

Cherokee County Soil Conservation District



ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1949



DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS

C. C. Martin, Cherokee

L. C. Bengtson, Cherokee

James R. Fee, Washta

INTRODUCTION

In presenting our report of activities of the Cherokee County Soil Conservation District for 1949 we, the commissioners, would like to state that progress in the past year has made it the most successful one since the district was organized.

District accomplishments are increasing annually and goals for next year should show conservation practices being applied at a greater rate than ever before. Every effort should be made to increase the number of cooperators with farm conservation plans over the 1949 rate. Emphasis should be placed on increasing the number of organized sub-watersheds in the Little Sioux area.

The technical help assigned the district by the Soil Conservation Service has been busy working out complete conservation plans with interested farmers and with aiding cooperating farmers in laying out conservation practices on their farms. Technicians Harvey Lindberg, Mervin Danielson, Glen Craft and Edwin Clow, together with Assistant Extension Director Bruce Florea, have done a very good job for the district.

The district has received valuable assistance from many different groups, whose contributions are listed later in this report.

We, the commissioners of the Cherokee County Soil Conservation District, are elected to serve you in organizing and administering the soil conservation program in Cherokee County. To do this effectively entails making use of every possible resource that can be made available. New ideas and suggestions contribute much to the success of the program and we urge all to assist us by submitting your ideas and suggestions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PRODUCTION & MARKETING ADMINISTRATION: We should work with and exchange ideas with the PMA organization in effecting a coordination of our activities that will encourage more farmers to use conservation practices and to install complete conservation plans on their farms.

At present, the matter of acreage allotments is causing the commissioners and many of our district cooperators some concern. The following questions are being asked: How will acreage allotments affect farmers who have already reduced corn acreage considerably as many district cooperators have done? How will it affect their attitude toward the district's conservation program?

We would like to see any program of acreage allotments based on good land use. As a start in this direction we feel that it might be well to change our present philosophy on making acreage allotments (using crop history as a base) and substitute one that takes into account the land use capabilities (using the amount of cropland on a farm with adjustments for slope, soil type and degree of erosion).

Following is a resolution approved by the Cherokee District commissioners (copies of which were sent to the County PMA Committee, State PMA Committee, State Soil Conservation Committee, Senator Guy Gillette, Congressman Charles Hoeven, State Representative Lawrence Boothby):

Cherokee, Iowa
December 2, 1949

"To: Chairman, Cherokee County PMA Committee

FROM: Commissioners of the Cherokee County Soil Conservation District

Acreage allotments, when in effect prior to the last war, were based on past cropping practices. This method led to some inequalities in that the farmer who had reduced his acreage of row crop to establish a soil conserving rotation had his base reduced in the same proportion as those who had a very large acreage in corn. It, in effect, penalized the man who had a good conservation program on his farm.

Now that the question of acreage allotments confronts us again, farmers are faced with the problem of how best to make acreage allotments to individual farms.

This is a question that deeply concerns the commissioners of the Cherokee County Soil Conservation District. The district was organized and operates for the primary purpose of assisting farmers in planning and applying complete soil conservation programs on their farms. The question that concerns the district is: What will acreage allotments based on past history do to the farmer who has already reduced his row crop acreage by using a crop rotation with a considerable amount of grass in it (such rotation being the basis of a sound conservation program).

Knowing that the PMA is as interested in furthering the wise-

spread adoption of soil conservation practices as the district is, we would like to make the following suggestion.

We suggest that acreage allotments be based on the amount of cropland on a farm rather than crop history. We believe this suggestion has merit because it would mean that the farmers who have already reduced row crop acreage to 40% or less of their total cropland would not have to take further reductions until others were on a par with them.

Farmers who voluntarily reduce their row crop acreage in establishing soil conserving rotations would be encouraged under such a program.

Also, the information necessary to set up acreage allotments in this manner is already on hand.

Yours truly,
C. C. Martin, Chairman
Cherokee County Soil Conservation District

EDUCATION: A continuing educational program must be maintained in the district if the soil conservation program is to be advanced successfully in the future.

Soil conservation is a common term, it is heard nearly every day. However, it does not always mean the same to all people. Perhaps we should make "a better and fuller understanding of what soil conservation means" one of our major objectives. Along with this, the purpose and functions of a "soil conservation district" should be emphasized.

Our district educational program should make an effort to reach every farmer and landowner in the district (a better understanding cannot help but intensify the interest in soil conservation). The educational program should also be geared to spread an understanding of the meaning of soil conservation in our cities and towns.

We need to make every effort to utilize more people in spreading an understanding of soil conservation. By working more with groups perhaps we can spread this understanding faster as this is a good means of enrolling more men on our team.

Some of the other points our educational program must be geared to cover are:

1. It is much easier to get a widespread use of practices such as contouring, grassed waterways and seeded headlands than it is to get widespread use of a more basic practice: rotations with more grasses and legumes.
2. Overcoming inertia: "I realize we will all have to come to a soil conservation program someday but not just yet for me".
3. Working with agencies such as the Extension Service and the County Board of Supervisors in continuing the promotion of a successful weed control program.
4. Making better use of press and radio facilities.

Little Sioux Flood Control Program

The district is guiding its conservation activities with the view of getting complete upland erosion control measures on small watersheds.

Practically all of the Cherokee District lies within the outlines of the Little Sioux River watershed. As a result we are adapting our conservation activities so as to best fit in with the flood control program worked out for the entire Little Sioux Watershed.

In our district this means organizing small watershed groups for the purpose of planning and applying soil conservation measures.

District progress in the development of sub-watersheds is as follows:

1. Mortenson watershed — Over 70% of acres planned and application of conservation practices well underway. Gully control work practically complete.
2. Martin watershed — Over 70% of acres planned and application of conservation practices well underway. Gully control work underway.
3. Fee watershed — Over 70% of acres planned and application of conservation practices well under way. Little Sioux Works Committee has granted a priority for gully control work.
4. Simonsen watershed — Over 70% of acres planned and application of conservation practices well underway. Little Sioux Works Committee has granted a priority for gully control work.

Other watersheds being developed are: Clark watershed, Roberson watershed, 4-Mile Creek watershed, Perry Creek watershed, Conley watershed, Patterson watershed, Johns watershed and Ralston watershed. Priorities for gully control work on these watersheds will be requested as fast as the planning and application of soil conservation practices in these watersheds justifies such requests.

Soil Conservation Service

The technical assistance provided by the Soil Conservation Service has provided the district with a working tool that is essential to its successful operation.

During 1949, the Soil Conservation Service provided the following fulltime technical assistance to the Cherokee County Soil Conservation District:

- 1 — Planning Technician (12 months) — Harvey Lindberg
- 1 — Junior Planning Technician (9 months) — Mervin Danielson
- 1 — Conservation Aid (10 months) — Glen Craft
- 1 — Conservation Aid (9 months) — Edwin Clow

It is anticipated that, during 1950, the District will have the full time services of 1 planning technician, 1 junior planning technician and 1 conservation aid.

In addition to the above the District received part time assistance from a District Conservationist, a Soil Surveyor, an Engineer, and the staff of the flood control section of the Soil Conservation Service.

Farm Planning Activities To Date

Since the organization of the district, 238 farmers have developed conservation plans with district assistance (technical assistance furnished by the Soil Conservation Service) for a total of 47,365 acres. Total land in farms, in Cherokee County, is about 357,116. acres.

The greatest concentration of district cooperators is in the more rolling townships. It is interesting to note that the large percentage of district cooperators are grouped; whether the start was an individual, a small group or a watershed, the result has been pretty much the same. As the district grows older we find groups of cooperators accumulating around the older cooperators; where a small group made the original start there is usually an expansion in the number of cooperators in the area. In the past, planning activities have been on both an individual and a group basis.

Future farm planning activities will be centered on neighborhood groups; it is hoped that by 1951 all planning activities will be with groups developed on a neighborhood basis. This would facilitate the development of sub-watersheds in the Little Sioux River watershed area.

Progress Made by the District in Securing Establishment of Soil Conservation Practices

Item—	Unit	In '49	To Date
1. Farmers developing complete conservation plans	No.	60	228
2. Practices established by farmers with complete conservation plans:			
a. Contouring of row crops	Acres	5,028	21,412
b. Headlands seeded	Acres	111	625
c. Terraces constructed	Miles	15	58
d. Diversions constructed	Ln. Ft.	1,056	6,738
e. Waterways tiled	Ln. Ft.	3,800	12,950
f. Waterways seeded	Miles	15	69
g. Contour fence built	Rods	1,775	5,086
h. Contour field divisions established	Rods	13,077	43,575
3. 49 other farmers received assistance in establishing following practices during 1949:			
a. Contouring of row crops	Acres	1,435	
b. Terraces constructed	Miles	1.75	
c. Contour field divisions established	Rods	1,105	

In addition to the above there has been some work done in improving permanent pasture, seeding new permanent pastures, planting wildlife areas, liming and fertilizing. The soil testing program in Cherokee County, operated by the P. M. A. and the Extension Service, should lead to an important increase in the use of lime and fertilizer (and on a sound basis).

Note: Steele State Bank constructed approximately 40 miles of terraces on their farms during 1949; to date they have constructed approximately 82 miles of terraces (this is in addition to the terracing reported above).

During 1949, one set of 3 parallel terraces were constructed on the James Fee farm. These terraces will be kept under observation to see how they function and how they farm; if they operate successfully they may provide an answer to some of the objections to farming terraced land. However, they appear to be adapted to quite uniform slopes only.

GOALS SET FOR 1950

New farm conservation plans	60
Additional contouring of row crops	6,618 acres
Additional terracing	28 miles
Additional grassed waterways established	33 miles
Additional contour field divisions established	20,061 rods
New sub-watersheds developed	5

Extension Service

The Extension Service, through County Extension Director A. R. Griffith and his assistant, Bruce Florea, is one of the mainstays of the district program, especially its educational program. Some of the highlights in aiding the district are listed in the following paragraphs.

The adult night school movement in Cherokee County now involves three school systems. In two of these, regular courses in Agronomy are being offered. Assistance was given in outlining the courses and obtaining subject matter specialists.

A soil conservation training school has been set up for the winter months. Plans include three all-day sessions and a meeting in the field some time this coming spring. About three farmers per township will be invited. Young farmers, key men in watershed areas, and P.M.A. committeemen, are the main ones we hope to reach. If this type of program is successful, it will provide a reservoir of local leaders which can be expanded from year to year.

Two fifteen minutes radio programs have been presented over station KAYL in Storm Lake. One was a round-table discussion among the commissioners on the workings of a soil conservation district and the other was an explanation of the Little Sioux Flood Control Program.

Assistance was given the Pilot Rock Plowing Match Association on the rules and program planning committees as well as assisting with the matches.

The soil testing program, operated through the cooperation of the P. M. A., was greatly expanded. A training school was held in the spring to teach P. M. A. men how to take soil samples for testing. The samples are sent to Iowa State College for analysis and the results are returned to this office where fertilizer and lime recommendations are made. When samples are taken on a farm which is operating under a plan with the district, an extra copy of the recommendations is made and sent to the S. C. S. office to be inserted in the folder of that farm. By September 1, over 800 samples had been submitted to the laboratory for analysis.

Fertilizer clinics are planned for this winter when farmers who have had soil tests made will be invited in to discuss their fertilizer problems. Interest and actual use of commercial fertilizer is increasing each year. An illustration of this is the fertilizer dealers short course held at Ames. This year eleven fertilizer dealers and five farmers from the county attended.

The special activity of the Boys' 4-H Clubs in Cherokee County this year was Soil Conservation. Program material was prepared and discussed at the regular club meetings in addition to stops on the June tours at which conservation layouts were pointed out and explained. A conservation exhibit consisting of two relief models of the same farm—one before and one after a farm plan had been adopted—was exhibited at the Plowing Match and also at the

State Fair. A demonstration team received a white ribbon at the State Fair for their demonstration, "How to Develop a Farm Plan". One of the team members, Jim Warrender, was presented a \$50.00 bond and a bronze pin for his outstanding work in soil conservation. In addition to participating and placing in several plowing and terrace-building contests he has operated as a commercial terrace builder as well as assisted his father in establishing a conservation plan on their home farm.

The education program in the elementary and junior high schools outlined in last year's report was used by most of the schools in the county. Each student was supplied with a work book and reference material was provided in the rooms and libraries using the unit. This unit was made available through the cooperation of the local chapter of the Friends of the Land and the County Superintendent of Schools. This year, since the state department of education is supplying the course of study, our assistance will probably be in speaking to classes and conducting tours in the spring.

The district wishes to express their appreciation to County Superintendent of Schools Earl Berkler for the interest shown and the time he has spent in arranging for the use of conservation material in the county school system.

Pilot Rock Plowing Match Association

The above named association again sponsored a two day event (during August) that featured contour plowing and terrace building.

The two day show was held on the F. O. Mortenson farm (a district cooperator). This farm was selected because it had an ideal site for a plowing match and also because it is part of a sub-watershed in which flood control work was underway.

The two day show consisted of the following events:

1. An open terrace building contest.
2. State plow terrace building contest.
3. District contour plowing contest.
4. Junior contour plowing contest.
5. 4-H Livestock show and sale.
6. Farm machinery show.
7. Pageant (for full week).

The plowing match was well attended and there were about fifty contestants in the four events. Louis Bengtson, also a district commissioner, served as president of the association during 1949 and directed the 1949 show. One of the outstanding features of the show from a conservation standpoint were the two terracing contests; they demonstrated how to build terraces with practically every type of terracing equipment that can be pulled with a farm tractor.

One of the drawbacks of previous terracing contests has been the amount of time needed to obtain the data for judging and the computing of it; results have not been available until long after the contest is over. A new method of scoring terrace contests was tried out this year and, in our opinion, worked very successfully. The judging time was more than cut in half. Credit should be given to Bruce Marcue of Ida Grove, Iowa, and to Leonard Larson of Sioux City, Iowa, for the part they played in working out this method.

Sioux City Program for Permanent Agriculture

(Sponsored by the Sioux City Chamber of Commerce and the
Sioux City Journal-Tribune Publications)

The Cherokee County Soil Conservation District participated in the above program again in 1949. One hundred sixty-three farmers (from Cherokee County) were nominated as outstanding conservation farmers.

In picking the team of three to represent the Cherokee District, judges were exchanged with the O'Brien County District. Picked to represent the Cherokee District were Ralph Kludas of Cherokee, Vere Corrington of Aurelia, and Arthur Dorr of Marcus.

The Cherokee team won the following honors for the district: a plaque for outstanding district in the four county area and a check for \$300.00 for outstanding district in the Iowa section. The commissioners are proud to recall that similar honors were won by the Cherokee District in 1947.

We wish to express our appreciation to the sponsoring groups in this program. It is a good program for it gives recognition to the men who put conservation on the land — the farmers. The district will participate in the 1950 program.

The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. Soil Conservation Contest for District Commissioners

The commissioners participated in this program in 1949 and are participating again in 1950.

We feel there is a real value in this program in that it encourages each district to review its activities and, in doing that, point out the activities that are not receiving their due emphasis; it provides a good score sheet for analyzing our activities.

PRODUCTION & MARKETING ADMINISTRATION—

The soil testing program being operated by the P.M.A. in cooperation with the Extension Service is an outstanding contribution to better land use. The wise use of lime and fertilizer is an important adjunct to the establishment of grasses and legumes and to maintaining them in high production.

CHEROKEE COUNTY FARM BUREAU—

The attitude of this organization toward the district program can best be expressed by quoting from the resolutions of the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation: "The Farm Bureau is proud of its part in establishing the 96 Soil Conservation Districts in Iowa . . . Our organization wishes to do everything possible to promote soil conservation".

NEWSPAPERS—

The newspapers are one of the most effective ways of reaching people with news of the district program and we appreciate the space that Cherokee County newspapers have given it in the past year.

BANKS—

Cherokee County banks are outstanding in the interest they have shown in and the effort they have expended in promoting a sound soil conservation program. They are an important factor in the spread of conservation practices in Cherokee County.

CHEROKEE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE—

The Cherokee Chamber of Commerce again sponsored the dinner preceding the plowing match events and for which the services of an outstanding speaker (Dr. Jonathan Forman) were secured. It is through such events that many people obtain a better understanding of what conservation means.

LITTLE SIOUX CHAPTER OF FRIENDS OF THE LAND—

The district appreciates the many contributions this organization has made toward setting up a better educational program in Cherokee County. Among other activities, the securing of such speakers as Louis Bromfield, Dr. Jonathan Forman, and Dr. Albrecht, of the University of Missouri, are among their outstanding accomplishments. Washburn Steele, as president of the organization, is doing a very capable job.

FARM MACHINERY COMPANIES—

Dealers are continuing their able efforts to promote more widespread use of conservation practices. They have been active in lining up equipment for demonstrations and contests.

OTHERS—

The district cannot list the many individuals, in this report, who have contributed to the advancement of the soil conservation program in Cherokee County; however, we wish to take this opportunity of expressing our thanks.

Report of the Treasurer
Cherokee County Soil Conservation District
DECEMBER 31, 1949

GENERAL FUND

Cash Balance on January 1, 1949	\$ 100.00	
Paid Out During 1949		\$ 64.25
Receipts During 1949 (Prize money from Sioux City Chamber of Commerce)	300.00	
Balance on Hand December 31, 1949		335.75
	\$ 400.00	\$ 400.00

MAINTENANCE FUND

Cash Balance on January 1, 1949	\$ 0.00	
Received from F. O. Mortenson and P. M. Peterson	1,800.00	
Refunded to F. O. Mortenson and P. M. Peterson		\$ 600.00
Paid Title Certifications		12.50
Balance on Hand December 31, 1949		1,187.50
	\$1,800.00	\$1,800.00

