

Longest serving conservationist retires



Times are a changing and that holds true for Indiana's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

After 43 years with the agency, Jane Hardisty has officially retired as Indiana's NRCS State Conservationist. Jane was the longest serving State Conservationist in the country for the NRCS,

leading hundreds of employees and serving in Indiana for over 17 years. This born leader and dedicated public servant has affected many within Indiana with her quick wit and visionary outlook. She personifies partnership, teamwork, energy, drive, and passion.

In a mostly male dominated field, Jane Hardisty began her career with the Natural Resources Conservation Service as Indiana's first female Soil Conservationist. Gas was 59 cents a gallon, the average price of a home was \$12,700 and NASA launched their first Space Shuttle that year. However, no one could have guessed that this farm girl from Hancock County and new Ball State University graduate was starting a lifelong career dedicated to protecting the natural resources of our country, especially Indiana.

Throughout Jane's career, she pioneered innovation and change, helping to streamline the USDA-NRCS agency in Indiana. Her concept of aligning personnel in work teams rather than by counties allowed NRCS staff and partners to complete a backlog of conservation projects and deliver effective conservation planning to Indiana landowners.

In 2010, Jane spearheaded the Soil Health movement, which recognizes soil as a living and life giving natural resource. She promoted this movement, strengthening

Indiana's role as a conservation leader, while proving the positive environmental impacts farmers achieve with voluntary conservation efforts. This effort is growing stronger each day and as a result, farmers are sequestering more carbon, increasing water infiltration, improving wildlife and pollinator habitat—all while harvesting better profits and often better yields.

Because of Jane's leadership and vision, Indiana is recognized as a national leader and role model for our effective conservation partnership, seamlessly working together to deliver state of the art and direct technical assistance to private landowners. Through her gift of persuasion and public speaking, she has been able to reach out to local, state and national partners to accomplish even greater conservation efforts as a team. Henry Ford said, "Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success." This success is what Jane has exemplified in her Partnership crusade throughout the Hoosier state.

But Jane didn't only make a valuable impact in Indiana. Her expertise in policy development and implementation allowed Jane to serve on special assignments and advisory councils that had nation-wide impacts, such as Acting Deputy Chief for Management and Acting Associate Chief for Operations. She was also an advisor of the agency's National Healthy, Productive Soils Campaign.

Jane has received numerous awards throughout her career including the Ball State Natural Resources and Environmental Management Alumni Award of Achievement in 2000, the Ball State Distinguished Alumni Award in 2006, the Ball State Distinction in Natural Resources Conservation Indiana Women of Achievement Award, and most recently the 2017 Purdue Women in Agriculture Leadership Award. She was also selected to attend the White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation in 2005.

Jane's leadership, will be missed but the drive of the conservation partnership will continue because of her strong, yet kind, leadership. Jane always said that she had the greatest job in the agency working every day with Hoosier farmers, partners, and a dedicated workforce. We say it was us who has been privileged to work alongside Jane.



Our local IN-field Advantage (INFA) group held its Winter Meeting on March 1st. At the meeting attendees discussed the 2016 growing season and the Indiana Nutrient Management Strategy. Led by the meeting facilitators, Meg Leader, INFA State Coordinator, Hans Kok, Consultant, and Justin Orme, Indiana Corn Marketing Council/Indiana Soybean Alliance, the participants came away with some ideas about their crop management.

Infield Advantage works with small regional groups of farmers who are interested in improving their nutrient use efficiency on their corn fields by sharing their management decisions and the resulting impact those decisions had on their production with a goal of creating personalized local guidance for future management innovations. This year the program completed its seventh year and continues to be one of the largest adaptive nutrient management farmer networks in the country. In 2017, there were 35 active regional groups located across more than 60 Indiana counties. State-wide, nearly 1,100 fields, over 70,000 acres, were monitored using Infield Advantage tools. Based on a participant survey, the participants have a direct impact on the management of over half a million cropland acres across the state.

The Dubois County group continued working in 2017. This group was formed by local growers in Dubois and Pike Counties to improve their nitrogen use efficiency in corn. This year, 16 local growers participated in INFA. The local group is part of the state-wide program coordinated by the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA). More information about the program and previous years' results can be found at: www.InfieldAdvantage.org.

INFA uses aerial imagery and the Corn Stalk Nitrate Test (CSNT) to determine nitrogen use efficiency in each field enrolled. Producers are not restricted on tillage, rotation, nitrogen form, timing or rate and may enroll multiple fields. The basic level of the program is called Guided Stalk Sampling (GSS). Growers may also use INFA to conduct on-farm research using Replicated Strip Trials (RST). At the end of the year, INFA supplies each grower with the imagery and CSNT results from each field. Any fields with a Replicated Strip Trial will also have an RST report. Each grower also receives a regional report, with each field assigned an anonymous ID number.

In 2017 INFA continued a joint project with Indiana Pork focused on fields with hog manure. It also developed a nutrient management project on soybean fields with Dr. Shaun Casteel, Purdue University. In addition, major cost savings were captured by changing the contracting format with suppliers.

The 2017 working group consisted of 45 GSS corn fields. INFA costs are funded through Indiana Corn Marketing Council/Indiana Soybean Alliance (ICMC/ISA) checkoff funds, offered free of charge to producers. The total value of the imagery and lab work to our producers in 2017 was \$7,695. This program is possible due to the coordination and support of local Indiana Conservation Partnership staff. Our group also received additional support from state-wide coordination by ISDA, central office, and ICMC/ISA. This in-kind support is roughly valued at \$4,500.

2018 INFA registration forms are available. If you are interested in enrolling fields as either GSS or RST, please contact the Dubois County group leader, Andrea Gogel 812-480-1498.

OFS Brands Forest Stewardship Award Recipients

2004	Gene Gramelspacher*	2013	Lee Schnell
2005	Richard and Carroll Harder*	2014	Kenny Beckman
2006	Aloysius Welp*	2015	Dr. Thomas J. Rusche
2007	Jack L. Nelson*	2016	Werner, Werner, Margarida
2008	Clarence and Tony Buechler*	2017	Hilary Blessinger
2009	Don Scherle		
2010	Clarence Durholz		
2011	Philip Gramelspacher		
2012	David Altman		

** Award renamed in 2009. Formerly presented as Kimball Forest Stewardship Award.*