



BLACK HAWK SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

3216 THISTLEDOWN DRIVE • WATERLOO, IOWA 50702 • PHONE 319-296-3262

Fall 2004 Newsletter

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVE PROGRAM (EQIP)

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program that is available to producers. The program offers financial and technical assistance to install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land.

In 2004, the Black Hawk Soil and Water Conservation District allocated over \$77,000 in EQIP conservation practices. Some of the practices receiving 50% cost share include sod waterways, terraces, and waste storage facilities.

Sign up for the EQIP program has begun and will continue through December 17, 2004. Contact the NRCS office at 319-296-3262 for details.

2004 ANNUAL CONSERVATION TOUR

The annual Conservation Tour and Open House, co-sponsored by the Black Hawk SWCD and Basic Materials Corp., took place on October 3, 2004 at the Raymond Quarry. Between 1500-2000 people attended, with many people stopping at the Black Hawk SWCD booth to ask about conservation practices and programs. Numerous people visited the stream table, which demonstrated formulation of streams and rivers.

DRY RUN CREEK WATERSHED

This year the Black Hawk SWCD commissioners, NRCS, and Hawkeye Community College students are working on Dry Run Creek, which is on Iowa's Impaired Waters list. Staff, students and volunteers have completed the land use survey for each field in the area and water monitoring information is being gathered to test thermal impact, pH, nitrate, fecal coliform bacteria, sediment and phosphate. Final testing will be done in February 2005.

Black Hawk Soil & Water
Conservation District
3216 Thistledown Drive
Waterloo, IA 50702

November 2004

RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (RC&D)

In September 2004, the Black Hawk SWCD, in partnership with the Black Hawk County Board of Supervisors, joined the Cedar Valley RC&D. This will be a valuable tool in assisting the county in planning and accessing grants and the RC&D will provide leadership and technical services that accelerate the development, conservation, and wise use of human, financial, and natural resources in the area. The Black Hawk SWCD looks forward to working closely with the Cedar Valley RC&D on numerous projects to benefit the citizens of Black Hawk County.

WINDBREAK ASSISTANCE COST SHARE PROGRAMS

CRP Shelterbelt:

- Must have a crop history 4 out of 6 years prior to 2002
- Minimum of three rows
- 90% cost share
- Sign up for Incentive Payments (SIP) up to \$150/acre
- Annual rental rate for the length of contract

State Cost Share:

- 75% cost share of \$20/tree, 75% of \$3/shrubs, up to \$1200 maximum per project
- Minimum of 3 rows
- An acreage must be 10 acres in size or market \$2500 in farm produce

DNR Shelterbelt:

- 75% cost share or up to \$200/row
- Minimum of 8 rows

EQIP:

- Establish for livestock benefit
- 50% cost share
- Minimum of 3 rows

If a new windbreak or renovation of an existing windbreak is in your future, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff can assist you with the planning. Please call 319-296-3262 for assistance.

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BUFFER STRIPS (Continuous CRP)

This program has been ongoing for five years. The rental rate runs from \$78.20 to \$197.00 per acre in Black Hawk County. These figures include incentives to participate and the maintenance of the area. The correct rate depends on soil type. Buffer strips conserve soil, filters incoming water, and provides wildlife habitat. Currently, 2658 acres are signed up for the program. Our specialist, Larry Weigle, can be reached at 319-296-3262 for further information.

CSP - WHAT EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes on Tribal and private working lands. The program is available in all 50 states, the Caribbean area and the Pacific Basin area. It provides access to benefits to all producers, regardless of size of operation, crops produced, or geographic location.

NRCS recently released a self-assessment workbook online for potential CSP participants. By going through the workbook, producers will get a good idea about whether they are eligible for CSP at this time. To complete the Self-Assessment online, go to: <http://csp.sc.egov.usda.gov/> or stop at the NRCS office to visit with us about CSP.

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2004 BLACK HAWK COUNTY CONSERVATION SUPPORTERS CLUB

The Black Hawk SWCD wishes to sincerely thank the following members of the 2004 Supporters Club for their generous donations to conservation during the year:

Peterson Construction, Inc.	Ernest Nauman
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CLUB MEMBERSHIP: Donations are used for a variety of projects, including conservation materials for the annual Conservation Tour, scholarship awards for students, awards for conservation leaders, and materials for local schools. **Please take a moment to consider a donation to the Black Hawk SWCD to continue conservation efforts.** Complete the short form below and mail it with your donation to: Black Hawk SWCD, 3216 Thistledown Drive, Waterloo, IA 50702. Thank you for your support!

Soil, Water & Wildlife Supporter	\$5.00 to \$9.99
Soil, Water & Wildlife Saver	\$10.00 to \$19.99
Soil, Water & Wildlife Steward	\$20.00 and up

-----Cut here and return-----
(Please print your name as you would like it to appear in the 2004 membership report.)

Name _____
Address _____

Donation enclosed \$ _____



Note to producers: Conservation buffers still work ...

economically & environmentally

More opportunities than ever

Ask your neighbor about the advantages



Are conservation buffers a good economic choice for your operation? Your neighbor may be the best person to ask. Farmers and ranchers are among the strongest and most credible advocates for use of buffers and supporting practices.

- More than 250,000 buffer contracts with USDA have been signed.
- Nearly 160,000 farms and ranches have buffers, installed under voluntary programs that provide annual rental payments and other financial incentives.
- There is no bidding, no waiting. Offers are automatically accepted if eligibility and other requirements are met.
- Payments vary across the country, with an average of about \$97 an acre per year.

Many farmers and ranchers find that setting aside environmentally sensitive land makes a lot of economic sense. Employees at your local USDA service center or conservation district office can tell you more. Or you can ask a neighbor!

Good for you and the environment



In addition to providing economic benefits, buffers can help you achieve a number of important conservation objectives. When used with supporting practices, buffers can help you:

- Prevent soil erosion.
- Improve water quality by removing sediment, fertilizers, pesticides and other pollutants from runoff.
- Improve air quality.
- Enhance fish and wildlife habitat.
- Control flooding.
- Improve farm safety.
- Protect buildings, roads and livestock.
- Conserve energy.
- Beautify the landscape.

USDA's voluntary incentive programs, including the continuous Conservation Reserve Program — CCRP — are stronger than ever. They are valuable tools that can help you sustain your operation and protect the environment. That's good news for today and tomorrow!

Partners say: 'We're with you'



America's farmers and ranchers often must "go it alone," but when it comes to buffers, other partners have jumped in to help. Their message is, "We're in this together!"

- Groups like Pheasants Forever, Trout Unlimited and Quail Unlimited believe so strongly in buffers that they are committing thousands of dollars and volunteer assistance to increase buffer establishment.
- Citizen groups are providing funding and volunteer support for buffer programs.
- States and cities are supporting buffer programs on rural land, in recognition of the positive impacts buffers have on drinking water supplies.
- Rural lenders often promote buffers as a wise economic choice.
- Many farm-related groups and businesses, including cooperatives, also support buffer use.

Talk to USDA service center or conservation district personnel about partners in your area.

Now, more than ever, buffers are the right choice

Conservation buffers are a simple way for you and many other farmers and ranchers to stay profitable while protecting your land. USDA supports the use of buffers on cropland, pasture and rangeland through several conservation programs, including the continuous Conservation Reserve Program, or CCRP. Unlike the regular CRP, sign-up for the CCRP is available year-round.

Financial incentives available through CCRP are especially attractive. They include:

- A signing incentive payment of \$100 to \$150 per acre for riparian buffers, filter strips, grassed waterways, shelterbelts, field windbreaks, living snow fences, farmable wetlands and wetland buffers, and marginable pastureland wildlife habitat and wetland buffers.
- Up to 50 percent cost sharing for practice installation.

- A practice incentive payment of up to 40 percent of eligible practice installation costs.
- A 20 percent rental rate incentive for riparian buffers, filter strips, grassed waterways and field windbreaks.
- A 10 percent rental rate incentive for wellhead protection areas.
- Higher annual maintenance payments per acre for certain activities.
- Competitive rental rates nationwide for installing riparian buffers on marginal grazing land.



More options for producers

Today, more than ever, USDA's conservation programs are complementary, so that farmers and ranchers can combine conservation practices to do what's best for their working land. The programs are also voluntary, and most provide incentives and cost sharing.

One of America's largest private land conservation programs is the CCRP. Incentives and cost sharing make it a wise economic choice, and it's recognized by farmers and ranchers across the country as common-sense conservation at its best.

A related program available in about half the states is the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. CREP is a federal-state-local program that addresses specific conservation needs, primarily water quality, in the states where it operates.

You'll find that, in addition to CCRP and CREP, several other programs can help you install conservation buffers. Here are

just a few examples:

Environmental Quality Incentives Program — Significant increases in funding for EQIP in the 2002 farm bill make it an attractive program. Livestock-related natural resource concerns and other conservation priorities, including buffers, are among the practices EQIP funds. Local input helps establish local conservation priorities under EQIP.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program — WHIP is a voluntary program for landowners who want to develop and improve fish and wildlife habitat on private land.

Wetlands Reserve Program — Landowners can protect, restore and enhance wetlands on their property with this voluntary program.

Forest Land Enhancement Program — A new program in the 2002 farm bill, FLEP provides cost sharing, technical assistance and education to owners of

private forest land. Planning, tree planting, fish and wildlife habitat, riparian restoration and forest improvement are among the practices that states and private landowners may focus on with FLEP.

Eligible practices

One or more of these buffers may be right for your farm or ranch

- Grassed waterways
- Contour grass strips
- Shelterbelts/field windbreaks
- Living snow fences
- Vegetation to reduce salinity
- Filter strips
- Riparian buffers
- Wetland restorations
- Cross-wind trap strips
- Farmable wetlands
- Farmable wetland buffers
- Marginal pastureland wildlife habitat buffers
- Marginal pastureland wetland buffers
- Shallow water areas for wildlife
- Public wellhead protection buffers

'OK, where can I learn more?'

- Ask a neighbor who has installed conservation buffers about the economic and environmental benefits.
- Your local USDA service center or conservation district office can provide details about rental payments, cost-share options and other buffer assistance programs available in your area.
- Your state forester's office or consulting foresters can offer advice about what tree and shrub species are appropriate for use in buffers in your area.
- You can also talk to agricultural consultants and representatives of agribusiness firms to find out more about conservation buffers and their use on your farm or ranch.

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