

ANNUAL REPORT

IDA COUNTY, IOWA, SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

1947

DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS

Henry Dall, Chairman	Battle Creek, Iowa
Edw. C. Perion	Ida Grove, Iowa
Ross E. Baumann	Cushing, Iowa

SECRETARY

Donald H. Dodge, Extension Director	Ida County
-------------------------------------	------------

TECHNICIANS

Kenneth H. Burnett	Soil Conservationist
Robert B. Hollins	Conservation Aid
Albert M. Murphy, Jr.	Conservation Aid

INTRODUCTION

The following is a report of the activities of the Ida County Soil Conservation District and other cooperating agencies for the 1947 calendar year. Combined with the record of accomplishments of the different organizations is a discussion of the methods used in attaining these ends. It is hoped that by such a procedure, the experiences of this District may be gainfully employed by others. There is considerable duplication in the reports of the accomplishments of the District and of the Ida County Agricultural Conservation Association. Since this can not be eliminated, the reports of the two agencies must not be added together to project a picture of the total for the county or District.

During the summer of 1947 disastrous floods plagued our state and did some damage within the District. These floods with their resulting damage and suffering, did much to focus attention of the public on soil conservation as a flood control measure. The time is now ripe to direct this interest toward saving the soil, our most valuable resource. Rural and urban people alike must be made to realize that the soil is the basis of our present and our future welfare and prosperity.

In 1947 the District was given the following direct assistance:

From the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service:

- Soil Conservationist (P-2) - 12 months service
- Conservation Aid (SP-5) - 11 months service
- Transportation, office space and supplies for the above. (U. S. Post Office Department furnished office space from August 1)

From the Ida County Farm Bureau, Cooperating with the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service and the Iowa State Extension Service:

- Assistance of the County Extension Director in setting up and holding meetings, in laying contour guide lines on farms of prospective cooperators, and in acting as secretary for the District Commissioners.

From the Ida County Agricultural Conservation Association:

- Assistance in laying out contour guide lines.
- Much favorable newspaper publicity.

DEVELOPING INTEREST IN SOIL CONSERVATION

The development of interest in soil conservation is the first step in the District Work Plan. The goal is to obtain, if possible, proper competence and ideals of farm operators, especially as regards the fundamentals of soil conservation. This step is very important since it constitutes the threshold from which all soil saving activity must depart to establish soil conservation practices on the land. No set technique has been developed to arouse this interest. However, the operational aids set forth below have proved effective in many cases.

The economic approach now used by the Production Marketing Authority through its local Agricultural Conservation Associations has proved very effective in stirring up interest. Elsewhere in this report the accomplishments of this method in Ida county are set forth. The Little Sioux Flood Control Program operates in the north three-fourths of the District. It provides much the same incentive, in that the Federal Government provides water disposal systems to groups of farmers without cost where the farmers can guarantee the maintenance of the system. There are some who disagree with the idea of paying a farmer to help himself, but the value of the work as a whole can not be discounted where goal is to arouse enthusiasm.

Farm conservation plans resulting from Farmer-District Agreements have made excellent demonstrations for farmers to watch and study. During the past year this District has had thirty six such plans in operation. There will be about seventy five in 1948. Unfortunately, in order to facilitate cooperation with the Little Sioux Flood Control Program, it has been necessary to concentrate these plans into groups. The result is that at this time, only seven of the District's twelve townships have one or more farm conservation plans for demonstration purposes. The situation is equally weak as to distribution of planned farms within the townships themselves.

Tours have not been used extensively since most usually only small attendance can be obtained. In addition experience indicates that over a period of time it is the same small group which attends all of the tours.

Schools and demonstrations for teaching soil conservation techniques to farmers have met with indifferent success. Since the event must be held out of doors it is always subject to the vagaries of the weather. Last year six such demonstrations had to be called off at the last minute because of inclement weather. On the other hand, schools and demonstration are an excellent means of getting soil conservation practices on the land. During 1947

eight such schools were conducted with a total attendance of twenty five.

There has been a Veteran's Agricultural Training School in operation in this District since March 1947. During the first nine months of this course eighty seven students were given some training in soil conservation and soil management at the rate of one lesson a week. It is too early yet to appraise the full value of this course. However, the District has received many requests for assistance with individual conservation practices, which can be attributed to this activity.

There are four newspapers in the District, all weekly. They are, The Ida County Pioneer-Record, The Battle Creek Times, The Holstein Advance and the Galva Tribune. All four have devoted much space to the printing of soil conservation news items. Prior to our annual District Birthday Party, last March, the Pioneer-Record carried a banner headline and the entire right hand column of page one announcing plans for the party. The County Extension Director in his weekly newspaper column always brings out something on soil conservation. This column is printed in the four county papers and in the Farm Bureau Spokesman.

Radio station WNAX, Yankton, South Dakota, through its inquiring reporter, George B. German, broadcast an interview with Henry Dall, one of the District Commissioners on "The Practical Side of Soil Conservation." In addition there were many other fine radio programs concerning soil conservation which while they did not directly concern this district, never the less provided practical information and aroused interest.

The District has established the precedent of holding an annual birthday party to cry the cause of saving the soil. In 1947 the party attracted 300 Ida County farmers, who listened to Tom Kelly give his illustrated lecture. It is hoped that this event can grow with the district and become the outstanding agricultural event of the year.

During the past year the County Extension Director has held ten informational meetings on soil conservation with a total attendance of 767. These meetings have done much to arouse interest. This is particularly so where uninformed and disinterested individuals attend at the request of farmers who already have become enthusiastic. This later accounts for about twenty five new points of interest developed during the past year. The small meeting of farmers fosters the spirit of common problems and fellowship among farmers. It is a great morale booster and conveys to the individual the idea that he is not the only one who is concerned and is doing something to save the soil.

In August of last year Dominic Lickteig, a farmer living near Battle Creek, won the Pilot Rock Mold Board Plow Terrace Building Contest. Later, at the National Plow Terrace Contest, Lickteig placed seventeenth in a field of twenty eight. This outstanding performance has received much favorable comment.

The moving picture short entitled "Flood" was given ten showings in three Ida County theaters to a total audience of 1225. Where available this type of publicity is very effective in reaching large numbers. There is considerable effort involved in arranging the bookings, but the time is well spent.

One very excellent poster, two feet by five feet, was made available to the district. This was displayed in the bank lobbys in the district. More of this type of advertising should be placed in the hands of work unit personnel so they can in turn divert more time to planning of farms and the actual application of soil conservation practices.

The principal problem encountered in developing enthusiasm for soil conservation has been the lack of man power. The County Extension Director can spend only a part of his time even though the job ahead is tremendous. Service personnel can help, but they must spend a major portion of their efforts in planning and establishing soil conservation practices. Many other people have assisted, but even then the net result was that there was not enough effort available. Consequently much necessary work along this line was not accomplished. If it were possible for Ida County, through the Farm Bureau, to maintain an Assistant County Extension Director who could spend half time on soil conservation education and related work, the program as a whole would be greatly accelerated.

ORGANIZING FOR SOIL CONSERVATION AND FLOOD CONTROL

The second step used in this district in establishing soil conservation on the land is the organization of small watershed groups of farmers. This method is used because, it speeds up the work of the farm planner and of the technician who will assist the farmer in laying out and placing the individual practices on the land. Three district commissioners are unable to assume the entire responsibility for seeing that the work is done throughout the district, however, if a committee of local farmers assumes this responsibility, a better job will be done and the commissioners are free for other activities.

Ordinarily the County Extension Director has assumed the responsibility for organizing these groups. During the past year his activities have resulted in the formation of three groups, bringing the total to seven. The District has been responsible for obtaining cooperation between farmer groups and the Ida County Board

of Supervisors.

Experience indicates that the best group contains from ten to twelve farm units. When there are less than that number operations of the technicians becomes unwieldy because the ties of common interests and problems are lost.

In addition to the advantages set forth above the group approach has the following advantages:

1. The nearness of others practicing soil conservation tends to remove some of the stigma always attached to trying something new on a big scale.
2. Neighbors can assist each other by exchange of work and by common attack of common problems.
3. The close attention possible with small groups, living on the site of the problem, makes for prompt and timely action.
4. Where there are groups, interest stays alive better.

It has been the experience of this district that a period of two years is necessary to carry a group from interest and organization through planning to general application of conservation practices. Since this time lag is always present, it is necessary that interest be developed and groups organized well in advance of planning and application operations, it is felt that at all times a district should have enough interested farmers organized to keep the technicians busy for at least a year.

To spread the program to new areas where as yet it has been impossible to organize groups, the District is using another plan. After it is determined that there is not sufficient interest to form a group, the interested individual is allowed to become a demonstration farm. In this case he also assumes the responsibility of selling soil conservation to all other owners and operators of land in the section in which the individual lives. Here again the final responsibility rests with those owning and operating the land and not with the district commissioners.

The Little Sioux Flood Control Program has done much to encourage farmers to organize. It offers assistance to groups in controlling water disposal problems that are beyond the ability and means of the individuals concerned. At this time the program is in its formative state, but construction of two complete water disposal systems is contemplated in 1948.

GETTING SOIL CONSERVATION PRACTICES APPLIED

This district has assisted cooperating farmers in establishing conservation practices in the amounts shown below:

Contour planting	1 350 acres
Seeding waterways	146 740 sq. yd.
Terraces constructed	7 miles
Contour field boundaries established	184 rods
New permanent pasture established	103 acres
Adequate cropping systems planned	6 675 acres

The Ida County Agricultural Conservation Association has the following preliminary report on conservation practices for which payments were made in 1947. Since there was a ceiling on the payment to any individual farm, it has been estimated that these figures represent about 70 percent of the total for the county.

<u>Practice</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>1947</u>	<u>1946</u>
Contour Planting	Acre	6 398	6 267
Seeding Waterways	Sq. Yd.	590 100	722 111
Small Earth Dams	Cu. Yd.	107 097	267 545
Liming	Ton	5 674	1 194
Fertilizer Spread	Ton	379	256
Green Manure Plowed Under	Acre	21 416	23 444

The Ida County Board of Supervisors and the Ida County Engineer are cooperating with the District by constructing, where possible, combination road culverts and soil saving dams. Ordinarily such dams involve no extra cost. Where there is additional expense involved, adjoining land owners have sometimes contributed the excess. In this way the owner has obtained relief from a bad gully problem at greatly reduced costs.

PROBLEMS

The District has been unable to arrive at satisfactory solutions for the following problems:

1. The shortage of man-power for educational purposes.
2. The difficulty of maintaining long-time land use and soil conservation plans where there is a rapid turnover of owners and operators.

3. The tendency of farmers to sacrifice soil organic matter and top soil for additional row crop acreage because of high prices or economic necessity that may result from low prices. In many cases these farmers think that contour planting and terraces will protect them from the result of their excesses.
4. The relative difficulty of controlling weeds in drilled corn, which in turn retards the general acceptance of contour planting. Widespread use of 2,4-D may provide a partial answer.
5. The lack of funds available to the Ida County Board of Supervisors for roads. This problem becomes critical where the Little Sioux Flood Control Program calls for a large number of structures on public roads.

SUMMARY PROGRESS IDA COUNTY
SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT
ESTABLISHED-FEB. 19, 1945
WORK UNIT OFFICE OPENED-MAR. 13, 1946

	<u>In 1947</u>	<u>To Date</u>
Sub-watershed Groups Organized	3	7
Soil Conservation Surveys (acres)	8 901	30 421
Farm Conservation Plans Completed (no)	37	62
(acres)	5 511	9 845
Acres Contouring Laid Out	2 320	- - -
Miles Terraces Built	5.2	6.9
Acres Definite Crop Rotation Planned	3 106	6 965
Educational Meetings Held (no)	18	43
(attend)	536	943
News Articles	18	47
Demonstrations (no)	12	29
(attend)	25	140
Radio Talks	1	1
Birthday Party (no)	1	2
(attend)	300	475

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Space will not permit the naming of all individuals and groups to which this district is indebted for assistance and cooperation. Many farm operators have carried on soil conservation practices without our knowledge. However, it is desirous to name the following organizations and persons, and to express appreciation for all assistance rendered.

Ida County Farm Bureau		
Soil Conservation Service		
Ida County Agricultural Conservation Association		
Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station		
Ida County Superintendent of Schools		
Iowa Agricultural Extension Service		
Production and Marketing Administration		
Battle Creek Times	Charles Wacker	Ida Grove
Galva Tribune	Westley Dreeszen	Cushing
Holstein Advance	R. J. Dreeszen	Cushing
Pioneer Record (Ida Grove)	Elvie Dreeszen	Cushing
Arthur Trust and Savings Bank	A. W. Lasher	Holstein
First Trust and Savings Bank	J. P. Stapleton, Jr.	
(Galva)		Battle Creek
Holstein State Bank	W. F. Burow	Battle Creek
Ida County State Bank (Ida Grove)	Herman Mildenstein	
King Theatre (Ida Grove)		Battle Creek
State Theatre (Holstein)	Fred Burow	Battle Creek
Galva Theatre (Galva)	Carl Huth	Holstein
Otto Ferguson	Clifford Law	Holstein
Jens Kirkholm, Jr.	Marvin Volkert	Washta
John Irwin	John Volkert	Cushing
Cyril Perion	Frank Myrtue	Correctionville
Edward C. Perion	Roy F. Stewart	Ida Grove
H. H. Boughton	Orie F. Johnson	Ida Grove
R. D. Bresnaham	Clifford Johnson	Ida Grove
J. E. Stephan	Lena Stoltenberg	Holstein
R. E. Baumann	J. W. Graham	Ida Grove
J. P. Stapleton	R. D. Brotherton	Ida Grove
Earl Mickleson	Stuart Baxter	Battle Creek
Robert Smith	J. J. Baxter	Battle Creek
Harrison Peters	Hector Baxter	Battle Creek
Mrs. Elsie M. Smith	Dominic Lickteig	Battle Creek
August Albertson	Henry Dall	Battle Creek
Mrs. Earl Spotts	C. H. Dall	Battle Creek
Frank Webb	Florence E. Burgert	Ida Grove
M. F. Bockwoldt	Henry R. Preston	Battle Creek
A. B. Smith	Ambrose Westendorf	
W. P. Hansen		Sioux Falls, S. D.
Gaylin Perkins	M. D. Van Houten	Battle Creek

L. W. Christiansen	Ida Grove	John Macklem, Sr.	Ida Grove
Glen Baker	Ida Grove	Eugene Batson	Ida Grove
A. E. Preston	Battle Creek	Wm. M. Gehrts	Correctionville
Arthur Henderson	Cushing	Emil Bubke	Ida Grove
Clint D. Burton	Battle Creek	Irvin Bubke	Danbury
Chester D. Burton	Battle Creek	C. W. Erne	Wall Lake
Hilbert Stockfleth	Danbury	Theo Hauschildt	Ida Grove
Leonard Flynn	Correctionville	Chris Thogersen	Battle Creek
Walter W. Schmidt	Battle Creek	Wm. Rossow	Battle Creek
S. L. Ralston	Battle Creek	Edgar Rossow	Battle Creek

Henry Dall.
Henry Dall, Chairman
Ida County Soil Conservation District