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SOIL CONSERVATION



DES MOINES COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS: front row: Gary Wagner and Leonard Lane. Back row: Charles Nealey, Sherman Smith and Lloyd Schmeiser.

District Activities and Reports

By Dorothy E. Davis, Secretary

Lake Geode Watershed. Special funding for conservation projects in Lake Geode Watershed was allowed in fiscal year 1989-90. Des Moines Soil and Water Conservation District was granted \$15,611.

CRP. The ninth sign-up period for Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts occurred July 17 through August 4, 1989. There were 1,208.6 acres signed in 31 contracts.

Multi-Flora Rose. State of Iowa and Des Moines County Supervisors provided a total of \$2,150 to the district for cost sharing on chemicals to eradicate Multi-Flora Rose.

No-Till Tour. Charles Nealey organized a no-till tour to the Jim Kensella farm at Lexington, Illinois. Forty persons participated in the bus trip to view the no-till operation.

Soil Loss Complaint. District received a soil loss complaint. After an investigation, it was determined that there was severe erosion taking place. A solution was worked out with the farmer and the problem was corrected by a critical area seeding with 75% cost sharing to the farmer.

Soil Disturbing Activities. Commissioners reviewed several construction sites in the county to assess their adherence to a soil loss of five tons per acre.

Grade Stabilization Structures. District confirmed their ongoing policy to give low priority to cost sharing on structures.

Election of Officers. Sherman A. Smith was elected chairman; Leonard Lane, vice chairman; Dorothy Davis was appointed secretary; Horace

Sutton, treasurer; Arlyn Musselman, Jeff Bergman, Gary Wagner and William Walker, assistant commissioners; Charles Nealey was appointed to represent the district on the REAP Planning Committee; Lloyd Schmeiser on the County RC&D Board and Sherman Smith on the RC&D Executive Board.

No-Till Drill. District offered \$2500 to the County Conservation Board toward the purchase of a no-till drill to be used primarily for native grass seeding. It is expected that use of the drill will enhance water quality.

Leadership Development Program. District sponsored Kathy Baughman, Lisa Niedermayer and Charles Nealey to participate in the program.

Water Quality Project. District received a grant of \$12,000 for tree planting in the Little Flint Watershed. The project, Bonus for Trees, will give landowners from 75% to 90% cost sharing to plant 10 acres or more of trees.

REAP. On February 1, 1990 the district started accepting REAP cost-share applications. Priorities for practices to be funded are: 1) conservation cover, 2) timber stand improvement, 3) tree planting, and 4) rescue treatment.

IASWCD Scholarship. The Education Committee selected Rusty Orr of Mediapolis as winner from 17 applications submitted to the district.

Soil Loss Limits. District went on record to approve a limit of five tons per acre soil loss and recommend that the limit be uniform throughout the state.

Technical Assistance Available

By Doug Ensmlinger, Soil Conservation Technician

The Soil Conservation Service was originally formed to assist landowners in applying soil saving practices on the land. This service is still available to those who request it free of charge. In servicing landowners, our goal is to reduce soil erosion to a tolerable level. There are many ways of doing this dependent on the area in question. Some areas may take only conservation tillage, while others may take an earthen structure such as a terrace.

Some of the practices include: (1) no-till planting; (2) contour terraces; (3) water and sediment control basins; (4) grassed waterways; and (4) grade stabilization structures. These practices are also treatments that may be cost shared, depending upon the availability of money. They are listed above in the priority in which cost-share funds are allocated. The priority rating was developed by our five member board of commissioners in the allocation of these cost-share funds. This rating may change from time to time depending upon the focus of USDA programs.

No-till is cost-shared up to 30% of total funds available due to the implementation of the 1985 farm bill. There is a limit of 80 acres at a rate of \$10 an acre.

Terraces consume most of the funds, because they are a practice which fights soil erosion for many years if proper maintenance is performed. They are cost-shared at 50% of the lesser of an estimate developed by the Soil Conservation Service or the actual cost of the project. Terraces will be constructed as close to the contour as possible in order to get the maximum benefit in soil savings.

Water and sediment control basins are similar to terraces but are placed across a waterway to hold water and sediment until a tile can drain the runoff. These structures are beneficial in that they collect sediment before it reaches streams or water impoundments. These basins are cost shared the same as terraces.

Grassed waterways are a low cost method of controlling gully erosion in fields. These areas are shaped and seeded to a sod-forming grass to hold soil in place along water flowing paths. Cost-share for waterways is also at 50%.

Grade stabilization structures are similar to a pond because they impound water to a level that controls an overfall in a field or pasture. These structures are a low priority because they usually are not found in row-cropped areas, but are also cost-shared at 50%.

Our cost-share does not have a limit but will be allocated in the priority listed above. ASCS also has cost share funds available at 70% with a limit of \$3500 per project.

If you have an area that may be losing excessive soil, feel free to contact our office. We will be glad to take a look at the area and give advice on possible control methods.

District Accomplishments

Item/Practice	No.	Acres/Ft
October 1, 1989 - September 30, 1990		
New Cooperators	64	10,110 ac.
Individuals Assisted	1,148	
Conservation Practices Applied	201	
Conservation Plans	9,830 ac.	
Land Use & Treatment Site Plan Review	11	
Governmental Agencies Assisted	11	
Tracts with No Highly Erodible Land	126	
Tracts with Highly Erodible Land	80	1,525 ac.
Tracts with Conservation System Applied	42	1,171 ac.
Tracts w/Approved FSA Conservation Plan	229	9,651 ac.
Contour Farming	1	128 ac.
Grade Stabilization Structure	1	
Grassed Waterway	7 ac.	
Terrace	19,475 ft.	
Water & Sediment Control Basin	6	18,000 ft.
Cropland Treated	10,568 ac.	
Cropland Protected	10,568 ac.	
Pasture & Hayland Treated	5 ac.	
Woodland Treated	47 ac.	
Wildlife Land Treated	1,736 ac.	

Annual Report of Des Moines County Soil & Water Conservation District

Fiscal Year July 1, 1989 - June 30, 1990

Expenditures of funds provided by State of Iowa for District Commissioners' Expenses, Office Supplies and Expenses, Office Equipment and Financial Incentive Programs.

1-M FUNDS - TRAVEL, OFFICE SUPPLIES, EXPENSES & EQUIPMENT	
Commissioners' Travel	\$1,165.22
Office Supplies & Expenses	1,680.73
Released to State of Iowa	356.06
Total Allocation	\$3,202.00
1989-90 STATE FINANCIAL INCENTIVE FUNDS	
Terraces 650 lin. ft. completed	\$1,249.93
Obligated (projects not completed)	10,688.52
Unobligated (earmarked for no-til)	5,218.28
Unobligated Balance	243.33
Total Allocation	\$17,394.00
Critical Area Seeding 4 ac. (mandatory)	\$1,700.68
1988-89 STATE FINANCIAL INCENTIVE FUNDS	
Terraces 6400 lin. ft. completed	\$8,038.48
Water & sediment Control Basins 950 ft. completed	1,325.58
No-Till 4,414+ acres (project not completed)	4,141.34
Obligated	696.00
Unobligated Balance	46.57
Total Allocation	\$14,248.00
1990-91 REAP-FORESTRY PRACTICES	
Obligated (projects not completed)	\$25,402.75
Unobligated Balance	1,068.33
Total Allocation	\$26,471.08
1990-91 REAP-PRACTICES	
Obligated (projects not completed)	\$20,285.81
Unobligated Balance	5,294.11
Total Allocation	\$27,280.00
BONUS FOR TREES PROJECT	
Allocation & Unobligated Balance	\$12,000.00
1989-90 REAP FORESTRY PRACTICES	
Timber Stand Improvement 45 acres completed	\$2,820.00
Obligated (projects not completed)	\$4,648.77
Allocation held by Div. Soil Conservation	
1989-90 REAP PRACTICES	
Obligated (practices not completed)	\$13,047.00
Unobligated Balance	48.00
Total Allocation	\$13,095.00
REVOLVING FUND ACCOUNT	
July 1, 1989 - June 30, 1990	\$624.48
Receipts:	
Sales of Flags & Scales	141.53
Bus Tour	333.00
NACD Video Survey	43.50
Computer Sale	105.00
State Reimbursement	1,180.73
Mailing Fees Reimbursement	4.00
Loan (H.Sutton)	7,000.00
Total Receipts	\$8,807.76
Total Expenses	8,807.76
Balance, June 30, 1990	\$836.48
CD Value, June 30, 1990	\$5,801.10
CD Value, June 30, 1990	\$3,643.46

Des Moines County Soil & Water Conservation District COMMISSIONERS

Sherman A. Smith, Chairman
Leonard L. Lane, Vice Chairman
Keith B. Renner - Lloyd F. Schmeiser - Charles T. Nealey

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONERS

Horace Sutton, Treasurer
William Walker - Arlyn Musselman - Jeff Bergman - Gary Wagner

OFFICE STAFF

Terry J. Costly, SCS District Conservationist
Doug Ensmlinger, SCS Soil Conservation Technician
John Horan, SCS Soil Conservation Aide
John K. Fruhling, SCS Soil Conservation Aide
Lisa M.K. Niedermayer, SCS Soil Conservationist (transferred to Indianapolis and Knoxville 6/15/90)
Kathy R. Baughman, SCS Soil Conservation Technician (to 9/30/90)
Sally J. Mehaffy, SCS Soil Conservation Aide (to 5/19/90)
Dorothy E. Davis, State & District Secretary

ANNUAL REPORT

SCS to Ask For Drainage Records On Wet Areas

Des Moines County landowners and operators who have wet areas on their land and have been involved with USDA programs since 1986 can expect to receive an important letter from the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) within the next few months.

The letter will ask for cropping information and drainage records on wet areas the SCS has identified from aerial photographs and soils information.

"We're in the process of making determinations on which of these areas are wetlands, and what type of wetlands they are," says Terry J. Cosby, District Conservationist for the SCS. "We need information from the landowner or operator so we can make the most accurate determination."

"Drainage records that document prior drainage of an area will have a big impact on what the area is called and whether any further drainage work can be done without a violation of USDA's "swampbuster" provision.

The swampbuster provision of the 1985 and 1990 farm bills was designed to discourage further drainage of wetlands for agricultural production.

"We don't want anyone to lose USDA benefits by modifying a wetland," says Cosby. "Our whole effort over the next few months is intended to let landowners know where they stand on these wet areas - to come to an understanding of just how the swampbuster rules affect them on their land."

Des Moines County landowners will receive a letter, aerial photographs with potential wet areas outlined, and a worksheet. The SCS is asking for the worksheet to be completed and returned to the SCS office within 60 days.

"We're asking farmers to provide all the records and supporting information they have," says Cosby. Records indicating whether areas were drained before or after 1985, or if they have been cropped or in a USDA set-aside program since then are needed. Details, dates and locations of tile systems will also be requested.

Five percent of the drainage documentation sheets will be spot-checked by SCS to verify that the field situation has been accurately reported.

All information gathered from local landowners will be combined with data from soil types and maps. The SCS district conservationist will then determine which areas are wetlands, what type of wetland they are, and what role swampbuster may have on any further altering or draining of the area.

If the owner or operator can show SCS the wet areas have been totally drained before 1985, and a "prior converted cropland" (PC) designation is given to the site, it may be drained and farmed or altered as needed without swampbuster penalties.

On the other hand, if there is no record of previous drainage and it can not be certified that previous drainage work was done, the area will be labeled a wetland. While this designation will not prevent cropping the area under natural conditions, drainage work would be prohibited under the swampbuster provision.

There are also areas that drain out frequently because previous drainage work was inadequate.

"If you can certify some drainage work has been done, there are restrictions on further drainage of the area, but current farming practices and maintenance of the existing system may continue on these farmed wetland," Cosby says.

I encourage landowners to contact their local SCS office to go over their information and get any questions answered," said Cosby.

Cosby says it's very easy for incorrect rumors to get started. "We want to be sure we understand all the drainage history, and that landowners and operators understand the process," Cosby says.

There is an appeals procedure on a wetland determination, which begins with the local SCS office. The deadline for SCS to make all wetland determinations in the state is Oct. 31.



OFFICE STAFF: front row: Doug Ensminger and Dorothy Davis. Back row: John Fruehling, Terry Cosby and John Horan.



Darrel Belzer, Earth Team Volunteer in the Soil Conservation Service office in Burlington. Darrel has contributed 250 hours since September 1990.

Volunteerism: Is It For You?

by Terry J. Cosby

If the answer to the above question is yes, then the Des Moines County Soil Conservation Service Earth Team is interested in you. Since 1983, the beginning of the volunteer program in Des Moines County, 40 individuals have donated approximately 7000 hours of community service. At \$7 per hour the value is \$49,000. In essence, these individuals have saved the taxpayers in Des Moines County and the nation \$49,000, dollars that otherwise would have been paid out of your pockets.

The next question of yours might be "Who or why do people volunteer?" People of all ages volunteer. The vast majority of these individuals volunteering enjoy working with the environment and natural resources. They are mothers whose children have gone off to school; they are young

people wanting to get some work experience so they can be hired for a paying job later. They are senior citizens who no longer want a 40 hour a week job. They are single persons with a few extra hours and a need for social activity. They are also individuals who are in rehabilitation programs.

Volunteers have played an important part in my day to day operations of the Soil Conservation office. Without volunteers many duties or projects would not have been completed. Volunteers are an important part of our society; they are out on the front lines every day doing a sometimes difficult job, not because they have to, or they are paid to. They do it because they care.

If you fit into any of these categories or need additional information on the Volunteer Earth Team program, please contact the Soil Conservation Service field office.

Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management

By Don Dahl

In Des Moines County and across the State of Iowa, roadside management and "weed" control has traditionally been accomplished through the use of mowing, cutting of brush and blanket spraying. Concerns over the use of chemicals, the relative inefficiency of traditional practices and the high level of energy consumption have prompted counties across Iowa to implement a program of Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management.

The intent of the IRVM is to control weed problems through wise management and involves a variety of techniques. The new approach to roadside management primarily involves the establishment of native warm season grasses and flowers. A community of prairie grasses and flowers is established to protect our roadsides with a dense vegetative cover. Without vegetative openings and dead spots, weeds will not be able to invade and soil erosion will be prevented.

Spot spraying of herbicides is an important part of the IRVM program. Plants requiring control will

be identified and specific herbicides will be used during the plants' most vulnerable growing time. Plants will be sprayed individually to prevent disturbance of the surrounding vegetation.

Burning to control weed invasion is a limited part of the roadside management program. The season for beneficial burning is late March through mid-May. Burning is not a primary activity. However, because fire was a natural part of the prairie ecosystem, it plays a key role in the establishment of a good healthy stand of mixed prairie vegetation.

Planting native, warm season grasses and flowers has several long range benefits. It provides food and cover for wildlife, protects the groundwater by reducing the use of herbicides and will reduce the amount of time and money spent on mowing.

Given time, good management practices and principles will result in reduced expenditures of taxpayers' dollars and a quality environment.

Bonus For Trees

By John Horan, Soil Conservation Aide

There are still funds available for the planting of trees under the Bonus for Trees project in the Flint River watershed area.

The Bonus for Trees project is a program by which a landowner may receive up to 95% cost share for planting trees on their farm.

Some of the requirements to be eligible for the program are:

a) planting must be 10 acres or larger in size,
b) planting has to be within the Flint River watershed,

c) planting has to be done according to State Forester's recommendations.

Planting of trees is of benefit in the reduction of soil erosion, the improvement of water quality, provides cover for wildlife, and is a good long term investment.

The state of Iowa is the leading producer of Black Walnut in the world and providing you have the right type of soil for walnut, this is an opportunity to get a planting started at a reasonable price per acre.

Anyone interested in planting trees on their land, or who has any questions please feel free to contact Des Moines County Soil and Water Conservation District, 1104 Derek Lincoln Drive, PO Box 547, West Burlington, IA. Phone 319-752-6221.

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