



# CONSERVATION CATCHALL

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## WHY WE NEED CONSERVATION COMPLIANCE IN THE NEXT FARM BILL

*The following article appeared in the Iowa Ag Review in the spring of 2007. Please see Rich Nichols' article on page three for an update on Illinois' CRP land being converted to crop production. If the issue was deemed serious in 2007 I would think it has reached the critical stage in 2013. Land coming out of CRP without the needed conservation measures to protect the soil will set conservation progress back years if not decades. Conservation compliance is needed to help assure that we don't lose what we've gained over the past years.*

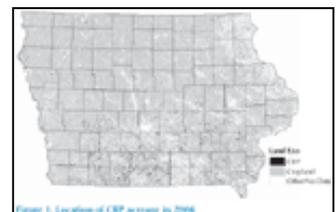
Growing demand for corn due to the expansion of ethanol has increased concerns that environmentally sensitive lands in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) will return to crop production. Most of the land currently in the CRP was enrolled because of the potential for environmental damage if it were farmed. A return of this land to crop production would likely lead to lower environmental quality. Iowa has a large number of CRP acres, it produces more ethanol than any other state, and it produces the most corn. Thus, an examination of the impacts of higher crop prices on Iowa land moving out of the CRP and the resulting effects on soil erosion, nutrient losses, and carbon sequestration will give insight into what we might expect nationally in the years ahead if crop prices remain high.

### Estimating Environmental Impacts

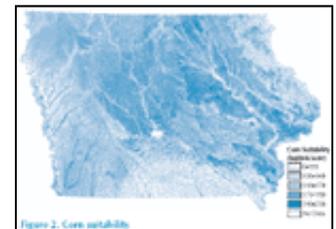
The first step in estimating the environmental impacts of higher crop prices is to estimate the relationship between crop prices and the proportion of CRP land that will return to production. That is, we first need to estimate CRP supply curves for Iowa. The basis we use for estimating these curves is the land's suitability to produce corn, which we measure using the Corn Suitability Rating (CSR). We then estimate the environmental impacts of cropping CRP land through the Environmental Policy Integrated Climate (EPIC) model. EPIC provides edge-of-field estimates of soil erosion, nutrient losses, and carbon sequestration.

[Figure 1](#) shows where CRP land is located according to USDA's Farm Service Agency. Two million acres of Iowa cropland is enrolled in the program. The CSR of each parcel of CRP land was obtained by overlaying a CSR map ([Figure 2](#)) on the map shown in [Figure 1](#). There are relatively few CRP acres in the Des Moines Lobe in North Central Iowa. But the land that is enrolled is productive. Because of this higher productivity, enrolling land in the CRP in North Central Iowa is more expensive than enrolling land in southern or northeastern Iowa, which is one reason why there are more acres enrolled in southern and northeastern areas of the state.

We construct the CRP land supply curves for corn prices ranging from \$2 to \$5 per bushel. We assume that soybean prices stay at \$4 above corn prices in all scenarios. Our assessment presumes that profit is the main driver of CRP enrollment decisions. However, there are many reasons why property owners decide to enroll in the CRP program, and, in practice, profit is not always the driving force behind their choices. Therefore, our estimates have to be considered an upper-range projection of the acreage that would go back into production. It is also important to note that this is a long-term equilibrium analysis of the alternative land uses



[Figure 1](#)



[Figure 2](#)

(continued on next page)

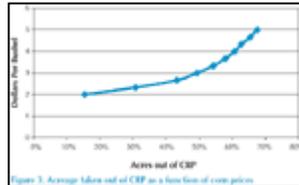


## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE - LONNIE WILSON

lonniewilson@gmail.com

for CRP land. We are abstracting from penalties for early termination, and re-enrollment provisions such as the re-enrollment and extension returns to cropping the land exceed the rental rate that the land can get in the CRP.

[Figure 3](#) illustrates the statewide curve. At \$3 corn, we estimate that almost a million acres would go back into production. We cannot know for certain how this land will be cropped. About 460,000 acres of this land is designated as highly erodible, so it would require use of conservation tillage, which is most easily accomplished with a corn-soybean rotation.



[Figure 3](#)

### *Costs of Retaining and Losing CRP Acres*

Currently, CRP annual payments total about \$200 million. One way to limit land coming out of the CRP is to increase CRP rental payments. At \$3-per-bushel corn, we estimate that USDA would have to pay \$314 million to reduce the loss of CRP acreage to less than 200,000 acres. For higher corn prices, even doubling the payments becomes a relatively ineffective policy. For example, we estimate that for corn prices of \$3.66 per bushel, doubling the rental rate paid to farmers would hold program costs constant, but only 675,000 Iowa acres would be enrolled.

To estimate the environmental impact of cropping land previously set aside from production, we used the EPIC model to estimate 30-year averages for soil erosion, nitrogen and phosphorous loss, and carbon sequestration. For simplicity, we assume a uniform fertilizer rate application of 133 pounds per acre for nitrogen and 30 pounds per acre for phosphorous for corn acres. Fertilizer applications occur in the spring.

Our results indicate that, on average, land that would leave the program first would have relatively small environmental impacts. However, incremental impacts would increase dramatically as higher corn prices bring into production more and more environmentally fragile land. For example, sediment losses increase from less than 5 million tons at \$3 corn to over 30 million tons at \$5 corn, when over 1.35 million acres would go back into production. We estimate that if all CRP land in Iowa were put back into a continuous corn rotation, the sediment losses would exceed 78 million tons.

Nitrogen losses follow a similar pattern. Losses increase from around 62,000 tons to over 294,000 tons at \$5 corn. If all CRP land in Iowa were put back into a continuous corn rotation, the nitrogen losses would exceed 438,000 tons.

At \$3 corn, there is over a 400 percent increase in sediment losses, almost a 500 percent increase in phosphorous losses, and a 270 percent increase in nitrogen losses. Changes in carbon losses in percentage terms are much smaller, ranging from a decrease of 2 percent for \$2 corn to a decrease of 9 percent for \$5 corn. Note that as prices increase, there is progressively less and less acreage put into production. However, environmental damages per acre

become progressively higher, as corn prices increase and bring additional, more environmentally sensitive land into production. The marginal impacts increase rather steeply, reflecting the increasing environmental sensitivity of the land brought back into production.

It is also interesting to note that if all the CRP land were returned to production of continuous corn, the environmental damages would be much higher than what we estimate with corn prices as high as \$5 per bushel, as we noted earlier for sediment and nitrogen losses. In the case of carbon sequestration, losses would increase from over 87 million tons at \$5 corn and 1,350,000 acres back in production to 133 million tons for the almost two million acres currently in CRP. This suggests that no matter how high corn prices ever get, some land in CRP is simply too fragile to be cropped.

### *Change in Strategies*

The results of our work carry implications for large parts of the United States but are particularly relevant for the Corn Belt. Our results indicate that land currently enrolled in the CRP offers significant environmental benefits that could be lost under higher commodity prices. Maintaining current levels of environmental quality will require substantially higher spending levels. Even allowing for the cost savings that would accrue as CRP land leaves the program, a change in targeting strategies will likely be required to ensure that the most sensitive land does not leave the program. In particular, high corn prices may accelerate the trend that started with the 2002 farm bill in which CRP targeting has shifted from the idling of whole fields for conservation purposes to implementing in-field practices, such as filter strips and grassed waterways that are seen as supporting working lands by reducing environmental impacts. (To preserve whole fields in the CRP, higher payments would have to be considered.) Because this will keep only part of the land out of production, it is not certain that more money will have to be devoted to CRP payments. For example, at \$4-per-bushel corn, doubling soil rental rates would keep over a million acres in the program, as opposed to less than 700,000 acres with current payment levels, and the program costs would be over \$26 million lower than they are now.

The source of the foregoing information is an article titled:  
***Impact of High Corn Prices on Conservation Reserve Program Acreage***

written by:  
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515-294-5764

[http://www.card.iastate.edu/iowa\\_ag\\_review/spring\\_07/article2.aspx](http://www.card.iastate.edu/iowa_ag_review/spring_07/article2.aspx)

*This article was substituted for my report for the November issue.*



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTES - RICH NICHOLS

[rich.nichols@aiswcd.org](mailto:rich.nichols@aiswcd.org)

I must admit, I am a bit surprised. With the late planting for most of the crops here in the central part of the state, I figured that there would be a lot of people in the fields still harvesting when Thanksgiving came around. Well, there are still a few corn fields that need to be harvested but much less than I thought there would be.

In spite of the late planting date and a mid-summer drought, the corn crop exceeded all records for bushels produced. Now, I'm wondering if that is because of the number of acres planted or improvements in yield potential...or both. But there was an article in the Springfield paper November 12<sup>th</sup> that indicated the reason for the record crop was due to increased acres being planted. This article accompanied another "less than complementary" article on ethanol and the toll it is taking on the natural resources. The article on additional acres being planted is reproduced below.

The Ethanol Article can be accessed at: <http://www.sj-r.com/top-stories/x529849593/AP-INVESTIGATION-The-secret-dirty-cost-of-Obamas-green-power-push>

By Jim Suhr

The Associated Press

**COBDEN** — For all its scenic splendor in a mostly pancake-flat state, southern Illinois can be a hassle for farmers. The soil isn't *as* fertile as up north, and the hilly terrain lends itself to erosion.

That's why so many farmers, like others across the Corn Belt, set aside much of their land years ago to a federal program that paid them to keep it idle in the spirit of conservation. At a time when corn prices were flagging, it simply made sense, giving farmers guaranteed income that helped them cover property taxes and other farm costs.

But that has changed with America's increasing demand for ethanol, the fuel additive that since 2010 has been the nation's top use for corn. The government's push for green energy has changed both the economics and the land of southern Illinois. Farmers are planting more corn in this area known as "Little Egypt" for its place between the Ohio and Mississippi rivers and the town of Cairo on the state's southernmost tip.

In the 10 southern Illinois counties that lost the most conservation, land since 2006, the disappearance amounts to more than 43,000 acres, a swath bigger than St. Louis.

The pullback from the Conservation Reserve Program has paid off for farmers like Bill Bass, who is unapologetic about what he calls his "unbelievable, astronomical" yields of corn and soybeans on hundreds of acres he farms. Much of it is property that Bass share-crops with retired farmer Collin Boyd, who pulled it out of conservation in recent years and threw it back into production.

Neighbors in Union County, along the Mississippi, have done the same, returning nearly 4,200 acres of conservation land to farmland since 2006, the year before the ethanol mandate passed. Corn planting is up 33 percent over that period in a region that's always been agriculturally eclectic, home to traditional cash crops, peach and apple orchards, vineyards and pumpkin farms.

"The CRP saved a lot of people, and it had its place," said Bass, 63. He asked, "Why shouldn't the American farmer have more money in his pockets? Am I missing something?"

It is impossible to specify how much ethanol accounts for the spike in corn prices — and how much those prices led to the Midwest land changes — *as* farmers enrolled in the conservation program weigh whether to stick with it, tying that property up for another decade or perhaps longer.

In Wayne County, nearly 7,700 acres have been pulled out of the conservation program since 2006, and corn planting there has increased 60 percent over the same period. About 300 of those acres belong to Walt Townsend, leaving him with more than 100 still in conservation. But by 2016, he expects just 35 or so will remain in the program.

To the northwest, in Randolph County David Uchtmann doesn't like the trend.

Two years from retiring, the 63-year-old grower has 150 acres he plans to keep in conservation. He believes that despite the economic incentive to remove land from the program, doing so "could make us all collectively thought of as money-hungry"

"I think short-term greed rather than long-term commitment is associated with these decisions," he said. "I'm very much an outdoors person, and there's not enough wildlife. ... If I'm a maverick or a renegade, I'll have to apologize. But there's just too many pocketbook decisions being made?"

The above article can be accessed at: <http://www.sj-r.com/top-stories/x825430448/AROUND-ILLINOIS-Farmers-pull-land-out-of-conservation>.

*Rich*



## PROGRAM COORDINATOR'S PAGE - KELLY THOMPSON

[kelly.thompson@aiswcd.org](mailto:kelly.thompson@aiswcd.org)

### IUM Practice Standard Updates

**Wetland standards** ... content is being finalized and should be ready for the IUM Technical Review and Steering Committees approval. Upon both committees' approval, the standards will go onto IEPA for final approval and inclusion into the IUM online.

**Bioretention Facility standard** ... was finalized and voted on by the Steering Committee last week. The standard now goes onto IEPA for final approval and inclusion into the IUM online.

**Wetland, Wet Bottom, Extended and Dry Detention Basin standards** ... are going through a few content changes before being voted on by the Steering Committee. Changes will be finalized by week of November 18, then go onto Steering Committee for approval before being sent to IEPA for final approval and inclusion into the IUM online.

**Temporary Sediment Basin standard** ... is undergoing a few content changes before being voted on by the Steering Committee. Changes for the standard will be finalized by week of November 18, then go onto Steering Committee for approval before being sent to IEPA for final approval and inclusion into the IUM online.

**Rain Garden standard** ... task order group (TOG) is ready to send the standard to the Technical Review Committee for approval before placing the standard on Public Notice for 30 days. Once on public notice, a notification will be sent to all those who have signed-up for the IUM email list along with the TRC and SC members.

**Soil Bioengineering standard** ... drawings are being finalized. The standard is complete so once the drawings are complete the standard will go before the TRC for a vote of approval before going onto the Steering Committee then to IEPA.

**Field Manual for Inspection** ... has been approved by both committees and is now in its final state before going to print. A proof should be delivered to AISWCD office by week of November 18. Once proof is accepted by TOG Chairperson the Printing Company will fulfill our order of 3000 copies. A distribution strategy has been developed and will be put in place upon receiving the printed Field Manual. If your district is interested in receiving a few copies of the Field Manual for the SWCD office please contact me and I will be sure you receive the amount you request. The Field Manual will also be placed online at AISWCD website. An email will be sent to all of those on the IUM email list as well as TRC and SC members. If you are not on the IUM email list and would like to be, please visit the IUM page on AISWCD website: <http://www.aiswcd.org/ium/>

### Upcoming Events

#### **ISWCDEA Winter Training**

**December 3 - 4, 2013**

Pick-up IUM Field Manual Inspection Guides for your district and/or pick-up Field Manual informational cards to hand out to municipalities around your county.

#### **AISWCD Quarterly Board Meeting**

**December 9 - 10, 2013**

The new IUM 604b Grant received from IEPA will be discussed. The new grant will take effect on February 15, 2014 and will be a continuation of the current IUM 319 Grant from IEPA with a few additional duties as outlined in the grant.

(continued on page 10)



## ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT'S UPDATE - *SHERRY FINN*

[sherry.finn@aiswcd.org](mailto:sherry.finn@aiswcd.org)

Greetings! Everyone,

I have three items of possible interest to SWCD personnel-especially if you are new.

On the next page you will find an updated Personnel Status Form that is to be completed and submitted whenever you have a new employee hired or an existing employee leave. This form is to be sent to everyone listed at the bottom of the form. This form is also on our website.

The link is: <http://www.aiswcd.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/SWCD-Personnel-Status-Form.pdf>

Listed below is the link and the directions on how to subscribe to the il.all listing:

[il.all-subscribe@aiswcd.org](mailto:il.all-subscribe@aiswcd.org)

When the e-mail pops up to subscribe, all you have to do is type "subscribe" in the subject or memo line and then send. You will receive a confirmation back from our provider, Tiger Tech, which will confirm your subscription to the il.all listing. Please check your "junk" mail, the confirmation may be there.

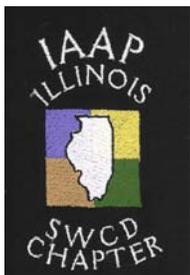
Identification Badge: The AISWCD will provide an ID Badge for each new employee; all we need is a recent head shot (tiff or jpeg format), the SWCD office where you are employed, and the year you were employed.

In addition, I would like each of the LUCs to submit "Spotlight" information to the AISWCD for future Legislative Newsletters. We would like to know what is happening in your areas!!

**A time to think:** What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us. (William Morrow)

**A time to act:** Believe in what you can become!!!!

(see page 6 for Personnel Status Form)



## ILLINOIS CHAPTER - IAAP - *JANE BRANGENBURG, PRESIDENT*

Winter Training is in just a few weeks! The IAAP and IDOA will be co-sponsoring a program given by Amy Stolte from Lincoln Land College. The presentation will cover working with fillable forms in Adobe & Microsoft Word and held Tuesday from 11:00-12:00 in the Onyx Room. Anyone wanting to bring their laptop is more than welcome for this session.

The IAAP will also be conducting their Annual "Holiday Gift Card Raffle". There will be three drawings; Drawing #1 \$100.00 Visa and \$25.00 Lottery tickets. Drawing #2 \$25.00 gift cards from iTunes, Cabela's, Wal-Mart, Red Lobster and Old Navy. Drawing #3 \$25.00 gift cards from Amazon, Kohl's, Bass Pro, Target and Applebee's. Tickets are 1 for \$1.00 or 6 for \$5.00. Tickets are available through the IAAP members and at Winter Training. We will draw the three lucky winners on Wednesday, December 4<sup>th</sup> at the Annual Meeting luncheon.



If you are interested in joining the IAAP (International Association of Administrative Professionals) please contact any member of the organization or go to our website <http://iaap-swcd.tripod.com> and view what is happening.



# SWCD PERSONNEL STATUS FORM

**\* To be completed by ALL newly employed or departing employees \***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position/Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
County: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
BLWR Region: \_\_\_\_\_ NRCS FOD: \_\_\_\_\_ SWCD City Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Check One:  New SWCD Employee  
 Departing Employee  
 Transferred  
 Name Change  
 Hours Reduced

Date Started: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Departed: \_\_\_\_\_  
New location: \_\_\_\_\_  
From: \_\_\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_\_\_  
Hours worked: \_\_\_\_\_ /week OR \_\_\_\_\_ /year

## SWCD OF ILLINOIS HEALTH INSURANCE QUALIFICATION

Check one of the following:

- Qualifies – employee works 50% of more of the regular work week hours
- Does not qualify – employee works less than 50% of the regular work week hours
- Does not qualify – employee works in a temporary position

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have read and understand the qualifications for the SWCD of Illinois Health Insurance Plan and that as an Administrative Coordinator or Resource Conservationist working 37 hours or more per week, that this insurance is a condition of employment.

As a permanent full time employee I  Do  Do Not wish to participate in the Group Health Plan.

I understand that later application for insurance may limit my access to complete coverages.

My  completed application or  waiver was submitted today to \_\_\_\_\_ County SWCD.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Signature Date SWCD Chair Signature Date

## QUALIFICATION FOR INSURANCE CONTINUATION

To be completed by all insured departing employees.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have submitted my resignation effective \_\_\_\_\_

My current mailing address is: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## VERIFICATION OF COMPLETION & SUBMITTAL OF FORMS

Form was completed on \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

This form was completed and sent with completed health and life insurance forms or a waiver of insurance form to the Administering County on \_\_\_\_\_ .

Please distribute copies to:

- Administering County: Montgomery Co. SWCD, 1621 Vandalia Road, Hillsboro, IL 62049  
\* Copy of status form, waiver for or new enrollment health & life forms
- IDOA/BLWR: State Fairgrounds, PO Box 19281 - Springfield, IL 62794-9281 - F 217/557-0993
- AISWCD: Attn: Sherry Finn F 217/744-3420
- NRCS: Attn: Dave Walling - F 217/353-6676
- Regional Representative:  
Joe Bybee, Region 2 - F 815/753-2305  
Elliott Lagacy, Region 4 – F 217/557-0993
- Marty McManus, Region 1 – F 309/787-4946  
Randy Grove, Region 3 – F 309/456-3482  
Gary Albers, Region 5 – F 618/476-7230



## Office Assistant's Information - Gina Bean

[gina.bean@aiswcd.org](mailto:gina.bean@aiswcd.org)

### Josh Seehorn Is Headed Our Way!

As of late October, Josh Seehorn was in Iowa. That's just a state away! Please, if Josh is going to pass through your town, or even county, help him in any way that you can. Whether, you can provide a meal or a place to shower or even if you send his press release to media in towns he will be passing through, every little bit of help he can get he will be more than appreciative. He has selflessly taken months out of his life to travel across the country to raise money for Envirothon. Why would someone not want to help him?



I'll admit, it would be hard for me to leave my every day luxuries, but I find myself jealous of Josh and the things he gets to see and experience. I've read, in more than one blog, of him experiencing pure human kindness. In one of his later postings he writes of discovering his first "Trail Magic" bin. As you can see from the picture it is a tub filled with items hikers might need such as first aid supplies, bug spray, sun screen, snack bars, etc. Seeing and hearing about random acts of kindness, especially this time of year, can really warm a person's heart.



Thank you for supporting Josh and his efforts. Press releases that can be sent out to local media can be found on Josh's website.

### Follow Josh!

Website: <http://outdoorjosh.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Josh-Seehorn/253473538111392?ref=ts>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/theoutdoorjosh>

**Remember as you sit down to feast on Thanksgiving....**

***"Vegetables are a must on a diet. I suggest carrot cake, zucchini bread and pumpkin pie."* Jim Davis - RD.com (Readers Digest)**

Enjoy your Holiday and Family Time!

Gina Bean



**ISWCDEA CORNER - SHERRY HUFFSTUTLER**  
**ISWCDEA REGION ONE REPRESENTATIVE**

website: <http://www.il.ncdea.org>

Greetings! Plans are well underway for the Winter Training scheduled for December 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>. If you have not already done so, please make your hotel reservations at the Northfield Inn, Springfield, as soon as possible. Their phone number is (217) 523-7900. Also, registration for the meeting is \$15 per person. The registration is due by November 19<sup>th</sup> to:

Henry County SWCD  
ATTN: Sharon Matson, AC  
PO Box 162  
301 East North Street  
Cambridge, IL 61238

'TEAM CONSERVATION' has been chosen as the theme for the Winter Training. We know that a team effort is needed in all that we do in order to carry out the job responsibilities for the preservation and conservation of our natural resources. The following logo indicates the conservation partners who work closely with us in these efforts:



A new General Session topic will be featured this year. The session will focus on the government shutdown and its impact on SWCD offices. I know you will not want to miss this session especially knowing of the possibility that a shutdown could once again happen.

Here are some items for you to keep in mind before you come to the Winter Training:

- 2014 Memberships are due (\$10.00)
- Used eye glasses, cell phone, hearing aids for donation
- Toys for Tots donation
- Door prizes
- IAAP Raffle (bring money to buy tickets!)

The Employees Association has rolled up their sleeves and has worked very hard to try and make this two-day event informative, educational, and enjoyable for you. We're going to have a great time so please come and join us at Winter Training on December 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>!!

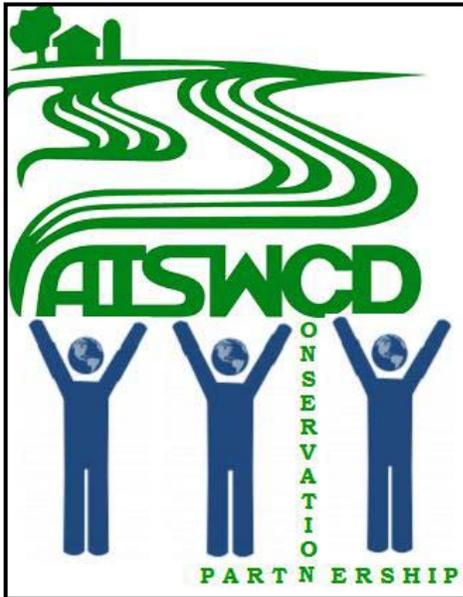
Until next time!

Sherry



**TODAY!**

**BECOME A MEMBER**



*Association of Illinois Soil and Water  
Conservation Districts  
Conservation Partnership*

*Business, Consumer, &  
Health Service Discounts!  
Tirebuyer Discounts!*

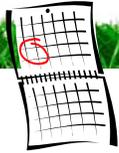
*Perfect gifts for family members!*

*For more information visit our website ~OR~ call Kelly Thompson at 217-744-3414  
[www.aiswcd.org/donate-membership/](http://www.aiswcd.org/donate-membership/)*

**Look who has already joined!**

**District Members:  
Warren County SWCD**

**Affiliate Members:  
Marc Anderson  
Sheryl and Richard Phillips**



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

- Thanksgiving - November 28 & 29, Holiday, Office Closed
- Winter Training - December 3 & 4 Northfield Inn Springfield, IL
- Christmas - December 25, Holiday, Office Closed

### 2013—2014 QUARTERLY BOARD MEETING DATES

- December 2013 Quarterly Board Meeting - December 9th & 10th - Northfield Inn - Springfield, IL
- March 2014 Quarterly Board Meeting - March 11, Northfield Inn - Springfield, IL - Executive Committee Meeting - March 10, IDOA
- June 2014 Quarterly Board Meeting - June 9th & 10th - Northfield Inn - Springfield, IL

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## PROGRAM COORDINATOR'S PAGE

(continued from page 4)

### NACD Annual Meeting & Conference

February 2-5, 2014

Megan Andrews and I will be presenting information on the IUM at the NACD Share Fair during the 2014 Annual Conference on Monday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>. We will have Field Manual handouts as well as informational cards on how to find the manual online. Please stop by our booth if you plan to attend the conference.

For more IUM-related events, seminars or training please visit <http://www.aiswcd.org/ium/>.



*Kelly Thompson, Program Coordinator*

AISWCD Mission: *To represent and empower Illinois' SWCDs*

4285 N. Walnut Street Rd.  
Springfield, IL 62707



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