

Henry County Soil & Water Conservation District
709 S. Iris Street, Suite 101
Mt. Pleasant, Iowa 52641
319-385-2824, Ext 3

2013 Annual Report
July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013



**Soil & Water
Conservation
Commissioners**

Front row:
Rick Mallams
Harlan Miller
Jeff Olson

Back Row:
Allan Barnes
Chuck Allen
Ross Tweedy
Alan Miller

District Commissioners:

Allan Barnes, Chairman
Rick Mallams, Vice-Chairman
Harlan Miller
Jeff Olson
Alan Miller

Assistant Commissioners

Chuck Allen
Ross Tweedy

IDALS-DSC Staff:

Barb Shelman, Secretary
Michael Allen, Technician



NRCS Staff:

Doug Ensminger, District Conservationist
Josh Sieren, Soil Conservationist
Dale Schmeiser, Soil Conservation Technician



SWCD Staff:

Caleb Waters, Watershed Coordinator



*"Our mission is to provide leadership and administer programs to help people conserve,
improve and sustain our natural resources and environment."*

2013 SWCD Poster Contest Winners



Soil & Water Stewardship Materials purchased by the Henry County Soil and Water Conservation District were provided to New London, Mt. Pleasant, Waco and Winfield-Mt. Union School Districts. Five teachers used these materials to promote soil and water conservation to their students. Posters created for the 2013 Poster Contest featured the theme **"Where Does your Water Shed"**. Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company, Conservation Districts of Iowa, and the Henry County SWCD co sponsor the SWCD contest. Winners of the 2013 Poster Contest were:



Meredith Roth
1st Place
Grades K-1
Waco



Isabella Mitchell, Marie Farmer & Zoey Dennler
Grades K-1
Waco



McKenna Grace--1st Place
Wyatt Miller & Camryn Lair
Grades 2-3
New London



Logan Lee--1st Place
Akaiysha Coop
Grades 4 -6
Salem

District Financial Report of State Funds & Accomplishments: July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013

Budget-Operating Funds Commissioner and Office Expenses

Total Allocations	\$2,375.00
Commissioner Meeting Expense	\$ 451.08
Office Expenses	\$ 373.75
CDI & NACD Dues	\$1,200.00
Educational Materials/Awards	\$ 173.95
Postage	\$ 181.74
Total Expenditures	\$2,380.52
Balance	\$(5.52)

REAP

Resource Enhancement And Protection 75% Cost-Share Funds

Cedar Creek Priority Watershed Practices Fund Terraces 7,250 L.F.

2012 Projects Rolled Over	\$ 12,167.11
Initial Allocation	\$ 6,653.13
Supplemental Allocation	\$ 19,959.39
Total Allocations	\$ 38,779.63
Projects Complete & Paid	\$19,550.00
	\$ 19,229.63
Funds Rolled Over to 2013	\$19,202.11
Funds Recalled	\$ 27.52

Forestry/Grasses Fund Timber Stand Improvement 70.8 ac.

2012 Projects Rolled Over	\$ 3,510.00
Initial Allocation	\$ 2,217.71
Supplemental Allocation	\$ 8,153.13
Total Allocations	\$13,880.84
Funds Complete & Paid	- 8,496.00
	\$5,384.84
Funds Rolled Over to 2013	-3,750.00
Funds Recalled	\$1,634.84

Local Watershed Protection Program (LWPP) 3% Loans: 4 Projects Completed; Terraces 9,530 L.F.

Loan Funds Allocated	\$61,254.00
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Public Owned Lakes---Lake Geode 4 Projects; Terraces 4,450 L.F.

Funds Paid in Henry County	\$8,942.10
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State Cost-Share Funds Terraces 26,850 L.F.

2013-Cost Share

2012 Practices Rolled Over	\$ 15,005.00
Initial Allocation	\$ 25,808.00
Supplemental Allocation	\$ 77,424.00
Transferred to Mgt. Practices	\$ -10,000.00
Total Allocations	\$108,237.00
Projects Complete & Paid	\$ -82,748.65
	\$ 25,488.35
Projects Rolled Over to 2013	\$ 25,488.35
Unobligated Funds	\$ 0.00

State Cost-Share Management Funds Cover Crops, 12 landowners, 400 Ac.

2013-IFIP-Management Practices	
Total Allocations	\$10,000.00
Projects Complete & Paid	\$10,000.00
Unobligated funds	\$ 0.00

State Bonding 2 Cost-Share Funds Terraces 32,863 L.F.

2013-Bonding 2 Funds	
2012 Practices Rolled Over	\$-20,190.00
Total Allocations	\$-20,190.00
Projects Complete & Paid	\$17,418.70
Funds Recalled	\$ 2,771.30

2013 Storm Damage Repair Bonding Funds 4 Waterways Repaired-- 0.9 Ac.

2013-Storm Damage Repair

2012 Practices Rolled Over	\$-2,154.36
Projects Complete & Paid	\$-2,146.86
Funds Recalled	\$ 7.50

State Revolving Fund--No-Interest 0% Loans 1 Grade Stabilization Structure Constructed

2013 Allocations	\$ 0.00
Projects Rolled Over to 2013	\$26,200.00
Projects Completed & Paid	\$- 6,200.00
Funds Rolled Over to 2014	\$-10,000.00
Funds Recalled-Project Cancelled	\$-10,000.00
Unobligated Funds	\$ 0.00

All services and programs are offered on a non-discriminatory basis.



Lake Geode Watershed by Caleb Waters, Coordinator



Construction in the Watershed:

A dozer pushes dirt to build up a terrace on the property of Robert and Gary Oetken in the watershed. This is one of twenty five terraces that the Oetken's received cost-share to have rebuilt this past fall.



This fall was a very short construction season for many Projects throughout southeast Iowa as well as in the Geode Watershed. The cold wet spring delayed planting for many farmers around the area even resulting in some crops to be replanted. This resulted in a late harvest in some cases which caused some projects to be postponed till late fall. Fortunately for some of the construction projects in the watershed they were able to be constructed before a long cold spell that caused a halt in construction due to a decent amount of frost in the ground. Applications are being accepted for anyone interested in installing conservation practices on their properties such as *Terraces, Waterways, Water and Sediment Control Basins or Pond/Grade Stabilization Structures* within the watershed. Or if you are unsure but you have a resource concern on your property feel free to contact Caleb Waters, Geode Watershed Coordinator to schedule an appointment. To schedule an appointment contact Caleb at (319) 753-6221 ext. 304.

Water Quality Initiative: Cover Crops planted in Geode Watershed

Left: Is a field owned and operated by Tom and Matt Parrott of rural Danville. Cereal rye and radishes were flown on in early September. The intent of the cover crop was to reduce erosion, increase water infiltration, help reduce compaction, build up organic matter, and help scavenge nitrogen.



Radishes or Hair Vetch?

By Jeff Olson,
Henry County Soil & Water Conservation District Commissioner

Cover crops have been a hot topic this winter in the agriculture media. They are not intended to be harvested or sold, but to cover the soil between cash crop seasons, hence the name “cover crops”. What is so good about intentionally seeding other plants that will not be harvested for grain? This article outlines some of advantages associated with this conservation practice.

Corn or soybeans planted in April or May and harvested in October use the soil, nutrients, water, and sunlight for about 7 months. That is more than half the year but significant plant growing time is left on the table, wasting free sunshine. If a winter hardy plant such as cereal rye, wheat, or rye grass were planted in the early fall, soil binding roots can grow during the rest of the year, storing carbon in biomass and organic matter, scavenging left over nutrients, and building residue that stops erosion until the next cash crop is planted the following spring. If nitrogen fixing legumes like clover or hairy vetch are added to the planted mix, it also pulls some free nitrogen out of the air and puts it in the soil where it helps to fertilize the cash crops that follow the cover crops.

In the spring, the growing cover crop is sprayed or turned under to make way for the intended crop to be seeded. Soil structure improves with cover crop root systems and that helps store moisture and promotes root growth of the following cash crop. The positive value of soil health and organic matter increase is priceless.

There are costs - management, seeds, machine use and labor to plant it and kill it when the cover crop has done its job. One idea that saves some labor is to use a cover of oats and tillage radish or turnips planted in the early fall so the winter freeze takes care of killing it.

Using cover crops is a learning process and the answers will always depend on the weather, climate and soils. The positive value of cover crop practices outweigh the costs in many operations and include economic activity that benefits the entire community. Aerial applicators are set up for the task of fall seeding in standing crops and seed suppliers are gearing up for increased seed demand.

Interested in more information? Attend a cover crop field day by Iowa Learning Farms (<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf>) or Practical Farmers of Iowa (phone 515.232.5661 or online at <http://www.practicalfarmers.org/>) The Henry County Soil & Water Conservation District or the local Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) office can also assist with cover crop ideas.





What Does it Mean to Put Conservation on the Land?

By Jim Gillespie



I believe that we have some of the best farmers and ranchers in the world right here in Iowa. We also have some of the best soils that make Iowa an agricultural leader. These two things are very important to Iowans and people worldwide. We need to continue to work together to help preserve them.

When using the land for agricultural production, we must have a plan to protect the resources needed to make the operation successful and the land sustainable. When conservation practices are needed, we are here to provide the best technical assistance and financial assistance if available, to put them in place. This will insure that the soil stays healthy and productive and our waters are protected for use by crops, livestock and people. We need to protect the soil from erosion and degradation and prevent sediment and nutrients from reaching the water.

Exemplified by the progress shown at the local, state and federal levels, Iowa has always been a leader in conservation efforts. Now our challenge is that we need to do more. With agriculture always changing, we need to be willing to change with it. Putting conservation on the land should always be one of our biggest priorities as we go forward. We should all be the best stewards of the land and resources that we can be. Conservation should be part of everyone's farm or business plan and we should work together to implement that plan.

Many have heard the new buzz phrase, "CONSERVATION MAY BE VOLUNTARY, BUT IT IS NOT OPTIONAL". I believe that we can achieve soil quality, safe food and clean water by working together voluntarily to put the best conservation practices on the land. For the best assistance in continuing conservation implementation, please contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District.



A History Lesson on Soil Conservation

By Vince Sitzmann

Hugh Hammond Bennett, otherwise known as the "father of soil conservation" was a soil surveyor with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). In 1928 Bennett co-wrote a publication, titled, "Soil Erosion: A National Menace" which helped establish scientific credibility about the repercussions of erosion and inspired others to take initiative on the erosion problems within the United States.

In 1937, Bennett was presenting to a congressional subcommittee in Washington D.C. and timed his presentation to coincide perfectly with the arrival of a severe dust storm. As Bennett flung open the window he shouted "Gentleman, get ready because here comes Oklahoma" so the story goes. Soon thereafter the Soil Conservation Service was established as a permanent agency within USDA, with Bennett as its director. This was the first constitutional act in the history of this or any other nation that sought to control and prevent soil erosion, flooding, and other threats to our natural resources. Not long after, President Franklin D. Roosevelt sent a letter to all the governors recommending that each state adopt their own laws. Iowa's Governor Wilson adopted the law and by 1940 Iowa's first Soil and Water District was formed by three townships in Marion County.

Today we have 100 SWCDs in 99 counties, that are represented by 500 Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners. Five nonpartisan Commissioners are elected from each district and are entrusted with many responsibilities including the prevention of excessive soil erosion and conservation of our soil resources. No small task considering Iowa has 36 million acres, 92,300 farms and 25 million acres of crop land. Iowa also ranks number one nationally in the production of corn, soybeans, pork and chicken.

In 1973, the Iowa legislature enacted the cost share program for to help promote conservation. Throughout the past 40 years, over 254 million dollars have been leveraged with funds from private landowners and farmers through the SWCDs to conserve and protect our soil resources. Hundreds of thousands of acres are now protected with no-till and strip till, terraces, waterways, grade stabilization structures, buffers, cover crops, and other practices that save millions of tons of soil from washing off our fields and into our waterways.

Who could have imagined that one man's passion for soil conservation, along with a little dust in the wind in the 1930's, could have spurred a conservation ethic that spans the world and touches each and every acre of our farms?

Statewide Practices Cost-Share

In August of 2013, \$2.8 million was made available through all 100 Soil and Water Conservation Districts to help implement conservation practices through the Water Quality Initiative (WQI). After an initial \$1.8 million was offered and subsequently obligated in less than a week, a supplement of \$1 million was added to the fund and this additional funding spoken for within another week.

The strong level of commitment showcased by Iowa farmers volunteering to try something new on their farms to help water quality is a testament to the level of engagement farmers are ready to take on these issues. Over 1,000 farmers committed an additional \$2.8 million in landowner match to help implement these practices. Each landowner or farmer could apply for up to 160 acres of cost-shared practice. Some of the applicants used the practice on more acres than they applied for cost-share.

Practice Info

The practices offered through the WQI Statewide initiative were selected because of their ability to be implemented in a short time frame and thereby providing a water quality benefit in 2013. The statewide approach gave farmers an opportunity to try these practices for the first time.

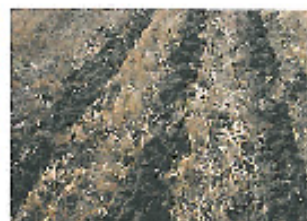
Offering a portion of WQI funding statewide allowed each county to participate. This funding, along with a targeted approach, engaged more farmers and landowners in the process.

Year-end totals of fall established practices through the WQI Statewide cost-share program was over 88,000 acres of cover crops and over 2,000 acres of N inhibitor.

Practices Offered Through Statewide WQI Funding in 2013



No-Till



Strip-Till



Cover Crops



Nitrification Inhibitor

Iowa Leaders in Conservation:

Six years of no-till proved its value in a 48-hour time span last spring for Hawarden farmer Nate Ronsiek. A pounding 3-inch rainstorm, followed by a 5-inch downpour the next day, washed away topsoil and created rills and gullies in some area farm fields. But the soil in Ronsiek's no-till fields held firm.

"I didn't have a single gully wash out," he said. "It takes a long time to build that soil back up. Anything you can do to save any of that, it's huge. Just seeing what happened after 8 inches of rain in two nights makes a big difference. There's no way I'd go back to conventional tillage."

-Nate Ronsiek No-till Farmer, Sioux County



Find out about more Iowa Leaders in Conservation at CleanWaterIowa.org



Message from the: State Conservationist, By Jay T. Mar, State Conservationist



A different kind of “healthcare” taking root in Iowa

There’s a game-changing movement coming from right here in Iowa. It has broad implications regarding the vitality of our farms, the health of our planet and our ability to feed more than 9 billion people worldwide who will be coming to dinner by the year 2050.

This movement continues to grow thanks to a different kind of healthcare—the health and care of our precious soil.

Previously, we looked at soil in terms of its “quality.” But as one farmer observed recently, “Anything can have quality, but only *living* things can have health.” Focusing on “soil health” versus “soil quality” reflects a fundamental shift in the way we now care for our nation’s soil.

Practices like no-till, cover crops, rotational grazing, and crop rotations are helping to improve the health and vitality of our soils.

Talk to any Iowa farmer working to improve the health of the soil and he or she will likely tell you that the “ah-ha” moment came upon the realization that soil isn’t just an inert growing medium. In fact, the soil is alive and teeming with trillions of microorganisms and fungi that are the foundation of an elegant, symbiotic ecosystem.

This new reality has quietly spawned an agricultural revolution. Increasingly, more and more producers in Iowa and throughout the nation are harvesting a wide range of production, environmental, sustainability and business benefits—on and off the farm—by improving soil health.

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service recently launched a new education and awareness campaign titled “Unlock the Secrets in the Soil” to help more farmers and ranchers discover the basics and benefits of soil health—and to encourage the adoption of soil health-improving practices like cover cropping, no-till and diverse crop rotations.

Last year, Iowa farmers grew an estimated 300,000 cover crop acres – a 300 percent increase over 2012. NRCS is committed to assist these soil health pioneers—and to help make their farms more productive, resilient and profitable along the way.

As we face mounting production, climate and sustainability challenges, we believe there is no better time to make a long-term commitment to improve the health of our *living* and *life-giving* soil.

The promise of our future depends on it.

Jay T. Mar is the State Conservationist for USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service in Iowa. For more information on soil health visit www.nrcs.usda.gov

Soil and water conservation districts work closely with a number of local, state and federal agencies, as well as with local groups and organizations. In particular, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services have close ties with the districts. The Division helps districts administer state and local programs, including financial incentive programs and assigns state technical and secretarial people to districts. The NRCS works through districts, providing technical soil conservationists and other natural resource specialists as well as office space for the local district.

Districts work closely with other entities including the Iowa Association of Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners, USDA Farm Services Agency, USDA Rural Development, State Soil Conservation Committee, Iowa Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, county conservation boards, county boards of supervisors, drainage districts and levee districts.