Porter County Soil & Water Conservation District
Five Year Strategic Plan
2017-2021
This long range strategic plan has been developed to guide the Porter County Soil and Water Conservation District’s programs over the next five years, clearly setting forth resource issues, statements of intent and priority actions that are designed to meet our mission.
Who We Are: The Porter County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) is a legal subdivision of state government (Indiana Code IC 14-32-5-1) which operates as an official department of Porter County Government. It is the only unit of government responsible for coordinating the conservation of our soil, water and related natural resources. The District is governed by five unpaid supervisors, each a resident of Porter County. Three supervisors are elected and two are appointed. All are required to subscribe to a standard public oath of office. The District’s daily operations are conducted by two Porter County Government employees, a District Engineering Technician and a District Program Coordinator.

Our Purpose: The Porter County Soil and Water Conservation District provides information, education and technical assistance regarding soil, water and related natural resources; identifies and prioritizes local soil and water resource concerns; implements conservation practices and technologies in cooperation with federal, state and local partners.

Our Mission: To promote the wise use of soil, water and related natural resources.
Our Vision:

Clean Water Resources

Porter County is blessed to be bordered by Lake Michigan to the north and the Kankakee River to the south. Numerous small lakes, rivers and streams pepper the county, creating a magnificent landscape appreciated by residents and envied by visitors.

The District, with its state and federal partners, conducted an in-depth nutrient and water quality study in small watersheds of the East Branch of the Little Calumet River Watershed during 2016 and 2017. The study revealed surface water quality concerns applicable to the whole of Porter County.

Resource Concern:

Impaired surface water quality in streams, rivers, ponds and lakes due to:

- Aging and Failing Septic Systems
- Sediment Accumulation
- Nutrient and Organic Run-off
- Urban Run-Off Due to Improper Chemical Application
- Combined Sewer Overflows, Storm Sewer Overflows

Our Focus:
**Clean Water Resources**  
*Over the next five years...*

**Objective 1:** Fifteen miles of buffer will be installed to protect vital water resources.

**Objective 2:** 3,000 acres of new cover crops will be planted.

**Objective 3:** Host 10 workshops which include information on proper pesticide application.

**Objective 4:** Coordinate with the Septic Awareness Group to promote education regarding septic system maintenance through our outreach efforts at 15 events.

**Objective 5:** Continue to coordinate with town and county MS4s to review erosion control management plans and promote measures which reduce sedimentation in water bodies.

**Objective 6:** Seek funding to expand nutrient/water quality study to the southern end of Porter County and the Kankakee River Watershed.

**Our Vision:**  
*Healthy Soil Resources-Agricultural Land*
The glaciers that covered Porter County thousands of years ago spawned the mineral rich soils that make up its 115,000 acres of farm ground. Although providing a fertile foundation, to remain healthy and productive, these soils require conservation practices which replenish nutrients, build soil structure and support a host of beneficial micro-organisms.

**Resource Concern:**
Degraded soil quality including the loss of soil structure, loss of organic matter, soil balance, permeability and infiltration due to:

- Soil erosion
- Excessive Cropland Tillage
- Lack Of Crop Rotation And Cover Crops
Our Focus
Healthy Soil Resources-
Agricultural Land

Over the next five years . . . .

Objective 1: Ten field days promoting healthy soils and innovative soil conservation practices will be held

Objective 2: $10,000 in District cost share monies will be made available to offset expenses associated with cover crop establishment

Objective 3: Increase no-till and cover crop conservation practices by 5,000 acres.

Objective 4: Increase the number of acres of cropland utilizing nutrient and pest management plans which meet Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) standards and specifications by 5,000 acres

Objective 5: Increase conservation practices which are beneficial to pollinators by 200 acres.
Our Vision:
Protected Soil Resources-Developed Land

According to the US Census Bureau, Porter County has attracted a significant number of new residents between the years 2000-2015. Among area communities in the tri-county region of Lake, La Porte and Porter counties, Valparaiso and Portage were among the top seven experiencing population increases. (US Census/NWI Times)

Safeguarding natural resources during construction assures that Porter County maintains its reputation as a place people want to live.

Resource Concern:
Degraded soil quality including the loss of topsoil, erosion and sedimentation due to:

- Excessive Earthmoving Activities During Construction
- Failure To Preserve Existing Vegetation On Construction Sites
- Failure To Install Appropriate Erosion Control Measures In A Timely Fashion.
Our Focus
Healthy Soils- Developed Land

Over the next five years . . . .

Objective 1: Continue cooperation with county and city MS4s to provide technical assistance with erosion control planning as outlined in Indiana Code (327 IAC 15-5, Rule 5- July 1, 1996.)

Objective 2: Continue to attend monthly or as scheduled meetings of the Porter County Storm Water Advisory Board and Porter County Redevelopment Commission to provide input on new construction projects.

Objective 3: Utilize social media to provide information useful to builders and contractors about soils and erosion control measures.
Objective 4: Conduct at least 5 presentations to educate stakeholders about the benefits of soil conservation practices and limiting storm water run-off.

Our Vision: Sustainable Communities

As Porter County becomes more urbanized, land that was once productive often becomes idle, promoting the growth of invasive species, reduced maintenance of tile drainage systems and increased costs to Porter County Government.

Resource Concern:

Land use fragmentation resulting in:

Loss Of Prime Farmland
Spread of Noxious And Invasive Species
Excessive Costs To Provide Infrastructure and Service
Lack Of Proper Maintenance On Tile Drainage Systems
Our Focus
Sustainable Communities

Over the next five years . . . .

Objective 1: Cooperate with area watershed groups to encourage best management practices such as retention areas and rain gardens.

Objective 2: Host a minimum of 3 workshops for landowners to provide information on management ideas for small tracts.

Objective 3: Engage partners to host a workshop focused on native plants and control of invasive species
Objective 4: Sponsor an annual tree sale to offer landowners trees that are affordable and suitable for conservation (windbreak, wildlife and reforestation). An added goal will be the addition of 8,000 trees to the Porter County landscape.

Objective 5: Expand the youth education program expected to reach 40,000 students over the next five years to include follow-up material for families.

Partnering For Porter County

The District is unique in that, although a department of Porter County Government, it receives the support of many County, State and Federal government, non-profit and corporate sponsors. This team approach has created a successful, vital and growing District for the citizens of Porter County since 1952.

Our Primary Partners

Porter County Government—Financially supports the District through staff and administrative program funding.

Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA)—Educational, technical and financial assistance. Provides office space, computers, phone, and basic supplies. Also compensates the District for employee assistance with programs.
Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) Division of Soil Conservation - Financial and administrative support through the District Support and Resource Specialists and the Clean Water Indiana grant program

Our Research Project Partners

United States Department of the Interior - Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore

United States Geological Survey

Our Cooperating Partners

United States Army Corps of Engineers
United States Environmental Protection Agency
United States Department of Fish and Wildlife
United States Department of Agriculture
Farm Services Agency

Indiana Department of Environmental Management
Indiana Department of Natural Resources
(Lake Michigan Coastal Program, Divisions of Fish and Wildlife, Forestry and Water)
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All services provided without discrimination.