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Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD)

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**Indiana Conservationists Recognized at Annual Conservation Awards Ceremony**

INDIANAPOLIS, IN –On Monday, January 12, the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD) honored farmers, county employees, educators, and volunteers for outstanding work in conservation at the Indianapolis Marriott Downtown during their Annual Conference of Indiana Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). The individuals and groups who received the awards made exceptional commitments to protecting Indiana’s natural resources and educated their communities about the importance of protecting water quality and soil health.

The awards ceremony held a special meaning as 2015 marks the 75th anniversary of Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Indiana. IASWCD President Jeff Meinders explained, “Thanks to the work of these award winners and other Hoosier conservationists, we have been able to make great progress in the protection of Indiana’s natural resources in our first 75 years. Continued efforts by SWCD employees, supervisors, and engaged citizens will be the key to sustainable agriculture and sustainable communities for years to come.”

Among those recognized were:

* **The Parke and Vermillion County Soil and Water Conservation Districts (Earth Team Award)** for their work in soil health education
* **Jack Welp (Conservation Farmer of the Year Award)** of Dubois County for his use of conservation farming practices that reduce erosion and runoff and improve organic matter in the soil
* **Bill Fuller (Friend of Conservation Award)** of Greene County for efforts in water quality monitoring, native plant installations, and volunteering with his local SWCD
* **Dr. Alan Johnson (Friend of Conservation Award)**, dean of the Vincennes University Jasper Campus (VUJC), for the VUJC Land Stewardship Initiative, which serves as a site for research into conservation agriculture
* **Reverend Neil Ainslie (Friend of Conservation Award)**, for education programs on the science of the Wabash River and water quality monitoring
* **The Clay and Vanderburgh County Soil and Water Conservation Districts (District Showcase Award)** for their natural resource conservation outreach programs
* **James (Jim) Brown (Supervisor of the Year Award)** for his outstanding leadership in conservation and natural resource protection

The IASWCD also recognized National Association of Conservation Districts past president Gene Schmidt with the IASWCD President’s Award and IASWCD past president Jeff Meinders with the Outgoing President Award.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts are county-level units of government that manage and direct natural resource management programs at the local level. Indiana has 92 SWCDs, one for each county. Their focus is responsible and wise management of private land and natural resources.Together with the 92 SWCDs and more than 400 volunteers statewide, the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts coordinates technical and financial assistance in an effort to develop locally-driven solutions to natural resource concerns. The IASWCD seeks to enable the conservation of Indiana’s natural resources and to improve the environment and quality of life for future generations.

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