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Quad-County Conservation News

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Fall/Winter
 2000

Rosmanns use organic farming to conserve land

By Dorathea Rebecca
 Graham, Quad County
 Conservation News

Ron and Maria Rosmann, rural Harlan, have been announced as 2000 Region Five Soil Conservation Award winners. They also received the honor as local winners in the Owner/Operator Division of the Iowa Soil and Water Conservation Awards program.

The award was presented at the 54th annual meeting of Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners, better known as the Conservation Districts of Iowa. The award is sponsored by the Iowa Farm Bureau and the Conservation Districts of Iowa.

Their 480 acre farm has 320 acres contour planted, 160 acres of protected terraces, 212 acres planted using conservation tillage, 60 acres of buffer strips and 23 acres of field borders. They also have five acres of grassed waterways, 1.8 acres of filter strips along streams and three acres of wildlife habitat.

The Rosmanns will receive a plaque from the Iowa Farm Bureau at one of the regional conservation meetings this fall or winter. This is the 24th consecutive year that Farm Bureau has presented the awards.

Speaking of the three acres of habitat, Maria Rosmann said: "We did not plant it specifically to attract wildlife, but it is a nice offshoot of it."

Hungarian partridge, birds about the size of doves, Kestrels, and Purple Martins are among the birds the habitat attracts. "We put up a box this year. Not a lot of harm for them. There are three farms that are certified organic in a row out here," said Maria. "We have to maintain a certain area that isn't sprayed to maintain our certification," she noted.

The Rosmanns and the other three organic farm neighbors also must work closely with the Shelby County Board of Supervisors, the County Engineers and road crews. They have agreed not to spray weed kill on the ditches running along the property lines of these farms. "When



Ron, Daniel, Mark, and Maria Rosmann show off their wildlife habitat, formerly a tree nursery, packed with several types of firs. Quad County News/Pete Graham

they plant prairie grass and wildflowers, with appropriate rain it's been very successful as a county program. All counties are cooing it," she said.

This is called the Roadside Management Program in Shelby County. The two and a half acres of the three acre habitat is planted mostly to evergreens, with a few hardwoods, Red Oak and Red Maple, which along with the grass around the evergreens and those trees attract pheasants.

At first, the evergreens were potted and sold that way, as in a nursery, but after 15 years, Ron has gotten away from that because of time constraints. Now the evergreens are rooted in the ground and when someone wants to buy a tree, Ron uses a very good portable tree spade he keeps for that purpose. There are ten varieties of species besides the Red Oak and Red Maple in the plot:

White Pine; Ponderosa; Scotch Pine; Spruce; Norway; White; Blue; Angolan,

Douglas Fir and Concolor Fir. Some of the trees were planted for a windbreak.

The Rosmann farm is also a 480 acre organic grain and livestock operation. There are presently 18 sows in a farrow to finish program and 90 cows in a cow/calf operation. The following grain crops are being planted: barley, rye, turnips, pasture and hay. "This year is unusual because we have had hail and wind damage. We had a very heavy hail storm in June, a lot of damage, one building was partially damaged," said Maria.

Success comes from rotating such a diversity of crops and saving the cost of expensive nitrogen and weed killers and pest killers. "When you put down nitrogen, only so much will be absorbed. We have matched county yields by cutting costs," said Ron.

"But it's owning your own business; you must meet very strict standards to keep your certification, for example you must have 30 feet of buffer strips between your farm and

those who do spraying," said Maria.

"My husband took over the farm from his parents in 1973. He worked alongside his father. We were married in 1978," she said.

According to a "History of The Rosmann Family Farms," the Rosmann's farm is a business owned and operated by Ron and Maria Rosmann and sons and is located four miles northwest of Harlan in Shelby County. Ron has

farmed this land, where he was raised, since his graduation from Iowa State University in 1973. The farm has organic certification since 1994 and certification for the beef operation since 1998.

After receiving an ISU biology degree, Ron began farming in earnest. Not completely satisfied with conventional farming prac-

ROSMANN 16

New editors at newsletter helm

Dorathea and Peter Graham of Missouri Valley are the new co-editors of The Quad County Conservation News, beginning with this edition. They replace Joyce Bohnker who is pursuing other interests.

The Grahams each have 30 years of community journalistic experience. The couple published and edited The Malvern (IA) Leader for ten years and were employed there for 13. They added The Treynor (IA) Record and The Tabor (IA) Beacon-Enterprise, operating all three Southwest Iowa weeklies for a number of years. In 1984, Peter (Pete) became Managing Editor of The Missouri Valley (IA) Times-News, holding that position through June of 1997. Dorathea (Dottie) Graham was employed as Assistant Editor and columnist at The Times-News from 1984 through 1996.

They have two children, both grown, Kela, 27, and Casey, 21. They have a seven year-old grandson, Michael, who brings great joy to the family.

The Grahams also publish a weekly agricultural column, "FARMING and your FREEDOM," which they self-syndicate to about 60 newspapers in Iowa and Minnesota.

Conservation buffers need to be expanded

By Jay Ford, District Conservationist for Crawford County

Incentives At Their Peak

Conservation leaders, government agencies, environmental groups and farm organizations are getting serious about conservation buffers on private ag land. Three years of the Federal government's continuous signup CRP program has yielded about 200,000 acres of conservation buffers in Iowa.

The governor and state legislature emphasized water quality last session. A multitude of new programs, funding and emphasis is wrapped up in the I on Iowa program (Initiative on Im-

proving Our Watershed Attributes). The new state goal is to add an additional 400,000 acres of conservation buffers in the state over the next 5 years.

Additional CRP incentives are now in effect for buffers. An extra first year payment of \$100 to \$150 per acre is now available for filter strips along streams. First year seeding costs are now cost-shared at 90%. CRP rental rates for filter strips are generous; in the \$150-\$175 per acre range. (Rates vary by soil type, check with your county office.)

Additionally, contour buf-

BUFFERS

15

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Missouri Valley, Iowa 51555

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Peter Graham
Doratheia Graham
Co-editors

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Schleswig farmer receives Izaak Walton League award

By Lynna Miller, Soil Conservation Technician for Crawford County

The Crawford County SWCD is pleased to announce Steve Struck as the recipient of the 2000 Izaak Walton League of America Windbreak Award. Steve raises corn, beans, hogs, and cattle along with a family near Schleswig. His first trees were planted in 1994 to replace an old windbreak. More trees were planted in '95 and '99 to extend what was first planted as more trees from the defunct windbreak were removed. Currently, over 210 trees cover a span 1200' long and 120' wide adjacent to the Struck homestead, barns, and livestock yards.

Steve notes, "The trees are already providing some wind and snow protection, even though they are far from full grown. I'm looking forward to what we'll have in a few years."

Steve took advantage of the 75% Cost Share program to establish a farmstead windbreak available to most rural landowners. For more information or application forms, stop at the Denison field office soon. Trees are also offered for sale through the SWCD Commissioners-order forms are available at the NRCS office as well.



"In recognition of an exemplary windbreak planting program that is helping to conserve America's natural resources," SWCD Commissioner, Curt Brotherson, presents Steve Struck (on right) with the Izaak Walton League of America Windbreak Award.

The windbreak protects most of the Struck farmstead including cattle yards, hog buildings and livestock barns. Started in 1994, additions were made in '95 & '99. Steve has planted a nice variety of several species and done an excellent job of maintaining the trees.



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John Paper's best friend is his Loess Hills garden

By Dorathea Rebecca
Graham, Quad County
Conservation News

John Paper is 86, a life long resident of Missouri Valley in Harrison County. He is a retired Union Pacific electrician, a husband of 53 years, father of four, and grandfather of seven. He is a World War II veteran, serving in the Signal Corps with the 5th Fighter Command attached to the 5th Air Force in the Pacific Theater. Now he is in the biggest battle of his life, he has cancer.

His health problems do not diminish his consuming passion, gardening, and though he holds an amateur standing, he is really a professional. He is also a consummate conservationist. He started building terraces into the steep Loess hill behind his house in 1952, long before terracing became a popular practice with farmers and ranchers in the United States.

(It had been used in farming in China, the only other place in the world where Loess Hills are to be found. The Hills are comprised of centuries of compacted dust. While fertile, they are easily eroded. In southern China, farmers use every bit of land possible to grow rice and have extensively ringed the hills with terraces. In this way, and because of the warm southern climate, they are able to produce two to three crops per year.)

John has planted a variety of fruit trees and bushes in the flat land behind his house and up into the hill. On the flat, he planted, apple, apricot, peach, Bartlett pear, nectarine, wild plum, wild grapes, bitter-sweet, kiwi and some Loofah Sponge. These trees and bushes are not only attractive in blossom and planted to bear

fruit for the larder but to attract various species of wildlife such as birds, bees, butterflies and other beneficial insects. John exemplifies the "Backyard Conservationist" program initiated by the USDA through the Natural Resources Conservation Service, but he did it much earlier and without federal help.

John grows all his plants from seed, starting them in containers on his enclosed south porch. He has been growing Kiwi for seven years, but he said it never blossomed until this year. Another tropical plant he grows is the Loofah Sponge. He first heard about the Loofah from his wife, Effie's, brother in Texas. He sent up some plants but no seeds. John ordered seeds from Degorgia Seeds in Omaha, NE.

The Loofah is a vine that grows on a fence in the side yard. It bears long, cylindrical fruit that looks much like a large zucchini. When picked green, it can be cut into chips and fried or used in casseroles. But the Papers prefer to use it as a bath



John Paper holds onto Loofah sponge as it hangs on the vine. Fully ripened Loofahs make excellent bath sponges. Quad County News/Pete Graham

sponge. When dried, it makes an excellent sponge and can also be used to do dishes. Effie says that the Loofah Sponge "really gets down into glasses and cleans them out."

In addition to the terraces, John also built steps into the

side of the hill to keep the dirt steps are wood but three of path he had made to reach the garden at the top of the hill from eroding. Most of the them are old ice tanks. They

PAPER 14

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Keg Creek funds are available now

The Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Harrison, Shelby, West Pottawattamie, and Mills County announce the approval of a grant for Keg Creek Watershed.

The grant was approved under the Watershed Protection Funds administered by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation. It allows the districts to provide cost-share to landowners for trying no-till farming or for installing terraces, filter strips, buffer strips, and waterways. This year, the districts will receive \$154,150 for these practices.

Landowners wanting to build terraces or install waterways are eligible to receive 75% cost-share. The cost-share follows each individual county's normal cost-share policy.

Those willing to install filter and buffer strips as part of the continuous conservation re-

serve program (CRP) will receive a one-time \$100.00 an acre incentive. This incentive is in addition to the incentives received when signing up for the continuous CRP program.

Landowners and/or operators who have never no-tilled or who haven't no-till planted their crops for at least five years are eligible for a one-time \$10.00 per acre incentive. The applicant would be required to sign an agreement to continue the no-till system for an additional five years.

Keg Creek encompasses 114,898 acres. Approximately 6,935 acres in Harrison County, 50,977 acres in West Pottawattamie, 24,971 acres in Shelby County and 32,015 acres in Mills County.

The purpose of the Keg Creek Watershed project is to reduce flooding, soil erosion, and improve overall water quality in the watershed by: reducing runoff and the delivery of sediment and other

pollutants into Keg Creek, reducing flooding in the city of Glenwood, stabilizing critical streambank areas to protect road structures, and to increase public awareness of how their actions affect the watershed.

The project is set up as a three-year plan. The grant received is for one year only.

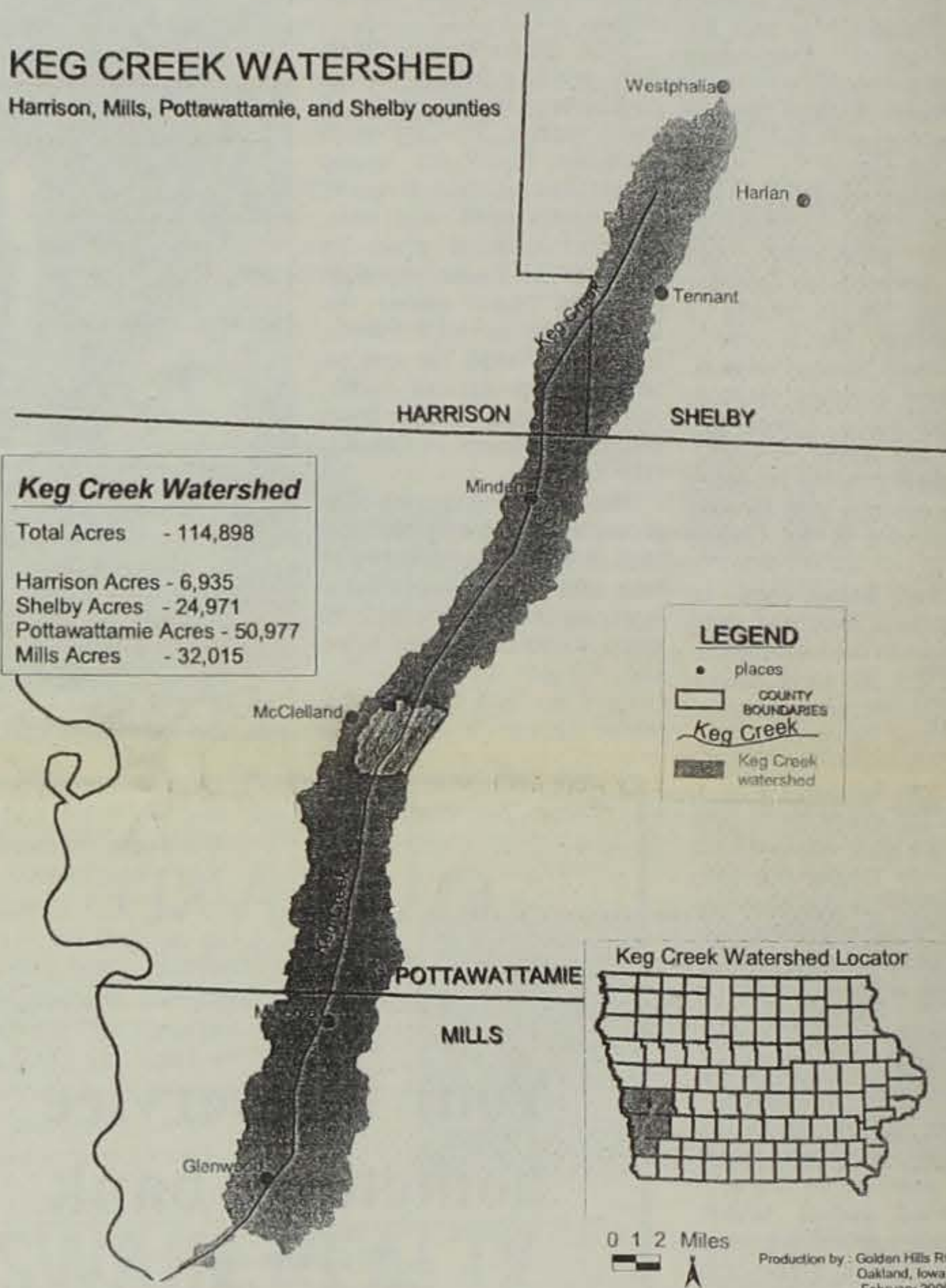
All monies must be spent by June 30, 2001. Therefore, the districts will apply for additional grants the next two years.

Each county has received a designated amount of the funds for certain practices. If you own or operate property in the Keg Creek Watershed, stop by your local Soil and

Water Conservation District office to see which practices they have funding for. As funding is limited, allocations will be made on a first-come, first-served basis in each office.

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Harrison, Mills, Pottawattamie, and Shelby counties



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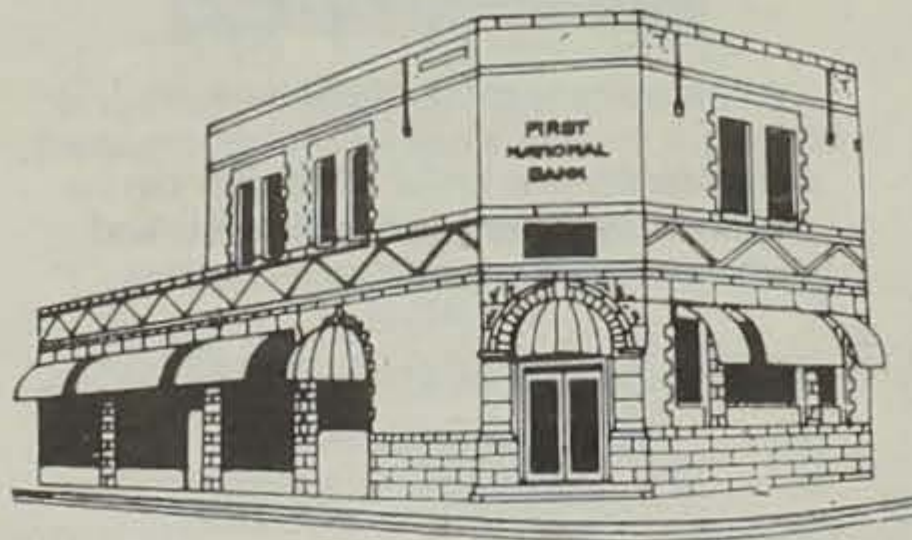
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Outstanding windbreak one of many Rosman plantings

By Dorathea Rebecca

Graham, Quad County News son, John, has taken on the role of naturalist and tender of the homestead. Not that Gene grows, so the saying goes, but has retired completely, he in this time of instant gratification, who wants to wait around to see if a tree will sprout from an acorn? Gene Rosman is just that kind of a person. Not only is he a naturalist and a superb gardener, but he is a true believer. Plant it, nurture it and it will grow. Gene's work, and his wife Marion's, and son John's, were recognized recently, at the Water and Soil Conservation Awards banquet for Outstanding Homestead Windbreak. Take that acorn for example. Now, most of us, if we wanted a grove of oak trees, would have bought young trees from a nursery. Not, Gene. He picked up an acorn and planted it. He wasn't in any hurry, just wanted some oak trees there for his children and grandchildren, if he had some, to enjoy. He got them. A nice grouping of oaks, spreading out from that acorn. Gene believes in starting from nuts and seeds. He once brought a buckeye back from the White House lawn. He joked that it had to be a Republican tree, because it was during the Eisenhower Administration that he took it. It grew to 25 feet tall and 22 inches in diameter, but never bore nuts. Gene thought that may have been because it was a male. It blew down during a storm and the family found it was rotted right at the base. Another tree that died, was an English walnut, brought back from Niagara Falls. "It was a nice tree," said Gene, "it grew to 15 feet, after seven to eight years and it bore, then it died. Old Cocoa, our horse, used to reach over the pasture fence and eat the leaves."

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The Circle R Farm is the formal name for the farmstead where Gene and Marion Rosman and John won local recognition for their outstanding Farmstead Windbreak at the Annual Soil and Water Conservation Banquet held earlier this year. The windbreaks were begun by Gene's father, Rudolph, or "Rudy" as he was called, in the 1920s. Gene said he made a "real nice windbreak" out of 200 mulberry trees. But they don't put out mulberries any more because they are such a messy, dirty tree. "It made a good windbreak though, it got so thick though, we had to call it a grove."

"They multiply so fast, they are like the Chinese elm. We planted Chinese elm, thinking they were immune to the Dutch elm disease, but, evidently the elms were too closely related to the Dutch elm and died. "We had planted a row of It grew to 25 feet tall and 22 inches in diameter, but never bore nuts. Gene thought that may have been because it was a male. It blew down during a storm and the family found it was rotted right at the base. Another tree that died, was an English walnut, brought back from Niagara Falls. "It was a nice tree," said Gene, "it grew to 15 feet, after seven to eight years and it bore, then it died. Old Cocoa, our horse, used to reach over the pasture fence and eat the leaves."

Now, Gene's and Marion's, Not only do the Rosmans plant trees for windbreaks, but for wildlife habitat and esthetics. They have fifteen white English walnut, brought back from Niagara Falls. "It was a nice tree," said Gene, "it grew to 15 feet, after seven to eight years and it bore, then it died. Old Cocoa, our horse, used to reach over the pasture fence and eat the leaves."

There are river birth, silver maple, Norway maple Ginkgo, Douglas fir, white pine, and eat the leaves."

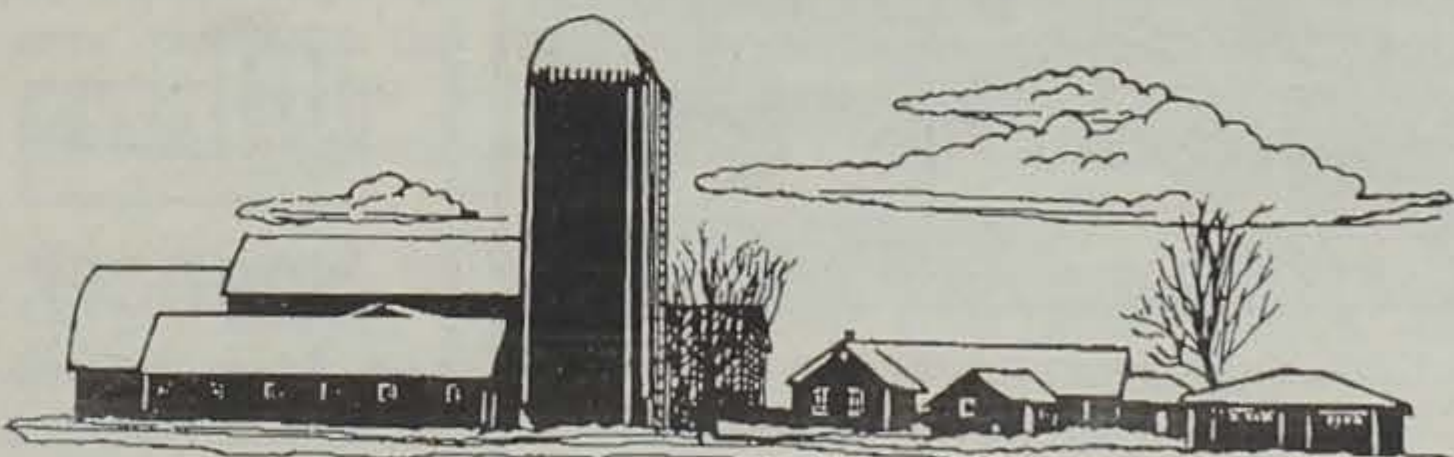
WINDBREAK 6



John Rosman stands near one of the many giant trees that make up the windbreak at his parents farmstead.
Quad County News/Pete Graham

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Rosmans enjoy planning their tree plantings

from page 5

Frasier, fir, Catalpa, Whitney other wildlife like them"), leaf and Delicious Crab Apples plum, Austree, (a hybrid be- (John said: "We don't much tween a Willow and a like them but the deer and the Poplar, it is only eight years

old and already 30 feet high, clean and pretty. "We're think- ing of sitting more out to class of 1938. He says, rue- fully, "they tore it down." provide cover, protect other trees from hot dry winds in the spring and provide nice shade, like a windbreak), white pines, Scotch pines, Colorado pines. Black spruce, blue spruce, Norway spruce and some vol- unteer cedar that provides good cover."

Shrubs include: gray dog- wood, silky dogwood, American or Viburnum Cranberry bush, burning bush, to provide food for birds. John said, "We wanted a variety of trees and bushes to provide vegetation-wanted to get a vari- ety, see where we needed to fill in spots."

Conservation practices aren't limited to windbreaks and wildlife habitats, some go back many years, to Rudy's time. Gene's father is the one who bought the farm in 1907, 120 acres, which went back to 80 in the hard times of the depres- sion. Now the farm is divided into two farms, one 220 acres and the other 160 in another section, a mile east.

Rudy and Clare, his wife, farmed the land all his life. He started conservation practices immediately. He tiled bottom land with clay tiles, 80 rods long, dug by hand, into the neighbor's land.

And he put in terraces and the mulberry windbreak.

Rudy's son, Gene, is a grad- uate of Harlan High School, class of 1938. He says, rue- fully, "they tore it down."

Marion is a graduate of Holy Trinity of Hartington, NE, class of 1939 and St. Joseph College in Sioux City, taking a three year nursing degree to get her R.N. in 1945. She married Gene on January 13, 1962 at St. Peter's Catholic Church in Omaha.

John graduated from Harlan Community High School in 1983 and Iowa Western Community College's Ag Program after that. He was born in 1964.

John's sister, Mary Jean, born in 1966, also graduated from Harlan Community High School, class of 1984. She went on to graduate from the University of South Dakota at Vermillion with a business major. After graduation in 1988, she pursued a business career until her marriage to Paul Zdechlik in 1993. They just presented Gene and Marion with their first granddaughter, Grace, on July 20, 00. Paul is a video photographer and is self employed. He films docu- mentaries, company files, na- tional news programs and has worked with such newscasters as Mike Wallace of "60 Minutes."

He works out of the home, and Mary Jean has been on leave from the mortgage com- pany where she is employed.

John enjoys landscaping, gar- dening, and has built a small greenhouse with his father, a year ago, in order to grow plants from seed, forcing bulbs, etc.

He has a large vegetable gar- den, including: tomatoes, radishes, onions, lettuce, squash, brome corn (Gene likes to make brooms out of the stalks), flowers, including a wide variety of perennials and annuals such as roses, lilies, marigolds, phlox, and mums.

Out behind the house is a pasture where John raises lambs, a hold over from his days in 4H. They bleated softly as we moved around the beauti- fully crafted yard, snapping pictures of the snow covered martin house, the gazebo and the windbreak. John's dog loped ahead in search of rabbit tracts. We couldn't help but wonder what all these trees and flowers would present in the spring with their color in full bloom. But there was a quiet, soft white beauty to the world today, a contrast between the stark trees and the shining crystals of the sun-refracted light that created a greater beauty.



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Osler-Casey farm a conservation model for all

By Dorathea Rebecca
Graham, Quad County
Conservation News

Don Casey, at the age of 76, has well earned his retirement as a small and exotic animal veterinarian. He established a practice in Arizona in 1974 after practicing his profession in Carroll, IA for 15 years.

Don's wife, LaDeanne Osler, was born on the Pottawattamie County farm the two now oversee for their children. The year was 1926. Her family lived on it before that.

Don and LaDeanne were high school sweethearts. They were one year apart. Don was in the graduating class of 1942 from Griswold High School, LaDeanne, 1943. She went to Grinnell and was a Phi Beta Cappa, graduating with a chemistry degree in 1947.

He worked the farm. "I was very interested in soil conservation," he said. "In the 1940s, we put in broadbased terraces, also called whirlwind terraces.

"We farmed this place until 1953 when we had a sale. We had two children between 1947 and 1953," he joked, "and two and a half when I enrolled in the pre-veterinary program at Iowa State University in Ames that year."

The Caseys ended up with six children, all told, three boys and three girls: Kent, Robert, Janice, Diane, Donna, and Mark.

After raising her children, LaDeanne went back to school, too. She got a gradu-

ate degree in psychology, again from Drake and in 1975 she received her doctorate from Arizona State. She set up private practice, from which she retired last year.

After the sale, the Caseys turned the land over to tenants, who kept the terraces in place. They were satisfied with their stewardship of the land, as far as it could go, but they really wanted to find someone close to the family, to farm the land for true conservation purposes.

Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) Technician Clair Acker said: "You don't find many absentee landlords that know exactly where all the tiles are on their farms!"

When Don retired from his veterinary practice he had the time to oversee the building, with the help of the NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) of several conservation projects over the years; including tiles, terraces, waterways and other programs.

(The original terraces built in the 1940s are still in place.)

EQIP is a USDA program designed to encourage farmers to install conservation practices on a voluntary basis. It provides technical assistance, cost-share payments, incentive payments and education to producers who enter into five to 10-year contracts based on conservation plans.

EQIP funds next year will be focused on controlling soil erosion, improving water quality, improving grazing

lands and developing better animal waste and nutrient management systems.

Practices will include, but are not limited to grassed waterways, filter strips, manure management facilities terracing integrated pest man-age-

ment, and pasture man-age-

ment. Don had the perfect farmer to farm his land for him, Mike Casey, his nephew. Mike lives three miles south of Griswold and three and one-half miles east of Griswold.

Mike is Don's deceased brother Joe's son. (Out of a family of eight, there are two brothers and one sister left.

CASEY

10



Greg Mathis, East Pottawattamie County Soil and Water District Conservationist, points toward drainage in some grass waterways as Conservation Technician Clair Acker (left) and Don Casey sight along the direction in which he is pointing. Quad County News/Pete Graham

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Don Casey, Clair Acker, Conservation Technician, Greg Mathis, East Pottawattamie Co. Soil and Water Conservationist (Clair and Greg are holding the conservation plan for the Osler-Casey farm) and Mike Casey, listen as Clair reads the plan. Quad County News/Pete Graham

Harlan attorney/farmer: Bill Lewis keen on using many soil conservation measures on his farm

By Dorathea Rebecca
Graham, Quad County
Conservation News

She had plans for him. He had plans of his own. But the war came along and put everything on hold. He joined the Marine Corps. Then he went to law school. But his mother wanted him to be a farmer. He ended up being both.

Bill Lewis, of rural Harlan, wanted to be a lawyer. He attended North Western University before the Second World War, then took time out to serve in the Marine Corps.

After the War, he attended the University of Iowa Law School where he graduated in 1948. The year 1948 was to prove pivotal, for he not only received his law degree but he married another University of Iowa graduate, a science major, named Jackie.

He came back to Harlan to set up a law practice; she took a position as a high school teacher with the Kirkman school district, along with two other teachers, teaching all of the high school students, which numbered 25 at the time.

He had come back to establish

himself as a lawyer, but his mother convinced him to be a farmer. He ended up being both. Remember that pivotal year of 1948? In 1998, Bill and Jackie celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary; he celebrated his golden year as a member of the Bar; and they hosted the National Plow Terrace Anniversary.

"Bill," said Jackie, "has always been a conservationist. He loves to hunt and he loves wildlife." "There were some terraces when I started," said Bill, "we've put them in as needed, to satisfy the conservation plan."

After Bill bought the farm they built their house in 1961, Jackie bought the one next to it and eventually their three children bought the one next to that. They custom farm, now, no-till beans and minimum till corn.

Steve Boettger does the custom farming for them. He crop in 1976. Steve has put in started in 1975, with his first Jackie's Conservation Reserve



A mighty stand of Douglas Fir, Austrian Pine and Concordia make up one of many of the windbreaks on the Bill Lewis farm. Quad County News/Pete Graham

Program (CRP) in 1992. She has put her CRP acres in corn and Steve said he would swear he'd seen twenty pheasant in the plot when he'd been out there the day before. He planted switch grass along the creek and the sides of the hills in 1997 to prevent erosion and put in filter strips.

The Lewis' are well known for their beautiful and multiple windbreaks.

"The CRP is the Federal government's single largest

environmental improvement program on private lands and one of its most effective. Today, the CRP is safeguarding millions of acres of American topsoil from erosion, improving air quality, increasing wildlife habitat, and protecting ground and surface water by reducing water runoff and sedimentation.

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streams, rivers, and other bodies of water throughout the country. "Countless lakes, rivers, ponds, and streams are cleaner, healthier, and more useful because of the CRP," states a United States Department of Agriculture publication.

CRP Today

"Today," stated the publication, the CRP accepts only the most environmentally

sensitive land, yielding the greatest environmental benefits. The Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) is used to classify and rank land offered for enrollment in the CRP during a general signup. Scores are based on the expected environmental improvement in soil resources, water quality,

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Osler-Casey farm a model

from page 7

Don was born in 1928.)

Under EQIP, which the Casey-Osler farm is eligible for because it is part of the Farm Creek Watershed, the Caseys have put in two and one-half miles of terraces, an equal amount of tiling and waterways.

Originally, when they farmed the land, the Caseys raised cows, hogs, chickens, corn and soybeans. Now, all the livestock is gone, but Don says "we haven't taken much out of the corn, we want to leave it better than we found it." The only other crop raised is soybeans.

On their farm manager, Don cannot heap enough praise. "Mike is a very good farmer, very conservation minded."

Mike answered: "I put up some terraces in the last two or three years for my uncle. I was really anti-terrace, but he

changed my thinking all around. It was all contour and ditches, four or five feet deep. Now its terraces and waterways. I keep them mowed and there's no runoff."

A plaque hangs in the Shelby County NRCS office that

seems to sum up Don Casey's reverence for the land he owns. "Man, despite his artistic pretensions and his many accomplishments, owes his existence to a six-inch layer of topsoil and the fact that it rains."

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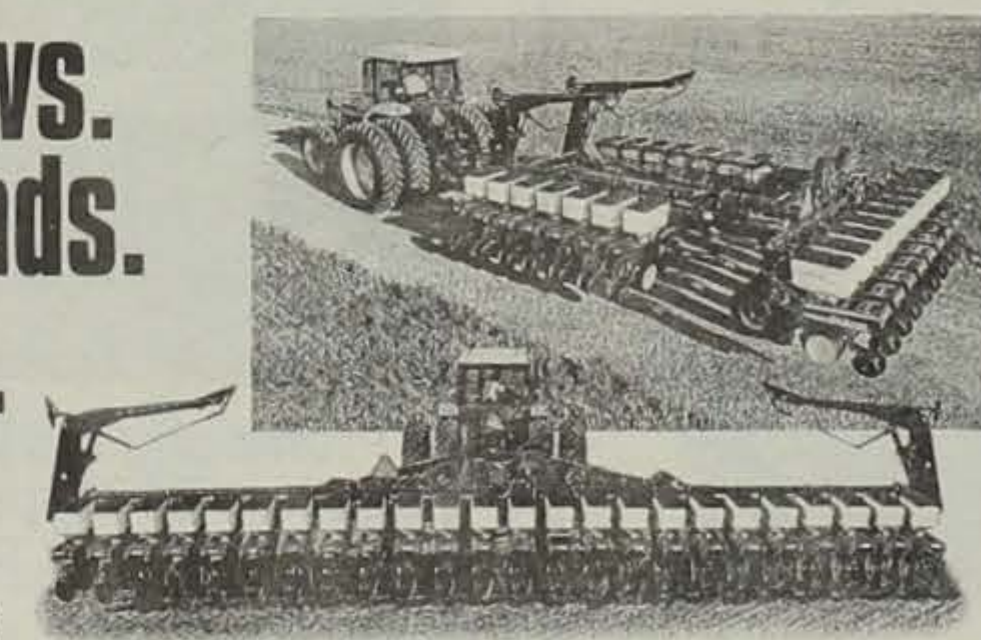
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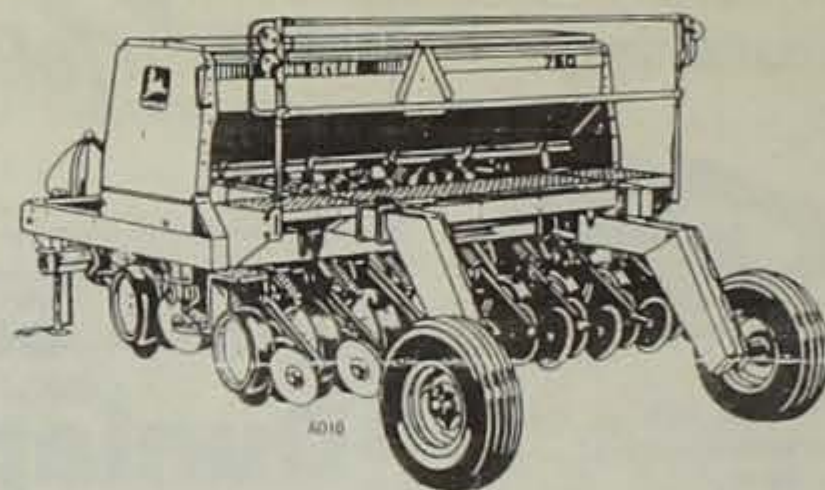
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The Lewis' also have extensive windbreaks.

Bill and Jackie were honored this year by the Soil and Water Conservation District at their Awards Banquet for their outstanding conservation practices.

Bill, 79, and Jackie, 74, have three children, Rebecca Wunnen, of Grand Marais, MN, who has five children; Jeffrey Lewis, of Chicago, IL, music director and teacher and was the music director of the "Play of Plays" in college, and Connie Larson, who lives with her husband and two daughters, in Dallas, TX, and teaches French part-time at a junior college there.

Windbreaks

According to an agricultural bulletin, windbreaks improve the quality of life on a farm or ranch or in a country home. People in many areas find windbreaks useful. Although windbreaks are found more often in the North and West than in the South and East, they are proving to be useful in every State—even in the Deep South. Farmers and ranchers in the United States have planted and benefited from them for the past 60 years and some case longer.

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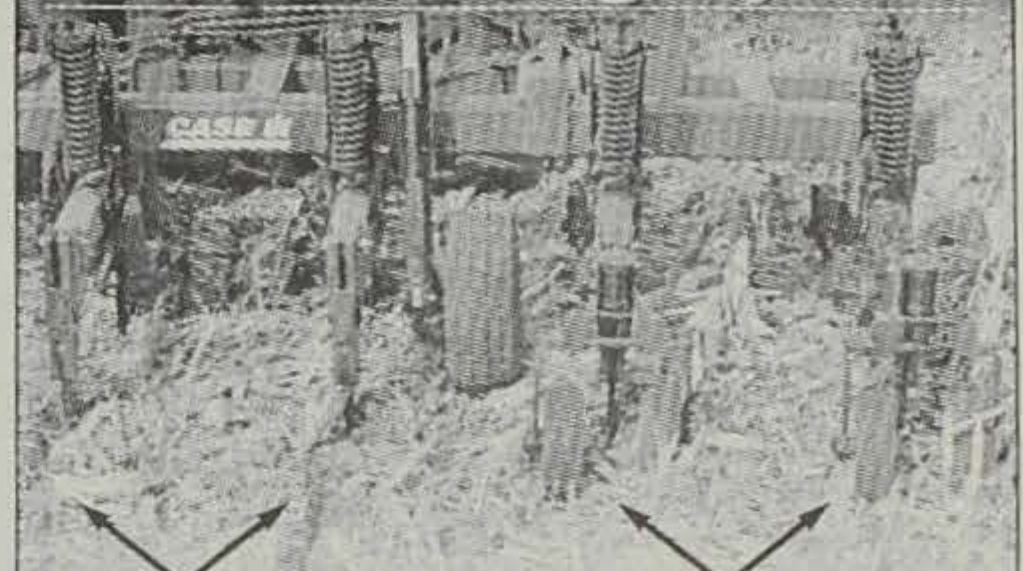
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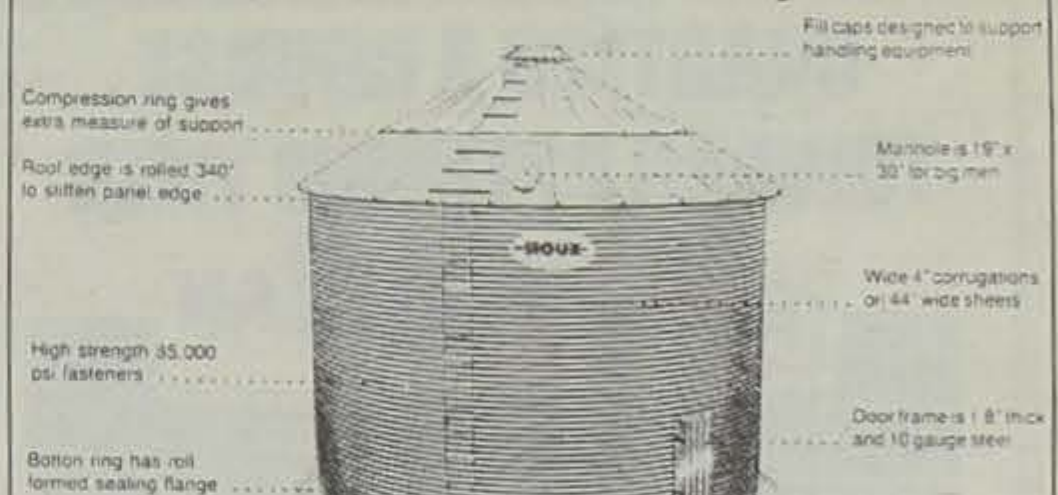
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Region Five Poster award to Caitlin Andersen

Caitlin Andersen of Kirkman, daughter of Bob and Toni Andersen, was the first place winner in the Region Five 2000 Soil Conservation Poster Contest sponsored by the Ladies Auxiliary of the Conservation Districts of Iowa and the Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company of Grinnell. Caitlin received \$35 cash award for her entry in Division Two for Grades 2-3. The annual contest is open to all students in grades K-12. Posters were judged on entry's conservation message, visual effectiveness and universal appeal. Regional contest winners were entered in a state contest from which four winners were chosen. -- photo furnished



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Fischer, Metz, Shudak join West Pott. County SWCD's Commission

Dean R. Fischer, Joanne Metz, and Cliff Loran Shudak were elected West Pottawattamie County Soil and Water Conservation commissioners in the recent November election. Here are short profiles of each:

Dean R. Fischer

Family: Wife Pat, 8 children (Mike, David, Theresa, Diane, Dave, Brian, Katherine, Sarah), 2 grandchildren.

Job: Farmer, part-time postal carrier

Township of residence: Neola

Schooling: High School diploma, 1 year Iowa State Ag Program

Interest/Hobbies:

Other elected offices: St. Pats Church Finance Council, Tri-Center School Board, 4H Club leader for 25 years., 4H Extension Council-Youth Committee.

Clubs/Organizations:

What he wants to accomplish during the four-year term: I would like to see that soil conservation practices are carried out in a more compatible manner. Also, I would like to see more soil erosion controlled so government funding isn't miss-spent.

Joanne Metz

Family: Husband John III, 2 children (Jaime, John IV)

Job: CEO of Metz Engineering.

Co-owner JM4 Ranch Harness & Tack

Township of residence: Crescent

Schooling: Graduate of Pierre School of Practical Nursing-Pierre So. Dakota

Interest/Hobbies: Reading, traveling, snorkeling, horse related activities.

Other elected offices:

Clubs/Organizations: Red Cross volunteer for 16 yrs

What she wants to accomplish during the four-year term: Help school age children understand their responsibility towards soil & water conservation. To work for & with landowners in controlling soil erosion & flood waters in the Loess Hills & surrounding areas.

Cliff Loran Shudak

Family: Wife Carol, 3 children (Eric, Craig, and Chris), 1 grandchild (Logan)

Job: Full-time Agri-businessman for 25 yrs.

Township of residence: Hazel Dell

Schooling: High School diploma

Interest/Hobbies: Collecting John Deere tractors, Auctions, Reading

Other elected offices:

Clubs/Organizations: St. Columbanus Church

What he wants to accomplish during the four-year term: Common sense approach, ie. soil & water conservation techniques and policies should be applied by people who know, understand and live in the area

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Paper grows unusual plants in home garden

from page 3

held thirty pounds of ice each and they came from the second 19th Century ice house to be built in Missouri Valley.

Most years, John gardened extensively on the hill, but because of illness, this year he planted his garden along the north side of his driveway. Prairie grass, big and little bluestem, bittersweet, wild plum and wild grape grow wild on the hill.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Association of Conservation Districts and Wildlife Habitat Council came up with the Backyard Conservation Program about six years ago. The program was designed to take soil and water conservation practices used by farmers

and ranchers to conserve their land, livestock, water and wildlife and adapt it to the more than 92 million acres of land, an area the size of California, which is privately developed and much of which is tended by homeowners.

One example of backyard conservation as used by John Paper is the planting of trees. "Trees in your backyard can be home to many different types of wildlife. Trees also can reduce your heating and cooling costs, help clean the air, add beauty and color, provide shelter from the wind and the sun, and add value to your home," explains Backyard Conservation, a USDA publication.

If you were interested in at-

tracting colorful butterflies, for example, you could consult with your county office of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and ask about planting flowering plants to attract butterflies under the Backyard Conservation Program.

There are many more aspects to Backyard Conservation such as building a backyard pond for birds, butterflies, frogs, fish and you and your family. These ponds are typically small, sometimes no larger than 3 to 4 feet in diameter. Water is very effective in drawing wildlife to your backyard. It is also a natural, relaxing and scenic addition that can provide interest and enjoyment.

Or you can even create a mini wetland in your backyard. Many yards can support a backyard wetland that benefits you and your community. Letting runoff from your roof, parking area, and lot slowly filter through a mini-wetland helps prevent pollution of neighboring creeks and may help prevent flooding.

There is also cold and hot composting, mulching, soil tests for fertilizing purposes for both lawn and garden, terracing, as mentioned above, drip irrigation and other water conservation practices which can save water and money and lastly, early detection and treatment of pests, which means a healthier growing environment.

John has not implemented every aspect of the Backyard Conservation Program in his garden and he isn't an actual participant. His story was sought out because he was

such an early innovator and pioneer user of terracing and conservation practices adapted from farming operations to backyard use. Nor would every gardener be expected to use every conservation technique mentioned here. If just a

few were added to each piece of privately owned land, conservation would take a huge step forward.

If you are interested in the Backyard Conservation program, please contact your county NRCS office.

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John Paper (with climbing stick) leads Everette Wohlers up the Loess Hill behind his house. Everette is a Soil and Water Conservation district commissioner for Harrison County.
Quad County News/Pete Graham



John Paper shows off Loess hillside terraces built many years ago and gardened extensively until recently. -- photo furnished

Conservation buffers need to be expanded

fer strips now have a new incentive. CRP payments for contour buffer strips run in the \$90-\$120 per acre range. An extra first year payment of \$100 per acre is now available for this practice through the state's cost-share program.

The two most common conservation buffers in Crawford County are filter strips (1,300 acres) and contour buffer strips (250 acres). The programs are in place, to double or triple these acres over the next few years. It doesn't take many acres on any given farm to improve water quality, help control erosion and provide better wildlife habitat.

Using the continuous signup CRP program to install buffers can be done at any time during the year. However, first year payments are prorated from October 1st. The closer to October 1 you sign up, the larger your first year's payment will be.

Buffers Address A Changed Landscape

Fifty years ago, conservation buffers were more numerous. Fence rows were wider and there were more of them. Wet waterways were common and most were quite wide due to the wetness. Creeks and small streams were often part of bottomland pasture. Equipment wasn't available to quickly doze out trees and close ditches. The landscape was broken up more frequently with natural

areas of permanent cover, grass and trees, that filtered sediment, slowed and cleaned the water.

Fifty years later, we apply large amounts of fertilizer and chemicals to the land. We have faster runoff due to straightening of drainage ways. Ironically, the need for a good filtering system on the landscape is greater now; but 50 years of "improving the land" has left us with less.

The conservation buffer initiative continues to gain momentum, and remains a voluntary program. In this country, we all prefer to obtain public goals using the least amount of coercion possible.

This is why the continuous signup CRP buffer initiative and new State incentives are so generous. However, it probably would be a good idea for the farming community to fully embrace conservation buffers now, to keep the voluntary approach towards conservation alive and well.

The loess hills area of western Iowa need three types of buffers to create that great filter; contour grass strips, grassed waterways, and filter strips along creeks.

All that is needed to be eligible for any of these three practices is crop history on the land being entered. The CRP program will pay \$90-\$120 per acre per year for the contour grass strips (and associated headlands) plus an

additional one time \$100 per acre payment from the State.

Filter strips along streams pay \$150-\$175 per acre per year plus a one time \$100 per acre incentive. All practices entered at this time get 90% cost-share to establish the seed-ing.

Conservation Buffers And Things That Don't Make Sense

When the latest buffer incentives were announced last spring, most of us working in the NRCS office thought we would be swamped with continuous CRP signups. Especially, we thought, the filter strip practice used along perennial and intermittent streams. How could anyone pass up a guaranteed 10 to 15 year payment of \$150 - \$175 per acre plus an added up front bonus of \$100 - \$150 per acre the first year?

Well, we have been busy, but not swamped and we relearned that when you work with people and you are the government, there are always objections to overcome. There is also information that needs to get to the right people. It turns out that the continuous signup, buffer incentive program will be no different than any of our conservation programs. It takes one on one contact with people to raise accomplishments above the normal level. We are all working on being able to do

that this fall and winter.

However, there are still situations we see in our travels around the county that seem like no-brainers.

1. Why would someone take the risks of farming up to the edge of a high river bank when they know several rows will fall into the river before harvest. There could be an accident during harvest. The rivers edge and streambank erosion problems belong in CRP.

2. Trees, growing in ditches often have limbs hanging out over the cropland above that shade crop and sometimes catch machinery. Why hire expensive equipment to clear the limbs, or clean out the entire ditch? The frustration with the trees could be eliminated for 15 years by

from page 2

putting a CRP filter strip along the ditch. Let the trees grow.

3. Why would someone want to spray herbicides up to (or over) a river bank, or right next to any body of water (ponds). CRP can be used for the needed separation distance.

4. Not really a fair question for renters, but why would anyone raise \$1.40 corn, or \$4.50 soybeans when you can be paid \$170 per acre on a few of those acres?

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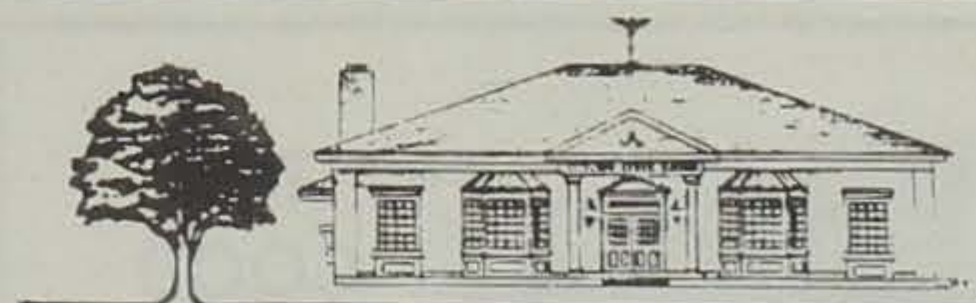
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2001 STATE & DISTRICT COST-SHARE POLICIES ANNOUNCED

The East Pottawattamie Soil & Water Conservation District Commissioners customized the Iowa Financial Incentive Program rules to best suit our district's needs. The following cost-share policies were drafted by the Board for the year, 2001.

REQUIRED PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

Application for any cost-share project must be obtained, and approval thereof at a monthly board meeting, prior to construction beginning to be eligible for any cost-share. If tillage is planned prior to staking, NRCS should be notified for approval first. NRCS will not stake tilled ground if prior approval for tillage has not been given. Keep in mind if cows are grazing a given field, NRCS will not stake until two days of contractor being ready to pull on.

Applications will be computer-inputted when you come in. It will be pertinent (and time-saving) to bring all necessary information with you:

- 1) We need to know "ownership" and "tract number" where construction is planned. Do not sign up in the "operator's name".
- 2) Your social security number (if individual) or Federal I.D. number (if partnership, corporation, etc.) will be required the day you sign up. A separate form for this will need to be filled out at the time of sign up.
- 3) The landowner signature is required on the cost-share application. If there is more than one owner that will result in two (or more) checks charged to separate social security numbers, both signatures are required. A signature may have to be obtained ahead of time or a Power of Attorney will need to be in our file. A Farm Service Agency (FSA) Power of Attorney cannot be accepted.
- 4) All cost-share projects must be located on land within the East Pottawattamie District boundaries. If land is located in West Pottawattamie, Mills, Montgomery, etc., you must apply for cost-share with those district offices. This is a State policy, and we cannot make exceptions.

To receive cost-share, the "landowner" must sign a 20-year maintenance agreement.

Know your approximate footage, especially if it will amount to less than our maximum amount. (Changes in application footage will result in more paperwork for you and the office.) If you have an idea of a contractor you may use, let us know. This helps the technician schedule staking.

TERRACES

- 1) One "first priority" application per owner/operator will be allowed per calendar year. (Ownership documented in our office as of January 1, 2001.) Applications for 2001 will be accepted beginning 8:00 a.m., January 5, 2001, at the Oakland NRCS office.
- 2) Maximum terrace footage allowed will be 7,500 feet cost-shared @ 50% not to exceed \$ 55/ft. The maximum amount of cost-share available per terrace job is \$4,125.00 regardless of terrace type. Topsoiling will be required.
- 3) Tiling will be cost-shared @ 50% not to exceed \$300 per intake maximum. A total cost-share job (terrace and tile) will not exceed \$7,000. Tiling will only be cost-shared in conjunction with the construction of new terraces.
- 4) Sign-up will be divided into three lists: Spring, Summer, and Fall. You may choose one season. Applications will be chronologically picked up as that season's funds become available. (As in the past, no assurances of any Fall allocation.)
- 5) For those landowners building their own terraces this year, the NRCS strongly recommends they have access to a transit and tripod for check out.

Applications taken out of the office to be signed cannot be accepted prior to January 15, 2001, nor show a 2000 date. If the application is returned by mail, it should not reach us before January 5. All contractors will be spot-checked by NRCS staff.

WATERWAYS

Waterways staked and constructed to NRCS specs will be cost-shared @ 50 percent not to exceed eligible cost of \$1.00/foot up to 2,500 feet in length not to exceed \$1,250.00. Tile within a waterway (available only with county funds) will be cost-shared @ 50% not to exceed \$ 50/foot of tile line in a waterway with a maximum of two tile lines per waterway. The maximum tile length on the waterway would be one mile.

Please note: A 20-year maintenance agreement will be signed prior to receiving cost-share

funds pursuant to Division of Soil Conservation Rules in Section 27 of the Iowa Administrative Code, Chapters 10, 12, and 13. Please refer to the back of your cost-share application.

It's mandatory for all cost-shared waterways to install petromat fabric as per District recommendations as far as spacing and number. The District has a fabric layer machine producers may use free of charge to install this fabric. The cost of the fabric is \$10 per check strip which is covered from raising the eligible cost to \$1/ft from \$.80/ft. on the waterway. NRCS specifications require that cost-shared waterways must have 75% upland treatment on HEL ground prior to construction. Specifications also dictate that waterways have a stable outlet. In some cases where the end of the waterway drops in elevation such as into a creek or fence line, a structure (small dam, chute, etc.) may be necessary to provide that stable outlet so that a ditch will not erode up the waterway. We cost-share up to \$7,000 for a structure. Please take this into consideration. The waterway and the structure for a stable outlet are two separate practices and are cost-shared differently. If you suspect you need a stable outlet, please come in to apply for additional funding.

SUMMER INCENTIVE

- 1) Maximum terrace footage allowed will be 7,500 feet cost-shared @ 60 percent not to exceed \$ 66/foot. For terraces (not needing tiling), a maximum amount of cost-share available per terrace job is \$4,950 will be available for all types of terraces. Topsoiling will be required.
- 2) Tiling will be cost-shared @ 50% not to exceed \$300 per intake maximum. A total cost-share job (terrace and tile) would not exceed \$7,825. Tiling will only be cost-shared in conjunction with the construction of new terraces.
- 3) Funds for Summer Construction can only be obligated after June 1 and the terraces must be completed by September 15. NO EXTENSIONS. People receiving summer cost-share funds will need to build the terraces during these dates. Extensions will not be granted due to the operator having corn or beans to harvest. We will help you stake out areas for small grain where the terraces are to be constructed to the best of our ability.

STRUCTURES

One "first priority" application per owner/operator will be allowed per calendar year. Structures will be cost-shared at the rate of 50 percent of the "estimated cost or actual cost, whichever is less" not to exceed \$7,000 per structure. Structures include: ponds, grade stabilization (638), earthen and non-earthen structures, cattle panels, rock chute, sheet piling, sediment basins, wetlands, etc. A pre-construction meeting must be held prior to commencement of project.

WINDBREAKS

Cost-share at the rate of 75 percent up to \$700 per windbreak through the REAP Program (Resource Enhancement and Protection). Individual limits of \$12/tree and \$2.25/shrub. Windbreak renovations must be within 4-10 years of age where 20% of the windbreak has been destroyed. Renovation must be completed within the same year it is commenced.

NO-TILL INCENTIVE ON CRP

This incentive is offered to encourage the practice of no-tilling into CRP sod. Participants need to sign an agreement of understanding that payment would not come until the spring to verify that they did no-till. Although this is a "one-time incentive payment per acre", it is hoped that the practice of no-till will continue on these acres. The incentive payment is \$10 per no-tilled acre of expiring CRP ground. No acre limit is set or cap on total dollars per person. Application may be made by the landowner or the producer. Once the planting completed, participants must sign a producer certification and supply chemical history on selected acres (to be used in future educational programs) and NRCS staff will verify no-till on CRP acres prior to payment.

WELLS

This is a two-fold funded program. The Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors offers a program whereby funding from State grants can be utilized as long as funds are available for the purpose of properly plugging abandoned wells. Cost-share on wells is available at 50% of the cost of the closure up to \$200 maximum. The District, through our Local Option Sales Tax Funds, will pick up the remaining cost of the closure (excluding sales tax) up to a maximum of \$400. (Total combined cost-share of \$600 maximum). This program is limited to one well per (fiscal) year per landowner. Applications are available at the Oakland NRCS office. Please remember application by the owner and approval from both agencies must be completed prior to commencement of the closure. Plugging must be completed by a certified well plugging contractor. Closure period will extend only 90 days passed approval date.

Should you have any questions regarding this policy, please contact the NRCS office at (712) 482-6408.

tices, he began in the 1980s to explore sustainable agriculture methods. His goals of building up the soil and not just the plant, using different tillage methods, improving the genetics in the livestock were reachable. Ron's late father had already taught him the value of crop rotation and diversity.

That interest in sustainable agriculture helped Ron team up with like-minded individuals who formed the PRACTICAL FARMERS OF IOWA, a group devoted to profitable, environmentally-sound farming practices. By conducting years of on-farm research with ISU, PFI has helped many farmers to incorporate more sustainable practices into their farming operations.

Ron has dedicated much of his efforts to the preservation of the small and medium-sized family farm. Over the years, he has been asked to address many audiences including university groups, members of Congress, business meetings and organizations.

The family has hosted tours of their farm from all around the United States and six continents. Ron has written and published a considerable amount on these issues and currently serves as a board member and vice-president of the Organic Farming Research Foundation based in Santa Cruz, California.

Ron and his wife, Maria Vakulsskas Rosmann, are the parents of David, 19, a freshman at ISU, Daniel, 17, a sophomore and Mark, 14, a freshman, both at HCS. The boys are active in 4-H, and are very active with their high school's music program, including their marching, concert and jazz bands. David, a public service and administration in agriculture major, is a member of the ISU marching drum line. Ron and Maria's goal is to teach their sons as many of the skills involved in farming as possible so they will be able to make an informed response when the time comes for them to decide if they want this way of life.

Maria Rosmann was raised in Sioux City and has a journalism degree from Creighton University. Prior to her marriage, she was a television announcer and worked in TV promotions and was the News Bureau Editor at Creighton. After taking time off to be at home with her sons, she worked in hospital public relations and was development director for Shelby County Catholic Schools. Now, her efforts are solely in the marketing of their beef, developing new recipes to share with their customers, and working with Ron.

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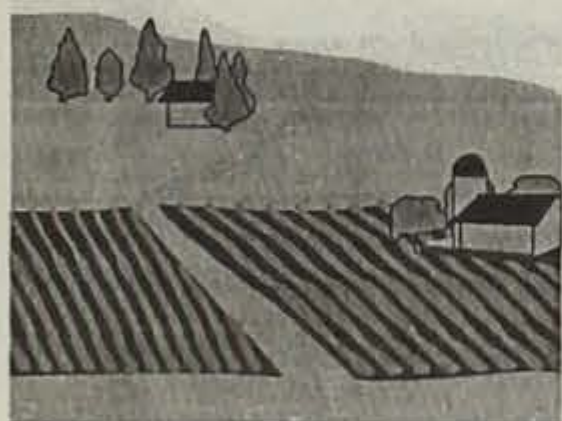
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