



**Shawnee**

Resource, Conservation  
& Development

# **2018 Annual Report**

**Shawnee Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc.  
941 State Highway 146W  
Golconda, IL 62938**



# RC&D Council Overview

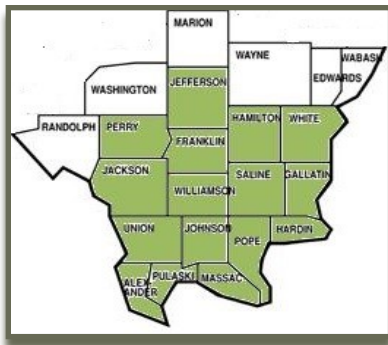
Since 1967 The Shawnee Resource Conservation & Development Area, extends across the lower 16 counties of Illinois.

In order to accomplish organizational goals, we strive to maintain strong partnerships with other organizations in our conservation area. Through these partnerships, and with the help of our talented and skilled Project Coordinators, we are able to create measurable change for the better, in Illinois.

## Mission Statement

*“The mission of this Organization is to provide local leadership and the framework required to develop and carry out a plan of action for the conservation, development and wise use of the resources of the Area.”*

### Shawnee RC&D Area



## Board of Directors

**Brandon Brown, Chairman**

**Connie Beck, Vice-Chair**

**Chris Evans, Secretary/Treasurer**

Tom Anderson

Tom Fisher

Karla Gage

Carlyn Light

Chuck Medvick

Charles Nolan

Rudy Rice

Butch Rider

Jesse Riechman

Kevin Rohling

Dale Shumaker

### Executive Director

Tabitha Ayres

### Program Director

Cathy Poshard

## Want to Get Involved?

The Shawnee RC&D is looking for dedicated professionals and enthusiastic community members to join our Council. Meetings are held four times per year in Marion, IL. Council members are responsible for helping find new projects or conservation opportunities, networking with community and government leaders to accomplish conservation goals, representing Shawnee RC&D to the general public and informing others about the work we do. For more information about joining our council, or to submit a project or grant idea, please contact: Tabitha Ayres, Executive Director, (618) 944-1736, or email [info@shawneercd.org](mailto:info@shawneercd.org).

# FROM THE DIRECTOR

Tabitha Ayres

## THANK YOU

First, I must say THANK YOU! Thank you to all our project partners, supporters, friends and community members for your continued interest in our organization. Without your continued support, we wouldn't be here.

This year has been full of changes for the RC&D, although many of them may seem invisible to those on the outside looking in.

We have welcomed several new faces to our team, accomplished and experienced conservation professionals who understand the unique ecosystems in our region. We have also had to say goodbye to long-time friends and supporters. While departures are always hard, I am so personally appreciative for all the time and effort our members give, and appreciate every moment.

This year I feel one of our major accomplishments was simply raising community awareness about our organization and the valuable work we do. Thanks to a push in our neighboring communities, I am pleased to report that the name "Shawnee R&CD" has a little more recognition in local city halls, county offices, and amongst other agencies with similar goals.



The RC&D, for years, gained its members by engaging individuals from local Soil & Water Conservation offices. We became reliant on those offices to provide a connection to the counties. However times have changed, and we have to change with them. So I am so pleased to see that our valuable, but small, agency, is getting the recognition it so rightly deserves.

My hope is that in the 2019-2020 year, the RC&D will see increased responsiveness from our communities, on the projects they are concerned with. While the RC&D project focus is always on environmental conservation, I believe we could be involved in so many wonderful projects in our local towns, either as lead partners, or simply assisting in a small portion.

To all our staff, project leaders, council members, and volunteers: Thank you! There is no way we could do what we do without you, and I cannot wait to see what we can do together in the next year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Tabitha Ayres". The signature is fluid and cursive.

## WELCOME!

Since forming in 1967, the Shawnee RC&D has been very lucky to work with some of the foremost conservation partners in the Southern Illinois region. This year, we were very pleased to add Mr. David Allen to our roster of experienced Project Coordinators. David will be overseeing the new Pope County CWPP project, along with others.

David was born in raised in Saline County, IL. He holds a B.S. in Forestry from SIU, and an M.S. in Forestry from Penn State. He has spent 5 seasons fighting fires with the forest service, and 29 years as the District Forester with IDNR at the Dixon Springs facility. He has worked in numerous states and on many federal and state grants.



We are so very glad to welcome David to our team and hope everyone will take the opportunity to meet him and learn more about the projects he is active in. Welcome David!

## WE WILL MISS YOU

This year, long-time Shawnee RC&D Council member Phyllis Mace passed on this life.

Phyllis was an active supporter of the RC&D. She worked tirelessly to further Conservation Education in her county. Her special interest, always, was childhood conservation education and ensuring that all children appreciated the natural world we live in.

As a whole, the RC&D is saddened by this loss, but sincerely thanks Phyllis for her many, many years of community support and service. Her work and efforts did not go unnoticed, and this world is a little dimmer without her in it.



# **From Orange to Green**

## ***Equipping Offenders with the Skills to Enter the New Urban Agriculture Economy***

Now currently in it's second year, this three year project proposes to create and administer a series of credentialed, non-credit agricultural training programs, to provide low-resource and military veteran offenders a complete introductory program on plant propagation and care, urban crop production and small business entrepreneurship.

Existing programs, including Master Gardener training, Preparing a New Generation of Illinois Fruit and Vegetable Farmers, and Mastering the Marketplace, are being synthesized to create a continuum of learning over an 11-month period of instruction per offender. Completion of these classes will provide a recognized standard credential to show basic competency in these fields of study, suitable for entry level to mid-level employment or ownership in production operations (both field and protected culture growing systems).

Program objectives include the following:

- To provide participant offenders a credentialed program of study to prepare them for employment or entrepreneurial opportunities in agriculture/horticulture following release.
- To reduce recidivism of participants following release.
- To educate program participants in the benefits of a healthy diet, the role fresh fruits and vegetables play in healthy lifestyles, and the marketing and outreach benefits for their individual businesses and the greater "local foods" movement.
- To connect participants, and subsequent local foods businesses, to partnering/associate organizations and employers in the metro-Chicago area to foster further market growth as well as the potential for employment following relocation.



Year One Accomplishments:

- 79% of participating offenders (POs) completed UI Master Gardener Curriculum (must earn an AVG of 80% on quizzes)



- Overall class average earned in Master Gardener Curriculum – 92.2%
- 50% of POs completed UI Beginning Farmer Training



- 1.5 acres of lawn converted to 50 individual garden plots managed by Pos
- 32% of POs completed and submitted a business plan for review by local Small Business Development
- 2,376 lbs. of produce harvested from POs' plots (June – mid Sept)
- Worked out curriculum delivery needs of POs to streamline training in subsequent years
- Became familiar with correctional facility policy and procedure for educational/vocational training
- Set up tool, supply, and equipment inventory and use system for POs based on correctional facility safety protocols
- Collected production yields from POs' plots to track individual skill levels as well as volume of produce supplied to dietary



Nathan Ryder, Project Coordinator, "Orange to Green"

### Anticipated Outcomes:

- Increase the number of POs that complete UI Master Gardener curriculum, UI Beginning Farmer training, and completed business plans.
- Modify criteria for offender eligibility and acceptance into the Master Gardener/Beginning Farmer program to include: TABE score of  $\geq 8$ , anticipated release within 18- 24 months, veteran status, and a high risk of recidivism.



- Provide feedback from Small Business Development Center on submitted business plans to improve success rate.
- Provide support as requested from POs after release as they pursue further agriculture related education or employment opportunities.

*Orange to Green continued on page 12*

# Pope County Community Wildfire Protection Plan

by Jody Shimp, *Project Coordinator*

This project is the first step in implementing recommendations from the recently developed Pope County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).

These recommendations include:

- 1) Use thinning along access roads and evacuation routes to create a network of enhanced fuelbreaks
- 2) Increase the use of prescribed fire
- 3) Increase the amount of mechanical fuel reduction and restoration
- 4) Promote and implement Forest Stewardship Plans;
- 5) Build additional landscape-level treatments that include the lands and concerns of state, federal, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private landowners
- 6) Map, repair, and install dry hydrants
- 7) Coordinate with utility companies so that the timing and location of right-of-way maintenance allows the ROWs to be most effective as fuel breaks
- 8) Raise awareness of fire department issues and capabilities
- 9) Communicate to landowners the importance of, and steps for, creating defensible space
- 10) Use road signs, brochures, and other materials to deliver fire prevention and fire danger messages
- 11) Identify smoke management concerns and mitigate them where possible.



## 2018 Accomplishments



**Home Risk Assessments** Through this Community Wildfire Protection Plan project, Pope County firefighters are partnering with the Shawnee National Forest and the Shawnee RC&D to offer free Wildfire Home Risk Assessments to Pope County homeowners.

For homeowners, risk is based on nearby land use, vegetation near homes and building design and materials.

Pope County firefighters have been knocking on doors throughout

the County offering this service. In addition, Pope County has been hosting a booth at community events to answer questions and sign-up landowners for a free assessment.





Risk assessment allows fire fighters to evaluate a home's particular exposure to fire as well as the critical factors that increase their risk. For each home risk assessment, Pope county receives \$35 from the Shawnee RC&D. In turn, Pope County Rural Fire Protection District is able to purchase much needed supplies.



"Our primary goal is to keep Pope County homeowners safe and we believe the message of preparing early and making their homes safe from wildfire risk will help us achieve that goal," said Josh Light, Assistant Fire Chief, Rural Pope County Fire Protection District. "If we identify risks through an assessment, we then want to provide the homeowner with options to reduce that risk. Most times, it's a simple fix like making sure leaves don't accumulate under your home or deck".

**Forest Management to Reduce Wildfire Risk:** This project supports the National and Northeast Regional Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy by reducing risks and creating a more fire resilient landscape. In Pope County, the majority of land is privately owned, which presents challenges for management across the landscape. Private lands are frequently in smaller parcels than public land, and owners act independently. This project helps coordinate efforts across multiple landowners to reduce fuel loads, disrupt the spatial continuity of fuels, and restore forest health, reducing the potential impact to the communities and the surrounding landscape. The Shawnee RC&D, through this

**"Our primary goal is to keep Pope County Homeowners safe, and we believe the message of preparing early and making their homes safe from wildfire risk, will help us achieve that goal."**

**— Josh Light  
Asst. Fire Chief, Pope County**

project, is able to provide financial support to landowners to help manage them hire contractors to prepare forest stewardship plan and implement forest management. The Shawnee RC&D coordinator for this project is helping to identify which properties need assistance and are located in the highest risk areas. In addition, the coordinator is working with agency partners to work at a landscape level. To date, RC&D has provided assistance to eight landowners in Pope County to get Forest Management Plans for their properties covering 650 acres. In addition, this project provided funds to 2 landowners to conduct 58 acres of forest thinning.

Over 2000 acres have been prescribed burned to reduce fuel loading.

**Raising Awareness of Fire Department Issues and Capabilities;** After meeting with the Pope County Rural Fire Protection district, the Shawnee RC&D learned that the District is lacking the radios needed to communicate with the Forest Service and IDNR firefighters making it extremely difficult to effectively work together on wildfires. It was also learned that the District's Bay City fire station does not have access to running water. The RC&D is working with the District and staff from the US Forest Service and IDNR to get the radios needed to improve communications. RC&D is also assisting the District with the details needed to seek a waterline. To the right, is an exhibit created by the RC&D to help determine the waterline needed to supply the firehouse.



# Ensuring Forest Health for the Future: Prioritized Forest Management Through Regional Partnerships

by Jesse Reichmann, *Project Coordinator*

The 2017-2018 year was a busy one for SIPBa and the RC&D. A few of our accomplishments include:

**Funding:** We await a determination on the new Forest Service grant proposal (Landscape Scale Restoration). This would fund SIPBA and their partners for the 2019-2020 fiscal years. This project would make the Forest Restoration Support Team a larger and more active partner. Major changes in our program would include:

- Forest Restoration Support Team will have its own membership and dues.

- FRST will have its own treasury and budget

- SIPBA will continue to share the cost of supplies for FRST as part of our cash match.

- FRST Coordinator will be funded for a larger share of coordination and increased scale and impact.

We have recently secured our second grant of this project period from the National Wild Turkey Federation, which supplements our cash flow for resources not procured by our current LSR award. The NWTF continues to be a prized partner we could not operate effectively without.



*(Fire Continued on page 11)*





**Outreach:** The first multi-agency fire ecology workshop and prescribed burn demonstration was held on November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2018 from 9am-12:30pm at the John A Logan historical village in Carterville IL. The live fire demo on a 1-acre plot of native prairie had to be postponed due to poor fuel reception, but the crowd was engaged in a good discussion with FWS, IDNR, and SIPBA representatives. The workshop was considered a success and the College is hoping to complete the burn as soon as conditions allow.

**Trainings:** September 9<sup>th</sup> – This practical fire training was popular and well-received, despite weather not allowing a live burn. The U of I

Extension staff is interested in hosting us for a repeat training any time. September 16<sup>th</sup> - The chainsaw training hosted by U of I Extension was well-attended and may also be repeated when necessary. Other relevant programs hosted by U of I Extension have been attended by SIPBA members and we thank them for their continuing high standards and engagement.



**Burns:** A total of 3287 acres were burned in 2018, consisting of 45 separate burns. Many of these acres were part of larger projects that spanned the public-private ownership boundaries and brought agencies and private landowners together in successful partnerships. We thank the Forest Service, IDNR, The Nature Conservancy and Fish and Wildlife Service for their role in these partnerships, which are recognized as a unique model for land management in this state. The

spring of 2019 has been challenging weather for burn practitioners but we are currently in the midst of a favorable “burn window” and have high hopes for accomplishing our goals this year.





*Pre and post exams and PO surveys clearly show our curriculum is increasing the knowledge and understanding*

So far in 2019, our second class is already on track to meet our anticipated outcomes. As of this report, 85% of PO's are slated to complete their Master Gardener Certificate (up 6% from 2018). When it comes to writing their Business Development Plans, 85% of PO's are moving toward completion for review with the Small Business Development Center at Shawnee Community College. That is up 53% from the class of 2018.

We are also hoping to double our harvest output this year, growing enough food to not only supplement the Vienna Correctional Center dietary department but to also have extra to donate to local food pantries. We plan to work in conjunction with our gardening neighbors housed next door at Shawnee Correctional Center to make these donations a reality.

Participating Offenders who completed the 2018 class are beginning to meet their parole dates. One former student has already been released and is residing in western Kentucky. He hopes to start a small vegetable growing operation this year. Another PO is due to finish his sentence in May and parole back to Cook County. We are working with the Chicago Botanical Garden's agricultural job placement program for ex-offenders to get him a spot as an intern once he returns home. Several other PO's will be released in the next 12 to 18 months and we plan to follow their experience as part of our data collection on this project.



Funding for  
**"From Orange to Green—Equipping Offenders with the Skills to Enter the New Urban Agriculture Economy"**

is provided by  
 USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)  
 Through their New Farmers and Ranchers Funding Program

Additional thanks to University of Illinois Extension, The Marketplace Literacy Program, the Illinois Department of Corrections and all our project partners.



# River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA)

by Nick Seaton, CWMA Coordinator

The Shawnee RC&D continues its strong leadership role in regional conservation efforts through the River to River CWMA project. The River to River CWMA is a partnership between 13 federal and state agencies, organizations, and universities aimed at coordinating efforts and programs for addressing the threat of invasive plants in the southern-most 11 counties of Illinois.



Nicholas Seaton, CWMA Coordinator



Nathan Speagle, FRST Coordinator, showing off a tree-of-heaven while surveying a

2018 has been an exciting and productive one for the River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area and partners. With multiple projects underway and others awaiting approval the program is in good standing.

Two projects were funded during 2018 allowing the RC&D to acquire a conservation drone and conduct land surveys for invasive species. New projects are focused on the identification and protection of rare plant species, forest management, invasive species control and pollinator education.

Ongoing work includes invasive species control with the Forest Restoration Support Team and coordination with the Southern Illinois Prescribed Burn Association. These programs rely on volunteers and provide landowners with the resources they need to get work done on their properties.

Future projects will continue to focus on landowner assistance programs and invasive species control throughout the Shawnee National Forest. It is exciting to see such great work being done throughout the region and to be a part of it is something really rewarding. I look forward to 2019 and the work to come.

## The River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area is a partnership between:

Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
Illinois Department of Agriculture  
Illinois Department of Transportation  
Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge  
Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge  
Middle Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge  
The Nature Conservancy  
Shawnee Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc.  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
USDA Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service  
USDA Forest Service Shawnee National Forest  
University of Illinois Cooperative Extension



# Let the Sun Shine In

by Jody Shimp, *Project Coordinator*

Oaks are slowly disappearing from Southern Illinois forests, and as a result populations of songbirds, pollinators and other wildlife are on the decline. By making our forests sunnier, we can save the diversity of life that depends on them.

In it's final year, the Let the Sun Shine In project has provided landowner education, woodland control on private and public lands, and informational events for the whole community.

Following two years of data collection, inter-agency data sharing, and feedback from partners and community members, the final leg of the project is now underway: Creation of a Let the Sun Shine In website, which will allow for public access to GIS and statistical data gathered during the project.

This final component will allow the work already completed to continue, and be added to, with other local agencies and organizations. Additionally, more funding is being sought for the 2020 and beyond fiscal cycle, to continue the stand improvement work and expand the reach of this valuable program.

## LET THE SUN SHINE IN



[www.letthesunshinein.life](http://www.letthesunshinein.life)

[Info@letthesunshinein.life](mailto:Info@letthesunshinein.life)

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR ANNUAL AWARD RECIPIENTS

### **Partner of the Year—Nicholas George, US Fish & Wildlife**

Mr. George is a Private Lands Biologist working on the Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program, in Marion IL. He has been an essential partner in working with Landowners to provide forest management services. Nick works one-on-one with landowners, and meets with stakeholders and partners, to ensure as much participating and understanding of these important projects. Additionally, he has worked tirelessly to ensure continued funding for project, such as the Let the Sun Shine In! initiative, to provide continued conservation work in Southern Illinois.

### **Organization Partner of the Year— Dr. David Gibson and SIU— Carbondale**

Dr. Gibson, and his entire department, has partnered with Shawnee RC&D for many years. SIU-C has provided valuable insight, research, and services on a multitude of projects over the years. From statistical data analysis, to full-time coordination, Dr. Gibson and his staff have always provided top-notch assistance and excellent quality support to the RC&D and the greater region. We sincerely appreciate our partnership and hope to see it continue for many years.

**Shawnee Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc.**  
**Profit & Loss**  
October 2017 through September 2018

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	<u>Oct '17 - ...</u>
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
42100 · Indirects - Grants	53,731.45
4300 · Grant Income	361,397.44
43400 · Direct Public Support	467.79
45000 · Investments	31.63
46400 · Other Types of Income	46.51
47200 · Program Income	350.00
Total Income	416,024.82
Expense	
60900 · Business Expenses	28.00
62100 · Contract Services	
62105 · Contractors	126,453.90
62150 · Outside Contract Services	223,375.82
Total 62100 · Contract Services	349,829.72
62800 · Facilities and Equipment	12,939.72
65000 · Operations	12,717.03
65100 · Other Types of Expenses	
65140 · Landowner Reimbursement	2,500.00
65160 · Other Costs	33.95
Total 65100 · Other Types of Expenses	2,533.95
65110 · Bank Charges	977.40
651140 · Line of Credit Principal	3,872.47
66000 · Employee Payroll	38,088.30
68300 · Travel and Meetings	5,850.40
70000 · Conservation Education	528.90
9999 · Annual Meeting	-399.16
Total Expense	426,966.73
Net Ordinary Income	-10,941.91
Net Income	<u><u>-10,941.91</u></u>

**Shawnee Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc.**  
**Balance Sheet**  
As of March 20, 2019

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	<u>Mar 20, 19</u>
<b>ASSETS</b>	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
1000 · NOW Checking	9,112.58
1002 · Money Market	39,584.39
Total Checking/Savings	48,696.97
Accounts Receivable	
11000 · Accounts Receivable	16,998.90
Total Accounts Receivable	16,998.90
Total Current Assets	65,695.87
Fixed Assets	
15000 · Furniture and Equipment	
15001 · Accumulated Depreciation	-13,169.00
15000 · Furniture and Equipment - Other	13,596.00
Total 15000 · Furniture and Equipment	427.00
Total Fixed Assets	427.00
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b><u>66,122.87</u></b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
27600 · Grants Payable	6,999.00
Total Other Current Liabilities	6,999.00
Total Current Liabilities	6,999.00
Total Liabilities	6,999.00
Equity	
30000 · Opening Balance Equity	92,299.90
31500 · Temp. Restricted Net Assets	21,003.16
32000 · Unrestricted Net Assets	-67,166.79
Net Income	12,987.60
Total Equity	59,123.87
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b><u>66,122.87</u></b>



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[www.shawneercd.org](http://www.shawneercd.org)

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## **Put Your Money to Work for Local Resource Conservation**

The Shawnee RC&D is primarily funded by grants and agreements with federal and state agencies. Private donations help to further the mission of the RC&D by providing necessary matching funds and can be targeted toward your personal area of interest.

The RC&D can receive tax deductible donations under Internal Revenue Service Code Section 501c3. The RC&D may accept all forms of contributions including, but not limited to gifts, property, cash, stocks and securities. Feel free to contact us with any questions at 618.944.1736 or [info@shawneercd.org](mailto:info@shawneercd.org).

The RC&D offers outreach and education, on-site technical help, landowner training and education, and costshare in each of the program areas. For a detailed description of each program, please visit our website at [www.shawneercd.org](http://www.shawneercd.org).

Your contribution can be mailed to:  
Shawnee RC&D 941 State Hwy 146W Golconda, IL 62938

