

Davis District Observes 20th Anniversary

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BLOOMFIELD. — Twenty years ago this month Davis County farmers voted to organize a Soil Conservation District. On Sept. 29, 1944 Davis County became the 45th soils district to be formed in Iowa.

P. W. Spilman, first chairman of the Davis Soil Conservation District Commissioners, notes that there were very few conservation practices on the land when the district was organized.

Today we find that Davis County farmers have applied considerable amounts of conservation practices on their farms. Many changes have occurred to the rural landscape.

As one compares aerial photos of 1944 with those of today he can see the terraces, the ponds, and the grass waterways that have replaced the then gullies. Many of the old square fields have been rearranged to fit the contour of the land, and one can pick out the contoured rows of corn or grain that wind around the hill.

ALTHOUGH much conservation work still remains to be done, we find that cooperators in the district have contoured 42,314 acres, built 673,224 lineal feet of diversion terraces, constructed 1,462 farm ponds, and built 153 grade stabilization

structures. They have renovated 17,256 acres of pasture and planted 229 acres of pine trees, built 2,712,549 lineal feet of standard terraces and 109,805 lineal feet of parallel terraces.

Other practices established include 1,141 acres of grass waterways, 74,871 lineal feet of tile drains, about 600,000 lineal feet of drainage ditches stocked 968 ponds with fish and developed 2,500 acres of wildlife habitat.

Of the 1,386 operating units in the district involving 294,228 acres of farm land, 882 comprising 191,436 acres are currently cooperators with the Davis Soil Conservation District.

Clay Barnett, present chairman of the Davis County District Commissioners, points out that actually 1,120 cooperative agreements have been signed between farmers and the district, but cancellation due to change of ownership, farm combinations, etc., leaves a net of only 882 cooperative agreements at the present time.

Commissioners, in addition to Spilman, elected to govern the district when it was organized in 1944 were Dale Blackwell and Fred Melvin. Harold Baughman was appointed to fill the unexpired term of Melvin after his death in 1951 and is currently one of the district commissioners. Blackwell retired

as a commissioner in 1962, but still continues as treasurer for the district. Sam Botts Jr., was elected commissioner in 1962 to succeed Blackwell.

Assistant commissioners at the present time are Lionel Herten and Charles Chickering.

THE SOIL Conservation District legislation enacted in 1937 by Congress permitting private citizens to exercise local initiative and responsibility for soil and water conservation has proven to be one of our most effective pieces of legislation, states Blackwell.

He also points out that a nation-wide resource development and conservation program on private lands has been accelerated during the past 25 years through soil conservation districts. The result has been the latest land conservation



Soil and water conservation work in Davis County comes under the supervision of three conservation district commissioners.

They are, from the left, Harold Baughman, Clay Barnett, chairman, and Sam Botts Jr. (Roberts Studio Photo).

movement in history occurring on privately owned land in the nation. Today 95 per cent of the farms and ranches in the U.S. are located in the nearly 3,000 organized soils districts.

Technical service needed to assist landowners in carrying out their conservation program is provided to the district by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service. Verle Arnold has been work unit conservationist in Davis County since 1958.

The United States Department of Agriculture also provides assistance to the landowners in the soil conservation districts through research, education, cost-sharing funds, and credit.

Three watersheds in Davis County have been organized and accepted by the State Soil Conservation Committee — the Big Wyacondah, the

North Wyacondah, and Carter Creek.

Construction was started this year in the Big Wyacondah Watershed with five structures completed to date. The other two watersheds have not been authorized for work plan development at this time.