Hardin Soil and Water Conservation District assisting farmers with soil conservation plans

1988 Annual Report Hardin County Soil and Water Conservation District

As commissioners of your Soil Conservation District we are pleased to present this 1988 report of conservation accomplishments. This report is published not only to show the amount of conservation work completed, but also to say thank you to everyone supporting conservation programs in the county. We especially appreciate the local news media for publicity throughout the year, every landowner or operator who applied a conservation practice or developed a Food Security Act Plan during the past year and to everyone who helped make our district's program a success.

1988 ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

IM Budget - District Allocation July 1, 1987		1,800.00
Expenses		
Commissioners mileage, meals, lodging	1,109.75	
Office Supplies & expense	688.22	
Total	1,797.97	
Released to Division of Soil & Water Cons.	2.03	
Balance on hand June 30, 1988		0.00
IIM Budget [voluntary cost-share program]		ALLOCATION
1973-74		15,317.83
1974-75		11,521.44
1975-76		23,668.47
1976-77		31,283.84
1977-78		46,250.00
1978-79		43,633.00
1979-80		46,320.00
1980-81		45,000.00
1981-82		77,662.12
1982-83		54,833.72
1983-84		96,753.61
1984-85		144,251.75
1985-86		147,916.82
1986-87		122,828.44
1987-88		71,787.50
1988-89 [Initial allotment]		32,006.00
TOTAL		1,011,034.54
No Interest loan [6]		48,248.05
Conservation Club Account June 30, 1987 balance		578.01
Receipts		
Donations	2,012.50	
Flags/Scales	139.64	
Interest	46.38	
HCSWCD	443.41	
TOTAL	2,641.93	
Disbursements		
Education programming	650.00	
ISWCDC dues	350.00	
Gifts & memorials	25.00	
Subscriptions	55.00	
Office expense	87.00	
Technical assistance	356.41	
Flags	79.76	
TOTAL	1,603.17	
June 30, 1988 balance		1,616.77
Revolving Account		
June 30, 1987 balance		382.86
Receipts		
St. Comptroller	703.28	
Disbursements		
Postage	271.25	
Office expense	297.52	
Printing	104.64	
June 30, 1988 balance		412.73
ACCOMPLISHMENTS		
New Cooperators	6 No./1,041 Ac	
Farms contacted	1,427 No	
Individuals & groups applying practices	140 No	
Conservation plans	8,030 Ac	
Contouring	285 Ac	
Grade stabilization structure	1 No	
Terraces	54,151 Ft.	
Sediment & water control basins	117 No	
Reduced erosion on cropland	2,518 Ac/19,705 Tons	

Hardin Soil Conservation Staff

Lawrence Green, seated right, serves as District Conservationist for Hardin County. Other staff members are Susie Reece, seated left, State Clerk, and standing, l to r: Earl Reece, Soil Conservation Technician; Kent Holmgaard, Soil Conservation Technician; and Earnest Hoffa, Engineering Aide.

Hardin Soil Commissioners

Carroll Hobson of Eldora, standing left, served as chairman of the Hardin Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners. Other officers were Martin Broer of Iowa Falls [standing center], vice chairman, and Gary Walters of Eldora [standing right], treasurer. Seated are directors Caleb Knutson [left] of Radcliffe and Gene Roberts of Hubbard.

Pine Lake Watershed subject of three county conservation sessions

By Carroll J. Hobson, commissioner

Forthright, forward looking, soil and water conservation has multiple forms and facets. Soil must be protected from both wind and water erosion. Land must have proper cover to accomplish these things. In instances where the land is very steep, and the soil thin, grasses and small plants will not suffice. Trees and shrubs are needed and must be planted properly and kept in place. Dams, erosion control structures and terraces of all types play their part in the soil-water-land drama. Rivers, creeks, lakes, reservoirs, swamps and marshes all make contributions to the quality of life we all enjoy so much. We all want abundant food, all the clean water we can use with beautiful natural resources and attendant wildlife. All this has a price and a heavy responsibility for every American man, woman, and child. Our main responsibility and concern is with Hardin County, however.

During the last year the Hardin County Soil and Water Conservation District held a responsibility meeting with regard to the only lakes Hardin County will ever have. We call your attention to the report of that meeting and we sincerely solicit your interest and support to aid and preserve these two magnificent lakes.

The meeting was hosted by the Hardin County Soil and Water District commissioners and included representatives from Franklin and Grundy conservation groups, as well as area and state conservation officials.

Present from Hardin County were District Conservationist Lawrence Green and commissioners Carroll Hobson, Martin Broer and Gary Walters. Grundy County was represented by District Conservationist Jerry Stork and commissioners Ralph Moore, Russell Kaiser and Larry Kruse. From Franklin County were District Conservationist Charles Keipe and Jim Mott. Area Conservationist Dennis Loreth and Resource Conservationist Jeff Zumbach attended from the Fort Dodge area office of the Soil Conservation Service. James Reel, who is a watershed specialist, was the featured speaker, coming from the Office of the State Conservationist in Des Moines.

The session was held as a part of Hardin County's Annual Work Plan and sponsored with the hope of enlisting new interest in erosion control in the Pine Lake Watersheds of both Hardin and Grundy counties, according to Hobson. Franklin County representatives were present because of similar problems around Beeds Lake in Hampton.

Lower Pine Lake has many erosion control structures in place and is well protected. Most of this work was done from 1966-88. Upper Pine Lake watershed is another story, Hobson said, and is exposed in the watersheds of both Hardin and Grundy counties. Lower Pine's watershed is well-known in this area because of the Agricultural Research Service five-year study on the Ray McDowell farm. Hardin's soil commissioners hope to revive the interest and community enthusiasm which accomplished good work in the Lower Pine area, Hobson reports.

Reel advised all people of Hardin and Grundy counties to "close ranks, create a non-profit corporation, raise local money and hope to attract grants." Reel further suggested a possible opportunity to acquire some of a special ACP fund offered through the federal government. He also suggested acquiring funds from the Soil Conservation Fund in Iowa. "All of this is available, provided the farmers and the people here support the project and provided the Pine Lakes Watersheds would qualify," Hobson reports.

Reel was explicit about the cost of dredging once a lake is full of silt. He reported the cost of dredging at $10 per cubic foot of soil provided the conditions are ideal. A close place to put the dredged material is the critical factor in dredging. Reel said moving the soil any distance could easily double the cost of dredging. He thought the cost of dredging an unprotected [no upland treatment] lake could run into millions of dollars.

Upper Pine watershed is located in both Hardin and Grundy counties, with 54 percent located in Hardin County and 46 percent in Grundy. Loreth and Reel suggested higher user fees [for which state approval would be needed] and directed community dedication to save the lakes.

Reel recommended asking visitors to the park to help along with higher fees. He concluded by saying, "Don't put off the effort. Don't try to carry more than one big project at a time as small communities can't handle more than one expensive project at a time. Show non-believers some of the lakes in Iowa that are already destroyed."

The combined watersheds of both counties comprise approximately 8,000 acres of farmland.

Summary of district activities

Twelve regular, two special meetings, one workshop, and one joint county meeting were held by the Hardin County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners. The special meetings were to review applications and request supplemental funding. The workshop was spent developing the 1989 annual work plan.

January - commissioners re-elected the following officers: Chair - Carroll J. Hobson; Vice-chair - Martin L. Broer; Treasurer - Gary D. Walters; Broer, Knutson, Hobson attended commissioners' annual short course in Ames. Requested and received supplemental state cost share funds.

February - District Conservationist met with Farm Bureau board members to explain Food Security Act program. Sixth signup period for Conservation Reserve Program had 14 bids submitted for 310 acres. HEL determinations completed. 60,000 acres of Hardin County land is considered to be highly erodible. Group meetings held in Union, New Providence, Eldora, Owasa, Iowa Falls, Buckeye and Hubbard to explain requirements of 1985 Food Security Act to owners and operators of highly erodible land.

March - Annual report published. Meeting on seeding and management of set aside and CRP acres held. Training meeting for earthmoving and tiling contractors held in Iowa Falls. Walters attended spring regional meeting.

April - Thaine Hogue began educational presentations on soil conservation to fifth and sixth grades in Hardin County schools. Business sponsors sought for conservation education program.

May - Self guided tour featuring no-till and ridge till fields.

June - Erosion productivity study sites staked.

July - Received initial allocation for 83-89 cost share funds.

August - 7th sign up period for conservation reserve program. 28 bids submitted for 935 acres.

September - Walters attended fall regional meeting. Carl Drielke selected as Hardin County winner of Izaak Walton League Windbreak Award. Recognized accomplishment of group terrace project.

October - Joint meeting of Grundy, Franklin and Hardin district commissioners held to discuss watershed treatment in Pine Lake watershed. Sponsored fall conservation tour for senior citizens.

November - Hobson and Walters attended annual conference.

December - Annual work plan for 1989 completed.

Carl Driefke [pictured right] was selected as the Hardin County winner of the Izaak Walton League Windbreak award. He is shown with Hardin Soil District Commissioner Martin Broer.

Implementing your conservation plan

As the planning continues, a number of farmers are also ready to "make their move" in implementing their plans, getting the conservation work started on their land. The conservation compliance rules require that at least one conservation practice must be implemented in 1990. For most farmers this first step is something such as conservation tillage, maintaining grass waterways, terraces or following a crop rotation. In a number of situations the plans involved no change in the present farming system.

Some form of conservation tillage will be a part of most conservation compliance plans. The tillage equipment used doesn't matter as much as the amount of last year's crop residue remaining on the soil surface.

The conservation rules of the 1985 Food Security Act also requires that the entire conservation plan must be fully implemented by December 31, 1994. Even though items contained in the plan may be scheduled for 1994, we strongly encourage that farmers should not wait until the last minute to put the conservation on the land. If you do wait until 1994, you run the risk of not having technical assistance from the soil conservation staff available when you want it. Also, if the plan calls for no-till planting, try planting a portion of your farm no-till in 91, 92 and 93 to work out any problems you might encounter rather than waiting until 1994 to plant no-till for the first time on all your HEL acres.

The exception to the 1990 date for planning and 1994 for implementing the plan is in the case where highly erodible land which was not cropped between 1981 and 1985 will be brought into crop production. This is called sodbusting and it requires that conservation plan must be fully implemented before the area is planted to a commodity crop the first year.

The Hardin County Soil and Water Conservation District and the soil conservation staff is available to provide technical assistance in implementing your plan. We can design and layout conservation practices such as terraces, sediment basins, grass waterways, contour lines, contour strip cropping systems and grade stabilization structures. There is no doubt that the tremendous amount of work which needs to be completed before 1995 will place great demands on the soil conservation staff. We strongly recommend making appointments by phone to work with individual staff members in the office. For the remainder of 1989 finishing conservation plans to keep producers eligible must be our top priority, with application of conservation practices on the land running a close second place. Please give us notice as far in advance as possible if you need field layout of conservation practices this spring or summer.

To financially assist in the construction of permanent erosion control practices such as terraces, sediment basins or structures there are two sources of cost share funds. The state cost share program provides 50 percent of the cost of construction and materials needed to complete the project. Applications for state cost share money must be made through the soil conservation office in Eldora.

Federal cost share funds may be available through the ASCS office in Iowa Falls for construction programs or as incentive payments for management related conservation practices.

Both state and federal cost share funds are likely to be in short supply with the large amount of work which needs to be completed before 1995 to keep Hardin County farmers in compliance. It would be wise to apply now for cost share money needed for fall terrace projects. There are no guarantees that funds will be available, so think ahead to be sure you can implement your plan on schedule.

Ephemeral gully erosion caused by concentrated flow of water must be controlled as part of a conservation compliance plan. A grass waterway or terracing could have solved the problem on this field.

What to expect in your conservation planning session

What's Done at the Session:

You sit down with an SCS conservation planner, usually for one-two hours. You discuss what conservation measures you're to use on fields that have been designated as highly erodible. SCS records your decisions, and later gives you a conservation plan.

What SCS will provide:

SCS will be scheduling appointments for conservation planning sessions with producers who have highly erodible land. To help you plan for conservation work, you'll receive:

1. Maps of your farm showing where highly erodible land is located.
2. Form CPA-026 listing the tracts and acreages of land that are highly erodible and need a plan.
3. A listing of possible conservation treatment alternatives for your land.

What's Expected of Landowners:

As a producer with highly erodible land, you first need to decide whether you intend to continue to receive farm program benefits. It's your responsibility to be sure you have a conservation plan on highly erodible land by December 31, 1989. You need it to stay eligible for USDA programs.

You will be expected to:

1. Contact ASCS before the planning session if you don't agree with all field boundaries and acreages. This can make a difference on highly erodible land classification.
2. Study the conservation options available to you.
3. Be prepared to make decisions on which conservation options you'll choose to put in your conservation plan. This includes the type of tillage to be used, crop rotations, and any structural conservation practices. You'll also be asked when you plan to begin the conservation work. Both landowner and operator must sign the plan.

Should I Be Concerned?

Producers who have planned with SCS so far have been relieved to find that it's not a complicated process. Most have also found that they don't need major changes in their farming operations.

Deadline for your conservation plan nears

"Make Your Move Now: Stay Eligible for USDA Programs," is the theme of the new USDA campaign urging farmers who have highly erodible land [HEL] to get started in developing a soil conservation plan. The clock is ticking. You now have less than a year to finish developing a conservation plan for HEL fields. The plan must be approved by the Hardin Soil and Water Conservation District before December 31, 1989, in order to maintain eligibility for USDA farm program benefits.

In Hardin County almost 60,000 acres or 20 percent of the cropland is considered to be highly erodible and will require conservation plans. So far, plans have been developed for approximately 35,000 acres [60 percent of total acres needing conservation plans]. At our present rate of planning we will be able to get the job done, provided the continuing cooperation of local farm owners and operators.

Last year we knew some farmers were holding off because they were afraid the rules for erosion control were too rigid. The final rules do provide more flexibility in reaching acceptable reductions in soil loss. Area farmers are finding that the alternatives presented by SCS personnel are workable. A number of farmers have stated after developing conservation plans, "that wasn't so bad."

1988 Conservation tillage self-guided conservation tour

By Caleb Knutson, commissioner

Last year instead of having a conservation tillage tour on a set day we decided to put signs on the fields so the people could stop and look anytime convenient to them and at any stage of crop growth. Also it gave those that are interested a chance to look again later as the crop progresses and to show the field to others. From the comments we received we think it was a successful way for a conservation tour.

This year we are going to expand on this method and have nine fields with signs marking them instead of the four last year.

The four last year included a field on Dil South of Buckeye operated by Elvern Hake. It was corn planted ridge till on soybean rows. The other ridge till operation on the self-guided tour was on the Quakenbar Farms at New Providence. This was soybeans following corn. Then we have two no-till fields, one on the Gene Roberts farm north of Hubbard. This was corn planted in alfalfa sod. The other was a field on Gary Walters farm planted no-till into soybean stubble. This was in the New Providence area. The fields had no record yields, however, the yields were comparable to conventional tilled fields and on a year like 1988 that was satisfactory, and on a normal year would have saved many tons of valuable soil.

This year there will be maps available by printing them in the county papers and at the soil conservation office. Hopefully, 1989 will be a better year for the crops and a growth in the number of people participating in the soil conservation tillage self-guided tour.

Thaine Hogue presented educational programs on soil conservation to fifth and sixth grade students in Hardin County schools.

Soil and water conservation in Hardin County Schools

By Gary D. Walters, commissioner

A total of 365 Hardin County students were given instruction in the spring of 1988 on the basics of soil and water conservation. Instructor for the classes was Thaine Hogue, Iowa Falls, retired district conservationist.

Farm tours of ponds, terraces, and conservation tillage were held for some of the students. The Calkins Campus farm near Iowa Falls was visited by some students also.

Soil erosion demonstration boxes with sodded soil and unprotected soil were used by Hogue to show the differences in runoff due to water striking the soil during rainfall. Soil profile cores were also used to demonstrate soil types and the fragile layer of topsoil that exists on most soils of Hardin county.

Many businesses in Hardin County were contacted by the commissioners of the Hardin County Soil and Water Conservation District to support these education efforts. The commissioners, staff, and students are grateful for their contributions. Without private donations this program could not continue. Any individual or business may contribute to this educational program.

Conservation bus tour held for senior citizens

By Gary D. Walter, commissioner

The Hardin County Soil and Water Conservation District sponsored a bus tour for senior citizens on October 26, 1988. Seventeen people, including District Conservationist Lawrence Green, commissioners Caleb Knutson, Martin Broer and Gary Walters, left Dorothy's Senior Center at 1:30 p.m. for the five stops of the tour.

The Stanley Granzow farm was the first stop where a newly constructed waterway seeded with rye and brome grass was observed. Explained were the benefits of the grassed waterway which included erosion control and habitat for wildlife. The swampbuster and sodbuster provision of the 1985 farm bill were discussed also.

At the second stop the conservation reserve program was observed on the Dick Terveer farm. The ten year program featuring grass planting and optional tree planting were discussed as well as the sign up and bidding process.

Conservation tillage was observed and explained at the third stop of the tour. A field in Tipton Township was being tilled with a coher chisel leaving an abundant stubble mulch of cornstalks on the surface of the tilled soil.

The beautiful and functional Carl Driefke farm windbreak was next viewed on the tour. The windbreak consisted of two rows of honeysuckle and two rows of evergreen plantings. Cost share for windbreaks through ASCS was explained.

Terrace construction, tile inlet and outlet pipes were observed at the final stop on the Dunn Estate Farm whose tenant is Duane Klosterman. These conservation practices were explained as being part of this farm's plan for compliance to the Food Security Act of 1985.

A self-guided tour of no-till and ridge till sites in Hardin County was organized this year. Additional signs will be built and installed in 1989.

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