

ANNUAL REPORT

DES MOINES COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Period Ending Dec. 31, 1950

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It has been our observation that the work of the district has progressed very well during the last year. The district has cooperated in making a number of events very successful.

A two day leader's training school was held January 26 to 28 with a total attendance of 80. An appeal was made to younger farmers in the county and most of the group consisted of representatives of the Young Married Folks group, 4-H club leaders and eight or ten older 4-H club members.

Subject material was presented by members of Extension and Soil Conservation Service staff, assisted by local farmers and representatives of outside districts. The highlight was a presentation by Jim Wallace who has been in charge of experimental farms of Iowa State College.

An example of how the information presented in these training schools take effect was discovered on a visit to the Charles Tonkinson farm in Washington township. Charles had attended the first training school four years ago. In the spring of 1951, he will complete putting his farm on the five year corn, corn, oats and two years of alfalfa-bromegrass rotation that was suggested by George Browning at that meeting. It was surprising and very pleasing to discover, in talking to farmers, that they followed the information received at these training schools, the visits of the farm planner, extension director and others. Farms were being put on a sound rotation supplemented with the use of erosion control practices

The extension director spent several days visiting farmers in the Geode Lake Watershed Area, comprising about one-half of Danville township. Approximately 90% of the landowners filed requests for farm plans with the district. These visits were made in the spring of the year and the farm planner began work with those who had not filed previously, in the fall. Special effort was made here to get conservation on the farms to prevent silting into the 200 acres of lake in Geode State Park.

The soils tour was made in June with 40 people present.

Another event in which the district cooperated was the soil conservation contest sponsored by the Burlington Chamber of Commerce. This was climaxed by a farm institute and a banquet on December 6. Recognition awards were given to 10 farmers for excellent conservation work in some phase of the program and to four families as outstanding conservationists during 1950. Nearly 200 people attended the institute and banquet.

The district helped with a field day sponsored by the Veteran's Class of the Mediapolis high school. A wide variety of conservation practices were demonstrated including terracing, waterway shaping, sodding, gully work, building structures, tiling, pasture renovation and pond building. Equipment was arranged for by the veterans and the nearby equipment dealers. Veterans operated most of the units and handled most of the details. Over 1000 people were in attendance.

The local daily paper, the Burlington Hawkeye Gazette cooperated with the district very nicely again during the year featuring articles and pictures of farmers who had done outstanding conservation work or are doing good conservation work on their farms.

Presentation of some phase of the soil conservation program was made at seven township meetings. The special activity for 4-H clubs in 1950-51 club year is soil conservation. Twelve other news stories were written or published on the general phases of soil improvement not bearing directly on conservation practices.

Through the assistance of Robert Gray, District Extension Director in Soils for 8 southeast Iowa counties, four nitrogen fertilizer tests on corn, 3 fertilizer tests on alfalfa and 1 rather complete test on alfalfa were conducted in the county. Three fertilizer meetings were held with two other meetings bearing on the general phase of good soil improvement. 7,000 acres were tested by the county soils laboratory operated by the Des Moines County Farm Service Company. 80 quick tests for limestone and phosphate were conducted in the Extension Director's office. While the above activities did not apply directly to the soil saving practices, they contributed to better soils management. In each of the five meetings held, although the use of fertilizer was the subject the speaker had, all the other soil improvement practices, including erosion control were emphasized.

At the Farm Institute, December 6, a program was launched to increase the average corn yield in the county to 100 bushels per acre by 1965. This program was approved and back by the soils district commissioners, the county Farm Bureau board and a special committee composed of seven men, including: F. S. Yetter, District Conservationist; H. K. Caldwell, President of the county Farm Bureau; Wm. R. Parrott, Chairman of the extension program planning committee; Walter Swank, Chairman of the county 4-H Club committee; Horace Sutton, Jr., Soil District Treasurer; George Eversman, PMA Chairman; Vic Siems, Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce Agricultural Committee. Robert

Gray, Extension Soils Specialist in eight counties and the Extension Director served as advisors to the committee. The goal of 100 bushels by 1965 received considerable publicity in the county and some state-wide notice. The program was planned to bring to the attention of farmers all the phases that go into a good soils management program using corn as a yardstick to measure soil fertility. This goal and the publicity were planned to fire the imagination of the average farmer and to stimulate action that would involve the use of all good soil improvement practices on each farm in the county to reach its objective.

The Yarmouth Adult Night School has devoted several meetings to soil conservation. The Veteran's Class at Mediapolis has given a lot of attention to good conservation measures and nearly half the class have farm plans or are about ready to work out plans.

We believe that the thing that pays off is when the farmers see it for themselves and we are getting enough scattered around so they can really take a good look. Most people take to new things kind of slowly.

In reviewing the plans in operation more than half the cooperators have gone beyond what was set out in the original plans. A few have been slow to start and a few haven't kept quite in line but nearly everyone has moved ahead and has made some improvement.

The commissioners are convinced they are on the right track. As we get people to use lime and fertilizers right, get the right rotations established and use the proper erosion control measures the land will respond. One outstanding example is on the Hugh Jamison farm, where the fertility has been built up over many years. On his oats fields he closed off half the spouts on the drill so it was rowed at 14 inches apart. He sowed one bushel of oats and harvested over 85 bushels per acre. The legume mixture of alfalfa, alsike and red clover

was the best in the neighborhood this fall. The other two commissioners also carried on their programs with outstanding results. Many more farmers are conscious of the need for more grasses and legumes and the increase of good grass waterways has been great.

The district built a set of concrete forms for low head dams to loan to farmers. As a result a dozen structures were added in 1950. Other layout showed increase over previous years. Wildlife was given a boost by the planting of 42,000 multiflora rose plants.

Acknowledgement is given to all persons and agencies that have helped to promote the district program. Some of them have been mentioned in the body of this report but we want especially to mention Mr. Eyre, Extension Director, who has carried on a wholesome educational program; to Ray H. Audsley, farm planner and Grant Stevenson, his aid of the Soil Conservation Service. We mention also the Chamber of Commerce, Veteran's Class, implement dealers, P.M.A., Des Moines County Sportsman's Club, State Conservation Commission and others who have helped.

The special state funds permitted employment of extra help which increased the layout and planning. They also permitted more contacts with farmers.

Looking ahead the district is in good condition. We are not getting as much done perhaps as we should but everything seems to be in a healthy condition.

Respectfully submitted,

Des Moines County Soil Conservation District

Howard Gieselman

/s/ Howard Gieselman

By: Howard Gieselman, Chairman