

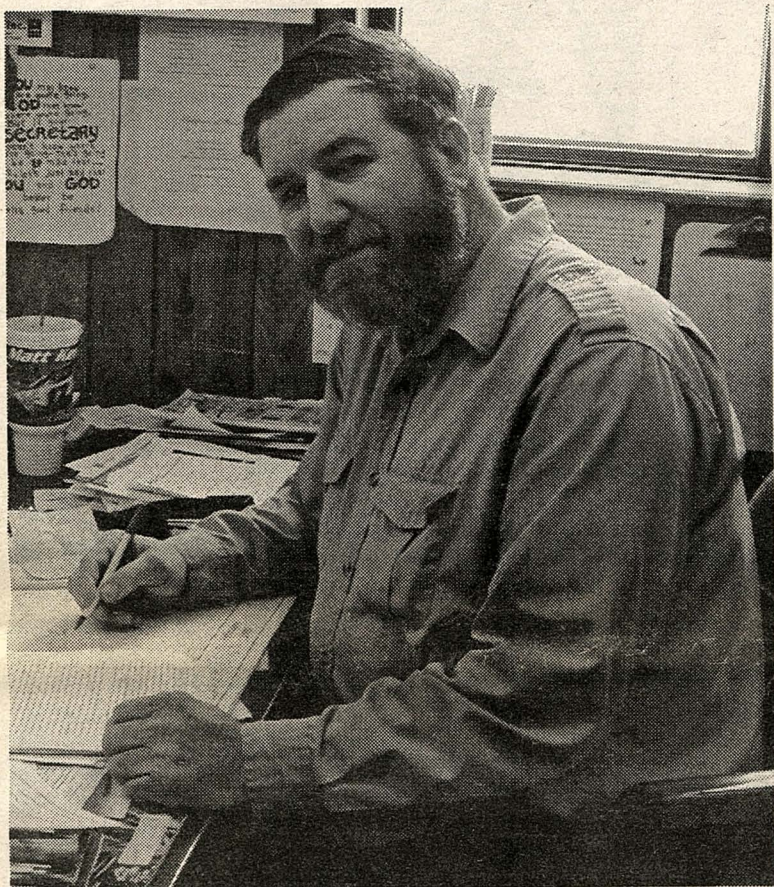
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Fayette SWCD Annual Report

Steege farm enters into conservation easement agreement



Jon Steege

How many times have you heard people say, "Boy, the old 'Smith' place sure looks different. It's a good thing they can't see what happened to it because they certainly wouldn't like it." ? I am sure we have all said that about one farm or another sometime in our life. But the Steege family at Maynard is taking steps to insure such a scenario doesn't happen on our family farm. Through a co-operative effort with the Fayette County Soil & Water Conservation District, we are donating a conservation easement for the land. Easements can either be donated or sold but we chose donating because, even though we were placing restrictions on the land, we didn't feel we were giving up anything of value that was important to us. The easement will insure that the land remains not only in agricultural production but also that the conservation measures that were installed on the farm starting back in the 1960's will remain in place as the farm is passed on to future generations and perhaps future non-family owners. Additional features will restrict building development to the existing approximate 11-acre building site and will also limit building of any large single-purpose

livestock facilities and housing developments. This is consistent with the family's wish that the land remain in agricultural production.

How does someone come to a decision such as this? Half of the farm recently changed hands due to settlement of an estate. At the time our family sat down and talked about what would be the best way to keep the farm in the family and yet maintain the things that were important to us. We consulted with an attorney who specializes in farm law. We explained the things that are important to us, what we wanted to preserve, and how we wanted the farm to stay in our family; and he suggested a course of action to meet those needs. We are currently in the process of drawing up the legal documents to make that a reality.

During this process we also consulted with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation about ways of putting a conservation easement on the land to protect the integrity of the contours and keep soil erosion at a minimum while improving water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat on the farm. At their December meeting, the Fayette County Soil &

Water Conservation District Commissioners agreed to hold the easement and guarantee its performance. It seemed the logical course of action that a local group concerned with soil conservation be the guardians of the soil conservation practices on our farm. Also encouraged will be participation in programs such as the continuous CRP under which we have installed contour buffer strips.

I don't know what my grandfather would think of what we are doing with the farm because he died when I was very young. But I believe my father would approve and, indeed, be pleased by the course of action we are taking. We have discussed our plans with our children and they agree it is the right course to take.

If other people are interested in taking a similar course of action or just want to find out more about what can be done to protect land through the use of conservation easements, they can contact me at 637-2733, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation at 515-288-1846, or the Fayette County Conservation Board at 422-5146.

Conservation easements explained by Natl. Heritage Foundation

My thanks to Jerry Muff for the opportunity to share a few thoughts on a different aspect of the term "conservation." I certainly applaud him, his staff, and all the NRCS folks who diligently carry our federal programs through local county offices. In fact, they are commonly the primary reference that comes to mind with many farmers and landowners when the subject of conservation is brought up. There was a time when I was much the same.

Though my 20 years of row crop farming are past, I still participate in all applicable NRCS programs on our Floyd County farm.

I still live on the land and feel its daily rhythms as many of you do, but my experience with "conservation" these days is in a broader realm. I work for a statewide, non-profit conservation organization called the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

We work separately from, but in conjunction with local, state, and federal public conservation organizations. We are a 20-year-old privately funded membership organization. A large part of the work I do with private landowners is not

widely practiced or even understood by many Iowans. Therefore, it is important to recognize we all can learn something about a concept that falls under the general heading of "conservation."

Let me try to introduce the notion of conservation easements.

A conservation easement is a way of permanently protecting private land. It is a legal document that, when recorded with the deed, voluntarily relinquishes certain practices for perpetuity. Consideration for a conservation easement always rely on two things: 1) what the land calls for, and 2) what the land owner wants to protect. A good easement simply formalizes an existing conservation intent. It is important to note that no conservation easement automatically allows public access. All rights and responsibilities of private land ownership not specifically relinquished are retained by the owner. Each and every easement is personally designed.

Property rights associated with land ownership can best be exemplified by a "bundle of sticks" analogy. When you own land, you collectively hold all the "sticks" that individually

represent the rights of mining, logging, grazing, subdividing, and others. You have the choice to separate out any one or more and simply extinguish them. Some public agencies and/or certain non profit organizations then "hold" the easement by accepting the responsibility of carrying out your wishes for perpetuity.

Conservation easements are not new. Land trusts that hold easements have been commonly operating in New England states for many years, protecting farms and open space. Wisconsin has several dozen locally based land trusts that protect designated land features. One Colorado based land trust was formed by ranchers to protect range land from intensive housing development pressure. In Iowa, INHF holds conservation easements with private landowners on Mississippi River bluffslands, central Iowa forests and lakeshores, and western Iowa loess hills farm land.

As I have visited with many Northeast Iowa landowners about this notion, I have had the pleasure of fielding varied responses.

One of my favorite discussions

arose from an obviously well seasoned older man who skeptically commented, "It looks to me like you are trying to govern from the grave." I told him he was exactly right; I could not have said it better myself. I quickly added that I have also felt the helplessness of many retiring landowners with their land being their primary retirement asset, and how much they love their land. In too many cases, they feel pressure to sell out to an uncertain future of their cherished land. Conservation easements offer hope that can extend a family's conservation legacy. They do work.

It is simply our mission to put some alternative options in front of willing landowners that may one day choose to protect their beloved resource and perhaps assist in some tax savings with the transitioning of that asset. It is definitely not our mission to talk anyone into anything that does not work well for them. Our work with private landowners is further rationalized by the premise that public land ownership alone cannot provide sufficient natural area and wildlife habitat protection.

Conservation easements represent only a small, but significant aspect of the whole we all call conservation.

We are willing to provide free additional information on request. The INHF main telephone number is (515)-288-1846. Also, the American Farm Bureau Federation has recently sponsored a new publication by Bick and Haney called the "Landowners Guide to Conservation Easements" that provides a good reference. The book is available from Kendall Hunt Publishing at 800-228-0810. Our ultimate goal is that all agencies and landowners working together can accomplish amazing conservation results yet to be realized.

Thank you for reading.
Darrel Mills
1695 Cameo Road
Nora Springs, IA 50458

Eric & Cindy Boehm's flood plain easement protects the land while providing habitat

Eric and Cindy Boehm live in a scenic valley south of Wadena. They have three children: Allison, one; Andrew, a high school senior, planning to attend ISU; and another daughter Jamie currently attending ISU, with plans to complete a masters degree relating to effects of phosphorus levels of pastures on water quality.

Eric has served on the Fayette County Conservation Board for approximately seven years. His wife Cindy, works full-time at the Fayette County Clerk of

Court office. Their farm is an excellent example of not only soil and water conservation measures, but also wildlife conservation. CRP Contour buffer strips and filter strips, grassed waterways, grassed head-

lands, and mulch tillage are a few practices applied to the farm in addition to a streambank stabilization project with lunger hides completed a few years ago. Woodland management is also utilized with the assistance of the DNR forester.

The May storm of 1999, had quite an impact on the Boehm farm. Their fields along Brush Creek were ravaged to the point that reparation would not be economically feasible. Brush Creek's floodwaters swept through the narrow valley, leaving large channels cut down to the bedrock, in addition to placing huge sand and rock depositions wherever it wanted.

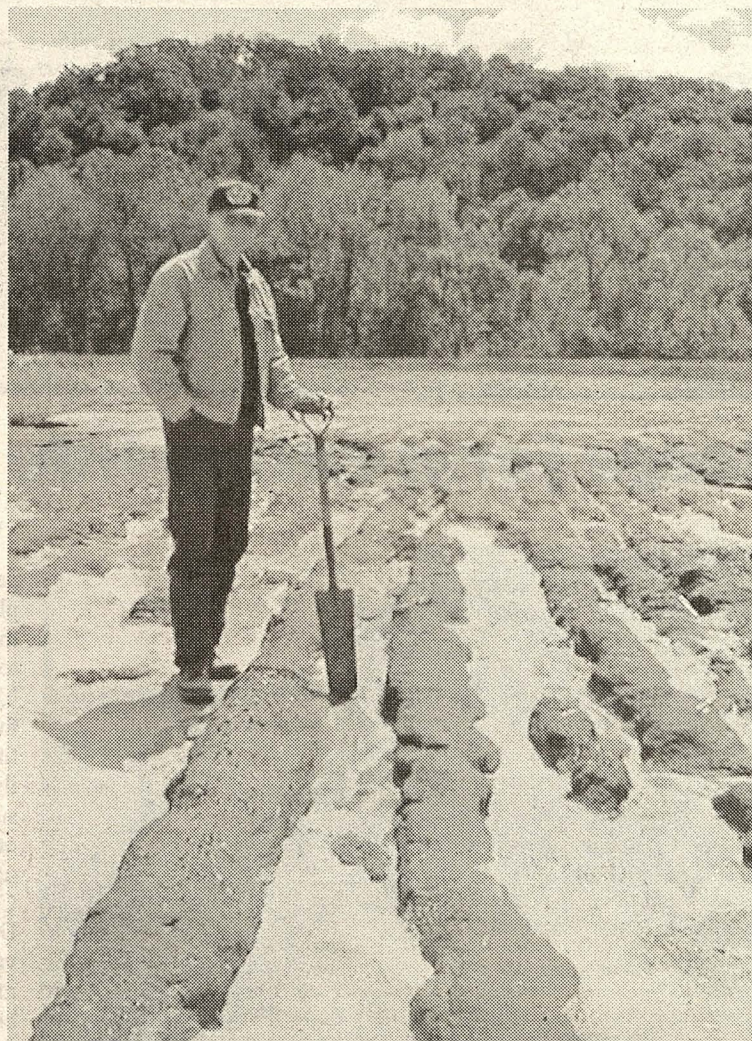
A fairly new program administered through the NRCS called the Emergency Watershed Protection floodplain easement program (EWP) caught the Boehms' interest. With this program, landowners offer their flood-damaged land for a floodplain easement. In other words, landowners are offered the full agricultural (pre-flood) value of the land for various restrictions placed on the land

in the form of a permanent easement. In general, permanent cover is established on the easement areas at the full cost to the government. The government also covers all surveying and associated legal expenses. The easement participant may do many of the things on this property they've done before filing the easement, but there are many things they are not able to continue doing. A few examples of allowable uses are recreational; such as hunting, fishing, trapping, camping, etc. Cropping or harvesting forage from the fields are examples of restricted uses. The only type of earthwork or excavation allowed, is with prior approval from NRCS. Another stipulation within the easement agreement is that the participant agrees that no more federal financial assistance may be provided for the easement area, including emergency aid.

Last May the Boehms' had just over 57 acres entered into the EWP. This includes approximately 25 acres of cropland and 32 acres of woodland. The Boehms' received 100% of the appraised value for the easement. The process was long and required a lot of work on the part of agency people, land surveyors, county employees associated with land records, real estate appraisers, lawyers and the Boehms'.

The Boehms' are happy they

Boehm, cont. to pg. 3



Boehm's field was eroded severely from the May storm, except where protected by the filter strip which was seeded to native prairie grasses. (Photo courtesy of Dan Burkhardt, Fayette County Extension.)

Congratulations
Matt & Diane Stewart

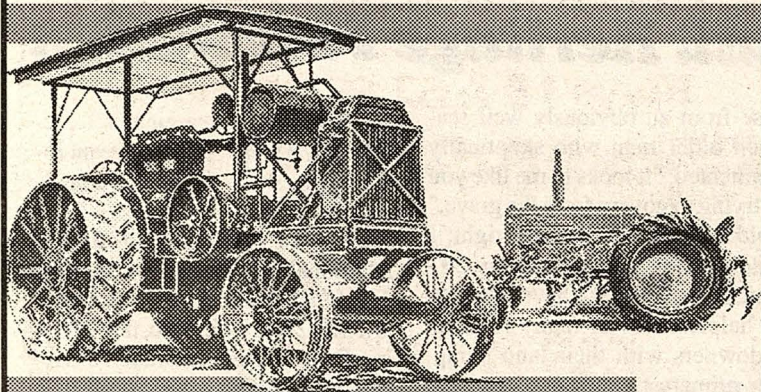
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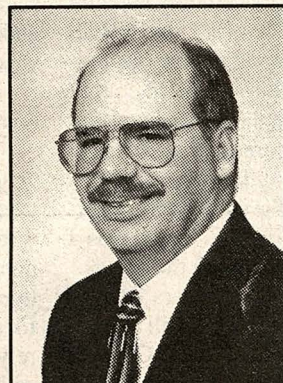
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2000 was a year of some successes and some misses for (CDI) Conservation Districts of Iowa. We were successful working with commissioners from across the state, the State Soil Conservation Committee, the Division of Soil Conservation,

the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Natural Resources, the Governor and the Iowa Legislature in getting funding to address several conservation needs. Among the biggest for the people of Fayette

County were bonus payments on contour buffers strips, watershed funding and a program to help districts hire some part time staff. It was another example that showed when we work with others we can

get more things done.

We provided training at spring and fall regional meetings and at the annual meeting for commissioners. Executive Director, Deb Ryun and local commissioners held several

watershed tours for legislators and the media across the state. The one nearest to Fayette County were the ones in Allamakee County, Howard County and Winneshiek County.

CDI officers and staff attended NACD (National Association of Conservation Districts) meetings and training in Illinois, Colorado, Washington, D.C., Michigan, and Arizona. The Water Quality Conference and the Carbon Conference here in Iowa were also on the agenda of CDI.

The people of CDI (commissioners, officers and staff) played a big role in getting the small watershed structure renovation bill the US Congress.

At the annual CDI meeting in September Will Ogle of Wadena was named outstanding Woodland Owner for the State of Iowa by the Iowa DNR. At this same meeting Bill Bennett of Elgin was reelected President of CDI. Judy Bennett of Elgin was reelected Treasurer of CDI Auxiliary.

Because of the tremendous workload reported to CDI by the districts across the state the association is working to obtain additional staffing for districts from the state. However, even though we were able to get this funding in the Dept. of Ag budget request, we were not able to get it in the Governor's Budget. To fill this need will require the work of all citizens across the state of Iowa. CDI requests this assistance from all.

CDI for the fifth year sponsored the Iowa Envirothon competition with the state winners from Decorah going to Wolfville, Nova Scotia to compete in the international competition. The Envirothon is a contest to test the skill of a five person high school team working together to solve environmental problems. Regional contests are held to narrow the field down for the state competition. Each district in the state has information on how high school students can take part in the Iowa Envirothon.

Boehm flooding,

cont. from page 2

went through with the easement project because Eric feels that most importantly, it's of most benefit to the land. The next time Brush Creek comes roaring through the valley, their soil will not only remain in place, but more than likely catch sediment from others' land from above. This was painfully illustrated during the '99 storm where the established filter strips held the soil and caught several inches of soil.

Eric plans to establish most of the cropland area to native prairie, except for five acres of tree planting to be done in 2001. He also plans to do some wetland restoration work with the assistance of the NRCS engineers.

Eric's philosophy on the subject of his easement project, is that while it appears to be a generous program, the annual federal farm program payments accrued over many years is possibly more expensive to the US government. The FSA estimates that farm payments made to Fayette County producers averaged approximately \$50 per acre on payment acres over the past five years. The Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) paid out approximately \$1.2 million to Fayette County landowners for the '99 disaster. When considering that this land will be under permanent cover while providing habitat for wildlife, it will also keep millions of tons of sediment out of the downstream river system for years to come.



Following the May 1999 floods, this depicts some of the devastation on the Eric & Cindy Boehm property south of Wadena. Pictured, is Jerry Muff. Photo by Dan Burkhart, Fayette Co. Extension Service.

We salute the conservation efforts of our area farmers!

IDENTIFICATION STATEMENT

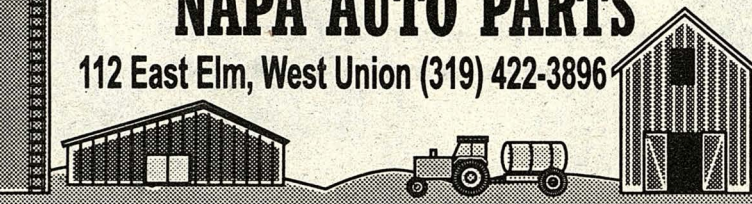
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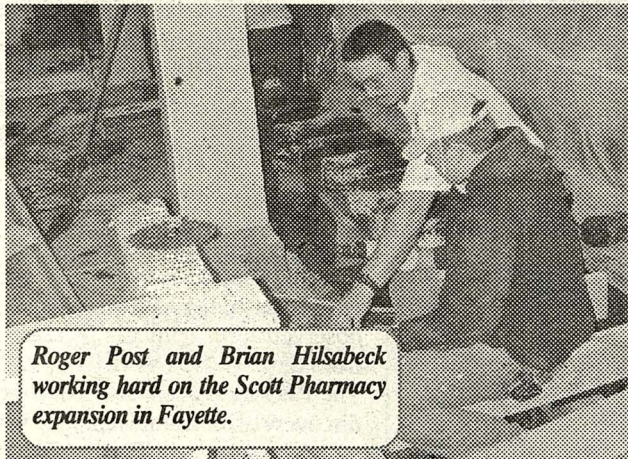
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Trout Habitat

Submitted by Eric Palas
Ensign Hollow II Project Coordinator

The quality of a stream is the reflection of its watershed. In Iowa, less than 15 of the 106 coldwater streams consistently support naturally reproducing populations of trout. Iowa's coldwater stream resources are limited in number and worthy of our protection.

Ensign and Hewett Creeks, in southeast Fayette and southwest Clayton counties, comprise the two distinct streams that are commonly referred to as Ensign Hollow. Ensign Creek, flowing east from

Thomasville Spring, has historically supported natural reproduction of brown trout. Natural reproduction has never been documented in Hewett Creek below the confluence with Ensign Creek. In the spring of 1999, the Fayette and Clayton Soil and Water Conservation Districts initiated the Ensign Hollow II Watershed Project. The project promotes the voluntary adoption of conservation practices by watershed landowners and farm operators, with the objective of improving the water quality of the two streams. The new effort builds upon a similar

project completed on the Ensign Creek Watershed in 1994.

The habitat that trout require is fragile. They find safety in pools more than two feet deep and in areas that provide a break from the current. Overhead cover provided by root wads, logs, brush, boulders and long stemmed grasses can protect trout from predators like herons and mink. Sediment is the major cause of trout habitat damage. Silt from eroding fields and streambanks fills pools and reduces the overhead cover where trout live. Trout also depend on insects for food. Sediment smothers the rocky habitat required to produce their insect foods and prevents them from spawning and reproducing. Trout eggs lie incubating in the crevices between gravel from spawning in early fall until they hatch in early spring. To ensure successful reproduction, a stream must be free of silt with a steady temperature.

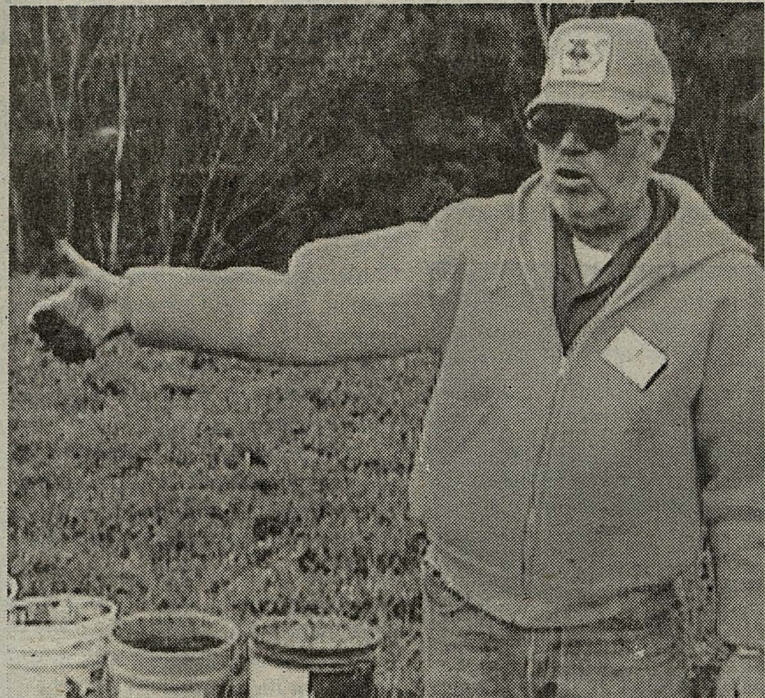
Trout like cool water temperatures. Eroding sediment has the long-term result of causing shallow stream channels that are easily warmed by the sun. Cold groundwater spring flows are essential to support trout, especially during periods of drought. Stream quality can be improved naturally, in part, by controlling upland erosion. The conservation practices that are used today, (such as residue management, contouring and terraces) have the common goal of holding water where it falls. Controlling surface runoff reduced the delivery of soil and nutrients to a stream, and allows water to cool as it is filtered through the groundwater system. Excluding livestock from a stream channel can also have a big impact on trout cover.

From 1990 through 1992, nearly 95 lunkers (artificial habitat structures) were installed on 15 sites along the state-owned portion of Hewett Creek by the DNR and the Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association.

Lunkers improve overhead cover and stabilize eroding streambanks. The installation of the structures also has the effect of increasing stream velocity. Higher current speeds remove sediment and exposes rock and gravel, which provides improved conditions for spawning and aquatic insect production. The habitat work coincided with two other events:

- Ensign Hollow was designated as a special regulation fishing area. All trout caught must be immediately released alive, and possession of trout is prohibited. Anglers are also required to use artificial lures only.
- Cattle were removed from the upper reaches of Ensign Creek.

The impact on the trout populations has been encouraging. On one particular stretch of Ensign Creek, observed trout numbers increased from three in 1991 to 618 in 1999. The 1999 assessment also led to the discovery of the natural reproduction of rainbow trout in Ensign Creek, making it one of four streams in Iowa where this has been documented. It would be difficult to determine what the trout population has responded to the most. The habitat improvement, the efforts of landowners to protect Ensign and Hewett Creeks and the catch and release regulation have all had a positive effect. What is very obvious is that there is a delicate balance between crop and livestock production and the impacts on our natural resources.



Will Ogle brought several soil samples for the third-grade students to see.



Chad Pemble showed the students how to tell the age of a tree by using a special drill



Sister Mary Kurt was recognized this year by the SWCD as Outstanding Teacher of the Year. She has been a great promoter of the third conservation education field day.

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Results of well water testing in the Upper Maquoketa River watershed

By Tom Sperflage, Environmental Specialist II
Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship -
Division of Soil Conservation

Quality drinking water is a need we all have. Clean, safe drinking water is more important than all of life's other essential needs except one - oxygen. Medical research indicates the average person can survive for about 14 days without food, about 3 days without water, and just minutes without oxygen.

Water quality is an issue we all have to work on. It affects our family health, our business, and our community...it permeates everything we do. Across the State of Iowa water quality projects are addressing water and water contamination. Here in northeast Iowa, several water quality projects are working to improve cold water trout streams.

Locally, the Upper Maquoketa River Water Quality Project is assisting watershed residents and landowners through education, incentives and cost-share to improve the quality of water that runs off their properties. Eventually, this runoff water reaches the Maquoketa River, Bruce Creek, Fenchel Creek or infiltrates through the soil profile to the ground water aquifer.

Ground water is an important resource for Iowa, particularly northeast Iowa. Recent estimates show that nearly 75% of Iowa's population receives its drinking water from ground water aquifers. Even though

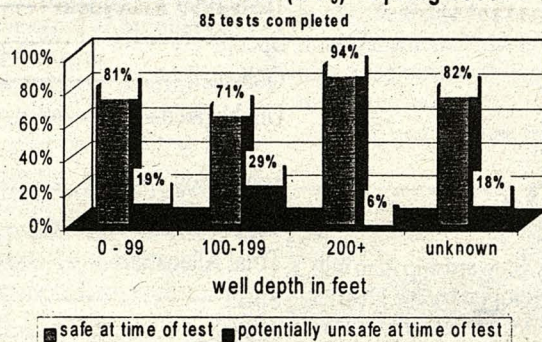
the soil profile has a certain capacity to filter and degrade contaminants, this ability can be limited when the soil layer is thin or other special conditions exist like sink holes, fractured bedrock, and "contamination overload". Unfortunately, many of these conditions exist in northeast Iowa, and can make our ground water vulnerable. When the aquifer becomes contaminated, it is very difficult and expensive (if even possible) to make it safe again.

In the spring of 1999, staff from Iowa State University Extension

the soil profile. Sources of nitrate contamination are numerous, with cropland fertilization being one of the leaders. Excessive concentrations of nitrate in drinking water can make life difficult for younger and older members of the family. Babies can develop "Blue Baby Syndrome" if too many nitrates are in the water for too long of a period. Boiling nitrate contaminated water only makes the problem worse.

Coliforms are bacteria that can cause dysentery and other maladies when ingested in the human body. Again, the younger and older fam-

Well tests for nitrate (NO₃) - spring 1999

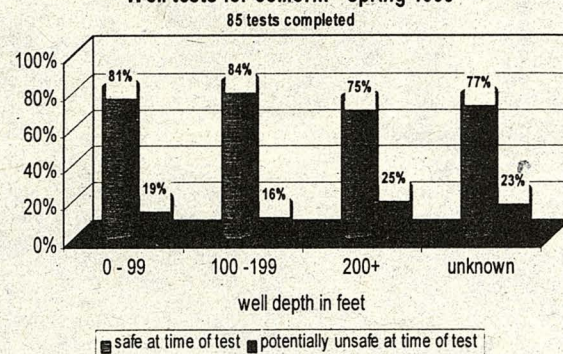


tested 85 wells in the Upper Maquoketa River watershed. Wells were sampled for nitrates and coliform. Nitrate nitrogen is a common contaminate found in Iowa ground water. It gets into the aquifer by leaching (typically) through

ily members can be most affected. Coliforms can get into the aquifer through leaking manure structures, improper manure disposal, septic systems and fields, and open well pits. Boiling coliform contaminated water may kill the coliforms, but it is not an effective method of treating the hundreds of gallons necessary to supply a home on a daily basis. Clearly, prevention is the key.

Results of the testing are graphed below. Generally speaking, Iowa State University Extension staff did not identify very many potentially unsafe wells. Concentrations of unsafe nitrate levels increased with shallow wells- which would be expected.

Well tests for coliform - spring 1999



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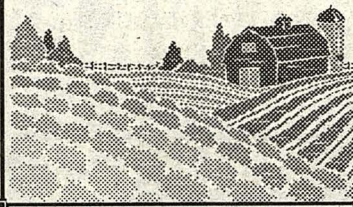
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Commissioners for the Fayette Soil and Water Conservation District include front-(L to R) Rod Marlatt, Joyce Trotter and Paul Nuss. Back- Dick Jensen and Jon Grafenburger. Absent from photo are Bill Bennett, Judy Bennett, Deb Dessel, Joe Wingert and Bill Ogle.

Northeast Iowa Private Forestlands Management Assistance Program Available

The four northeast Iowa counties of Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, and Winneshiek have been approved as an Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) priority area. This priority area titled Northeast Iowa Private Forestlands has cost-share available to do forest management practices, such as: tree planting, timber stand improvement, and livestock exclusion. The Northeast Iowa Private Forestlands has received \$180,000 in funds for cost sharing this sign-up.

About the program

EQIP is the USDA conservation cost-share program designed to encourage and support conservation of natural resources on private lands on a voluntary basis.

It provides technical assistance, cost-share payments, incentive payments, and education to producers who enter into 5-to 10-year contracts based on conservation plans.

Where to apply

Applications are being taken at local USDA Service Centers. Local employees of the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the conservation district can take applications.

Apply by completing and signing contract form CCC-1200 at the Service Center.

When to apply

The 2001 sign-up is scheduled

to be held March 5-March 30. The Northeast Iowa Private Forestlands priority area has been approved for funding for 5 years. Sign-ups will be held in future years to allocate funds.

After sign up is received, the application will be ranked to prioritize applications for cost-share approval. Applicants will be notified of the status of their application after approval by the state technical committee.

PRACTICE DESCRIPTIONS AND COST SHARE RATES

Tree Planting Designed to establish or re-establish locally native trees and other desirable non-native woody vegetation by means of planting seedling stock or direct seeding method. Cost-share= 75% not to exceed \$315.00 per acre.

Timber Stand Improvement Designed to improve the condition of forests for multiple resource benefits. Cost-share= 75% not to exceed \$75.00 per acre.

Livestock Exclusion (fencing) Designed to protect forest resources from destruction by domestic livestock. Cost-share= 75% not to exceed \$1.00 per foot.

Plantation Maintenance Designed to provide weed control in years after tree planting. Cost-share= 75% not to exceed \$45.00 per acre.

A Forestry Stewardship Plan will need to be developed by the District Forester for your country. For Winneshiek and Fayette counties, contact: Gary Beyer, District Forester, USDA Building, Box 4, Charles City, IA 50616, phone: (515) 228-6611. For Allamakee and Clayton Counties, contact: Bruce Blair, District Forester, P.O. Box 662, Elkader, IA 52043, phone: (319) 245-1891; or Greg Heidebrink, EQIP Forester, at (319) 245-1891.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT JULY 1, 1999 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2000

IM BUDGET

Allocation-----	\$ 3,000.00
Supplemental-----	2,107.00
Total Allocation-----	5,107.00
Commissioner Expenses-----	2,835.86
Office Supplies & Expenses-----	\$ 2,622.20

3M BUDGET COST-SHARE PROGRAM

1999-2000 Allocation-----	\$ 43,663.00
Spent-----	26,618.68
Obligated-----	15,227.71
Unobligated-----	1,816.61

1998-1999 Allocation-----	\$ 37,842.00
Spent-----	29,511.33
Obligated-----	7,342.87
Unobligated-----	987.80

1997-1998 Allocation-----	\$ 37,616.00
Supplemental Allocation-----	1,500.00
Total Allocation-----	39,116.00
Spent-----	21,834.66
Obligated-----	11,691.51
Returned to State-----	\$ 5,589.83

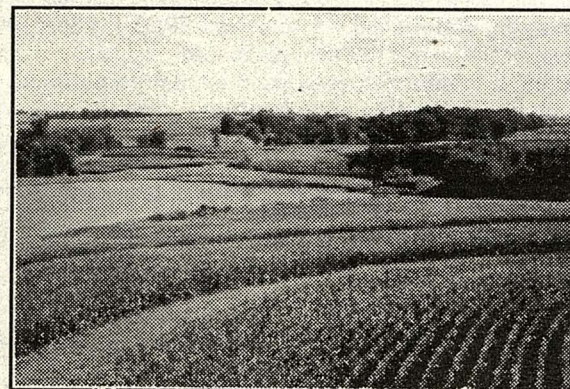
REAP Practices Allocation-----	\$12,030.00
Supplemental Allocation-----	17,810.00
Total Allocation-----	29,840.00
Spent-----	14,371.00
Reallocated under 2001 Funds-----	14,805.00
Returned to State-----	\$ 664.00

REAP Forestry/Native Grasses Allocation-----	\$ 4,952.00
Supplemental Allocation-----	8,137.50
Total Allocation-----	13,089.50
Spent-----	6,524.63
Reallocated under 2001 Funds-----	5,700.00
Returned to State-----	\$ 864.87

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- Time savings - up to 450 hours on a 1,000 acre farm
- Reduced labor - with fewer trips to the field
- Reduced machinery wear - No-till saves an estimated \$5/acre
- Fuel savings - fewer trips, no-till saves an avg. 3.5 gallons/acre
- Higher soil moisture - reduced evaporation saves up to 2" of water
- Reduced soil erosion - can reduce wind & water erosion to 90%
- Improved surface water quality - by holding soil particles, nutrients & pesticides on the field, less runoff
- Increased organic matter - important to long-term fertility
- More wildlife - crop residues provide shelter & food for wildlife
- Reduced carbon gas releases - keeps natural occurring carbon in the soil, reducing green-house effect

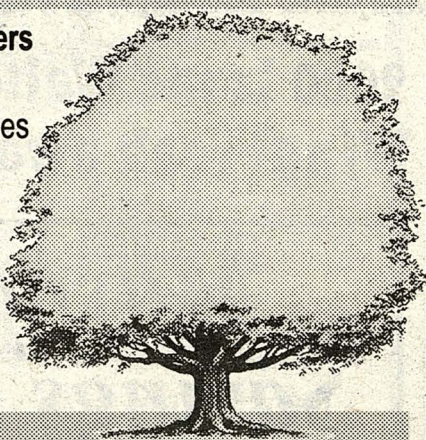


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A cash rent quiz

By Dan Burkhart, Fayette County Extension Education Director

Please answer the following question--which of the following is the best place to determine a fair cash rental rate?

- local coffee shop
- Fayette County Assessor's office (in the Courthouse)
- FSA (Farm Service Agency) office located in West Union
- Iowa State University Extension Office located in Fayette

Let's discuss each of the potential answers. First the coffee shop. The credibility of information exchanged over coffee related to cash rents is at its best unreliable. In many cases it leads to conclusions like this-- "Well, if your tenant is paying you that much and it's just down the road from my farm, then mine should be worth at least that much." As you can predict, the probability of discussing lower or fair cash rents at the coffee shop is very small.

Both the tenant and the landlord need some basic information on which to base rent decisions. This leads to the second potential answer-- the Fayette County Assessor's office. You can find out what the productivity of your farm is by asking the assessor for your average CSR. CSR stands for corn suitability rating. CSR's provide a relative ranking from 0-100 of all Iowa soils based on their potential for intensive row crop production. Soils in County range from an average CSR of 5 (Chelsea loamy fine sand with a 14-25% slope) to 95 (Richwood silt loam with a 0-2% slope.) A farm with an average CSR of 85 would generally be very productive while a farm with a CSR of 29 would have limits on crop production due to sand, shallow bedrock, or slope. The taxes you pay on your farm are based on this productivity index. Be aware that the average CSR is for the whole farm, including timber, wetlands, and any other non-crop acres.

The third potential answer is a visit to the FSA (Farm Service Agency) office. Here you can find out what your farm's crop acreage base is. This affects what a tenant receives in deficiency payments under the farm program. You can also get the official number of crop acres on your farm. While you are there, ask about the CRP (Conservation Reserve Program). You might want to ask about the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program if you have a stream flowing through your farm. If you need information on any government farm program, just ask. Stop next door before you leave the building and see if you need to update your conservation plan at the NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) office or check out the cost share for waterways or other conservation projects. You also

could fine tune your average CSR by looking at your soil maps.

The final potential answer is

your Fayette County Extension Office. You will want to pick up Iowa State University Extension's annual cash rental survey. The survey is the result of a statewide survey of farmers, landowners, agricultural lenders, real estate brokers, and professional farm managers. They base their estimates on typical cash rental rates for high, medium, and low quality cropland in their counties.

Estimates of expected corn yields are derived from actual farm yields submitted for crop insurance documentation. Our example farm with an average CSR of 85 would probably fit into the high quality one-third of Fayette County farms in the survey. The range of cash rents is from \$130-165/acre with an average of \$148. You could expect corn yields to average 143 bushel/acre as a five-year average.

If another farm averages 133 bushels/acre, has a lower CSR, and has some other crop limiting factor such as drainage, then we will look at the medium quality rental rates. The average cash rent was \$123 with a range of \$95-150/acre.

Our example farm with an average CSR of 29 would fit into the low quality category. The average low quality cash rental rate is \$105 per acre. The low quality rental rate range is from \$90-120/acre. Typical five-year average corn yield could be 112 bushels/acre.

The survey also shows what the average rent per bushel of corn or soybeans and what the average rent/CSR index point is. The farm with an average CSR of 85 calculates out at \$137.70/acre and the farm with the CSR of 29 calculates out at \$47/acre. You say you don't know anyone that is paying only \$47/acre? Well, that is where market demand comes in. If the rent on this farm is actually at \$90/acre, it reflects market demand. If the current tenant doesn't pay \$90 per acre, someone else will. If we have a dry year, the potential for loss by the tenant is great. Can the tenant really afford to rent this farm at \$90/acre? This is called risk. In a cash rental agreement the tenant assumes all the crop production risk. The landlord's risk of not getting the rent is low, even if there is a crop failure or government farm programs disappear. In a 50-50 rental agreement both share production risk, both benefit from high prices or yields and both can suffer losses.

What is the correct answer to the question? I'm sure you have it figured out by now. The correct answer is b, c, and d. If you want to determine a fair cash rental rate for both tenant and landlord based on productivity, then visit b, c, and d, do your homework, and negotiate. If not, go to the coffee shop.

Field day features waterways, nutrient management

Waterway construction and improvement, one of the practices cited by the Maquoketa Headwaters Watershed Council as a way to reach water quality goals, led the list of events at the fall field day held Nov. 1 near Arlington.

The field day was held at the Darrel Rosburg-Smith farm southeast of Arlington, with the Watershed Council as sponsor.

Waterway demonstrations featured a Hurricane Ditcher, used to build new or reshape existing waterways, and a machine used to install erosion-reducing landscape fabric across new waterways.

Bill Bennett, Fayette Soil and Watershed District (SWCD) commissioner told some 40 producers, landowners and agency staff attending the field day that good waterway management includes good practices above the waterway, as well as good maintenance.

"We need to manage the whole

waterway," he said, to keep it from silting in. Jerry Muff, District Conservationist, Fayette County, said Natural Resource Conservation Service specifications require upland treatment, if the waterway is to qualify for incentive payments. Muff and Tom Sperfslage, Upper Maquoketa River project environmental specialist, also discussed incentives, bonuses and options available to landowners, and Iowa State University Extension's Brian Lang and Dan Meyer discussed seeding, especially the need to finish fall waterway work by early August to allow time for the seeding to become established before the growing season ends.

The fabric-laying machine is owned by the Fayette SWCD and is available to landowners and producers in the county. The machine installs a length of fabric "fence" across the waterway. The fabric, 36 inches wide and buried about half that width, acts to dam water runoff

during heavy rains while grass seeding is getting established.

Cost of the fabric is about \$1 per running foot. Distance between the fabric line varies between 50 and 100 feet, based on the slope of the waterway. For more information on waterways and the fabric installation, contact the Fayette SWCD in West Union. Producers and landowners in the Maquoketa Headwaters Watershed should contact Tom Sperfslage, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardships environmental specialist, concerning these programs and incentives within the watershed.

Iowa State University's agricultural and biosystems engineering department demonstrated a machine used in current research on nitrogen fertilizer management. Pete Lawlor, ISU research associate, said the machine injects liquid nitrogen fertilizer about 4-6 inches into the soil, then covers and compacts the soil above the slot.

The machine destroys or disrupts the macropores, which are formed by earthworms or from previous crop root systems. "The concept is to get water that goes to tile lines to go around the area where the fertilizer is knifed in," he said. Tests during recent years show a 10 to 20 percent reduction in nutrient loss, he said.

Chad Ingels, Maquoketa Watershed Project manure and nutrient management specialist explained the results from watershed demonstrations conducted in the watershed.

Results from these nitrogen management demonstrations show that nitrogen use can be reduced from average watershed levels while maintaining yield and increasing profit. Reducing commercial N application may promote more efficient crop use of soil N, therefore decreasing the chance of N moving into the surface water system. Phosphorus management demonstrations in the Maquoketa Headwaters Watershed this crop year show that yields are not increased and profits are actually reduced when crop removal rates of phosphate, P₂O₅, fertilizer are applied to soils on three farms in the watershed.

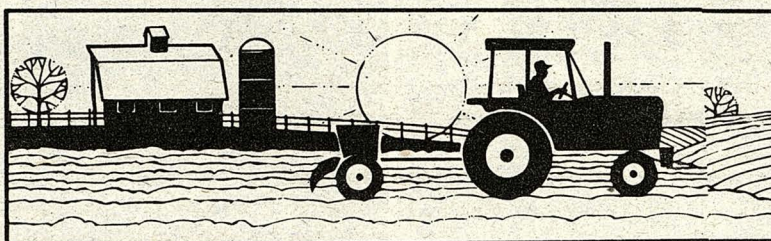
Following the morning tillage field day, Bob Bassett hosted a visit to his riparian buffer site a mile south. Bassett's project is a Trees Forever Buffer Initiative and Trees Forever cosponsored this visit.

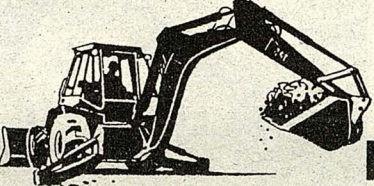
Bassett said he initiated the project because he had 13 acres of pasture "that wasn't good pasture." He decided to do something else on the land because the Maquoketa River flows through and when he heard of the riparian buffer program thought it sounded good. It was an opportunity to help decrease sediment loss into the river, he said.

The work was done over three years with the help of a number of agencies, including NRCS.

Bassett said his priorities in the project were: 1) establish switchgrass in the areas needing immediate protection and to filter the water; 2) take care of riverbank erosion before planting any trees; and then 3) planting trees. Nearly 3,000 trees of many species were planted in the buffer area.

Bassett, Carol Teator of Trees Forever and Muff emphasized the need to plant good native seed in similar buffer projects to ensure success.





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Amundson family sold on intensive grazing

By Kevin Amundson

Intensive grazing began on our farm in 1992. At that time it was used for the summer pasture for a cow/calf operation. Since that time we have converted to stocker steers.

If there has been one factor in promoting this on our farm is high tensile electric fencing. The new technology of low impedance fences is what makes this grazing system work. The construction of this fence costs about 1/3rd less than using barbed wire. There is no better fence to build.

The second part of the evolution to grazing has been the recommended grasses and legumes to put in the pasture. We have come a long way from the original thoughts of "plant what's in the road ditch" to "treat it like a corn crop". The first pastures were seeded to brome grass, timothy, reeds canary, white clover and red clover. This past year we seeded down the remaining uplands to Perennial rye grass and white clovers. We have also found a company that specializes in forages. It is The "Pioneer" of the forage companies in Europe. This switch to these forages has put our pastures in high gear.

The third piece of the puzzle seems to come from proper fertilization. The use of a balanced blend of nutrients has reaped more benefits

than just tons of forage. The quality has been continually improving.



Kevin Amundson

Also, lime has become a significant "nutrient" to apply.

The most satisfying of all of this has been the increased soil conservation. As a prime example, we had a horrific rain of 2.8" which washed rock across the gravel roads about four weeks after seeding. I did not look forward to going up the hill to see all the wash out gullies. To my complete surprise, we had only two small cuts. If this had been in corn, the resulting gullies would have been huge.

Last summer we hosted a pasture walk on June 20. We are happy to visit with anyone about our experiences with managed intensive grazing. Just give us a call.

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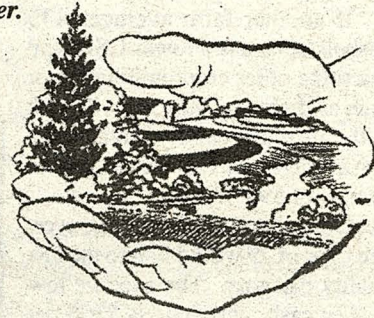
Bill Bennett and other family members honor his father, Cleve Bennett. Cleve was one of the first Fayette SWCD Commissioners.



Helen Halstead and grandchildren plant a tree in memory of George Halstead, past SWCD commissioner.



Carol Nus shown with SWCD chairperson, Bill Bennett planting a tree to honor her late husband Carl, past SWCD commissioner.



Report from NACD

By Bill Bennett NACD Director

NACD has been working on many national issues during 2000 as it has for more than fifty years. Among the issues NACD has been working on is the new farm bill, finding a way to help provide staffing for conservation districts, how to use all of our resources in the best way, how to be more responsible to the needs of our customers, what the needs of our customers are, how to cut costs and do more with less and

a great number of other things.

NACD works on things that are of a national scope and cannot or are difficult for state associations, like CDI, to do on their own. The same thing can be said about state associations, they work on things for districts to do on their own. Legislation is one of these things. CDI works on it on a state level and NACD works on it on a national level.

NACD has various committees that address different issues. The committees NACD has are: agricultural lands resources, district operations, education, environment and resource policy, forest resources, grazing lands & public lands resources, urban, community, & coastal resources and water resources. These committees meet and hold hearings on different issues that are brought forth from the district across the nation.

Bill Bennett of Elgin is one of seven district officials from the country that serves on the forestry resources committee and one of eleven NACD Board of Directors members to serve on national resource committees. Resource committees normally meet twice a year, while the NACD board usually meets three times a year.

NACD normally has several task forces working on non-permanent issues. NACD like individual conservation districts works with almost any group to serve the needs of people. All of this is done so that conservation districts can better serve their customers, all the citizens of each district.

The NACD mission statement is: To enable conservation district to pool their resources to accomplish collectively what would be difficult or impossible to accomplish individually.

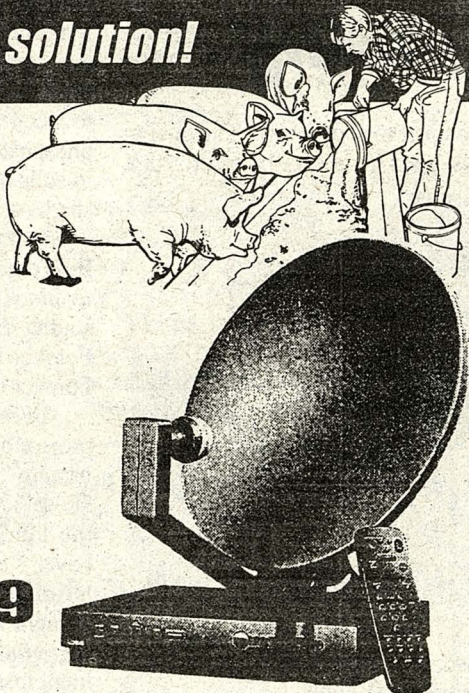
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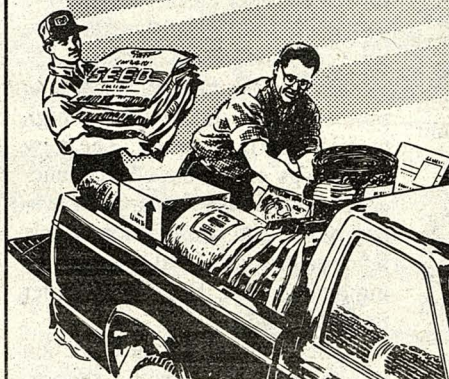
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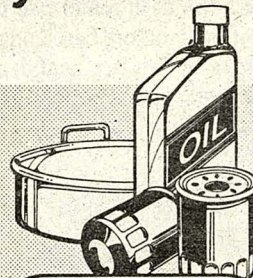
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Ralph Houg conservation education farm

In 2000, the Fayette SWCD was able to start developing areas on the Ralph Houg Education Farm for instructing people of all ages in forestry and water quality practices.

With the help of the Northeast Iowa Forestry Advisory Committee and the West Union Boy Scouts, the district has six different forestry practices. In the northwest corner of the farm is an untreated area that was left. Next to it is an area where 50 percent of the over story was killed and seedlings planted. Then an area was established with 100 percent of the over story killed and seedlings planted. In both of these areas some of the seedlings have tree shelters and some do not.

The area to the east had a dozer remove the weed trees and was direct seeded with nuts and acorns. Across the valley, seedlings were planted into grasslands. The other practice is near the road that goes through the farm, and is a TSI (timber stand improvement) harvest and a planting of seedlings at a rate of four seedlings for each tree harvested. The only trees harvested were ones in poor health so the healthy ones could continue to grow.

For water quality and to help prevent soil erosion, SWCD commissioners with the use of farm tractors and loaders constructed a gully block that will also create a small pond. This is located in the northwest forestry demo area. On the land east of the road an area has been seeded to native grasses and forbes.

In November and December a

new pond was constructed. The wetland area on the farm is to be enhanced in the summer of 2001.

The Fayette SWCD received a grant from the Fayette County Farm Bureau to help with the cost of the projects. All of these areas will be used to help educate people of all ages. Eventually the field day for third graders will be moving from the Dick and Dorothy Jensen farm to the Ralph Houg Conservation Education Farm.



Bill Bennett distributing walnuts as a part of a direct seeding on the Ralph Houg conservation farm.



Site preparation being done on the Ralph Houg conservation farm, east of West Union.



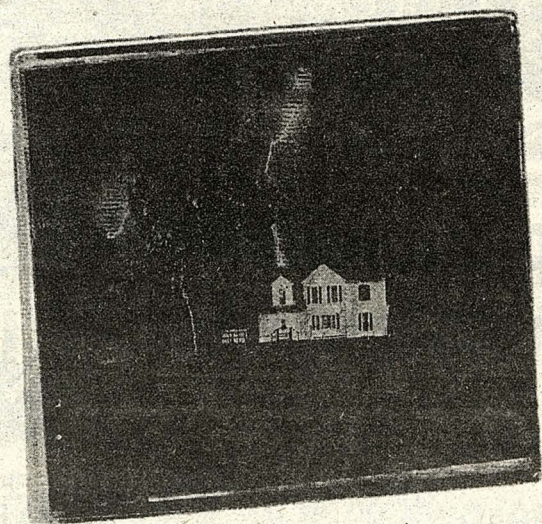
Bill Bennett is shown applying tree seed as part of a direct seeding on the Ralph Houg conservation farm.

SWCD has "no hunting" policy

Due to the fact that the Ralph Houg Conservation Education Farm has been designated for conservation education, the SWCD Commissioners will not allow hunting on this property. This is for safety and liability reasons.



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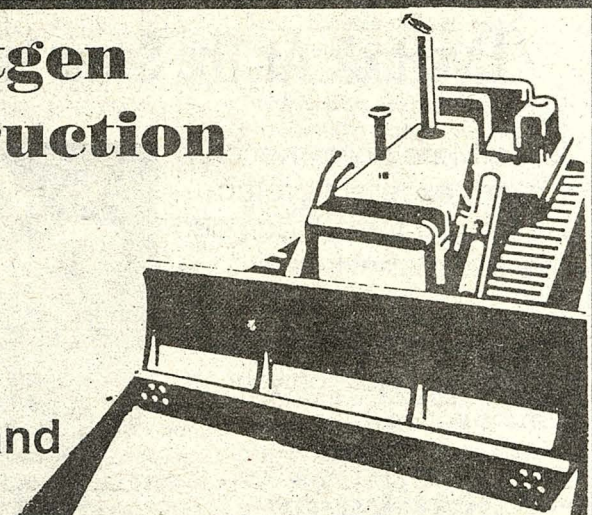
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Projects new and old at RC&D for Northeast Iowa

By Andy Johnson

Based in Postville, Resource Conservation and Development for Northeast Iowa is a nonprofit organization dedicated to sustainable development in Allamakee, Buchanan, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winnebago Counties. We work on a project basis, assisting individuals and organizations make ideas become reality through planning, organizational, grant-writing, and other forms of assistance. Projects range from community development and resource-related business assistance to watersheds and water quality, forestry, and value-added agriculture.

The RC&D is sponsored by the Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Boards of Supervisors from the six counties mentioned above. Our Fayette County board members include Bill Bennett from the Soil and Water Conservation District, Dick Jensen from the Board of Supervisors and Marilyn Rubner as an at-large member and board president. Staff in the office include myself, Teresa Steffens as program management assistant, Jeanne Kruckenberg as office assistant, Lora Friest as Upper Iowa Watershed coordinator and Pat Henry as Geographic Information Systems specialist.

The year 2000 has been a time of change at the RC&D in many ways. I joined the RC&D full time in January and became part of a strong organization with a proud history of facilitating positive, sustainable change in our communities and rural landscapes. Lora Friest came on board last fall and has been leading an exciting, dynamic and rapidly growing Upper Iowa Watershed Al-

liance into one of the most recognized and respected such groups in the state.

Patrick Henry came on this spring as a volunteer and later as GIS specialist. He works closely with the Upper Iowa project on resource analysis, assessment and educational activities using GIS as a tool. Geographic Information Systems are powerful computer systems with the potential to display, overlay and simultaneously analyze many layers of geographic data from land use, soils and streams to land ownership and demographic data. Pat is also available to do contract work on other natural resource or watershed projects. To learn more about this or other aspects of his work, feel free to give him a call at the office.

Our work has not been all oriented to the north however. We are working closely with a small group of landowners towards the formation of a sustainable forestry cooperative for northeastern Iowa. Such a cooperative would be modeled after existing coops in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Economically, they provide a means for forest landowners to organize and pursue value-added processing and marketing of their timber. Ecologically and educationally, they provide a forum for members to learn more about their forests, be assured of sustainable management and harvesting and share knowledge and experiences surrounding all aspects of forests and their place in the landscape.

Teresa has been working tirelessly with tourism representatives from each county on two re-

lated projects. The six counties have cooperatively implemented a web page accessible from www.visitiowa.org describing the tourism opportunities available in the region. And most recently, we have helped facilitate (and partially fund) the revision and reprinting of the visitors guidebook to the six-county area, which is hot off the press as we speak. These two resources have proven indispensable to folks wanting to visit us in this beautiful corner of Iowa.

ner of Iowa.

The list of projects goes on and on but one worth special mention regarding Fayette County is the possibility for methane recovery from the Fayette landfill. Methane is produced as the buried garbage breaks down and when recovered and used as an alternative energy source also prevents the methane from becoming a potent greenhouse gas in the atmosphere.

And thanks go out to all board members (especially Marilyn, Bill

and Dick here in Fayette Co., our staff, and all those partner agencies (such as the Fayette Soil and Water Conservation District), organizations, and individuals who have helped RC&D make things happen. We are just beginning a planning process that will include public meetings and participation in all counties coming up in February and March. If you are interested in participating and helping us identify priority work areas, please call us at the office at (319) 864-7112

Michael Henderson joins SWCD staff

Michael Henderson has recently been hired by the Fayette Soil and Water Conservation District through a Water Protection Development Grant.

The District developed the grant proposal to obtain funds to study the water quality of Mink and Grannis Creeks and to offer land treatment

measures in Grannis Creek watershed.

Improving the water quality of Grannis Creek would be accomplished by a combination of conservation practices and education. The proposal outlines an intensive scouting program that would be focused on educating the landowner/operator to scout their fields. It would also facilitate the implementation of on land conservation efforts within the watershed.

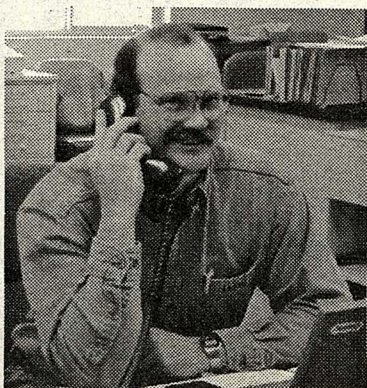
This is only the grant proposal and it would have to receive funding before this could all be implemented.

"I have been working at Postville Coop since fall of 1993 as the agronomist. In 1995 I helped bring in Site Specific Technology to the Coop. I worked extensively with the area farmers to show how GPS technology could work for them.

"Before that I was attending Oklahoma State University where I received a B.S. in Crop and Soil Science in 1990 and a M.S. in Agronomy in 1993," says Henderson.

Raised on a large irrigated farm in the Oklahoma Panhandle which his Dad and brother are currently operating. Michael married Eva Meyer, a native of Postville, in 1993 following college graduation for both.

They have three daughters, Sarah (5), Dawn (3), and Leah (7 mos.). Sarah is attending Kindergarten at Valley CEW. We live and have a farm just north of Gunder in Clayton County. "Water quality and land conservation has always been important to me and I am looking forward to stepping into the field of resource conservation work," said Henderson.



Mike Henderson

Don Jensen
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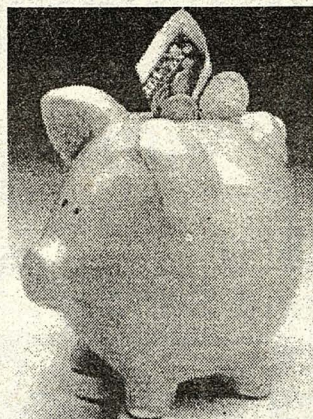
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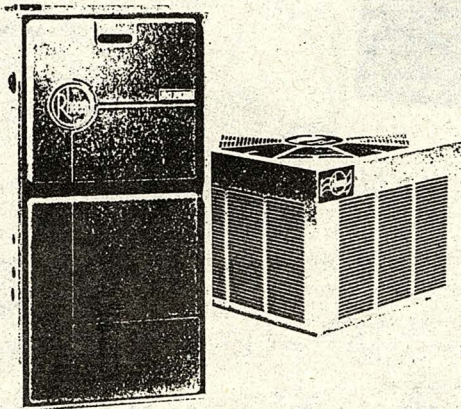
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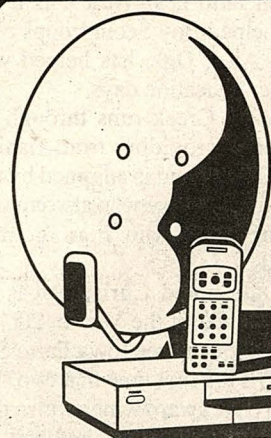
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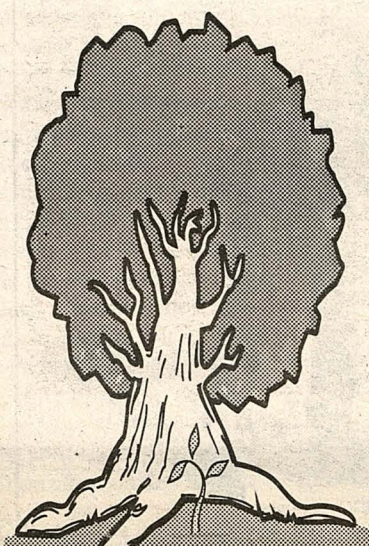
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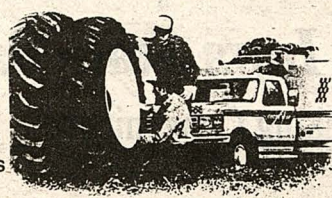
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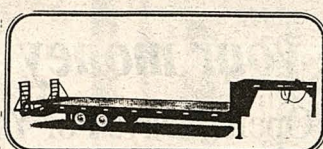
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Ogle gets county, state 'Woodland Owner' award

In the fall of 1984 Will Ogle bought 39 acres of land on Bighorn Road, north of Wadena.

Then a resident of Marion, he bought the land as a getaway from his job at Rockwell-Collins in Cedar Rapids. He didn't know much about forestry.

"I had an interest in an area where it was hilly and had timber... not in timber as a product, but as a recreational area," said Ogle.

He's certainly learned a lot. Ogle was named the 2000 Fayette County SWCD Woodland Owner of the Year. Ogle also went on to earn honors as the Iowa Woodland Owner of the Year.

Ogle put together a Woodland Stewardship plan in 1994 with Gary Beyer, District Forester from Charles City. A wildlife area was created across the road from his house through the planting of specific trees and keeping selected trees which produce foodstuffs.

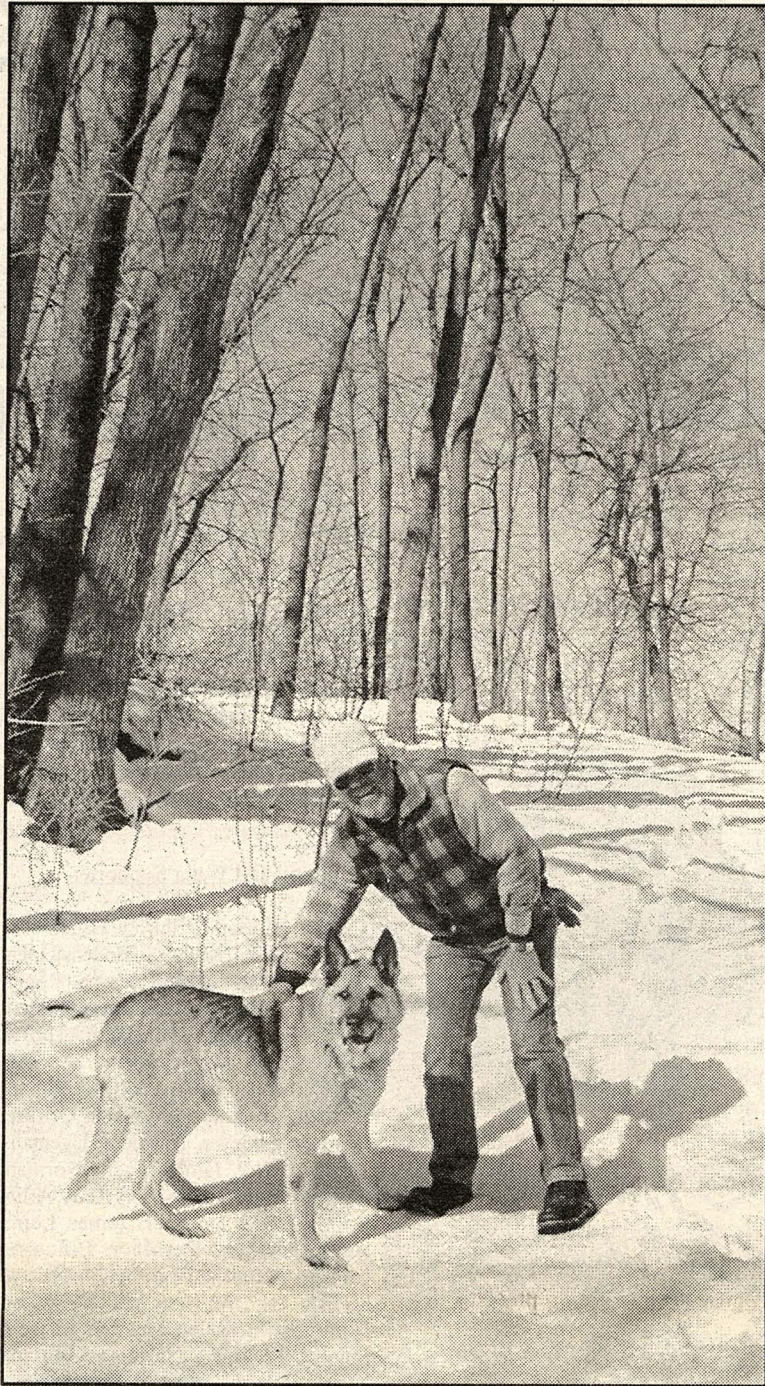
As far as recreation there, Ogle has created a trail running through the woods for friends to use for mushroom hunting, deer hunting and turkey hunting - with permission.

He has improved his timber stand by culling unwanted trees and pruning and releasing walnut on 33 acres over the past six years.

Ogle also has planted six acres to a mixture of walnut and pines. No harvesting has been conducted, as Ogle has been working to establish desirable regeneration before any harvesting is done.

In recommending Ogle for the Iowa Woodland Owner of the Year award, Beyer said:

"Will Ogle has done a nice job managing his property, but his commitment to promoting forestry to others is what makes him exceptional."



Accompanied by his dog, Will Ogle heads up a recreational trail on his timberland north of Wadena. Ogle is the Fayette SWCD and Iowa Woodland Owner of the Year.

"Will is a graduate of the Master Woodland Managers Program, past chairman and member of the

"Will Ogle has done a nice job managing his property, but his commitment to promoting forestry to others is what makes him exceptional."

Gary Beyer,
district forester

Northeast Iowa Forest Advisory Committee, and is a member of the Woodland Owner's Association. Will also assists with the forestry outdoor classroom for youth every year in Fayette County.

"Will is truly an ambassador for forestry. The past six to seven years, Will has attended field days, assisted neighbors with forestry projects, and has served on every forestry-related committee and organization."

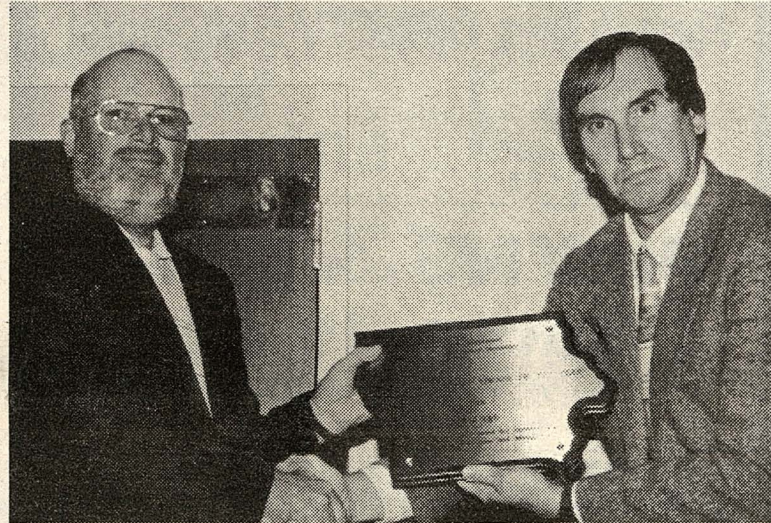
"His dedication to educating youth and adults on proper woodland management is unending."

Ogle has participated in many events in the area. To name a couple, he has given a soil science presentation to the third graders at the Dick Jensen farm near West Union and he's helped Boy Scout troops plant trees. Also, Ogle has helped with teacher education days.

Mink Creek runs through his property, providing trout fishing. And Ogle's land is adjoined by that of Louis Christen, who also is a winner of woodland management awards.

Ogle noted Christen was the Tree Farmer of the Year in 2000 of the American Tree Iowa Farm System. It's the first time that two such major state award winners also happen to be next-door neighbors.

"I try to do it myself," Ogle said of managing his timber. "It could be a full-time job, but I get the satisfaction of doing it myself. That's part of why I enjoy it."



The Iowa Woodland Owner of the Year is presented to Will Ogle.

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Travis Soppe is scholarship winner

A graduate of North Fayette High School in 2000, Travis Soppe was awarded the Fayette County Scholarship for onservation Districts of Iowa.

Soppe is currently attending Northeast Iowa Community College in Calmar. He plans to attend

NICC for two years, then transfer to Iowa State University in Ames.

His goal is to get a bachelor of arts degree in ag business at Iowa State. He said farming has influenced him to stay in the agricultural field of study and also job market.

Soppe said he would like to work at a local ag-related business "because farming is getting very tough. With these bad times we are going through, I would have a hard

time trying to start out farming."

The son of Ernie and Sheila Soppe of West Union, Travis has worked on the family farm - Soppe Farms - for a number of years. He's worked with dairy cattle, beef cattle, and assisted with planting and harvesting crops such as corn, soybeans and hay.

Soppe wrote in his scholarship application, "This has influenced me very much, because living and working on a family farm has inspired me to stay in agriculture for

the rest of my life."

He also noted the family farm uses soil and water conservation in its operation.

At North Fayette High School, he participated in FFA and held the offices of secretary and president. Soppe also was in German Club and basketball. Soppe regularly helped with community Dairy Days and its parade for seven years.

Hobbies and areas of special interest include farming, hunting, auto mechanics, four-wheeling and snowmobiling.

Equip priority area receives \$180,000

The four northeast Iowa counties of Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, and Winneshiek have been approved to receive \$180,000 in funds to cost share forestry practices.

The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) is a federally funded cost share program to protect natural resources. The four Northeast Iowa counties have an approved EQIP priority area to provide cost share to do forest management practices such as: tree planting, timber stand improvement, and livestock exclusion. The priority entitled, "Northeast Iowa Private Forestlands" is in the fourth year of funding. This year's allocation is \$180,000.

The priority area was approved based on the interest of landowners to install forestry management practices, the unique resources in Northeast and the proximity of the forestlands to the unique resources.

The EQIP has given landowners a tool to manage the forestlands and reduce the pressure to convert or utilize forestlands for short economic gains such as clearing for cropland or grazing livestock. Landowners are approved for cost share based on a set of environmental factors that are designed to direct the cost share funds to protect the most environmentally sensitive areas with the most cost effective forestry management practice.

For more information contact your local USDA Service Center or the Iowa DNR District Forester that serves your county.

Do Something

By Rod Marlatt

I pondered at great length upon the context of this article. The Fayette County Conservation Board is involved with many diversified projects. These include recreation, environmental education, wildlife habitat, recycling and solid waste, groundwater projects, etc..

These are things the public not only wants, but demands. In my years of work, I have come to the undeniable conclusion. This conclusion is that many people doing small things can far outweigh the accomplishments of a few doing big things. This is not to encourage those few to do less. Indeed we need these citizens as leaders in our quest to preserve and enhance our environment and quality of life.

I believe that we can all DO SOMETHING to enhance the conservation effort on this home we call earth.

How much time would it really take to make a call to your represen-

tative regarding an issue you feel strongly about? How much effort would it really take to attend a wildlife fundraiser? There are many wildlife related organizations that are working hard to enhance the environment we live in.

I would encourage all of us to do what we can with what little time we have in this fast paced world. I have a faded document on my wall. This tattered piece of paper is a pledge to remind me of why I'm doing this. It goes like this: I GIVE MY PLEDGE AS AN AMERICAN, TO SAVE AND FAITHFULLY TO DEFEND FROM WASTE THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF MY COUNTRY - ITS AIR, SOIL, AND MINERALS ITS FORESTS, WATERS, AND WILDLIFE.

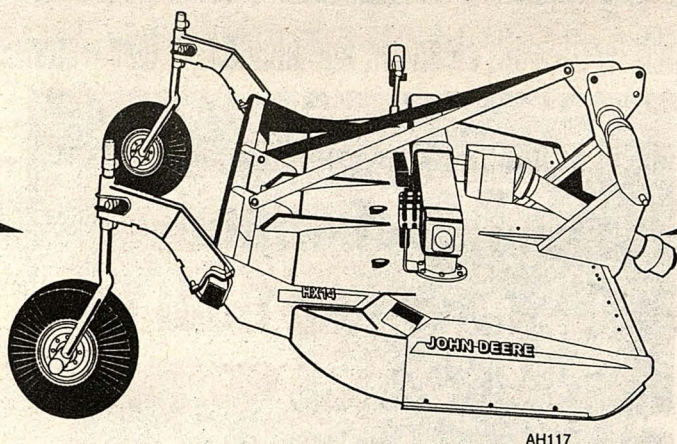
Remember, "We did not inherit this land from our parents, we are merely borrowing it from our children."

I leave we with this thought:
DO SOMETHING



Travis Soppe

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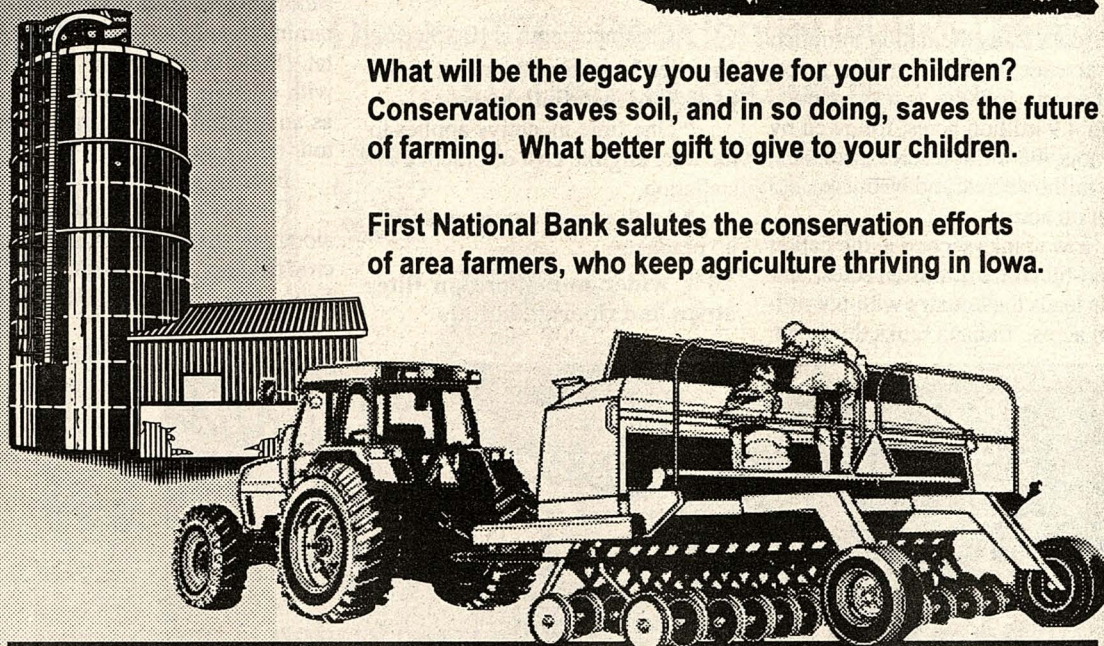


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Iowa still a national leader in no-till and conservation tillage

Results from a field survey conducted in 2000 show that Iowa still leads the nation in the use of no-till and conservation tillage.

According to results of the 2000 Crop Residue Management Survey released earlier this winter by the Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC), Iowans used conservation tillage on 13.9 million acres this year, more than 60 percent of the total cropland acreage in the state. This is an increase of more than 2 million acres from 1999. No-till use went up as well. Farmers reported no-till use on 5 million acres in 2000, an increase of 30 percent from the 3.8 million acres recorded in 1998.

"CTIC results show that Iowans, are in fact, continuing to do their part to reduce erosion on farmlands," says Leroy Brown, State Conservationist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Iowa NRCS, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's lead conservation agency, assists CTIC in conducting the semi annual tillage survey. Information collected from each county in the United States is used to analyze trends of various tillage systems.

"Conservation tillage and no-till have come a long way in Iowa in the last ten years," says Brown. "It was good to see that the 2000 results followed the same upward trend we've seen all decade." According to Brown, since 1990, the total number of acres in conservation tillage has almost doubled and no-till acreage has increased by 800 percent.

Conservation tillage is the practice of leaving stalks and other residues from the current year's crop on the surface of the soil after harvest to protect the soil from rain and wind until the next year's crop can protect it. Conservation tillage leaves 30 percent or more residue on the ground after planting, and is the umbrella term often used to describe no-till, mulch till and ridge till systems.

National Perspective

Iowa leads the nation in mulch till acreage, with 8.7 million acres. Minnesota follows as a far second with 4.9 million acres, followed by Illinois, 4.3 million acres, Montana, 3.6 million acres, and Nebraska, 3.3 million acres.

Iowa ranks second in the nation in no-till with 5.1 million acres. Illinois leads the country with 6.9 million acres. Indiana ranks third with

4.9 million acres, followed by Ohio with 3.4 million acres, and Nebraska with 3.4 million acres.

Hot pockets in the State

In Iowa, eight counties reported more than 100,000 acres of no-till corn and soybeans each. Together these eight counties, the majority of which are located in the southwest corner of the state, totaled 1.1 million acres, or 21 percent of the state's total no-till acreage (5.1 million acres). Pottawattamie led the state with 216,520 acres, followed by Cass, 143,062 acres; Marshall, 133,730 acres; and Shelby, 123,320 acres. Other strong no-till production was found in Jasper, 116,520 acres; Clinton, 113,724 acres; Page, 106,314 acres; and Audubon, 106,056 acres.

Fourteen Iowa counties reported more than 225,000 acres of conservation tillage on corn and soybeans each, which represented more than 25 percent (3.5 million acres) of the total conservation corn/soybean tillage acreage in the state (13.7 million acres). Many of the leading conservation tillage counties are located in north central Iowa. Pottawattamie led the state again with 323,697 acres; followed by Pocahontas, 300,322 acres; Calhoun, 286,706 acres; Kossuth, 275,645 acres; Franklin, 257,397 acres; and Crawford, 256,390 acres. Other counties that recorded more than 250,000 acres each include Sioux, Marshall, Boone, Butler, Buena Vista, Webster, Cedar and O'Brien.

Continuous CRP sign-up 22+ offers upfront bonus payments, higher incentives for installation, wider strips, and increased maintenance rates on some practices. (Program available since April, 2000)

Signing Incentive Payment of \$100 to \$150 per acre (most practices)

* Receive \$10/acre per full year for field windbreaks (CP5A), waterways (CP8A), shelterbelts (CP16A), living snow fence (CP17A), filter strip, (CP21), and riparian buffer (CP22).

* Contract length is 10-15 years.

Practice Incentive Payment equal to 40% of installation cost

* One-time incentive applies to the total eligible cost of practice installation.

* Applies to all continuous sign-up practices.

20% wider maximum on filter strips and riparian buffers

* Filter strips and riparian buffers must be next to and parallel to perennial or seasonal streams, ponds, lakes and certain defined wetlands.

Buffer Conservation Practices and CP numbers

Conservation buffers are strips or areas of land in permanent vegetation that help landowners reduce pollution and achieve other objectives. Here's a list and description of some of the main practices approved for the continuous CRP sign-up:

* **Riparian Buffers (CP22)**- Streamside plantings of trees, shrubs and grasses that can intercept contaminants from both surfacewater and groundwater before they reach a stream and help restore damaged streams.

* **Filter Strips (CP21)**- Strips of grass used to intercept or trap field sediment, nutrients, organics, pesticides and other potential pollutants before they reach a body of water.

* **Grassed Waterways (CP8A)**- Strips of grass seeded in areas of cropland where water concentrates or flows off a field. While they are primarily used to prevent gully erosion, waterways can be combined with filter strips to trap contaminants or filed sediment.

* **Shelterbelts/Field Windbreaks (CP16A)**- A row or rows of trees, shrubs or other plants used to reduce wind erosion, protect young crops and control blowing snow. Shelterbelts also provide excellent protection from the elements for wildlife, livestock, houses and farm buildings. Field windbreaks are similar to shelterbelts, but are located along crop filed borders or within the field itself.

* **Contour Grass Strips (CP15A)**- Narrow bands of perennial vegetation established across the slope of a crop field and alternated down the slope with wider strips of crops. Properly designed and maintained contour grass strips can reduce soil erosion, minimize transport of sediment and other waterborne contaminants and provide wildlife habitat. Field borders may be inclined with contour grass strips if needed as an integral component of a contour buffer strip system.

Benefits of Buffers

Conservation buffers are installed along streams or in uplands--within crop fields, at field edges, or outside a field. Properly installed and main-

tained, they have the capacity :

* remove up to 50 percent or more of nutrients and pesticides.

* remove up to 60 percent or more of certain pathogens.

* protect people, crops, livestock, wildlife, buildings, and roads from wind-blown soil and snow.

* slow erosion and remove up to 80 percent of sediment from runoff waters.



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Stewarts are SWCD's 'Owner-Operators of the Year'

It should come as no surprise that Matt and Diana Stewart of Oelwein were named the SWCD Owner-Operators of the Year for 2000.

The family has a strong history in soil and water conservation. Diana said, "Matt's grandfather was big on soil conservation -- real big."

His grandfather, Alfred Stewart served as state president of the SWCD Commissioners in the 1960s. So the ethic of soil and water conservation has been there from the start.

Matt and Diana farm 380 acres in southern Fayette County, just east of Oelwein. They started farming in a partnership with Matt's father in 1978. In 1995, the partnership was dissolved and purchased by the couple.

The Stewarts milk 110 Holstein and Jersey dairy cows, and feed 12 beef cows, 15 steers and 130 Holstein heifer calves.

Their family helps a lot with the farmwork. The Stewarts have five children: Jared, a sophomore at Iowa State University; Lindsey, a junior

in high school; Michael in seventh grade; Dan in fourth grade; and Katie, 4.

Matt is a firm believer in soil conservation. They started rotational grazing in 1994. Their goal was to get into a program that was more profitable and better for the soil. Of their 345 tillable acres, 260 acres are in rotational grazing.

"The decision was to try to determine and demonstrate that grass-based farming was as profitable or more profitable than row crop farming," Matt said.

The program has met with success. Matt also uses areas of his farm for test plots for the Practical Farmers of Iowa, known as PFI.

"We've done trials on pasture establishment, warm season grasses, water quality, supplemental feeding of dairy cattle on pasture, growth rates of Holstein heifers in rotational grazing, and experimental grasses," Matt said.

He described one example of one trial for PFI: when the corn is growing in June, leaf samples have

been tested to see how much nitrogen is present.

The Stewarts have hosted at least one field day per year the past seven years. Those attending include other farmers, extension people learning about grazing systems, and government agency employees.

The concern about saving soil also reaches to the small amount of ground that is row cropped by the Stewarts. Matt enrolled the land in

the CRP filter strip program. He believes with filter strips and rotational grazing, his loss of soil is very minimal. Even with the heavy rains of 1999, Matt said he has seen very little soil loss on the grazed farms.

As a family, the Stewarts are very active in the Iowa Holstein Association. They will be helping with Junior Holstein activities when Iowa hosts the Holstein national

convention June 27-30 in Cedar Rapids.

Diana and Matt have received other awards, including the Iowa Holstein Association's Outstanding Young Breeders Award in 1994, and the Iowa Forage & Grassland Outstanding Producer Award. They also serve on the Iowa Forage & Grassland Council.

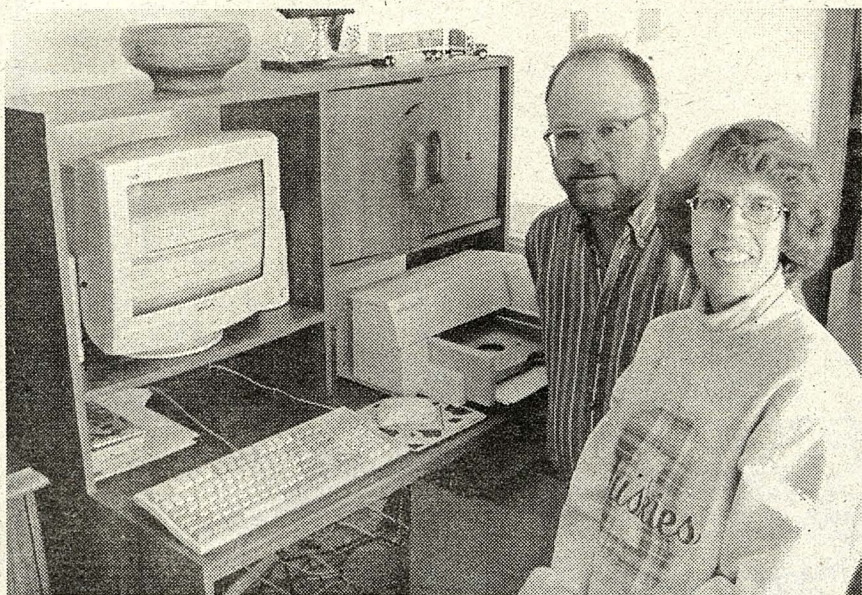


Holding a field day on the family farm near Oelwein, Matt Stewart, right, demonstrates an aspect of grasses and rotational grazing.



Matt and Diana Stewart are seen at the computer they use on their farm near Oelwein. They were the Fayette County SWCD Owner-Operator of the Year award winners for 2000.

Congratulations to Matt & Diane Stewart for their soil conservation efforts



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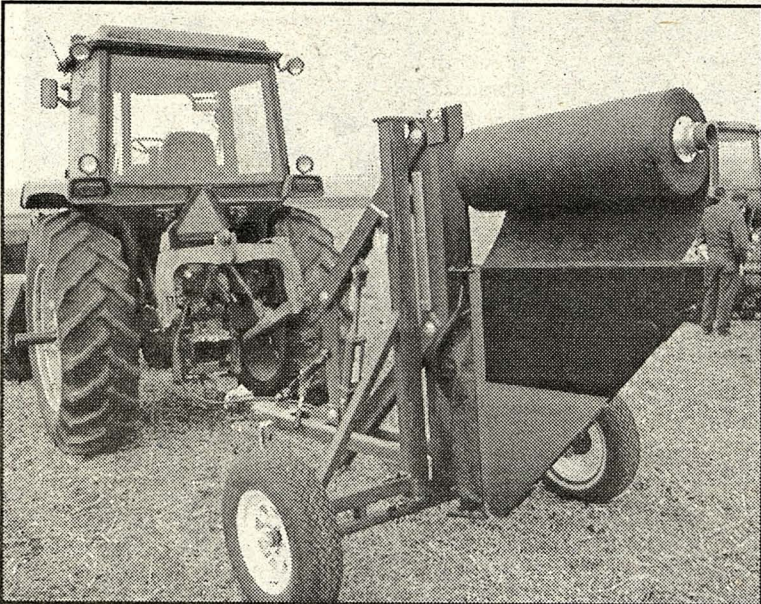
Waterway Fabric Machine available for use in 2001

In October of 2000, the Fayette SWCD purchased a fabric laying machine which is available to rent. It is used to help establish waterways. The machine installs a 36-inch fabric vertically across the center one half of the waterway. One to two feet of the fabric is buried with the balance above the ground. This is a very effective way of protecting the new waterway until the seeding is well established.

The SWCD furnishes the machine, fabric, and one person while the customer furnishes a 100 horse-

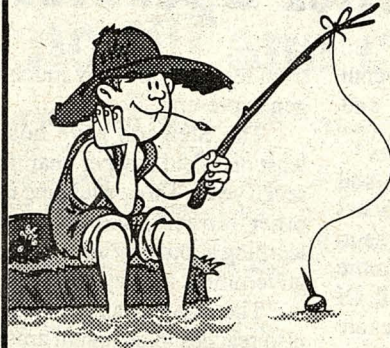
power tractor with hydraulics, and a person to operate the tractor. Please contact William Bennett at (319)426-5232 or the office at (319)422-3868 Ext. 3 to get your name on the list for the use of this conservation tool.

Last fall the Fayette SWCD demonstrated the fabric machine at the Maquoketa River Headwater Council Field Day. Several land-owners installed fabric in 2000. The SWCD believes that providing this machine is another way to assist people in protecting our soil and water resources.



The fabric layer machine is available for rent.

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A vision for Iowa's private lands

Guest commentary by Leroy Brown, State Conservationist USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

A little more than 30 years ago, a futurist predicted a number of the technological advances we now have in 2001. But I don't remember many predictions of fencerow-to-fencerow farming in the 70's to be followed by extreme agricultural hardship in the 80's to be followed by some of our country's strongest conservation efforts in the 90's.

So, while we now have computers that talk, we also have cleaner water. On Iowa's farmlands, there's more food and shelter for nature's creatures. Better pasturelands, high-yielding croplands, renewed forestlands, and restored wetlands - that's the direction of Iowa agriculture. It's a direction the people of Iowa want - a future with a strong agriculture that produces food and fiber in a healthy environment.

If you think about it, it is the direction our society must go to sustain ourselves. Our working land, the privately owned land that produces most of our food and fiber, is also the same land that provides habitat for our fish and wildlife, filters our water and helps purify our air.

Seventy percent of the American landscape is in private hands. That figure jumps to more than 90 percent in Iowa. We are increasingly becoming an urban society, even in Iowa, but our natural resource base and our environment is critically linked to the health of our private, rural land. Every time we buy a loaf of bread, take a drink of water, and watch a flock of geese head south, we are reminded that private land is interwoven into our daily lives. Almost 90 percent of the rain and snow that eventually makes its way to us for our use as water falls first on private land, and about three-fourths of our wildlife habitat is on private land.

While the movement to take better care of natural resources never seems to occur fast enough, the signs are evident that a trend has begun. In the next ten years, the NRCS vision is that private landowners will continue to make voluntary decisions to take ever better care of the land. They will continue to convert fragile, unproductive soils to grass

or trees while they produce record crops on the best of the land. Iowa's conservation farmers will also continue the trend to restore, rather than drain, wetlands.

The bald eagle, river otter, bluebird, wild turkey, peregrine falcon, Giant Canada goose, trumpeter swan, rainbow trout and other species will continue their dramatic comebacks in the next 10 years. That's because they will be aided by conservation agencies and organizations as well as the thousands of landowners who will provide the food, shelter, and other habitat they need. An increased availability of a mix of education efforts, public and private incentives, and technological improvements will help Iowa continue its status as a national leader in resource conservation on private lands.

Research, education, and new technology can turn our current problems with livestock manure into a viable part of an economically, environmentally sound system of farming in the near future. Livestock manure, long seen as animal waste, will be recognized and treated as a valuable resource. It will be used only in the amount and at the time crops can best use it; managed with commercial fertilizers, it will produce higher crop yields than any in this century.

Iowa farmers and the conservation community are already national leaders in establishing conservation buffers, restoring wetlands, using conservation tillage methods, and overall care of working agricultural land. The many partnerships and strong conservation ethic that have propelled Iowa into national leadership in resource conservation will gain more support as public and private conservation efforts continue to expand. Water quality monitoring and state cost-sharing programs for use of best management practices will expand throughout the next 10 years.

Finally, the stage will be set for a society in Iowa that makes sound decisions about resource protection for years to come as environmental



Leroy Brown

education programs are begun in Iowa that touch every student, as part of the state's focus on better education for our children.

As the nation's lead technical agency on natural resource care of private lands for more than 60 years, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) looks forward to helping Iowans take more steps forward.

With an office in every county in Iowa, our mission is to give on-site help to farmers and other landowners through conservation districts. We will continue to work closely with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship's Division of Soil Conservation and the many other conservation and farm agencies and groups dedicated to improving private lands.

When we look back in 10 years, we will see the positive conservation marks on the land from our combined efforts. We will see thousands of acres of measures including contour stripcropping, terracing, conservation buffers, conservation tillage, wetlands restoration, and grass and tree planting. We'll have less soil erosion, better water quality, improved wildlife habitat, a healthier economy, and an improved quality of life for both farmers and non-farmers. And we will have the satisfaction of knowing we did the best we could to take care of our part of the world in the short time we have on this earth.

Iowa one of six states chosen for pilot project

New Wetland Option: Pilot Program in CRP

Contact your local USDA Service Center for details



A new Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) practice will soon be available. Iowa was chosen as one of the six states for the pilot initiative for wetlands. Landowners will be able to enroll small wetland areas and adjacent buffers in the continuous signup of CRP. The USDA has set acreage caps - a maximum of 500,000 acres that can be entered into the program within the six states in the pilot region, and a maximum of 150,000 acres in each state.

There will be tough competition for these acres. We want Fayette County landowners to have all resources needed to make informed decisions and to be ready to enroll as soon as the signup begins. We want to assure that every Fayette County landowner that is interested in and is eligible for the program, has an opportunity to enroll in the program.

Final program rules will be out in 2001. Wetland areas may be 5 acres or less. Adjacent buffers may be up to an additional 15 acres (three times the wetland acres) or the cur-

rent width limit (150 feet) on either side, whichever is greater. Total acreage of wetland and adjacent buffers per tract will be 40 acres.

Cropped wetlands must have been cropped in at least 3 of the past 10 years in order to be eligible for the program. Contracts will likely be 10-15 years in length. Rental rates will likely be the CRP continuous signup rates plus incentive payments consistent with those available for riparian buffers and filter strips.

Hydrology must be restored to the wetlands, as determined technically feasible by NRCS, and vegetative cover must be established. Farm Service Agency cost share for restoration activities is currently available.

Incidental (after-harvest) grazing will be allowed as part of gleaned adjacent cropland. However, there will be a payment reduction for incidental grazing.

By Don Carpenter
County Executive Director
Fayette County FSA Office

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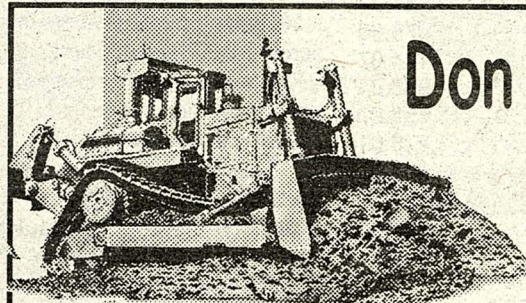
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Fort Atkinson

NRCS partners with N.E. Ia. Dairy Foundation

By Jim Ranum

The Northeast Iowa Community-Based Dairy Foundation was founded to assist citizens of Northeast Iowa capture dairy industry opportunities, and to apply appropriate technologies and production systems designed to fit the unique landscapes of the region. A function of the foundation is to expand extended and continuing educational opportunities to meet the specialized needs of dairy producers and the service industry. The initiative has constructed a dairy education and applied research center, which will provide educational opportunities and training. Training on alternative production systems, environmental protection, and landscape enhancement are important functions of the foundation. A grazing herd is planned to be in place for the 2002-grazing season. Through the Environmental Quality Incentive (EQIP) educational assistance program the Natural Resource Conservation Service has partnered with the Northeast Iowa Community-Based Dairy Foundation to help demonstrate grazing principles to students, producers and dairy support agribusinesses. Jim Ranum, NRCS Grassland Conservationist, will serve as the NRCS liaison for the agreement. Mr. Ranum notes that the funds provided by the NRCS will be used to give interested parties an opportunity to view conservation practices. Fencing alternatives, improved livestock lanes, watering alternatives including a nose pump, spring development and above

ground waterlines will be demonstrated. Other demonstrations will include pasture plantings, brush control, and a stream crossing.

Mr. Ranum notes, "In a time when it is more and more difficult for young families to start up or take over existing dairy farms, we need to demonstrate an alternative method for a young person to enter the industry." Techniques that will be demonstrated with the grazing herd will help producers more efficiently utilize small areas of land for larger numbers of cattle. Mr. Ranum explains, "We want to demonstrate ways dairy producers can do this, not only to keep cost down, but also to reduce sediment and nutrient loading of nearby streams and rivers. Environmental quality can be enhanced with an economical, productive grass based dairy operation."

Northeast Iowa Dairy Foundation will start by seeding 50 acres of cropland to improved forages for dairy production and start building the infra structure for the grazing herd this year. Pasture walks field days, and the curriculums will provide grass-based dairy education to at least 50 students per year as well as the general public. The partnership helps both parties move forward with their goals. It also helps keep Northeast Iowa up to date with the latest in grazing science as it relates to dairy production.

The county farm of Fayette County

By Richard Jensen

During the early 1860's when Fayette County was just a scattered population of primarily farmers and shop keepers, their livelihood was essentially dependent on the soil. These newcomers to our county worked very hard to clear the land and build the farms and shops they needed. They depended upon on another during times of need. Crop failures or bad luck could bring a family desperate hardship at any time. When a family was "down and out" a neighbor who was "better off" would take the family in. Often the children, if there were any, were "farmed" out for the labor they could provide. This plan worked well for a few years but by 1868 the number of poor people outgrew this system. The board of supervisors, 20 township trustees—one from each township, decided if the county bought land and constructed a large house, barns and sheds and provided machinery, tools and livestock, the poor and deranged could be housed and operate the farm at profit to the County.

A farm consisting of 283 acres was purchased for \$2,214.00 and the house, barn and other buildings constructed at a cost of \$3,826.00. The farm was equipped with farm machinery, tools and livestock. By 1878, 25 residents lived and sustained themselves on the farm. The "poor farm" concept grew in scope and size for many years allowing the residents to produce and process their own crops.

Fayette County's "poor farm"

set an example for the state by using the most modern farming methods. Fine dairy cattle, horses, hogs and chickens were fed with grain and hay grown in the fields and processed by the residents. By 1977 the farm grew to 548 acres and 80 residents, however they were forced to discontinue the livestock and crop production and processing. Thus ending an era that befittingly met the County's needs for some time.

The County still owns land. Each year it is rented out to the highest bidder. All land is subject to erosion and must be farmed accordingly.

Therefore our local NRCS has developed an extensive plan to control soil erosion, including 30,850' of contour buffers, 7,350'

of field borders, 12,700' of waterways. With the help of fish and wildlife funding, 2 shallow water structures have been constructed to attract geese and other shore birds. Approximately 50 acres of trees, shrubs, native grasses and wildflowers have been planted. The sum of all these practices benefits area wildlife, soil and water quality and our very existence.

The County farm has been serving the needs for County residents for 155 years. Thanks to the Natural Resource Conservation Service, County Conservation Board, Roadside Management and the Extension Service the farm now also serves as wildlife refuge and rental income for the County.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2000

Practice	Number	Acres/Feet
Contour Buffer Strips		1,733 ac.
Conservation Applied		7,604 ac.
Conservation Planned		9,358 ac.
Conservation Tillage		3,399 ac.
Contour Farming	3	140 ac.
Customers Assisted	1,662	
Forest Stand Improvement		277 ac.
Manure Systems Planned	1	
Total Assistance to Customers	3,422	
Grassed Waterways	13	52 ac.
Ponds	2	
Shallow Water Structures	6	
Terraces		22,375 ft.
Tree & Shrub Plantings		362 ac.
Upland Habitat Management		7,166 ac.
Water & Sediment Control Basin	1	
Wetlands Restored		12 ac.
Conservation Reserve Program		
General CRP - #20	97	4,056 ac.
Continuous CRP - #21	113	671 ac.
- #22	150	885 ac.
- #23	35	235 ac.
Total CRP Contracts	1,348	
Total CRP Acres		21,448 ac.

Cash Flow Report

7/1/99 Through 6/30/00

Category Description	7/1/99-6/30/00
INFLOWS	
Deposit	54,935.97
Interest Inc	679.18
TOTAL INFLOWS	55,615.15
OUTFLOWS	
Arcview Software	967.87
Awards Banquet	347.00
Check Order	16.25
Commissioner	3,056.96
Dues	1,300.00
Education	315.00
Field Day	541.70
Memorial	75.00
Miscellaneous	124.07
Office Supplies	955.94
Payroll	15,456.97
Postage	1,426.61
Sales Tax	806.59
Scholarship	500.00
Service Charge	10.45
Soil Stewardship	521.81
Tax:	
Federal FICA	4,591.53
IPERS	880.26
State	504.00
State Unemployment	135.36
TOTAL Tax	6,111.15
Trees	8,918.66
Water Quality	6,740.00
Wildflowers	1,552.15
TOTAL OUTFLOWS	49,744.18
OVERALL TOTAL	5,870.97



Harlan Anderson

Why I terraced

By Harlan Anderson

My farming operation started Feb. 14, 1970 with 22 dairy cows and later added 16 sows, farrow to finish. Two years later, in 1972, I bought 235 acres and increased the dairy herd to 33 cows, rented more land and upgraded the building site with a new silo and machine shed.

I was in partnership with my brother Elvin, renting 370 acres of land, since I purchased another 200 acres. Now I own 435 acres and rent 630 acres in which I raise 562 acres of corn, 363 acres of beans, 100 acres of hay, and 40 acres of oats.

Conservation practices I use are; contouring, contour buffer strips, waterways, terraces, and mulch tillage.

Over the past two years, I terraced a farm that was farmed corn and beans, no seeding down of any grass. The long gentle slopes were eroding bad. I thought of grass waterways but with waterways I've experienced ditches running down both sides of the grassed waterway. With cost-share through SWCD, it made possible for me to terrace this farm to help prevent the ditches from washing. Now there is no washing and no silt down at the bottom of the field or in the road ditch.

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Burrack honored with 'Windbreak' award

Page 19

"Many, many years ago, I used to work for the Soil Conservation department in West Union," explains Jerry Burrack when asked how he became interested in conservation.

"I was not involved so much with trees then, but with conservation in farming practices such as strip contouring.

"It was then I saw the real benefit to preventing soil erosion. With modern farming today and not many fences anymore, we need to do something to protect our wildlife and to protect our soil," he noted.

The windbreak for which Burrack received the Izaak Walton League Windbreak award was planted in 1979.

Using trees purchased from Oelwein Landscaping, it consists of 28 arborvitae and 24 Black Hill spruce.

Burrack's wife, Mary, helped with the planting and during the summer months helps maintain the acreage they live on just east of

Maynard on Highway 150.

In the first year of establishing the windbreak, the Burracks used a granular chemical in a 2' diameter circle around each tree. In subsequent years, the windbreak was mowed weekly.

Burrack mows along the ditches and in places where "there aren't too many trees" using his Ferguson tractor with a 72-inch deck, while Mary mows around the windbreak using their John Deere with a 60-inch deck.

When they get an occasional pocket gopher, the animals are trapped.

Burrack is an avid collector of old tractors, having eight in all. He also loves to fly and shoot aerial photos of their land.

The Burracks also own two acres of land south of their home, which are strictly planted to trees. Burrack explains 913 seedlings were planted by machine on these acres in 1993, consisting of various pine and spruce. At the time, Jon Steege, of Fayette

County Conservation, supervised the plantin. On his advice, the trees were planted close together because "normally one loses about half of the trees the first year," Burrack said.

"Well, if you recall," stated Burrack, "1993 was a year of heavy rain and we didn't lose hardly any, not even five percent, so now we will have to go in and cut some out." Somewhat amazed, he remarked, "The trees are so tight you can't even walk between them."

Last year, Burrack and his wife bought another farm adjacent to their land and have already implemented new conservation practices on it.

First thing last spring, on the three acres alongside the creek, he planted a filter strip of switch grass.

"It will help prevent erosion and again, it's good for the wildlife," said Burrack.



Jerry & Mary Burrack in front of their windbreak.



NRCS Field Office staff includes front (LtoR) -Jerry Muff, LaVonne Koch, Lori Kohlmeier Back-Tom Sperflage and Alan Crowe. Absent from photo Joe Wingert and Mike Henderson.

Congratulations Jerry & Mary Burrack



2000 Izaak Walton
League Windbreak
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SWCD Highlights from the year 2000

July 1999

- SWCD received \$3,000 for the IM Allocation.

- SWCD received \$43,663 for the Iowa Financial Incentive Program (IFIP) Allocation.

- Bennett and Wingert completed the audit of all financial records associated with the District Revolving Fund. all records were accurate to date and a copy of the audit report was sent to the Division of Soil Conservation.

- The IM Allocation Contract and budget and Spending Plan were approved.

- Seventeen applications in Fayette County were accepted for the Flood Plain Easement Program.

August 1999

- Eric Palas, Ensign Hollow II Project Coordinator, reviewed the ongoing activities in the watershed.

- SWCD approved funding for two teachers to attend the Food, Land and People Workshop.

- Dan schmitt and Don Durscher were hired as temporary employees to assist with CRP check out.

- Five projects were approved under the EQIP program.

- Sub-Area Cooperative Agreement was approved.

September 1999

- The 8th Annual Education Field Day was held for 413 Fayette County Third Grade Students.

- Paul Nuss was appointed as commissioner to fill a vacancy.

- Ken and Doris Wagner were named one of Iowa's Centruy Conservation Farmers at the Iowa Farm Progress Show in Middle Amana.

- Grazing workshop was held at Lanesboro, MN.

- EQIP Forestry and Grassland meeting was held.

- The Annual Conference was held in Des Moines.

- The Annual RC & D barbeque was held in Postville.

- Annual Farm Bureau Banquet was held in Fayette. S Jon Grimes was awarded the SWCD Conservation Owner/Operator of the Year Award.

October 1999

- SWCD received \$1,5000 ion supplemental IM funding.

- SWCD requested and received \$25,947.50 in supplemental REAP Forestry/Practices.

- Over \$9,0000 was allocated for the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP).

December 1999

- SWCD met with State Legislators to discuss conservation needs.

- Regional meeting was held in Dyersville.

- SWCD received approval for the Volga River Watershed Grant.

January 2000

- Mark Habiger, Area Conservationist, gave the SWCD an update on the NRCS items.

- Election of Officers meeting was held.

- Soil and Water Stewardship materials were ordered for Fayette county schools and churches.

- SWCD purchased the ARCVIEW computer software program.

- The Northeast Iowa Forestry Advisory Committee donated 500 trees to be planted on the Houg property.

February 2000

- NACD and CDI dues were paid.

- The continuous CRP currently has 610 contracts with a total of 4,804 acres enrolled.

March 2000

- SWCD received \$475 in supplemental IM funds.

- Annual Awards Banquet was held at the Methodist Church in West Union.

- Travis Soppee was selected as the Fayette SWCD Scholarship Award winner.

- Fayette County had 8 EQIP Forestry applications, 2 EQIP grazing applications, and 4 statewide concerns ag-waste EQIP applications approved.

- Muff reviewed EEO, Civil Rights, Memos of Understanding, and Supplemental Memos with the SWCD.

May 2000

- Andy Johnson, RC & D Coordinator, gave a report on their ongoing projects.

- Will Ogle was nominated as Woodland Owner of the Year.

- The Upper Maquoketa Water Quality Commissioner Agreement was approved.

- Pheasants Forever Supplemental Agreement was approved.

- SWCD purchased trees to be planted in the Jensen memorial garden honoring past commissioners.

June 2000

- SWCD approved funding for scholarship support for the 4-H Youth Conference.

- CRP meeting for the 20th general sign-up was held at Farmers Savings Bank.

Why?

By Bruce Greutzmacher

I have been asked by many of my friends and neighbors why I am participating in all of the CRP practices on my farm. Well, it is because I believe in these practices, the help Mother Nature improve the environment.

We arm 160 acres, 120 owned and 40 rented. We have owned and lived on this farm since 1956. It lays one quarter mile wide and one mile long. Of these acres, 150 are considered tillable acres by FSA.

We have established filter strips along each side of waterways that we cannot cross, waterways we can cross and are mowed, tree field wind breaks. We are currently establishing contour buffer strips. These practices consist of an estimated 54 acres in the above CRP practices.

The remaining 100 acres are planted to one half corn and one half soybeans. We use a heavy disk on corn stalks in the fall, going over it with a soil finisher in the spring and then plant. We try to use as little tillage as possible to get a good seed bed, then plant, & use chemicals to control weeds on the growing crop.

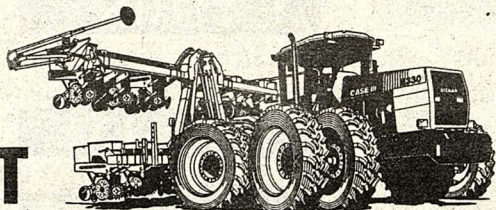
The benefits, I feel, from participating in these practices, is a lot of satisfaction in knowing I am cooperating with Mother Nature to pass on to the next generation a better environment, maybe better than I have experienced. The next generation needs to have something to build on and then pass along to following generations. To me this is a win win situation, you are participating in the establishment of CRP practices, enjoy the benefits of hunting, fishing and boating in a cleaner environment and on the flip side the government helps with the cost of establishment of these practices and then pays rent on this land based on the soil type of the fields. The rent the government pays is comparable to what you could expect from any renter based on your soil type. I have not heard of a government check that wasn't good.

I answer the why with, why not? The participation in the above practices fit my lifestyle. I love to hunt, fish, boat, and ride an ATV looking over the CRP acres. I enjoy this friendly habitat watching it grow and establish itself.

I challenge, why not participate in as many CRP practices that might fit your farming operation and pass along to the next generation, our children, grandchildren and anyone who wants to hunt and fish in a lean environment. I feel my personal benefit is watching the wildlife taking advantage of all this new habitat. Deer, pheasant & turkey can be seen on this farm regularly. I also feel I know this is the fall I am going to get that elusive 32 point buck!

Why not get in touch with your NRCS and made sure you are aware of all the conservation practices offered by the government. I feel we need as many acres in government CRP practices to lower acres available to be planted. It is evidenced by the low grain prices. All the land, after the rent contract with the government expires, can be reclaimed and farmed, probably in a better condition and better fertility than when it was entered into the CRP Program.

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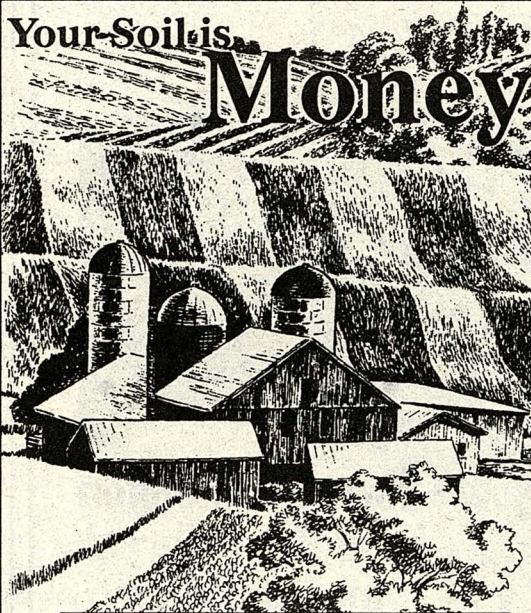
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Fayette SWCD continues effort to obtain water quality project funds



Last year the SWCD worked to obtain water quality funds through various programs. The Fayette SWCD applied and was approved for a small grant of \$10,000 through a state administered Watershed Protection Development Grant program. The objective of this program is to assist districts with the development of large watershed grant applications designed to provide incentive funds to landusers to apply land treatment measures, conservation educational programs, and provide funds to hire a watershed coordinator. There are two main sources of funds for this purpose: Iowa Water Protection Fund and a federal program entitled 319, both referred to as WPF/319.

The Fayette SWCD utilized the grant funds to concentrate on small sub watersheds of the Volga River. Severe erosion and flooding from the May 1999 storm caused the commissioners and field office staff to take action in the damaged area. The commissioners hired Karen Ott, a recent graduate in conservation, from Upper Iowa University, to develop the grant for the Volga River sub-watersheds. Karen spent many hours researching the area, developing maps, contacting landusers within the watershed, and drafting the grant application.

The district made an excellent effort, but was not approved for the grant in this competitive venture. It is not uncommon for a watershed to be submitted several times before it is finally approved.

Recently, the Fayette SWCD decided to switch directions and work towards obtaining watershed funds for Mink and Grannis Creek. Apparently, the multi-agency technical committee places a higher priority on smaller watersheds with high quality cold-water streams.

Grannis Creek is placed on a list of the top 25 cold-water streams in northeast Iowa. In January of this year we were approved for \$10,000 for another Watershed Protection Development Grant. We have selected an individual to put together

another large WPF/319 grant application for primarily Grannis Creek, but also to obtain water quality data for Grannis and Mink Creek.

If you are interested in water quality in Fayette County and would like to provide voluntary assistance,

you can contact the SWCD/NRCS office in West Union. We will provide you with information on the IOWATER program. This is an exceptional, informational, and enjoyable program.

If trees could sing...

If trees could sing they would be singing the praises of the Northeast Iowa Private Forest Lands EQIP priority area. The priority area is a 4 county area in Northeast Iowa that includes the counties of Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette and Winneshiek. The priority area was started because the locally led group could not ignore the need and interest in forestry management in the four country area. The four Northeast Iowa counties include over 290,000 acres of forest land which represents approximately 15% of all forest land in the state of Iowa.

Landowners requesting funds from other cost share sources had created a backlog of over 150 applications requesting cost share in the 4 county area. Existing programs were able to only fund between 12-15 cost share requests per year. This existing backlog represented over a 10-year wait for cost-share assistance.

The topography in the priority area is unique in the state of Iowa. The four counties have 35 coldwater streams or their tributaries within the county boundaries. The coldwater

streams are recognized as an extremely valuable natural resource by multiple conservation agencies. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources manages many of the coldwater streams as trout fisheries. The coldwater streams are the main justification for multiple state and federally funded water quality projects in the four counties.

A lot of the forest land located within the four counties is adjacent or within close proximity to the coldwater streams. Economic pressure was driving landowners to look at short-term economic gains on the forest land that included grazing and conversion to row crop. Grazing and conversion to row crop can have devastating effects on the coldwater streams from the increase potential of sediment delivered to the stream.

History has shown if a landowner was provided a forestry management plan and cost share to implement the forestry practices the natural resources would be protected on that property. History has also shown

that once a landowner starts down the road of forestry management, the forest land will remain permanently protected and that the landowners implement a lot of forestry management practices without cost share.

In three years the Northeast Iowa Private Forest Lands EQIP priority area has received 219 applications requesting \$907,571 in cost share. The amount of cost share requested has been suppressed as landowners submit the most competitive application possible to receive cost share from the EQIP funds allocated to the priority area. Landowners have requested roughly three times more cost share than funds allocated.

The EQIP funds have cut down the backlog of cost share applications and EQIP funds managed with other forestry cost share opportunities have greatly improved a landowner chance of receiving forestry cost share. The current EQIP contracts approved for cost share are being implemented to enhance and protect the forestry re-

source on 4350 acres of forest land. A ranking worksheet is used to direct the funding to protect the more environmentally sensitive areas with the most cost-effective forestry management practice.

The trees are singing the best time to start forestry management was 20 years ago, the next best time is today.

No-till native grass drill available for use

After receiving a number of requests from citizens in the county, the Fayette SWCD purchased a 10.5 foot Truax no-till native grass drill.

The SWCD reached an agreement with the Fayette County Conservation Board and Pheasants Forever on the Operation of the drill. To get your name on the list, please contact the Fayette County Conservation Board at (319) 422-5146. They will be directing the operation of this drill along with their three drills. Pheasants Forever will provide the operator and seed for the SWCD's drill.

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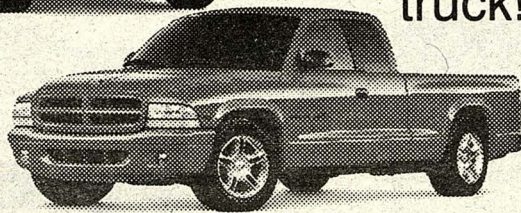
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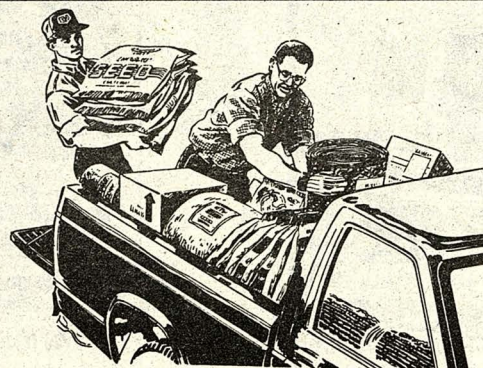
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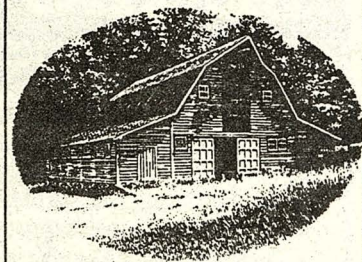
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Upper Maquoketa River water quality project is now underway

By Tom Sperfslage, Environmental Specialist, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship

The Upper Maquoketa River and its major tributaries, Bruce and Fenchel Creek, are important natural resources for northeast Iowa. In addition to being cold water streams stocked with trout by the Iowa DNR, the river and creeks also supply water to Backbone Lake in Backbone State Park, near Strawberry Point, Iowa. Every year, thousands of visitors come to the area to fish, swim and recreate, bringing with them thousands of dollars.

This past September, the Fayette, Clayton, Delaware and Buchanan SWCD's initiated field operations for the Upper Maquoketa River Water Quality Project. The Upper Maquoketa River watershed is just over 40,000 acres in size with the majority of the acres being used for crop and livestock production. The largest portions of the watershed are located in Fayette and Clayton counties, followed by Delaware and Buchanan counties.

This water quality project was a long time coming -- planning and grant writing for the project started back in 1998. Funding and support for the project comes from several sources and includes Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship - Division of Soil Conservation, Iowa DNR, US Environmental Protection Agency (section 319 of the Clean Water Act), USDA-NRCS and FSA, Iowa State University - Extension, the City of Strawberry Point, and local fly fishing clubs.

In addition to the sponsors listed above, the project is also supported by the locally led Maquoketa River Headwaters Council, chaired by Mr. Tom Hayes of rural Arlington. This council consists of landowners and producers in the watershed who are also concerned about water quality in the Upper Maquoketa River. The Headwaters Council looks to involve all citizens in the watershed, so that by protecting their farm, the river is protected as well.

While "official" field operations began in September 2000, ISU Extension staff had previously collected information about the Upper Maquoketa sub-watershed and the whole Maquoketa River basin, through surveys and personal visits. The Upper Maquoketa River Water Quality Project is part of a larger cooperative effort to protect and improve the larger Maquoketa River basin, that eventually outlets to the Mississippi River in Jackson County, Iowa. ISU Extension staff will assist the water quality project by training producers in Nutrient and Pesticide Management for cropland fields. A major goal for this program would be to fine tune nutrient inputs so that yields are maintained while environmental concerns are reduced.

Other goals for the project would be to reduce sediment delivery to the Upper Maquoketa River by 40%, improve manure usage and storage and conduct field days and educational events to help people understand water quality, crop production, resource conservation and related issues.

Water quality monitoring data show that the Upper Maquoketa River is laden with excessive nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and sediment. Excessive N, P and sediment in the river makes it harder for the trout to survive and naturally reproduce. Backbone Lake also shows the effects of poor water quality by having more frequent algae blooms, shallow depth and Lake/beach closings. Keeping contaminants out of the water protects farm value, protects farm income, improves trout (and the

critters they feed on) production, and protects the local economy that is based on farming and tourism.

Soil saving/water quality practices offered to landowners in the watershed include terraces, grassed waterways, sediment basins, ponds, streambank stabilization, timber stand improvement, livestock manure structures, corridor fencing, and pasture establishment. To encourage construction of these practices, the SWCD's are offering 75% cost-share instead of the usual 50% cost-share. Cost-share for pasture establishment is offered at 60%.

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is another soil saving tool that protects farm income by offering yearly rental rates and 90% cost-share. So far, enrollment in the CRP has been very good -- rental rates have been in the \$150 to \$180 per acre per year area and producers have been earning signing bonuses for most practices. CRP practices offered are waterways, filterstrips, field wind breaks, constructed wetlands, riparian filter and a few others.

Water quality is a product of our land and management. In the long run, it is as important as any other commodity we produce.

Farm operation benefits from no-till beans

By Mike Holtz



My wife, Jane, and I started farming in 1969 on a rented crop and livestock operation. Three years later, we purchased the farm where we live. Since then, we have continually increased the size of our farm, and today operate a 1,500 acre cash grain farm-most of which we own.

Generally we plant about half corn and half soybeans on our total acres. In 1993, we tried no-till beans drilled into corn stalks for the first time. We have been no-till drilling all of our beans ever since-between 700 and 800 acres per year. No-till beans have benefited our operation in many ways. Obviously, soil conservation is the largest benefit, but there are also the economic benefits of fewer trips across the field, less machinery cost, and less labor. Another advantage with less tillage is

fewer rocks to pick up- everyone involved is happy about that! I've also noticed, after eight years, that the soil tilth is improved. I have been very comfortable with the yields we get with this program. I know I can't give all the credit for increased yields to no-till, but it certainly has not detracted from high yields in any way.

No-till soybeans is, in my opinion, the most beneficial conservation practice that we use in our operation, but we also mulch-till for corn, and, two years ago, we seeded fifty-five acres of CRP buffer strips along streams. We also have more than five miles of permanent waterways, and in the last few years have installed 130,000 feet of tile.

The cost of these conservation efforts is substantial, but like any justifiable business expense, I know the return of our investment has been, and will continue to be good.

Our youngest son, Kevin, currently an Ag Business major at Iowa State University, has always exhibited a real interest in farming. This year he is buying into our farming operation. I can sense his enthusiasm about soil conservation, and his optimism about farming. I find that refreshing, and so it is with a renewed passion for the future of this business that we begin another year!

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The sale is open to anyone. There are no guidelines as to who can purchase the trees and where the trees are to be planted. **Cut off date for orders will be April 1, 2001. No orders accepted after this date.** We will notify you in late April when your order can be picked up. Supplies are limited so order early.

PLEASE NOTE: Check must accompany your order, payable to Fayette SWCD.

Species	Price Per Bundle	Number of Bundles	Total Cost
American Arborvitae (12-18")	\$35.00	x _____ =	_____
Black Hills Spruce (6-12")	\$30.00	x _____ =	_____
Black Walnut (2-3')	\$35.00	x _____ =	_____
Blue Spruce (6-12")	\$30.00	x _____ =	_____
Nannyberry (6-18")	\$30.00	x _____ =	_____
Lilac Villosa (8-24")	\$30.00	x _____ =	_____
Norway Spruce (12-18")	\$35.00	x _____ =	_____
Red Oak (2-3')	\$35.00	x _____ =	_____
Red Osier Dogwood (8-24")	\$30.00	x _____ =	_____
Scotch Pine (6-18")	\$30.00	x _____ =	_____
Sugar Maple (12-18")	\$35.00	x _____ =	_____
Evergreen Pkg. Includes:	\$45.00	x _____ =	_____
5 White Pine 12-18"; 5 Blue Spruce 12-18"; 5 Norway Spruce 12-18"			
Nut Tree Pkg. Includes:	\$45.00	x _____ =	_____
3 Northern Pecan 6-12"; 3 Shagbark Hickory 4-12"; 3 Hazelnut 6-18"; 3 Walnut 2-3'; 3 Shellbark Hickory 6-12"			
Shade Tree Pkg. Includes:	\$55.00	x _____ =	_____
3 White Ash 2-3'; 3 Pin Oak 2-3'; 3 Red Oak 2-3'; 3 Bur Oak 2-3'; 3 Swamp White Oak 2-3'			
Wildlife Shrub Pkg. Includes:	\$40.00	x _____ =	_____
3 American Cranberry 6-18"; 3 Hazelnut 6-18"; 3 American Plum 2-3'; 3 Red Osier Dogwood 2-3'; 3 Nanking Cherry 8-22"			
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American Arborvitae (2-3')	\$ 6.00	x _____ =	_____
Norway Spruce (18-24")	\$ 5.00	x _____ =	_____
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A habitat can be as small or as large as your area and imagination allows. Start by using native plants in existing beds, borders, ditches, or create a small "prairie plot" of Iowa wildflowers and grasses in your yard.

Each garden package contains 14 - 2 1/2" potted plants. Orders will be accepted until April 1, 2001 and plants will be available for pickup at our in late May or early June. We will notify you later of the exact pickup date.

The garden packages have been put together for sunny sites with average soil moisture. *Heights listed are for mature plants.

Note: The greenhouse reserves the right to substitute stock in case of plant failure.

Butterfly/Hummingbird Garden



\$35 each

2 Wild Sweet William	2' tall*
3 Butterfly Milkweed	2' tall*
2 Wild Bergamot	4' tall*
2 Showy Goldenrod	4' tall*
3 Sweet Black-eyed Susan	3' tall*
2 New England Aster	2' tall*

Pink flowers early summer
 Orange color in early summer
 Lavender color in summer
 Golden color in fall
 Yellow color in summer
 Purple color in fall

Iowa Prairie Garden

\$35 each

3 Prairie Coreopsis	4' tall*
2 Pale Purple Coneflower	3' tall*
2 White Prairie Clover	2' tall*
3 Prairie Spiderwort	2' tall*
2 Prairie Smoke	1' tall*
2 Sky Blue Aster	3' tall*

Yellow color in summer
 Lavender color in summer
 White color in early summer
 Purple color in late spring
 Red color in spring
 Blue color in fall

Item

Number
to Order Total

Butterfly/Hummingbird Garden @ \$35 each x _____ = \$ _____

Iowa Prairie Garden @ \$35 each x _____ = \$ _____

Total of Above Columns \$ _____

Add 6% Sales Tax \$ _____

Total Amount Due \$ _____



Please make checks payable to Fayette SWCD and return with your order to Fayette SWCD, 120 N Industrial Pkwy #2, West Union, IA 52175-1612. If you have any questions, please contact us at (319) 422-3868 Ext. 3.

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