

Reporter

ST. CHARLES COUNTY

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

SWCD Board Supervisor Elections Approaching

Agricultural producers in the county who are actively participating in the cost-share program are eligible to run for a position on the Board of Supervisors for the Soil and Water Conservation District. Two positions are up for election this year: Area 2 (northwest portion of the county, and Area 4 (eastern section of the county). The positions are currently held by Jim Petersen (Area 2) and Adam Bonderer (Area 4).

Duties for board supervisors include approving cost-share plans, signing cost-share contracts, and managing district employees and operations.

Nominations are being sought for the election which will take place in the fall. Interested parties should contact the St. Charles County SWCD at 636-922-2833, ext. 3.

Jerry Busch Retires from NRCS



See [Jerry](#), pg. 3

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@St. Charles County Soil and Water
Conservation District

Fourth Graders Illustrate the Importance of Habitats for Contest

The Soil and Water Conservation District awarded five cash prizes to fourth graders in St. Charles County for the annual conservation poster contest. At the bottom pictured left to right are: Aisyah Aquina of Hawthorn Elementary School who won the over all grand prize. Maria Schwartz of St. Charles Borromeo Catholic School (1st place); Kaitlyn Hupe of Hawthorn Elementary School (2nd place); and there was a tie for third place: Grayson Marshall of Saint Theodore Catholic School and Liam Gallagher of St. Charles Borromeo Catholic School.

The contest, sponsored nationally by the National Association of Conservation Districts, encourages children to recognize the importance of habitats by learning more about habitat resources and habitat related issues such as habitat destruction. This year's theme "Home is Where the Habitat Is" focused on a few key conservation messages:

- Biodiversity is a vital element of habitat conservation.
- Healthy habitats provide valuable services to animals, plants, and humans such as pollination, nutrient cycling, soil formation, and climate regulation.

St. Charles County Soil and Water Conservation District had a total of 70 fourth grade students participate in this year's contest and the panel of judges had some tough decisions to make. On behalf of St. Charles County SWCD, we want to thank the students, teachers, and parents who participated in this year's contest! We can't wait to see what next year brings. Next year's theme will be released on January 1, 2026.

Grand Prize



June: Men's Preventative Care Month

Starting small is one of the best things you can do for your overall health. Small steps and wise decisions can make a big difference in your daily health. Check out the tips and resources provided by *Anthem* for ways to feel more confident in making those decisions.

Schedule regular preventative exams with your primary care provider.

As you get older, the risk of developing health conditions or diseases increases. Scheduling annual exams with your healthcare provider is the best way to stay on top of screenings that may detect early signs and symptoms.

Be familiar with your mental health.

Feeling down time to time is normal, but long-term feelings of depression should not be ignored. Mental health is as important as physical health, if you feel like you need to talk to someone, seek medical advice from a healthcare provider. There are also free resources out there for farmers or rural families.

Choose to eat healthy foods.

Making healthy decisions about what you are eating may reduce your risk of obesity, heart disease, diabetes and many other healthy conditions. Eat a diet filled with a variety of food and limit processed foods.

Make decisions that can improve your overall health.

Getting at least 30 minutes of exercise every day, limiting alcohol, avoiding smoking managing stress can help improve your overall health.

End of the Fiscal Year Results

The St. Charles County SWCD board and staff would like to express their most sincere thanks to all the landowners, contractors and vendors who have helped contribute to this year's cost-share.

June 30th marks the end of the Soil and Water fiscal year and the district has completed \$20,338.29 in payments on conservation practices on county farms. The majority of the work has been done on cover crop and grassed waterway practices.

Call the district office at 636-922-2833, ext. 3 if you would like to learn more about agricultural conservation systems for your land.



This is a grassed waterway that was completed in St. Charles County.

**St. Charles County
Soil & Water Conservation District**
330 Interstate Dr.
Wentzville, Mo., 63385
636-922-2833, ext. 3

The Reporter Newsletter is published by the St. Charles County Soil & Water Conservation District quarterly, in March, June, September and December.

**Editor—Theresa Strunk
Writer—Alexandria Hecht**

For advertising information or to submit news, call the district at 636-922-2833, ext. 3.

The district is supervised by a board of supervisors made up of farmers from St. Charles County and a University of Missouri Extension representative:

Board of Supervisors

Adam Bonderer, Chairman
Jim Petersen, Vice-Chairman
Eli Isele, Secretary
Bob Feise, Treasurer
Bruce Siem, Member

SWCD Personnel

Theresa Strunk, Manager
Charlie Perkins, Technician
Alexandria Hecht, Info/Ed Specialist

NRCS Personnel

Kevin Barber, District Conservationist
Liz Hawkins, Resource Conservationist

The mission of the Soil & Water Conservation District is to conserve the soil and water resources of the county; promote the wise use of these resources through education; protect residents from undue hardship caused by erosion, sedimentation and flooding; protect the agricultural soil base to ensure continued productivity; and preserve the quality of water and water courses within the county.

Practice Spotlight: Field Borders

Field borders provide erosion control by slowing down water running off of fields and trapping sediment and pollutants. This helps protect water quality and provides a natural wildlife habitat. This cost-share practice provides a one-time out of production incentive not to exceed \$780 per acre. Other components that are eligible for reimbursement of the practice are in addition to the critical area seeding and buffer extension incentive. Call the district office at 636-922-2833, ext. 3 if you would like to learn more.

St. Charles County Stream Care Guide is Online

The St. Charles County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) worked with City of Wentzville Stormwater staff to produce a new county-wide Stream Care Guide. The guide is sponsored by the SWCD, the City of Wentzville and St. Charles County government.

This guide highlights the watersheds we live in and the activities within our watersheds that can harm water quality. It explains the functions of a stream and the natural and human influences that affect stream ecosystem changes. St. Charles County has made it available online to all residents. You can visit the county website's **Stormwater Management and Watercourse Protection** page to link to the new Stream Care Guide, or scan the QR code on the right.



To help the community better understand our impact on waterways, landscaping and stream stabilization tips, St. Charles County—in partnership with the City of Wentzville and the St. Charles County Soil & Water Conservation District—has created a unique and engaging Stream Care Guide. In this guide, residents will find out how they can:

- Prevent or minimize erosion issues.
- Avoid flooding impacts.
- Protect property values.
- Preserve water quality.
- Contribute to the survival of fish and wildlife.

As stewards of the two mightiest rivers on the North American continent, everything we do has the potential to affect our county's tourism, flooding, tax dollars, and the beauty of life's most important natural resource: water.

Scan the QR code with your phone's camera to begin reading the Stream Care Guide to learn more about the county's local waterways and what you can do to protect them and your property.



Jerry, from pg. 1

NRCS Area Technician Jerry Busch is trading his commute to the office for work on the family farm, having taken retirement from the Natural Resources Conservation Service in May.

Jerry began his career with the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in April of 1987, and transitioned to the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) program in the fall that same year. By 2002, he had accepted a position with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), where he remained for the next 23 years. In all, Jerry served in natural resource conservation positions for 38 years.

During his long career, Jerry has had the opportunity to work with multiple agencies and numerous public servants to design and implement hundreds of conservation practices and systems on thousands of acres of land in multiple Missouri counties. He retired as an Area Technician serving a five county area, which included St. Louis, St. Charles, Franklin, Jefferson and Washington counties.

"The work we've done within those five counties has varied because the topography, soils and land uses within them differ considerably," he said. "But for the most part, I've helped landowners develop conservation systems that save soil, protect water, and build the resiliency of their farms." Those practices include miles of grassed waterways and terrace systems, as well as carefully designed livestock watering systems and animal waste facilities.

Besides the five counties mentioned, Jerry accepted many details to other areas where emergency work was undertaken, including details to the Missouri bootheel in 2008 and 2011 for the

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program, to St. Genevieve for special projects, and to the city of New Orleans following the Hurricane Katrina disaster.

Not only has Jerry worked with hundreds of farm families over the years, sometimes working with 2 and 3 generations of farmers in one family; but has also positively touched the lives of multiple co-workers across different agencies. Jerry trained interns for NRCS, and technicians for the SWCD. With his own personal background in farming, and his educational and professional experience, he became a leader and a teacher in the world of agricultural conservation. With a kind demeanor and loads of patience, Jerry taught other employees how to talk to farmers, conduct land surveys and design conservation practices.

Jerry is the son of John and (the late) Marie Busch. The family's farm is south of Washington and is operated full-time by two of Jerry's brothers, along with their dad, John. Jerry has joined them full-time on the farm in his retirement. They raise hogs and cattle, as well as beans, corn, wheat and hay. In his free time, he enjoys being with family and friends, and perhaps doing a little deer hunting in the fall.

When asked about his best memories or accomplishments with NRCS, Jerry replied that the best part had to be working with farmers. "I really enjoyed working with landowners," he said "and helping them figure out the best way to work the land to their benefit while protecting natural resources."

He certainly was successful at that! Best wishes in retirement, Jerry, and a sincere *Thank You* for all your hard work!



St. Charles County Bike– Walk Network is in the Works

St. Charles County is working closely with municipalities such as Wentzville, Lake St. Louis, and O'Fallon to implement a connected network of low-stress facilities for cyclists and pedestrians. As streets and roads are redone, the County is working

Bike infrastructure helps build a sense of community. Evidence is strong that places where the built environment fosters social connection have higher levels of civic engagement and community resilience. Infrastructure that connects people to their community instead of simply driving through it fosters social connections.

with MoDOT and municipalities to add multimodal paths, in order to implement the County's Gateway Bike Plan. Multi-use paths are being implemented alongside new roadways that are being constructed as the County experiences rapid growth. Plans can be found at: <https://www.sccmo.org/230/bicycle-and-pedestrian-travel>.

To better define the county's existing bike infrastructure, new signs and pavement markings will be added to create a formal network that connects municipalities, and connects users to home, work, school, shopping centers, and local parks.

The work has been spearheaded by St. Charles County Bike-

Ped Coordinator Sara Nelson. The project is funded in part by a Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) grant from East-West Gateway. The plan includes signage improvements and placement of existing sidewalk with new 10 ft-wide multi-use path and intersection improvements including new crosswalk striping and mid-block crossings. The project will create three multi-use networks in St. Charles County that span 18 miles.

This project will be done in multiple phases and the final design is projected to be completed in late summer, early fall of 2025. Construction is planned to begin in Winter of 2025 and continue into the Spring 2026.



Saint Charles Community College: Cultivating Community Through Food and Agriculture



The Future of Agriculture is contained in this 320sq. ft. shipping container on SCC's campus.

Saint Charles Community College (SCC), a vital educational resource for St. Charles County, demonstrates a forward-thinking approach to experimental learning through its Field to Table Institute at the Dardenne Creek Campus. Established in 2019, this unique institute strategically integrates culinary arts, agriculture and healthcare that emphasizes

the link between food, health and quality of life.

The Dardenne Creek Campus features repurposed agricultural fields, a dedicated facility for equipment and processing student's harvest, and a greenhouse that serves as a classroom and a dynamic laboratory for plant science and off-season crop cultivation. A significant advancement for the program is the integration of the Freight Farm, a state-of-the-art hydroponic vertical farm housed within a 320-square-foot-shipping container. This compact yet highly productive urban farming unit, made possible in part by \$4 million funding awarded in MoExcels from the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development fiscal year 2025 budget, possesses the capacity to yield the same amount of produce as a three-acre field.

Powered by Farmhand Software, the Freight Farm offers high-tech and precise environmental control over light, water, and climate. SCC's Freight Farm currently operates on a water-recycling system with automated 20-minute watering cycles across its 88 plant panels. The strategic use of red and blue LED lighting allows the lettuce that is being planted to grow and develop at a 6 week growth life cycle. Under the current management of Brian Manhardt, Director of Field to Table Institute, the Freight Farm presents significant opportunities for students engagement and potential internship roles.

Mr. Manhardt emphasizes the valuable hands-on experience the Freight Farm provides to students,

from initial seed planting to harvesting fresh, flavorful ingredients for their culinary studies. The quick six-week growth cycle within the environmental controlled farm also help with exploration of cultivation techniques such as intercropping like we see in traditional farming.

Extending beyond the campus, the Field to Table Institute actively engages with the local community through initiatives like student participation in farmers' markets. "This provides invaluable networking opportunities and direct experience in showcasing and working with their products", states Manhardt. Moreover, the Freight Farm significantly contributes to the sustainability of SCC's food operations by supplying fresh, locally grown produce to campus dining services.

The excitement for agriculture and sustainability radiated by Brian Manhardt is evident throughout the program. Complementing the Freight Farm, the broader agriculture program at SCC, coordinated by Joey Blackburn, offers a diverse range of hands-on projects. Students actively engage in cross-pollination experiments in the greenhouse, conduct population density studies with various crops in the outdoor fields, and participate in Ag Club's plant sale. Innovative learning extends to cultivating mushrooms, investigating soil biology through unique methods such as burying underwear to gauge microbial activity , and inviting professionals in the field to teach specialized topics and allowing students to ask direct questions and gain hands-on experience.

The integration of the Freight Farm at St. Charles Community College, alongside the dynamic initiatives within the Field to Table Institute and the broader agriculture program, underscores the institution's commitment to providing students with cutting-edge, experimental learning opportunities in sustainable agriculture and food systems. The innovative approach not only benefits the students and the college but also strengthens its role as a valuable resource for the St. Charles County community.



Above: Dave Skaer, retired USDA soil scientist, and Charlie Perkins from St. Charles SWCD give SCC students first look at soil horizons, hands-on soil texture testing, and discussion about soil health.

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Local Team to Represent Missouri at International Envirothon

The Envirothon team from Parkway North High School in St. Louis County will represent Missouri in this year's international Envirothon Competition to be held in Calgary, Alberta, Canada at the end of July. The same team took first place at the St. Louis Regional Envirothon on April 3rd. Parkway North is preparing to compete alongside other US states, and Canadian and Chinese provinces.

The Parkway North High School team consists of (left to right) Miles Hines, Amelia Shoe, Matt Andrews, Daphne Nuestro, and Norah Huntebrinker.

This annual high school environmental competition is the outcome of an ongoing educational experience that includes regional, state and provincial competitions. The Parkway North team finished first among 14 Missouri teams who competed in the state event this May in Williamsburg, Missouri. This year's theme is Roots and Resiliency: Fostering Forest Stewardship in a Canopy of Change. Congratulations and good luck in Canada!



Parkway North High School Team— 1st Place MO Envirothon



Parkway South High School Team— 2nd Place MO Envirothon



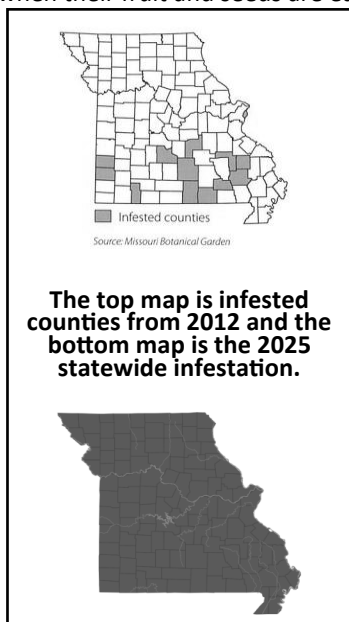
Lindbergh High School Team— 3rd Place MO Envirothon

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Invasive Species Spotlight: Callery Pear

Callery pear, Bradford pear, Aristocrat pear, Cleveland select pear, Autumn blaze, Whitehouse pear: whatever you call it, it's bad news. If you're from St. Charles County, you must have driven down highway 61 and/or highway 364 and noticed white, flowering masses along the sides of the highways happening in early Spring. Those are Callery pear trees.

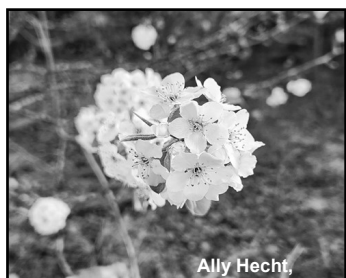
This deciduous tree is native to China and was brought to the U.S. in 1917. It was brought over with intention to help improve disease resistance (MDC). During the 1950's, the Callery pear was planted as an ornamental. The tree has been planted in urban, suburban, and rural yards, office and apartment complexes, malls, streets, and even college campuses. Since then, many other cultivars were developed. Callery pear trees include 26 cultivars. Individual cultivars are considered self-sterile, but different cultivars cross-pollinate and produce fruits and viable seeds if planted near each other. These hybrid trees are spread by birds and other wildlife when their fruit and seeds are eaten.



Once the Callery pear trees started to spread, it was quickly noted of their weak structures. The limbs often break from Missouri winds, snow, and ice. Within the past several years, the focus has shifted to its escape from cultivation (MDC). Callery pear is well adapted to a variety of environmental conditions such as drought, heat, pollution, and including Missouri clay soils. The trees tend to grow best in full sun, but do tolerate partial shade.

They are often seen growing in clusters in fields, parks, right-of-ways, and other open areas. They can even be established in the understory of forests and woodlands. The tree

grows very rapidly and flowers at a young age and produces lots of seeds. The seeds spread very quickly and often form dense thickets within several years and outcompete native plants. In forests settings, it leafs out earlier than native trees and it shades out spring wildflowers not allowing them to grow.



The tree grows similar to a pyramid or like a column while young, but as the tree ages it broadens and reaches heights of 30-50 feet. The bark is typically light gray. The leaves are simple and oval and grow 2 inches to 3 inches wide. The cultivar is without thorns, but as the plant has crossed with the other cultivars

thorns may develop. In late March and April, you can find clusters of 5-petaled, white flowers emerge. Round, small olive-brown fruits appear from May to July and in the fall the glossy dark green leaves turn a deep reddish-purple.

Control

In areas with light infestation, remove small trees by hand when the soil is moist. When you are removing small trees make special care to remove the entire root. When the foliage is a little thicker, it's recommended to spray with a 2 to 5 percent systemic herbicide solution of glyphosate; or triclopyr can be utilized in mid to late summer.

Medium to large trees should be cut down and stumps treated immediately with herbicide solutions. It's important to remember that herbicide uptake is most successful in late winter/early spring. The trees have a high potential for re-sprouting, so it's common that treatments will be required for several years.

Removing Callery Pear and planting alternative native trees instead is a must to help stop the invasive patterns from happening. Some recommended, native look-alike trees that can be planted are American plum, Flowering dogwood, Eastern redbud, Hawthorn, and Serviceberry.

There are many local events throughout the year that help plant native trees and even help remove invasive species. Participating in these events are helpful in tackling the state-wide problem of Callery pear invasiveness. One of the more popular programs hosted by the Missouri Invasive Plant Council is called "Pear Buyback Program" and during certain periods of the year, homeowners are encouraged to cut down one or more Callery pear trees and receive one free, non-invasive tree.. If you have concerns about Callery pear trees on public property, contact the most relevant agency to voice your concerns (i.e. MODOT, the county road department, the city, etc.).

Summary

The Callery pear, including various cultivars like Bradford and Aristocrat. Has become a significant

invasive species in areas like St. Charles County after its introduction from China as an ornamental tree. Initially favored for its rapid growth and adaptability, it has since escaped cultivation, forming dense thickets that out-compete native vegetation and even alter forest understories by shading out wildflowers. Its structural weakness leads to limb breakage and its prolific seed production through cross-pollination and animal dispersal exacerbates its spread.

Controlling Callery pear infestations requires varied approaches depending on the size of the trees, ranging from manual removal of seedlings to herbicide application on larger specimens with stump treatment crucial to prevent re-sprouting. Due to the persistent seed bank, ongoing management is often necessary. A key long-term solution involves replacing removed Callery Pear trees with native alternatives. Community initiatives like native tree planting events and the "Pear Buyback Program" offer valuable opportunities for public participation in combating this invasive species.



2025 Missouri Birding Challenge Results

The last quarterly newsletter we wrote about the 2025 Missouri Birding Challenge sponsored by Missouri Department of Conservation and their partnership with U.S. Fish and Wildlife, the Missouri River Bird Observatory, and the Missouri Conservation Confederation Heritage Foundation. Well here are the results:

The challenge was a huge success! The challenge brought in more than 630 participants (new and experienced birders) with over 441 teams formed. Between the dates of May 1 and May 15th, the teams logged a total of 160,600 individual birds of more than 300 bird species in 95 Missouri counties.

As a refresher, the challenge hosted 5 categories, and all the categories' teams were entered into drawings for prizes. The five categories were Nestling category, Fledgling category, Backyard Birder category, Dabbler category, and Competitive Coot category. A single team was left with bragging rights; they logged the most species. They logged a total of 244 species all across the state. There were even prizes for the Best Team Name. The Best Team Name winner was awarded to A Nested Development. The runners

up were Fellowship of the Wing, Wingardium Birdiosa, and I'd Like to Speak to the Tanager.

The funds raised through the challenge registration will support migratory bird research using the Motus Wildlife Tracking System in Missouri and beyond. The challenge was a great opportunity for community involvement and welcoming new birders to get involved.

New birder, Stephen Hecht reflects on the challenge, "I went into the challenge honestly not knowing any types of bird calls or identification to going full steam ahead. I went on multiple birding excursions, transforming our back yard into a bird's oasis by supplying a buffet of quality bird food, meal worms, and fresh water. I now enjoy dinner outside while watching my daily visitors of chickadees, tufted titmouse and downy woodpeckers. I would never have known how rewarding birdwatching can be. I hope that MDC continues the challenge next year."



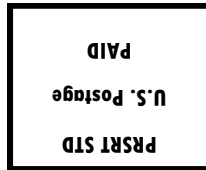
Women in Agriculture presents 30th anniversary event located in Macon, Missouri. This year's theme is *Rooted in Tradition*.

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Wentzville, MO 63385

330 Interstate Drive



Reporter

Learning About Soil and Water is Fun!

St. Charles County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) has been busy with outreach the past few months. St. Charles City-Country Libraries hosted St. Charles County SWCD at multiple locations through the months of April and May.

In the month of April, Information and Education Specialist, Ally Hecht, focused on watersheds by presenting the Enviroscope. The Enviroscope is a 3-D model of a watershed that shows water pollution and prevention through shared responsibility. The demonstration introduces water pollution concepts and prevention that is appropriate for all ages.

Throughout the month of May, Ally introduced a fun activity called Painting With Soils and it was a huge hit with the children. The children



were amazed when learning about the different colors of soil could be and what causes the different colors. But, their favorite part was actually playing and painting with the soils. All of the soils the children used were locally sourced in Missouri.

Overall, SWCD visited four different libraries in St. Charles County and taught over 100 children and adults on soil and water concepts. St. Charles County SWCD plans on doing more fun, educational presentations with the library in the 2026 year. Please keep an eye out on the St. Charles County SWCD's Facebook for more information! Following us on Facebook allows you to see

what is going on in St. Charles County when it comes to soil and water health.