Soil and Water Conservation District
Stephenson County

Stephenson County SWCD Newsletter

Published Quarterly

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Inside This Issue:

Fall Fish Sale

Friday, September 4, 2020:
Last day to order fish (includes grass carp)

Monday, September 23, 2020 @11:00AM:
Pick up fish at the SWCD Office

We have a new fish supplier; some fish were not available for this sale; but we hope to have a larger a selection available in the spring.

Logan Hollow Fish Farm went out of business after 38 years!

Fall Fish forms are available at the Stephenson County SWCD office on a shelf in the entryway; or on our website: www.stephensonswcd.org

Stephenson County Soil & Water District Well Water Testing Program

The District is pleased to be offering a well-water testing program again this year. The date has been pushed back this year due to COVID-19 and we will be selling kits a bit differently this year since customers are not currently allowed into the office. We will most likely be selling kits from the entryway. Please call the office number 815-235-2141 ext. 3 when you arrive to purchase kits. A personal check would be the best method for payment if possible.

Peace of mind about the water you are drinking truly is as easy as 1, 2, 3…

1 **Monday - Friday**
October 5 – 9, 2020; 7:00 – 3:30
Purchase Water Test Kits at the SWCD Office.

2 **Tuesday or Wed. (morning)**
October 13 – 14, 2020
Collect Water Sample.

3 **Wed., October 14, 2020**
By 3:00 pm
Return Water Samples to the SWCD Office, for immediate shipment to testing laboratory.

Note: PurTest® Bacteria self-testing kit is available from the District for $20.00. This is not part of the regular testing kits.

See page 2 for more information ▶

Stephenson Soil & Water District's Well Water Testing Program

COMPONENTS	TESTS FOR:	COST
Nitrate Package	Tests for nitrate, nitrite, ammonia, chloride, sulfate, fluoride, soluble phosphorus, silica, and conductivity	$30.00
Pesticide Screens	Detects major herbicides such as atrazine (Aatrex), simazine (Princep), alachlor (Lasso), metolachlor (Dual), and acetochlor (Harness)	$65.00
Metals	Includes antimony, arsenic, barium, beryllium, cadmium, chromium, lead, selenium, aluminum, copper, iron, manganese, zinc, nickel, sodium, calcium, strontium, cobalt, magnesium, potassium, silica, and vanadium	$80.00
****Bacteria**	PurTest Bacteria self testing kit is available from the District. ****Note**: **this is not part of the regular testing components; this is a home self test kit.**	$20.00

Kits will be available for sale, Monday October 5 – Friday October 9 from 7:00 A.M. to 3:30 P.M. We will be selling kits from the entryway of the building due to COVID-19 restrictions. Please call 815-235-2141 extension 3 if we are not in the entryway and we will come out and assist you. A personal check would be the best method of payment, so we do not have to deal with making change.

Confidential report containing test results will be mailed directly to you within 4 to 6 Weeks.

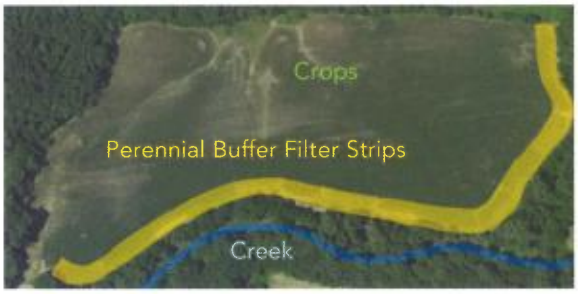
Multifunctional Perennial Filter Strips

An effective way to reduce nutrient loss

This field management guide demonstrates the potential of a multifunctional perennial mixed grass filter strip for mitigating nutrient leaching and runoff from a row-crop field and provides establishment and management guidelines.

Nutrient loss reduction at the edge-of-field

The Gulf of Mexico Task Force has obligated the development of action plans by the 12 contributing states in the Mississippi River Basin to reduce the loss of nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorous) to the Gulf by 45%. With this, Illinois published the "Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy" in 2015 (State of Illinois, 2015). This strategy identified priority watersheds for nutrient loss reduction efforts and outlined the alternative scenarios necessary to achieve the target reduction from both point and nonpoint (agricultural) sources. The agricultural practices include nutrient management, cover crops, reduced tillage, and edge-of-field practices. Perennial based filter strips installed at the edge of fields (see figure) are highly effective at reducing nutrient losses. Also, a perennial grass-based (bioenergy and/or forage crops) filter strip can be designed for multifunctionality to offer opportunities to bridge crop production (alternative revenue generation) and ecosystem services (reducing greenhouse gas emission and improving soil carbon sequestration and biodiversity) in agricultural watersheds.



A 3-year study of a filter strip established with perennial warm-season grasses and cool-season forage mixtures at MWRD's Fulton County Site (IL).

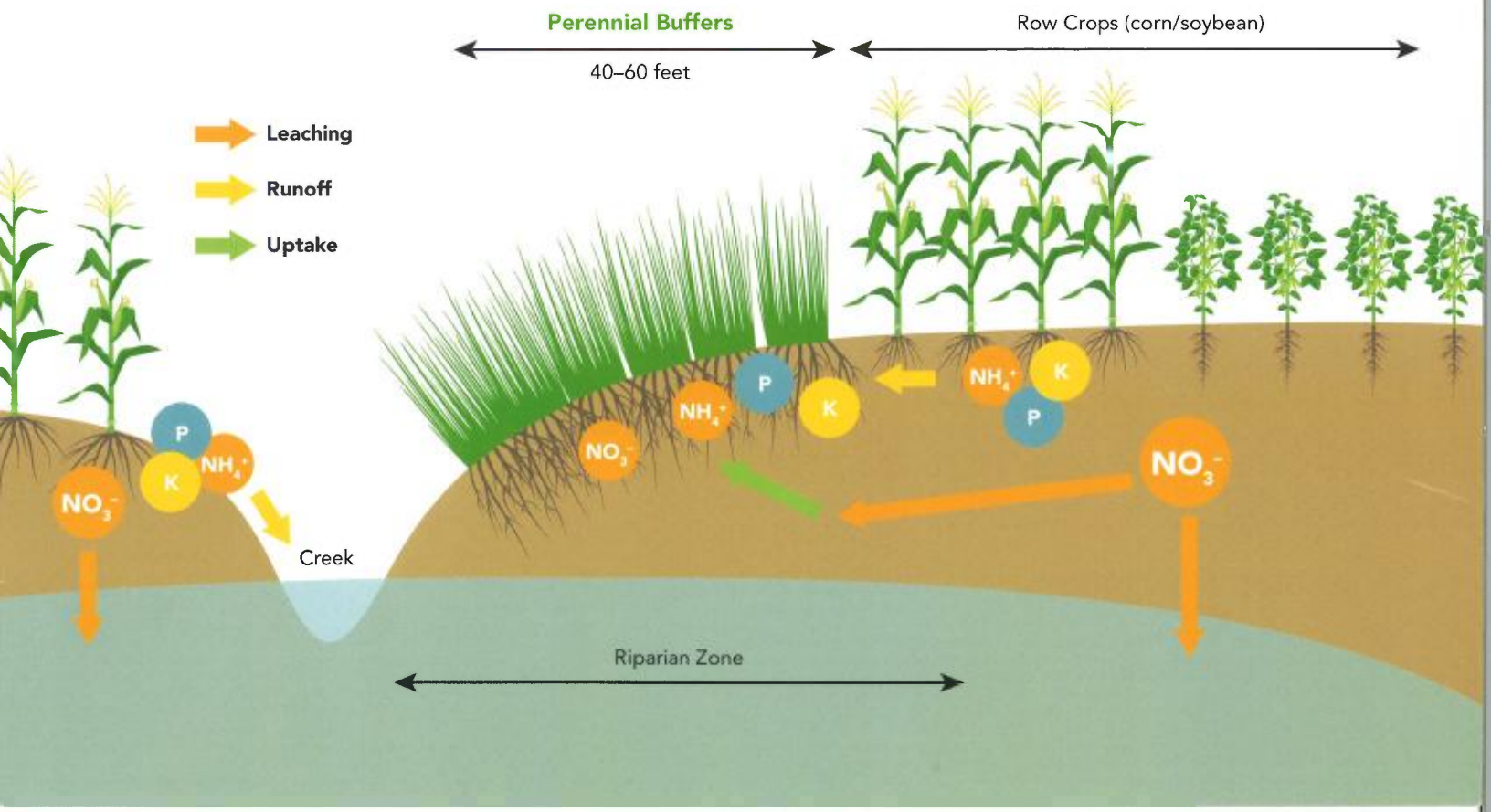
Perennial Buffers

Bioenergy crops

- Switchgrass
- Big bluestem
- Indiangrass
- Prairie cordgrass

Forage crops

- Alfalfa
- Smooth bromegrass
- Tall forage fescue
- Orchardgrass
- Perennial ryegrass
- Timothy
- Meadow fescue



Establishment is the key

Establishment is critical for perennial cropping systems. Successful establishment optimizes biomass yield, promotes productive long-term stands, reduces weed pressure, and contributes to effective nutrient capture from runoff water.

Species and Cultivar Selection

- Perennial grass filter strips compliment crop production by providing multiple services in agricultural watersheds.
- A filter strip can be designed to carry out many functions with various monocultures and mixtures of perennial grasses and forbs can be used.
- Selecting the right species and cultivars is the first step for effective filter strip establishment. Contact local NRCS, extension, or other experts to select the best species and cultivars to meet your management objectives.
- Warm-season grasses in monocultures or mixtures typically produce more biomass and provide more options for wildlife and pollinator habitat.
- Cool-season mixtures provide high-quality forage and are often less expensive and easier to establish than warm-season grasses.

Vegetation 1: Native warm-season grasses

Species	Purpose
Switchgrass Big bluestem Indiangrass	Bioenergy feedstock Summer forage Wildlife habitat
Prairie cordgrass*	Bioenergy feedstock
Mixtures	Bioenergy feedstock Summer forage Wildlife habitat**

Vegetation 2: Cool-season grasses and legumes mixture

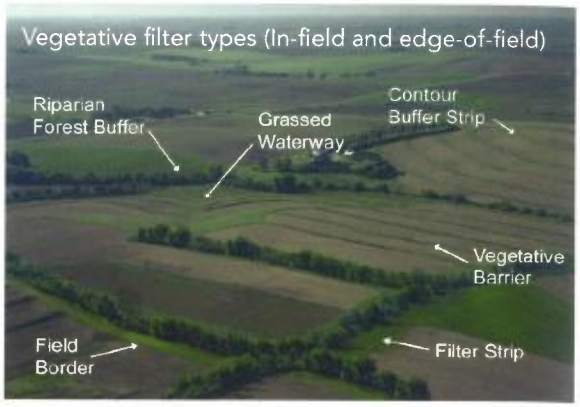
Species	Purpose
Smooth bromegrass Meadow fescue, Orchardgrass Tall fescue, Ryegrass, Alfalfa	Spring and fall forage

Vegetation 3: Warm- and cool-season grasses mixtures

Species	Purpose
Mixtures	Spring forage Fall bioenergy feedstock

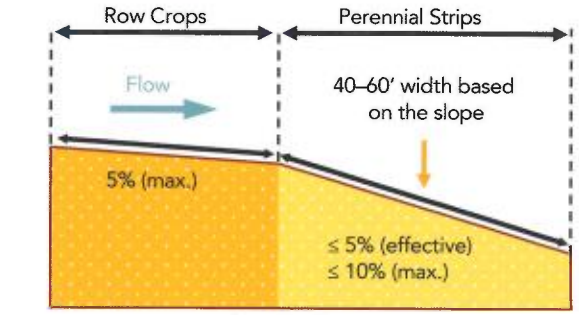
**Ideal for bottomland and poorly drained sites*
***Wildlife and pollinator benefits can be enhanced by including native forbs*

Design and Implementation

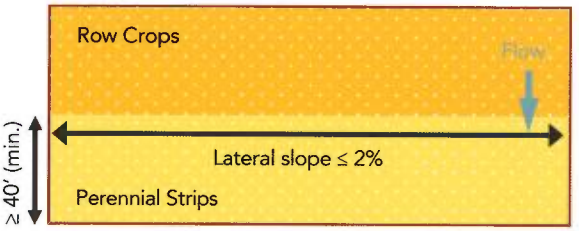


(Photo courtesy of USDA-NRCS)

Technical Notes



Section View



Overhead View

Maintenance

- Rills/small channels need to be repaired to avoid concentrated flow through the strip.
- Control grazing to prevent access by livestock.
- Control weeds to maintain quality stands.
- Repair gullies, remove deposited sediment, and reseed after storm events, if necessary.

Establishment Guidelines

1. Develop a firm seedbed
2. Plant high quality seed
3. Use a well calibrated drill
4. Plant seed ¼–½ inch deep
5. Plant 2–3 weeks before or after corn
6. Control weeds early
7. Monitor weather conditions to plant before predicted rain

Land Preparation

CONCEPTS: Prepare a firm seedbed to provide good soil-to-seed contact to maximize seed germination and minimize soil erosion and stand failure (no-till is ideal).

KEYS: Avoid tillage in sensitive areas (e.g. high erosion risks, see picture). In areas with heavy residues (e.g. after corn or sorghum harvest), graze or shred the residue, incorporate the residue with tillage, then pack soil surface using a cultipacker or roller (Note: seedbed preparation is similar to Alfalfa).

Planting

SEED QUALITY

- Grass-seed quality affects seedling vigor and establishment speed. Quality test is based on percent Pure Live Seed (PLS):

$$PLS(\%) = \frac{seed\ purity(\%) \times viable\ seed(\%)}{100}$$

where

$$Viable\ seed(\%) = dormant\ seed(\%) + germination(\%)$$

SEEDING RATE (30 PLS FT^{-2})

- Approximately 3–10 lbs ac^{-1} based on seed weight and quality. This will vary by seed lot.

SEEDING

- Drills (shallow seeding depth of ¼–½"): Small seed box drills, native grass-seed drills (see picture), no-till drills, conventional drills
- Broadcast: needs to followed by cultipacker (Not typically needed in no-till fields, killed pasture sod, or surfaces with heavy residues).

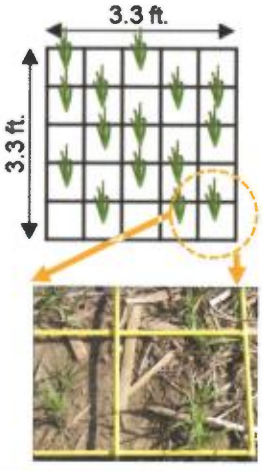
TIMING

- 2–3 weeks before or after the recommended corn planting date in your area (late April to early June)
- Germination is maximized at soil temperature of 68–86 °F
- Gemination usually begins 3–5 days after planting in optimum soil conditions but complete emergence can take more than a month.

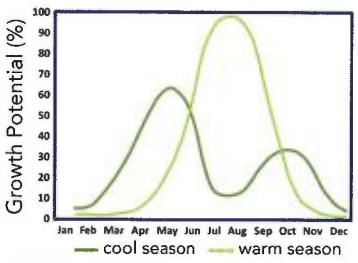
Erosion sabotages the seed planting and establishment

Good stand with no-till

1 Small seed box
2 Grass box
3 Grain box
4 Spacing: 7–10 inches row



Stand density



Growth potentials of cool-season and warm-season perennial grasses

- Cool-season grasses in late summer (early September) to minimize weed pressure and optimize ground cover in spring management.

Weed Control

PRE-EMERGENCE APPLICATION

- Existing weeds should be controlled using burn-down herbicides before planting.
- Pre-emergence herbicides can be sprayed before or immediately after planting.

POST-EMERGENCE APPLICATION

- Selective herbicides to control weeds can be applied after planting but wait until perennial grasses reach the four- or five leaf stage.
- Mowing during the establishment year above perennial grass canopy can suppress weed competition and seed production.

Stand Density

Evaluate stand establishment with a frequency grid (see picture) 4 to 6 weeks after planting to decide if overseeding or replanting is necessary.

CRITERIA FOR RATING STANDS

- Successful: ≥ 50% (≥ 2 plants ft^{-2})
- Marginal/Adequate: 25-50%
- Poor: < 25 % (needs to be overseeded or replanted)

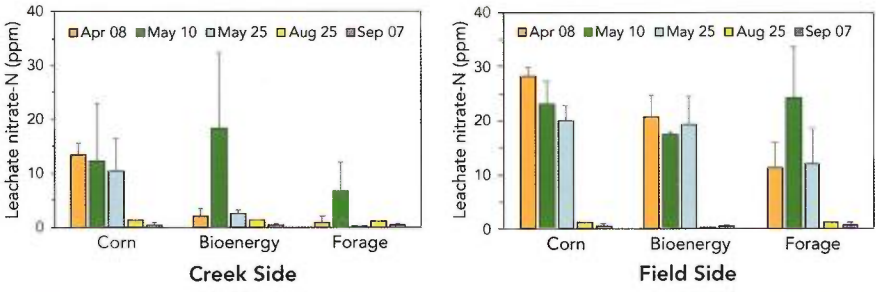
Managing Established Stands

- Control weed species in a timely manner.
- First aboveground biomass harvest should not be done until the completion of ground cover.
- For cool-season grasses or mixtures, biomass can be harvested more than once depending on stand health. Healthy stands can be harvested two times per year in spring and fall to optimize forage yield and quality.
- For warm-season grasses or mixtures, one annual harvest after a killing frost is recommended for bioenergy feedstock production to ensure stand longevity. Warm-season grasses can be harvested for summer forage at peak standing crop, usually early August. Annual harvests during summer can reduce stand health if fertility is not maintained.
- If the filter strip is enrolled in CRP, follow the CRP harvest management requirements

How does a perennial-based filter perform at Fulton County?

Nitrate-N leaching from row crop fields was measured with high concentrations of soil leachate nitrate-N near the field side of the filter strips. The uptake of leached-N by perennial crops (filter strip) resulted in lower nitrate-N concentrations in soil water at the creek site of the filter strips, showing that the perennial-based filters significantly reduced nutrient leaching compared with the row crop systems (i.e. corn in this study), especially for nitrate-N (see graph).

Soil nitrate concentrations from the field- and creek-side



Why Perennial Cropping Systems for Filter Strips?

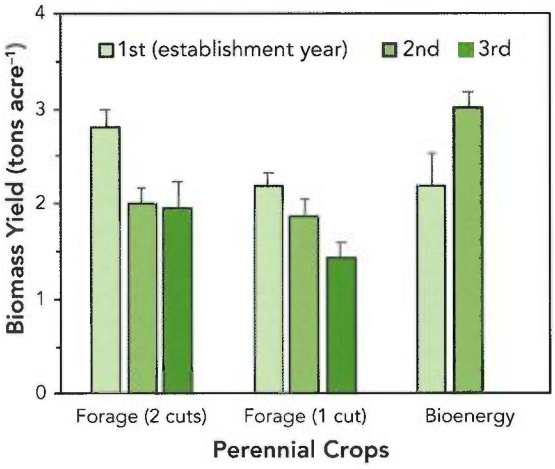
Perennial-based cropping systems can be used for feedstock bioenergy and/or forage, which can be considered as alternative income sources on marginal lands. The research demonstrated that a three-year rotation of forage crops with conventional row crop rotation improved net income compared with the traditional soybean-corn rotation system. The deep rooting system of perennial crops and extended growing seasons increase nutrient removal, greatly contributing to nutrient loss reduction. This on-farm field trial demonstrates that the potential of multifunctional filter strips for reducing nutrient loss from field to surface waters.

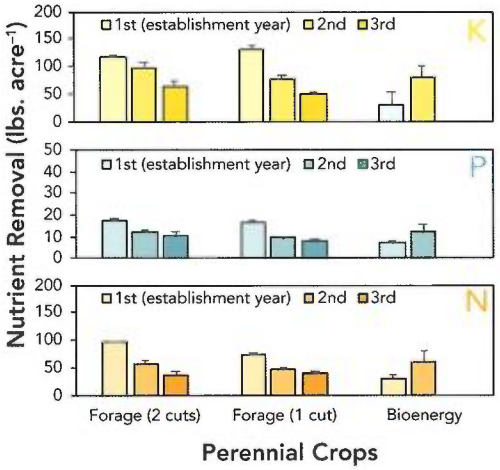
This specific filter strip research was jointly conducted by the University of Illinois and Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD)

For more information, contact Dr. D.K. Lee, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (leedk@illinois.edu) or Dr. Guanglong Tian at MWRD (TianG@MWRD.Org)

What affects how much nutrient a filter strip can remove?

Nutrient removal by perennial crops is based on nutrient concentrations in plant tissues and aboveground biomass yields, which were substantially influenced by the harvest frequency (one or two annual harvests) and timing (at anthesis in spring and fall for cool season grasses and after a killing frost for warm-season grasses). For forage crops (cool-season mixture), the two-cut system produced higher biomass yields than the one-cut system during the three years (see graph). The yields potential of coolseason forage decreased over the years, most likely due to insufficient nutrient in the filter strips. However, warm-season bioenergy crops showed higher yield potential in 'marginal' (low fertility) areas. The increased biomass from both the two-cut systems and bioenergy crop also increased nutrient (N, P, K) removal (see graph).





ILLINOIS Extension
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Meet two new NRCS Employees located in the Freeport Office:

Hannah McWhirter, NRCS Soil Conservationist

Hannah was raised in Cedarville, IL and graduated from Freeport High School. Hannah attended college in Ely, MN and Platteville, WI. Hannah graduated in August 2019 with degrees in Soil and Crop Science and Biology. In the past she has worked in trail maintenance, landscaping, prairie restoration and on several farms and greenhouse operations.

Hannah is a curious, lifelong naturalist and enjoy playing and working outside. Hannah currently live on 10 acres just outside of Freeport where she enjoys growing food and native plants.

Hannah started volunteering with the Freeport NRCS office last fall and am very happy to have been brought on full time. Hannah looks forward to interacting with our local producers and learning all she can about agriculture and conservation.

Luke Tweeten, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician

Luke was born in Mason City, Iowa and raised in Forest City, Iowa. He received a B.S. in Environmental Sciences and a Sustainability Certificate with a minor in Spanish from the University of Iowa in December of 2019. One of his most rewarding experiences during his time at university was spending the summer of 2018 researching tropical birds in Costa Rica.

Luke has worked seasonal positions with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources at both Pilot Knob State Park and Lake MacBride State Park. During his time at Lake MacBride State Park, he worked as a Forestry/Ecosystem Management Aide, where he managed young oak-hickory woodland and tallgrass prairie restorations.

His father and uncle together farm corn and soybeans, as well as raise hogs in northern Iowa. Luke prides himself in his farming heritage and his passion for conservation. He is looking forward to this new chapter in life and helping the NRCS, farmers, and landowners as much as he can in the ultimate goal of promoting conservation.

Managing Yard Waste

Yard waste makes up a significant portion of the waste stream for a typical American. Here are some ways that you can reduce or eliminate what needs to get hauled away.

Grass Clippings: Do not bag your clippings. Clippings contain nutrients your lawn needs to grow. In as little as 14 days, clippings release nutrients back into the soil.

Clippings do not contribute to thatch build-up. Thatch is primarily composed of turf grass roots, crowns, rhizomes, and stolon's, that contain large amounts of lignin, which decompose slowly. Grass clippings are mostly water, are high in nitrogen and decompose quickly.

Mow grass when dry, 3" to 4" tall. Never cut it shorter than 2' to 2 ½" in height. The grass will have a larger and deeper root system, making a stronger defense against weeds and droughts.

Make sure your mower blade is sharp. A sharp blade will mean clippings that decompose quickly. A mulching blade is not necessary. Avoid over fertilizing or over watering and limit the use of lawn chemicals which inhibit the growth of soil organisms to thrive and return nutrients to the soil by decomposing grass clippings. If your lawn becomes too dense with growth it will need to be mowed more frequently and your clippings will not reach the soil to decompose as easily.

Mulching with leaves and grass clippings reduces evaporation from the soil surface, controls weeds, and keeps soil temperatures from becoming too hot or too cold. Mulch also protects sloping ground from soil erosion, and it stops soil crusting of wet soils as they dry out. Mulching also improves soil conditions for earthworms and other soil organisms that are necessary for a healthy soil environment.

Grass clippings can be spread in layers over vegetable and flower beds to retain moisture and prevent weeds. Leaves of trees and shrubs may be spread around shrubbery in the fall or used to cover your perennials for the winter. Wood chips may be used around trees, shrubs or in flower beds.

Composting reduces material volume by 70% – 80% and allows you to return organic matter to the soil in a useable form. Organic material in the soil improves plant growth by loosening heavy clay soil. Compost improves the capacity to hold water and nutrients in sandy soils and adds essential nutrients to any soil. Backyard composting does not require a lot of work, causes less pollution, and uses less energy.

Compost is organic matter that is naturally broken down by bacteria, fungi, microorganisms, and insects into a dark brown, crumbly material (humus) resembling rich topsoil. Compost is produced when yard waste is piled in a heap or in bins constructed of wood, fencing or concrete blocks. The recipe for compost is: Greens (grass, weeds, food scraps, etc.) + Browns (leaves, sawdust, etc.) + Moisture, air, and time.

STEPHENSON SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
2020 FALL FISH ORDER FORM

Name _____ Phone _____ Email: _____

Address_____ City _____ State, ZIP _____

SPECIES (*Stocking Rate*)	SIZE	PRICE	UNIT	QUANTITY	TOTAL PRICE
Channel Catfish (*150/acre)* - *Sport fish. Mix with Hybrid Sunfish & Largemouth Bass.*					
Channel Catfish	4-6"	$ 0.70	each	ea.	
Channel Catfish	6-8"	$ 0.85	each	ea.	
Largemouth Bass (50/acre) - *A predator; helps control bluegill and crappie populations.*					
Largemouth Bass	3"	$ 1.10	each	ea.	
Hybrid Bluegill -					
Hybrid Bluegill	2-3"	$ 0.55	each	ea.	
Hybrid Bluegill	3-5"	$ 0.95	each	ea.	
Bluegill - *Prolific in ponds. Stock with Largemouth Bass.*					
Bluegill	2-3"	$ 0.55	each	ea.	
Bluegill	3-5”	$ 0.95	each	ea.	
Redear	3-4"	$ 1.00	each	ea.	
Fathead Minnows *(5 lbs./acre)* - *Stock in new ponds before Largemouth Bass.*		$ 11.25	per/lb.	lb.	
** Grass Carp *(5-10 each/acre) - Alternative to using chemicals for weed control. Aquatic plants should not be totally eliminated.*	8-11”	$ 12.50	each	ea.	

**** REQUIRED PERMIT INFORMATION FOR GRASS CARP ORDERS**

POND LOCATION: TWP _____ SECTION _____ T_____ R_____ POND SIZE _____ ACRES

ORDER TOTAL $_____

ORDER DEADLINES: Grass Carp – Friday, *Sep. 4, 2020;* Other Fish – Friday, *Sep. 4, 2020*

DELIVERY: **11:00 a.m., Wednesday, September 23, 2020**

USDA/SWCD Office parking lot, 1620 S. Galena Avenue, Freeport, IL

Pick-up will be drive through; please line up when arrive and remain in your vehicle.

PAYMENT: Please include payment with your order; checks payable to Stephenson SWCD.
If payment is made in person you will need to call 815-235-2141 ext. 3 and we will meet you in the entryway as the door entering the building is locked due to COVID-19 regulations.

MAILING ADDRESS: 1620 South Galena Avenue, Freeport IL 61032 815-235-2141 ext. 3

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

All fish *will be bagged* and sealed in oxygenated water.
A 5 gallon bucket or something similar to support the bags is recommended.

Water cannot be furnished.

CHANNEL CATFISH
The Channel Catfish has an olive and brown to dark blue body, back not humped, deeply forked tail, and their anal fin has a curved margin. A Channel Catfish can grow up to 58 lbs., however in most farm ponds they will only reach 5 to 10 lbs. Spawning will occur in cavities in hollow logs, holes in undercut banks and beneath rocks when water reaches 70-75 degrees. Stocking rate 100-200 per surface acre.

LARGEMOUTH BASS
Largemouth Bass have a jawbone that extends beyond the back of the eye and the two dorsal fins are nearly separated or deeply notched. The Largemouth Bass can grow up to 20 lbs., however the typical weight is 1 to 6 lbs. These bass are usually found in moderately clear to turbid, quiet warm waters in streams, rivers, lakes, reservoirs and ponds, around vegetation and near logs, trees, brush, and stumps. Largemouth Bass usually spawn when water temperatures reach 63-68 degrees. Stocking rate 100-200 per surface acre.

HYBRID BLUEGILL
The Hybrid Bluegill is a cross between a Green Sunfish and a regular Bluegill. These fish are similar to a regular Bluegill, however they grow at a quicker rate and get a larger size. The Hybrid Bluegill are more aggressive than the regular Bluegill because of the Green Sunfish mix in them. Hybrid Bluegill will reproduce however they are 90 to 95 percent male. A Hybrid Bluegill can grow up to 4 lbs.; however typically they get only 1 1/2 to 2 lbs. Stocking rate 600-1,000 per surface acre.

BLUEGILL
The Bluegill is a deep bodied, slab-sided fish with a small mouth and has a black spot on soft dorsal fin and flexible black ear flap. A Bluegill can grow up to 4 lbs., however they are usually 1 lb. or less. The Bluegill will congregate around vegetation and sunken trees of shallow backwater bays, lakes and ponds. Spawning occurs when water reaches 67 to 70 degrees in shallow areas over sand and gravel. The usually nest in colonies and spawn once every 28 days during the spring and summer. Stocking rate 600-1,000 per surface acre.

REDEAR SUNFISH
The Redear, also known as a Redear Sunfish or Shellcracker, is dark olive above, yellow to green on the sides, and has white on the belly. They also have a red edge on the gillcover on the male and orange on the female. Redear can grow up to 4 lbs., however most commonly they average about 1-1 1/2 lbs. Redear prefer the bottom of clear, quite waters with moderate vegetation. They will spawn when water reaches 60-70 degrees in deeper waters and they nest in colonies. Primarily a Redear will eat snails and clams, but they will also eat insect larvae, small crustaceans, and insects. Stocking rate 600-1,000 per surface acre.

GRASS CARP
The GrassCarp is a plant-eating fish that is native to China and Russia. It can grow up to 60 pounds and live 15-20 years. Although it is a relative of the common Carp, it neither acts nor looks like the common Carp. The Grass Carp is occasionally caught on hook and line and some anglers think it tastes better than the common Carp. Grass carp grow rapidly and prefer to feed on rooted vegetation, although after five years of age, both their growth rate and their effectiveness at controlling aquatic plants slow considerably. Stocking rate 10-12 per surface acre.

FATHEAD MINNOWS - stocking rate 3,000 -5,000/ 12-20 lbs. per surface acre

2020 FARM SERVICES DIRECTORY

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Please keep this directory with your telephone book.

AGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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1620 S. Galena Avenue, Freeport.....(815) 235-2141 Ext. 2

STEPHENSON SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT AND NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
1620 S. Galena Avenue, Freeport.....(815) 235-2141 Ext. 3

IL DIVISION OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Region 1 NWIL Office, Morrison ..... (815) 772-4708
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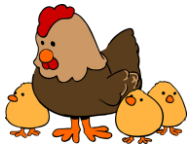

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