

Resilient Indiana: Technical Assistance for SWCDs

2024 Highlights

“Shall we not proceed immediately to help the present generation of farmers and to conserve the heritage of posterity.”

These words that Hugh Hammond Bennett, the father of soil conservation, wrote in 1928 are still true. With funding that was set up the previous year, the Resilient Indiana (RITA) program began in January 2024 with the hiring of Meg Leader as the Program Director. RITA is an initiative of the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD). It is made possible through the support of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Clean Water Indiana (CWI).

Liz Rice, IASWCD Executive Director, and the IASWCD Board worked closely with our Indiana Conservation Partners with the goal that RITA would provide three benefits to Indiana.

- **Technical Assistance** – to deliver timely professional technical assistance, training and outreach related to reduced soil erosion, improved soil health, improved water quality and quantity, and enhanced wildlife habitat
- **Capacity Building** – to make staff available to individual SWCDs that can assist with program implementation and provide more services to local communities
- **Workforce Development** – to target and train young professionals with the intention of instilling in them the desire to continue this work

By setting these goals, IASWCD is supporting efforts to get conservation on the ground now and looking ahead so there are staff available to continue the work into the future. Leader hired the first cohort of Technicians in June. Each Technician was assigned roughly six SWCDs. After their first quarter getting familiar with the work SWCDs do, all the assorted partners, and discussions with their District Supervisors, they began developing their own projects for 2025 that will provide additional programming to the local communities.

The full RITA team will consist of 14 Technicians. The additional RITA Techs are to be hired in early 2025. To learn more, visit Resilient Indiana.

A selection of the RITA Tech’s accomplishments in 2024 (7 months)

Attended SWCD Board Meetings	91
Attended ICP Meetings	82
Attended Field Days and Trainings	136
Presented at SWCD Board Meetings	47
Presented at a Field Day or Training	4
Presented to the general public	69
Provided Technical Assistance to landowners/producers	68

