

Years of Soil Conservation in Iowa
by
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Keep

1. A very significant step in progress in soil conservation was the passage of the soil conservation district law in 1939. This provided for local initiative, local authority and responsibility and for an organized approach to soil conservation.
2. The first State Soil Conservation Committee was composed of 3 farmer members—Clyde Spry, Earl Elijah and the late Clark Huntley in addition to Mark Thornburg and R. K. Bliss. Significant that Bliss and Thornburg said and insisted that soil conservation is a farm problem—it is an agricultural program and, therefore, a farmer should be chairman of the State Committee. By agreement each served as chairman for two years. History over the U. S. shows that this was a significant recognition by Bliss and Thornburg.
3. The first hearing was held at Knoxville, Iowa on March 4, 1940.
4. The first charter was issued to the Marion County Soil Conservation District on April 22, 1940.
5. Governor Wilson after appointing the State Committee told them to go ahead and do what they thought was necessary to get the job done and that he would leave the entire program to them. "If you get one or two districts organized the next year or two you will be doing good", he said.

Districts organized in 1940 —	8
1941 —	9
1942 —	13
1943 —	4
1944 —	12
1945 —	15
1946 —	21
1947 —	7
1948 —	3
1949 —	4

Total — 96

6. The late Attorney General Everett was most helpful in the early days of the District law and Bob Larson, Clarence Kading and others in the Attorney General's Office have likewise helped the State Committee and Soil Conservation Districts on many occasions.
7. The purpose and objectives of Soil Conservation Districts are clearly and emphatically set forth in the State Law. It also recognized that with authority to Soil Conservation Districts also goes responsibility to develop a program, plan of operations, set up policies and procedures, etc.

Two important items in many district programs and work plans are; (a) The long-time objective of the district is a conservation farm plan in operation on every farm in the district; (b) Secure the cooperation and help of every agency, organization and individual in a position to help with the work. (This, as will be pointed out later, is becoming increasingly important.)

8. Major agencies from the standpoint of funds and personnel facilities available to assist with the work are: (a) P.M.A. with several million dollars for payment to farmers for adopting soil conserving measures; (b) Agricultural Extension Service with specialists and others to expand the educational program; (c) The Agricultural Experiment Station to conduct needed research; (d) F.H.A.; and (e) Soil Conservation Service with technical personnel to help plan and apply the program on the farm. There are many others but full cooperation of these is most important. Iowa has enjoyed very good cooperation. There are many others whose cooperation, understanding and contributions are very essential--F.C.A., farm organizations, bankers' associations, civic clubs, etc. (The State Committee and Soil Conservation District Governing Bodies have the responsibility to seek cooperation of everyone.)
9. Press and Radio -- Interest in conservation on the part of newspapers, editors, camera men, promotion departments and so on, has been far beyond any expectations. The space given to stories, editorials and pictures has been very extensive. The cash contributions to conservation have been large--soil conservation field days sponsored by the Des Moines Register in cooperation with Soil Conservation Districts and others. The Omaha World-Herald Soil Conservation Contest, the Sioux City Journal and Tribune and Chamber of Commerce Agricultural Conservation Award Program are just a few examples of what newspapers are doing. Many daily and weekly papers throughout the state are making equally important contributions in the area they serve.

The farm magazines are continually on the lookout for material that will help further the cause. Kirk Fox told me sometime ago that he planned for a good story on conservation in every issue of SUCCESSFUL FARMING. Don Murphy, Editor of WALLACES FARMER is likewise on the lookout for bits of information and experiences of farmers that will interest their readers.

Radio stations have been pounding away from almost every conceivable angle. News items, personal experiences stories, technical information and sponsoring of conservation events in cooperation with Soil Conservation Districts and others. Herb Plambeck of WHO, Dale Williams of WOI and Chuck Worcester of WMT have provided outstanding leadership in this field. The field days sponsored by WMT and the State and National Contour Plowing Contests and conservation events initiated by Herb Plambeck and his associates at Radio Station WHO have reached unprecedented heights. This is particularly true as to attendance interest and enthusiasm.

May I take this opportunity to congratulate the Register and Tribune and Station WHO on a very forward step in my opinion in combining their resources and efforts into the National Soil Conservation Field Day and National Plowing Contests to be held near Runnells, Iowa on September 15th. Cooperation has been a must in all of these events in the past and, as pointed out earlier, farmers have been leaders in the events. This year Mr. Wilbur Goodhue, Chairman of the Polk County Soil Conservation District Commissioners, is chairman

of the Executive Committee responsible for the over-all planning of this large and most important event in Iowa.

Last year over 200,000 people attended soil conservation field days, contour plowing contests, tours and demonstrations.

Problems are to help people understand the purpose and objectives of these events as need for terracing, waterways, etc.

Accomplishments

What has been accomplished in soil and water conservation during the past 10 years is a question that is difficult to answer. If measured entirely in terms of interest, enthusiasm, understanding and cooperation, we can well be proud of what has taken place during the past 10 years. In terms of contouring, terracing, pasture improvement, drainage, etc., great progress has been made, but at the same time we must be aware of the job ahead.

Some evidences of progress since the first Soil Conservation District hearing was held at Knoxville, Iowa on March 14, 1940 and the first charter issued to the Marion County District on April 22, 1940 are:

1. 18,000 farm plans written.
2. 9,133 requests for farm plans as of June 30 or about an average of ninety per district.
3. Over 800 miles of terraces in the Page District.
4. About 50,000 acres of contouring in Woodbury District.
5. Over 31,000 acres of strip cropping in Clayton District.
6. Over 1 million feet of tile drainage in Webster District.
7. 673 district agreements in Marion district.
8. 90 to 95 counties in Iowa have conservation in the course of study in rural schools (about 2,300 schools).
9. About 750 private contractors doing soil conservation work.

Outlook Ahead

The appropriation by the last Legislature did not come without some thought, planning and effort primarily by you men as district commissioners. The same is also true as to Federal appropriations. The use that is made of these appropriations and the accomplishments that are attained will be watched by many individuals, agencies and organizations. Some district commissioners have already stated that they do not believe they can use all of the \$500 allotted to them by the state legislature. I am happy to see this because it indicates that commissioners are planning on the basis of needs and not solely on the amount of money available.

I hope that all district commissioners individually and as a governing body, when planning or revising their budget and when expending the funds available to their district, will ask themselves this question: "How much will this expenditure contribute to the progress of soil and water conservation in our district?" Much progress in my opinion can and will result from the state appropriation.

The needs of individual districts vary with the area of the state, age, and progress to date. The use that will be made of the state funds will no doubt likewise vary from district to district but from the budgets submitted to date on the \$200,000 appropriation, it appears that the majority of it will be spent for clerical and layout help.

This means to me that to make the most effective use of the state funds as well as other assistance available to Soil Conservation Districts, we should:

1. Organize more natural and neighborhood groups.
2. Work with more farmers on starting practices that will lead to conservation farm plans. This can best be carried on in my opinion through neighbor groups.
3. Increase the number of farm plans being written in each Soil Conservation District.
4. Increase the layout of conservation practices--terracing, contouring, grassed waterways, tile drainage, tree planting, farm ponds, etc. (Layout help through state funds will be most helpful here.)
5. Expand the acreage of high quality forages
 - For soil improvement.
 - For livestock.
 - For seed production.

Research results at the Soil Conservation Experimental Farm in Page County show roughly the following:

100 acres of land with the following rotations will produce approximately the same total bushels of corn per year:

- 100 A. all in corn yield 25 bu. per A. for 100 A. or 2500 bu corn.
- 100 A. in c.c.o.cl. rotation yield 50 bu. per A. for 50 A. or 2500 bu. corn.
- 100 A. in c.o.cl. rotation yield 80 bu. per A. for 33 A. or 2500 bu. corn.
- 100 A. in c.o.Balf.Balf. rotation yield 100 bu. per A. for 25 A. or 2500 bu. corn.

6. Help more farmers to better understand the seriousness of the erosion problem and what can be and is being done about it. (Once a man is thoroughly convinced of the conservation measures needed, the planning and application comes much easier and faster.)
7. Cooperation of agencies, organizations and individuals. Help from the County Board of Supervisors, schools, civic clubs, chambers of commerce, Farm Bureau in addition to the so-called technical agencies, is often the difference between an average and an excellent program.
8. Initiative on the part of commissioners and farmers themselves, although placed last here, will have more to do with progress than any one or a combination of the above. We hired men can encourage, enlighten and assist, but when the accomplishments are added up they always total the most in those districts where the largest number of farmers have convinced themselves that a complete conservation plan for the farm is practical and is necessary.

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- 100 A. in c.c.o.cl. rotation yield 50 bu. per A. for 50 A. or 2500 bu.

9. The cost of delay is terrific. The benefits from adoption of a good conservation program are \$3 to \$6 per acre per year.

Iowa cannot continue to stand the cost of erosion and we certainly cannot justify passing by the benefits that can come to us.