

Bobber Watchin'

Steuben County Lakes Council, Inc.

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www.lakescouncil.org

Summer 2026

S●C●L●C



**STEBEN
COUNTY
LAKES
COUNCIL**

PRESIDENT'S LIVE BOX

By Karen DeForest

Steuben County Lakes Council President

We welcome everyone to another summer back to our beautiful lakes in Steuben County. After 54 years of going strong, we have been working on our bylaws, restructuring our board, creating policies and procedures, along with many other items that we do here at SCLC. We have already completed the first set of water quality tests for this year. Those results will be on the website soon.

In January, SCLC hired a new office manager, Laura Buell. She has spent most of her life living in and around Steuben County. As an explorer at heart, Laura looks forward to helping us protect the natural resources of Steuben County that she has spent her life enjoying. We have seen what an asset she is to our organization.

We are so blessed in this county for our waterways, but they are imperiled due to lack of common-sense safeguards. This is also being addressed. The council is committed to working with local and state governments to enact common-sense environmental-friendly solutions.

This work cannot be done without you. Our membership is the driving force behind this progress. We ask that you, our members, talk to your friends and neighbors. Let them know about our Lakes Council and what we do to protect our waterways. We need your help to keep educating and growing. If we do not stand up to protect our 101 lakes, who will? Visit our website to view our water testing results for the past years.

Have a safe summer and rest of the year!

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SCLC OFFICERS 2026

- President – Karen DeForest
- President-Elect – Gus Reed
- Vice President-Water Quality – Bill Schmidt
- Secretary – Jim Parsell
- Treasurer – Jim Shiffler
- Assistant to the Treasurer – Gary VandenElst
- Government Committee Advisor – Susan Catterall
- Membership Committee Advisor – Vickie Lamb
- Public Relations Committee Advisor – Steve Schroeder
- Member-at-Large – Mel Hathaway
- Member-at-Large – Max Robison

ANNUAL MEETING NOTIFICATION

**A CORDIAL INVITATION
TO THE PUBLIC**

**STEBEN COUNTY LAKES COUNCIL
INVITES YOU**

SATURDAY, AUGUST 1, 2026

**STEBEN COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE
903 S WAYNE ST
ANGOLA, IN**

BREAKFAST PROVIDED AT 8:00 A.M.

BUSINESS MEETING AT 8:30 A.M.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

Sarah Powers

***Clinical Assistant Professor, Indiana University
O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs***

JOIN US AND SHARE YOUR CONCERNS

Conservation in Action

by Janel Meyer, SWCD Administrative Coordinator

The Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is wrapping up its 2024 Watershed Land Treatment Grants for the Upper St. Joseph River Watershed – Ohio (which includes the West Branch of the St. Joseph River, Nettle Creek, and Fish Creek sub-watersheds) and the Pigeon Creek Watershed. These grants were awarded to the Steuben County SWCD by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Lake and River Enhancement (LARE) Grant program.



The goal of the LARE program is to protect and enhance aquatic habitat for fish and wildlife, and to ensure the continued viability of Indiana’s publicly accessible lakes and streams for multiple uses. This is accomplished through measures that reduce non-point sediment and nutrient pollution of surface waters to a level that meets or surpasses state water quality standards.

Our grants provided cost-share assistance for a variety of conservation practices including forage and biomass plantings, a grade stabilization structure, livestock practices (i.e. fencing), streambank and shoreline protection, tree plantings, and wildlife habitat/pollinator plantings. Two projects deserving special recognition

include the grade stabilization structure + streambank & shoreline protection; the other, a 19-acre wildlife habitat/pollinator planting.

The grade stabilization structure + streambank and shoreline protection was a partnership with ACRES Land Trust, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Steuben County SWCD to reduce erosion and improve water quality in Ball Lake. We were contacted by ACRES when they observed significant erosion within a channel easement they own on Ball Lake. The

ACRES Land Trust Ball Lake Easement before grade stabilization construction
Photo courtesy of Kent Tracey, NRCS Engineering Technician

channel is an unnamed tributary that flows through Robb Hidden Canyon Preserve, a steep-sided ravine. Much of the soils in the watershed is highly erosive, and while land use/agricultural practices have helped minimize erosion in the uplands, the streams themselves cut deeply into these soils. Consequently, significant amounts of erosion occur along stream banks during periods of high flow. Higher stream flow rates increase sediment loading. A grade stabilization structure was designed and constructed to reduce stormwater runoff peaks, reducing streambank erosion. ACRES removed the invasive species along the channel banks and replaced them with native vegetation for bank stabilization, improved/enhanced habitat, and aesthetics.

Joanna Stebing, Conservation Manager for ACRES Land Trust, reported a neighbor located adjacent to the channel is very pleased with the work. The neighbor believes that, given the recent heavy rainfall, significantly more damage would have occurred without the benefits provided by the structure.



ACRES Land Trust Ball Lake Easement during grade stabilization construction
Photo courtesy of Kent Tracey, NRCS Engineering Technician

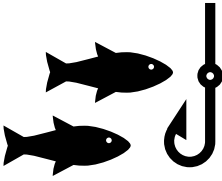
The 19.0-acre wildlife habitat/pollinator planting was a partnership with the Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy (CLTLC), the IDNR (Grasslands for Gamebirds and Songbirds Northeast Indiana Field Crew), and the Steuben County SWCD to restore a native prairie ecosystem within the South Bridge Nature Preserve. South Bridge Preserve, acquired by the CLTLC in 2024, is a retired agricultural field on the south side of Clear Lake that creates a natural “bridge” connecting their Woodland Conservation Easement and two tree farms to the west. Their property restoration goals include soil remediation, improved habitat for pollinators and migratory birds, improved species diversity, and nutrient retention. The planting was designed with a mix of grasses, sedges, forbs, and legumes.



We would also like to share that in January, we launched a new District Cost-Share program to help Steuben County residents offset the costs of septic system maintenance, repairs, and replacements. Unfortunately, septic systems are one of the most overlooked parts of landowners’ properties. It quietly manages all the wastewater from a home. By offering cost-share assistance to help with septic system upkeep and replacement when needed, we can reduce nutrient loading, protect public health, and maintain the water quality our community depends on.

Contact our office at 260/665-3211, ext. 3 or email steubenswcd@gmail.com if you would like information about this program.

Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy (CLTLC) South Bridge Nature Preserve during the seeding of the native prairie ecosystem seed mix.
Photo courtesy of Caroline Barth, CLTLC Executive Director



Free Fishing Day

by Laura Buell, SCLC Office Manager

A few times every year, the DNR declares free fishing days in Indiana. On these days, Indiana residents are not required to have a fishing license. Fishing for trout or salmon? Neither require stamps on free fishing days. All other fishing rules apply (i.e. seasons, bag and size limits). The final free fishing day of the year is scheduled for **September 26, 2026**.

Education Key to SCLC Mission

by Laura Buell, SCLC Office Manager

Education is at the heart of SCLC's mission. By investing in students, supporting local school programs, sharing trusted resources, and creating opportunities for members to learn from one another, SCLC helps build a stronger future for Steuben County's lakes and streams.

Each year, SCLC supports a scholarship for a Steuben County property owner's family member pursuing studies in environmental science, biology, or a related field. This year, that scholarship was renamed in honor of the late Pete Hippensteel, a co-founder of SCLC and Tri-State University professor. This scholarship recognizes his lasting commitment to education and conservation. SCLC also helps inspire the next generation of lake stewards by funding study materials for local students during the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District's annual Stewardship Week.

Educational opportunities are available for our members as well. SCLC provides admission for two members to attend the annual Indiana Lakes Management Society (ILMS) conference, and through our ILMS membership, board members and staff can participate in additional educational programs throughout the year, including Zoom events.

For lake associations and the public, SCLC maintains a variety of educational materials that can support meetings, projects, and outreach efforts. If your group is looking for helpful resources, our office may be able to assist.

SCLC board meetings are another important place for education in action. Representatives from lakes across the county along with general members and public guests come together to exchange ideas, share observations, and learn from one another's experiences. Those conversations help all of us become better stewards of our waters – today and for the future!

Scholarship Recipient Update

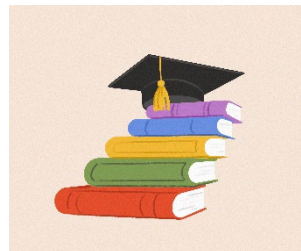
by Luke Campbell, Student at Northern Michigan University

My year at Northern Michigan University was one of the most challenging and rewarding years of my college career. As an Environmental Science major pursuing a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) certificate, I spent countless hours developing skills in GIS, remote sensing, environmental policy, statistics, and environmental research. Through projects involving wetland restoration, shoreline management, and spatial analysis, I gained hands-on experience using ArcGIS Pro and learned how science, technology, and conservation work together to solve real-world environmental problems. These experiences strengthened my understanding of natural resource management and helped prepare me for a future career in the environmental field.

Outside the classroom, I continued to grow as a leader and advocate for conservation. Serving as President of the Northern Michigan University Ducks Unlimited chapter and Vice President of Trout Unlimited allowed me to organize events, fundraisers, and meetings while working with fellow students who share a passion for the outdoors. These leadership roles taught me valuable lessons in communication, teamwork, and responsibility while helping me make a positive impact on conservation efforts both on campus and in the community. I also explored professional opportunities through internships, job applications, and networking, gaining a clearer vision of where I want my career to go after graduation.

Beyond academics and leadership, some of my most memorable moments came outdoors. Whether it was fly fishing for steelhead or kayaking up the river, time on the water provided balance during a busy year and reminded me why I chose to study environmental science. Looking back, this year was filled with growth, new experiences, and accomplishments that challenged me to become a stronger student, leader, and conservationist.

Thank you Scholarship Contributors!



2026 SCHOLARSHIP CONTRIBUTORS

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 Jack & Norene Arnold
 Warren & Barb Barnes
 Larry Bassett
 Donald & Beth
 Bieberich
 Dwight & Carol
 Bieberich
 David & Stacy Bowman
 Michael Burkhalter
 Mark & Dawn
 Christman
 Larry & Joan Cimino
 Coldwell Banker (Craig
 Walker & Barb
 Hendrick)
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 William Cupp
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 Giannelli
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 Kevin & Christine
 Waden
 Jeffery & Jana Walborn
 Doug & Fran Weidner
 Todd & Cynthia
 Wellman
 David & Heather Willis
 David & Diann Willits
 Steve & Jane Wurth
 John & Dawn Wysong

HOW DO WE MEASURE WATER QUALITY?

Water quality parameters are measurements used to assess the condition of water and its suitability for various uses.

- **Turbidity**

Turbidity is the amount of suspended particles in water. High turbidity is harmful to many aquatic organisms and indicates excessive erosion in the watershed.

- **Conductivity**

Conductivity reflects the amount of salts dissolved in water. While some salt is beneficial, high levels are harmful. An increase in conductivity may indicate pollution, such as agricultural runoff.

- **pH**

pH is a measure of hydrogen ion concentration and indicates the relative acidity or alkalinity of water. pH significantly higher or lower than 7 is harmful to most aquatic life. pH measurements outside of a certain range may indicate problems like eutrophication (excessive algae growth).

- **Metals**

Metals are elements present in all waterbodies, with natural concentrations corresponding to local geology. All metals can be toxic at high concentrations, and metal toxicity is harmful to aquatic organisms. Pollution from sources like mines and industry can contribute to higher metal levels.

- **Dissolved oxygen**

Oxygen is necessary for all life. If dissolved oxygen levels drop below 5.0 mg/l, aquatic life is put under stress. Dissolved oxygen is reduced when excessive bacterial growth uses up the available oxygen.

- **Temperature**

Temperature influences other water chemistry parameters such as dissolved oxygen levels, pH, and nutrient cycling. It also regulates many aquatic organism functions including growth, reproduction, and development.

- **Nutrients**

Nutrients are critical to biodiversity and healthy aquatic ecosystems, but excess nutrients can lead to eutrophication and harmful algal blooms (HABs). Nutrients affect other water quality parameters like pH and turbidity. Nutrients come from point sources (i.e., wastewater) and nonpoint sources (i.e., agricultural runoff).

Learn more from the
EPA by scanning the
QR code



<https://onewater.igws.iu.edu>



A Note from the Water Quality Committee

by Bill Schmidt, SCLC Vice President – Water Quality

The Water Quality Committee would like to thank the Lakes Council membership for its continued financial support. That support allows the committee to continue the testing program which tests over 50 sites. This helps protect our lakes and streams countywide.

Homeowners like you can help conserve and protect our county's waters too. In the Spring 2026 issue of Clear Lake Conservancy's *Clear Thinking*, we are reminded to practice conservation at home when possible. Here's a recap of how you can make a difference:

Grass Management

- ✓ Leave a buffer strip between the lawn and lake. This provides a filter for lawn runoff.
- ✓ Do not put grass clippings or leaves into the water. When these items break down, they remove oxygen from the water. They also serve as a source of phosphate for the water.

Fertilizer

- ✓ Pet droppings are not fertilizer. Keeping droppings out of the lake lessens the phosphate and *E.coli* contamination of the water.
- ✓ When self-applying fertilizer, use zero (0) phosphate fertilizer. On the fertilizer bag, find where phosphate is listed and make sure it says zero. However, if the lawn is new, disregard this. New lawns require phosphate for root development. For commercial applications, request zero phosphate fertilizer. Most commercial applicators can do this.

Landscaping

- ✓ Select deeply rooted native plants. This helps in filtering runoff.
- ✓ Plant barriers to discourage geese. This will help to keep geese away from your property, leaving your lawn free of droppings.

Thanks again to Clear Lake Conservancy for these helpful ideas.

You can access the history and current water quality data on the Steuben County Lakes Council website (lakescouncil.org). You will find a link to view reports for water quality testing underneath "Learn About Us."

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Donald & Janet
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 Aquatic Enhancement &
 Survey
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 Jack & Norene Arnold
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 Ball Lake Association
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 Caroline Barth
 Mary Ann Barth
 Bob & Lora Barton
 Larry Bassett
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 Lake James Association
 Lake Pleasant Association
 Lake Pleasant Marine,
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 David & Heather Willis
 David & Diann Willits
 Doran & Lois Wilson
 Steve & Sarah
 Wolodkiewicz
 Fred J. Wooley
 John & Dawn Wysong
 Amy Young

Thank you to all who contributed to the
 Water Quality Testing Program!

Indiana Wetlands – How Do They Serve Us?

by Kris Thomas, MS4 Coordinator/Engineering Assistant, City of Angola

There are many laws protecting water quality. All are important since water quality concerns are many, including safe drinking water and safe water for recreation. The MS4 program is concerned with protecting water quality through laws addressing the discharge of storm water to local waterways. When dealing with water quality issues, the important role wetlands play in improving water quality must not be overlooked. Here are a few facts that may reinforce your belief that wetlands are critical to water quality, as well as to other essential functions:

1. Indiana has lost nearly 85% of its wetlands. Wetlands covered 25% of the total area of Indiana in the early 1700s. Wetlands now cover less than 4% of Indiana. These remaining wetlands are protected under both federal and state laws.
2. Only 10-20% of Indiana's wetlands are protected by the Federal government. Federal regulations only protect those wetlands that are connected by surface waters to Indiana's waterways. These wetlands are considered Waters of the US, commonly known as "WOTUS".
3. The remaining 80-90% of Indiana's wetlands are protected by the state. Indiana currently protects the remaining wetlands that are not protected under federal law. These wetlands are not protected under federal law because they are not connected to WOTUS by surface water. These wetlands are known as "isolated" wetlands, and regulatory rollbacks within Indiana are threatening these vital natural features.
4. Wetlands provide substantial benefits:
 - **Water Quality** – Wetlands improve water quality by storing and filtering contaminants including nutrients, heavy metals, and sediments. Wetlands trap and hold them allowing the contaminants to settle out. Wetland plants reuse certain nutrients that might otherwise cause algae blooms.

- **Flood Control** – Wetlands store enormous amounts of water, slow down the flow of surface water during heavy rain, and allow for slower discharges over a longer period. This substantially reduces the danger of flooding when water runoff is at peak level, thereby also reducing the risk of property damage.
- **Support of Animals and Plants** – A variety of plants and animals depend on wetlands for survival. More than 120 wetland plants and more than 60 animal species dependent on wetlands are endangered, threatened, or rare in Indiana.

Of course, there are more wetland benefits including erosion control, groundwater recharge and recreation. If you are concerned about the loss of Indiana's wetlands, consider contacting your elected officials at all levels of government. Elected officials must be made aware that you value wetlands and that you believe they must always be protected. All wetlands serve vital functions throughout our state. For more information on wetland benefits, contact the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (www.in.gov/idem/). For more information on how to protect Indiana's wetlands, contact the Hoosier Environmental Council (<https://www.hecweb.org/>).



Loon Lake Photo courtesy of Laura Buell, SCLC Office Manager

THANK YOU!**2026 BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATES****Businesses**

Angola Seed & Supply, LLC
Campbell & Fetter Bank
Farmers State Bank
First Federal Savings Bank of Angola
Hot Rod Golf Carts
Indiana Warm Floors
JMR Cottage, Inc.
J. W. Services
Larry's Lock & Safe
Lawnscape Garden Center
Pleasant Township
Priority 1 Postal Station, Inc.
Rapid Rental
Stark's Plumbing & Heating Services
Stockwell Family Farms
Wayside Furniture

Campgrounds, Condos & Parks

Jimmerson Shores Co-op
Jimmerson Woods Co-op
Russell's Point

Construction

Current Mechanical
JICI, Inc.
Star Homes

Environmental Interests

101 Lakes Trust, Inc.
Aquatic Enhancement & Survey, Inc.
Aquatic Weed Control
Blue Heron Ministries
Indiana Lakes Management Society
Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Indiana-Kentucky
Sandhill Environmental Services
Steuben County Soil & Water Conservation District

Lake & Homeowners Associations

Ball Lake Association
Big Turkey Lake Association
Clear Lake Association
Crooked Lake Association
Fox Lake Association
Hamilton Lake Association, Inc.
Indian Hills Subdivision
Jimmerson Lake Property Owners Association, Inc.
Lake Gage/Lime Lake Association
Lake George Cottagers Association
Lake James Association, Inc.
Long Lake Cottage Owners Association
Lake Pleasant Homeowners Association
North Otter Lakes Association
Pine Canyon Lake Association
Snow Lake Cottagers Association

Marinas & Watersport Supplies

The Pier Place of Angola
Lake Pleasant Marine

Professional

Andrews & Shipe LLC
Budreau Insurance & Financial Services
City of Angola
Cress Law Group
Croxtton Roe Insurance

Realtors

Coldwell Banker Real Estate (Craig Walker & Barbara Hendrick)
Re/Max Results (John & Diane Stock)

Adopt-A-Ramp: DNR Program Needs Volunteers

by Laura Buell, SCLC Office Manager

When I lived nearby the public access at Wall Lake, I thought I was doing my part to keep the environment clean by picking up trash that visitors left behind. This I did multiple times a week, and other neighbors who lived nearby would mow the parking lot a couple times a month. Every so often, the DNR or another contractor would show up to do more of the same and additional maintenance. One day, a sign stood out to me among the posted rules and regulations: ADOPT-A-RAMP. No name indicated it had been adopted, but I figured this orphan was well-cared for, so I shrugged it off thinking there was no need to do this because we were already helping to maintain the public area. This was not entirely correct!

In a recent conversation about the Adopt-A-Ramp program with Outreach Specialist Jennifer Boyce from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Fish, Wildlife and Nature Preserves, I learned that when people become official volunteers, the state's DNR program funding is directly affected. When volunteers log their time and activities, the DNR uses this data to help secure funding for projects from the federal government. Besides income received from sales of the state's hunting and fishing licenses, additional funding comes from federal grants through the Division of Fish and Wildlife. However, to secure a grant, the IDNR is required to fund a portion of the grant money itself. How do volunteers facilitate this process? In a nutshell, the recorded data from volunteers works as a credit for funding, requiring the IDNR to put up less money than the grant would have cost them without volunteer activity data.

The Adopt-A-Ramp program is an easy way to create funding for our DNR, to help protect the environment, and to build community by working to achieve a common goal. The first step you should take to get involved is to create a profile. Find the link here:

www.in.gov/dnr/fish-and-wildlife/about-us/volunteer/

Among the list of Volunteer Interests on the form, you will find "Public Access Site Volunteer." After creating a profile, you'll be able to sign up for volunteer opportunities such as Adopt-A-Ramp. You will complete a service agreement

and also be contacted by the DNR staff in our area to review the details and discuss ramps that are available for adoption. Each member of a group planning adoption will be required to complete a profile. Youth who volunteer should do this too.

Once you have adopted a ramp, you are expected to care for it three to four times throughout the year. Basic maintenance and lawncare are needed at all sites. Bigger jobs like dock repair and removing large trash, fallen limbs, or abandoned vessels may require DNR assistance; however, in many circumstances volunteers are welcome to complete such tasks if they have the means. The DNR also requests that volunteers report damage and suspicious activities.

Adopt-A-Ramp is a statewide program. Indiana has provided us with 400 public access sites – 200 of which (including Steuben County) are supervised by one individual that relies on a small crew and a lot of hired help. Site stewards like you are vital!

Our lakes aren't just filled with water – they're filled with passionate people! Take a walk at a ramp near you. What do you see that you yourself could improve? How big of a difference can you make as an individual or group? If there is no name posted indicating the ramp has been adopted, the time to act is now!



To begin or renew your membership, visit www.lakescouncil.org and click on "REGISTER & PAY ONLINE" or complete the following form:

2026 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name(s): _____ Lake: _____

Lake Property Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Preferred mailing address if different than lake address:

Mailing address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Household Membership \$45 _____

Business Membership \$50 _____

Pete Hippensteel Scholarship Donation _____

Water Quality Project Donation _____

Total Amount Enclosed _____

(Donations are tax deductible.)

Mail to **Steuben County Lakes Council, 317 S Wayne ST, STE 2A,
Angola, IN 46703**

ADDRESS CHANGES

To ensure timely delivery of mailings, please notify us of any address changes, including seasonal or winter ("snowbird") addresses.

Updates can be sent by email to office@lakescouncil.org, by phone at (260) 665-1730 or by mail using the return address on this booklet.

Thank you for your assistance.

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