DICKINSON SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

SPIRIT LAKE, IOWA 51360 712-336-3782, EXT. 3

NOVEMBER 2000

Continuous CRP

As you may have noticed, a conservation buffers brochure is included in this USDA Service Center Newsletter packet. This colorful foldout is packed full of useful continuous CRP information explaining the many buffers practices including excellent visual images of each. A quick overview of the Continuous CRP program is shown below.

What is the Continuous CRP Program and what are the benefits to the Landowner?

As opposed to the General CRP Program, with a set signup period and bidding process, in the Continuous CRP:

- The landowner can sign up anytime during the year.
- There is no bidding process. After NRCS / FSA staff determine that the land fits the practice and meets the criteria, the offer can be made.
- Rental rates are based on soil type for most practices.
- The offer is applied to specific conservation practices aimed at erosion control and wildlife habitat.
- A cost share of up to 50% towards cost of installation.

In addition, new incentives are available from FSA including a one-time signup incentive of $100 to $150 per acre dependent upon the length of the contract and a practice incentive payment of 40% of the eligible costs to establish the practice.

For example, a Filter Strip seeding mixture of 4 lb. Big Bluestem, 2 lb. Indiangrass and 2 lb. Switchgrass per acre which would cost approximately $120.50 an acre. FSA will cost share up to 50% (60.25/acre) leaving a cost of $60.25/acre. An additional FSA 40% practice incentive payment of eligible costs would equal $48.20/acre, leaving approximate cost to Producer after the FSA incentive of $12.05 an acre.

The additional 40% practice incentive payment also applies to seedbed preparation, chemical burndown and herbicide application which may be necessary to establish the seeding.

In addition to the many buffers practices described in the pamphlet which require the offered land to been cropped, another Continuous CRP practice is the Riparian Tree Buffers—tree plantings next to streams and water bodies—which can be applied to cropland in the same manner as the others, but may also be

District Mission Statement

The Dickinson SWCD will serve its customers and the needs of the District's natural resources through education, promotion, and demonstration.

Contact us by e-mail at: **swcd@rconnect.com**

Visit the following web sites for information on Dickinson County SWCD and other area offices:
www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/counties_activities.html or www.theconservationstation.org

applied to marginal pasture lands without crop history. Cost sharing for fencing to exclude livestock can be included for Riparian Buffers in pasture land.

An additional interesting aspect of the Riparian Tree Buffer practice is crediting remnant prairies and existing trees and shrubs on the site.

Yet another new practice is the establishment of permanent vegetative cover (contour grass strips) on terraces (CP15B). This practice may be applicable to older existing terraces.

All Continuous CRP practices provide environmental benefits as well:

- Soil, wind and water erosion.
- Improved wildlife habitat
- Increased filtration of water and herbicide runoff.

Please feel free to call the Spirit Lake Service Center at 712-336-3782, or stop in with questions and/or to sign up now for Continuous CRP and other conservation programs offered by the USDA office.

The *SWCD Foundation* announces their 2001 Tree Sale.

The *Foundation* will be taking orders for trees and shrubs beginning immediately and until stock is depleted. Order early for best selection.

These trees and shrubs are excellent choices for USDA programs including:

Windbreaks
Shelterbelts
Riparian Tree Buffers
Wildlife Plantings
Etc.

There is a wide selection of stock at low prices. See the enclosed 2001 Tree Sale flier for varieties, prices and availability of cost share programs.

Call Tree Sale Coordinators Mark or Kim Ingwersen at 712-336-3616 or the NRCS-SWCD office at 712-336-3782, Ext. 3, for more information or to place an order.

Cost Share Funds Available

Do you have surface erosion problems on your farm that could be helped by the installation of an erosion control structure or other conservation practice?

Funds are available through State Cost Share Programs which provide 50% of construction costs of **terraces, sediment control basins and waterways.**

State REAP funds are also available for **farmstead windbreaks and field windbreaks** for 75% cost share, with a maximum of $700.00.

50% cost share funds with a maximum of $500.00 are also available for the establishment of acreage windbreaks which would not meet the agricultural qualifications of above.

In addition to tree practices, REAP funds are also available at 75% cost share for native grasses and wildflowers which has been lately of particular interest .

Call the NRCS-SWCD office at 712-336-3782, Ext. 3, or stop in to ask questions about State Cost Share and/or to receive technical assistance.

DICKINSON COUNTY 2000 CROP RESIDUE SURVEY

by: Carroll Oskvig
District Conservationist

460 crop residue samples were taken by Keith Van Kleek, Tim Hemphill and Carroll Oskvig in 2000. The tillage systems measured in the 2000 survey were:

No-Till: The soil is left undisturbed from harvest to planting except for nutrient injection. Planting or drilling is accomplished in a narrow seedbed or slot created by coulters, row cleaners, disk openers, in-row chisels or rototillers. Weed control is accomplished primarily with herbicides. Cultivation may be used for emergency weed control. (Includes Strip-Till).

Ridge-Till: The soil is left undisturbed from harvest to planting except for nutrient injection. Planting is completed in a seedbed prepared on ridges with sweeps, disk openers coulters, or row cleaners. Residue is left on the surface between ridges. Weed control is accomplished with herbicides and/or cultivation. Ridges are rebuilt during cultivation.

Mulch-Till: The soil is disturbed prior to planting. Tillage tools such as chisels, field cultivators, disks, sweeps or blades are used. Weed control is accomplished with herbicides and/or cultivation.

Reduced-Till: Tillage types that leave 15-30 percent residue cover after planting or 500 to 1,000 pounds per acre of small grain residue equivalent throughout the critical wind erosion period.

Conventional-Till: Tillage types that leave less than 15 percent residue cover after planting, or less than 500 pounds per acre of small grain residue equivalent throughout the critical wind erosion period. Generally involves plowing or intensive tillage.

The results from the 2000 survey are summarized in the table below:

Crop	Tillage	Percent
Corn	Conventional	25.4
	Mulch-Till	30.5
	No-Till	5.2
	Reduced-Till	32.9
	Ridge-Till	6.1
Soybeans	Conventional	6.5
	Mulch-Till	64.8
	No-Till	12.1
	Reduced-Till	10.5
	Ridge-Till	6.1

The results from the 2000 survey showed the following trends in tillage types compared to a combined 1998-1999 average:

Soil loss increases as the amount of crop residue cover decreases. No-Till, Ridge-Till and Mulch-Till systems provide the best way to protect water quality and to reduce soil erosion. Please contact the Dickinson County SWCD at 712-336-2782, ext. 3, for more information on these tillage systems.

Crop	Tillage Type	Trend
Corn	Conventional	Increase
	Mulch-Till	Increase
	No-Till	Increase
	Reduced-Till	Decrease
	Ridge-Till	Decrease
Soybeans	Conventional	Decrease
	Mulch-Till	Decrease
	No-Till	Increase
	Reduced-Till	Decrease
	Ridge-Till	Decrease

Construction Site Erosion

by: Tim Terrill
Environmental Specialist

Traditionally, the NRCS has been thought of as an agency that works with farmers, but that is not always true. An area that has recently gained popularity is soil erosion on construction sites. When any soil is left loose, the problem of accelerated soil movement can happen, and that can degrade our lakes one hundred times greater than on agricultural land. (Bridge and Weil, 1999).

Did you know that removal of topsoil by heavy equipment or by wind and water is the worst on-site drainage in urban areas. This drainage causes loss of nutrients and nutrient hold capacity to the disturbed area which results in less fertile lawns. As this topsoil and organic material is lost, the soil begins to compact more causing lower water infiltration rates into the soil. The compaction makes it hard for fertilizer and pesticide to move into the soil causing pollution into our lakes.

Some of the off-site impacts of construction include: algae blooms which ultimately lead to fish kill; cloudy water which blocks photosynthesis in plants and leaves a degrading habitat for fish; sediment build up in streams causing flooding in areas that never flooded before; and economic loss to the community for removing sediment from culverts. All these factors decrease water quality in our area.

The prevention of urban erosion is the best method to improve water quality. Some common sense suggestions are to divide a big project into smaller phases and disturb areas only when needed. Re-vegetate areas as soon as possible. Schedule excavation during low rainfall periods and divert water away from disturbed areas. Set up silt fences and minimize slope steepness to prevent excessive erosion. These practices can make the difference between an environmentally sensitive contractor and a normal contractor.

I hope you have learned that everyone is responsible for causing erosion and that guidance to contractors can be given by the Natural Resources Conservation Service office in Spirit Lake.

No-Till Incentive

Whether you have been using No-Till for years, or if you are just going to try No-Till for the first time next spring, contact the NRCS-SWCD office to apply for a No-Till incentive payment of $10 an acre with an 80 acre maximum.

State cost share provides for a one-time No-Till incentive payment of $10 an acre with an 80 acre maximum.

This payment is a one-time only payment per producer.