

First Annual Report

KOSSUTH COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT Algona, Iowa

December 31, 1948

Commissioners - J. C. Skow, Chairman
Frank Droessler
Henry Weber

The Kossuth County Soil Conservation District was organized in 1947 but did not obtain technical assistance from the Soil Conservation Service until 1948. However, some regular activities were carried on and interest was maintained among farmers in the county. The commissioners met with various organizations to keep the people informed of the anticipated assistance in conservation farm planning.

In January 1948, J. C. Skow attended the short course for district governing bodies at Ames, Iowa, sponsored by the State Soil Conservation Committee, the Mississippi Valley Association, and Iowa State College.

In April, Leon H. Laird, farm planner with the Soil Conservation Service, was assigned to assist the district, and an office was opened in the Post Office Building in Algona. Action was then started throughout the county in the form of farmer group interest meetings, where farmers were informed of assistance they could expect to receive through a cooperative agreement with the district.

In June, George Hagge, who had been chairman of the board of commissioners, felt it necessary to resign, and Henry Weber was appointed to fill the vacancy until the next election to be held in the Spring of 1949.

On the evening of November 21, the district sponsored a Harvest Home Sunday worship service, following the theme "Souls and Soil." Use of the Algona High School Auditorium was donated for this meeting, and approximately 500 persons attended. Lester Clapp, extension soil conservationist, was the principal speaker, and three ministers and a priest representing various denominations in the county also participated in the program. Assisting in arrangements for this county-wide meeting were the County Bankers Association, schools and churches, the Extension Service, and Soil Conservation Service.

Preceding this special service, the Kossuth County Interchurch Council circulated material to all churches in the county, requesting their cooperation by including some phase of soil conservation in their morning worship services, and encouraging attendance at the evening meeting in Algona. Representatives of the County Bankers Association met with district personnel to formulate material to present to their patrons regarding soil conservation in general, and the Harvest Home Sunday meeting in particular. The County Superintendent of Schools arranged to circulate material among the schools in the county, both for use in the curriculum and to publicize the meeting.

Following are individual reports of activities in the district conducted through the past months by cooperating individuals and agencies:

Soil Conservation Service

Leon H. Laird, the Soil Conservation Service farm planner assigned to the district, reports as follows concerning progress in the district during 1948:

Interest Meetings

Farmer Groups	9
No. Farmers Attending	79
Harvest Home Sunday Service	1
No. Attending	500

Talks to Civic Groups

Kiwanis, Lions, Rotary Clubs and Junior Chamber of Commerce	4
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Farm Bureau Meetings

Township Farm Bureau meetings and 4-H Club	8
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Applications for Assistance

Received and Approved by Commissioners (Involving 16,099 acres)	68
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Conservation Farm Planning Activities

Planning Groups Organized	7
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Group 1 - 15 members, 2 planning meetings
Group 2 - 11 members, 1 planning meeting
Groups 3 to 7 inclusive - 1 interest meeting each

Conservation Plans Completed	8
Acres Planned	1806

Field Establishment

Acres Contoured	40
Tile Surveys - feet	1500

Conservation Surveys

Acres Mapped	12,040
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More and more visitors are coming to the office to inquire about possibilities for securing assistance from the district in establishing conservation plans

and practices on their farms. In many cases, these individuals go out into their communities and organize conservation planning groups, while others postpone making formal application for conservation assistance until a group can be organized in their community.

At the present rate of conservation farm planning, the applications on hand will keep the technical staff well occupied until the summer of 1950.

Kossuth County Extension Service

A. L. Brown, County Extension Director

The Kossuth County Extension Service assumed initial responsibility in organizing the Kossuth County Soil Conservation District. After it was organized and before a county office was established, Extension personnel helped keep it active and functioning in a minor way. The county extension director has and is serving in the capacity of secretary to the commissioners.

Following establishment of the district in the spring of 1947, work was started immediately on developing a plan of work and executing the necessary memorandums of agreement. A regular monthly meeting date was established and, on the whole, it has been pretty well followed.

During the winter of 1947 the district was still without technical help, so it was decided to get underway on a survey of the condition of the open drainage ditches of the county. The idea was that an activity would be provided for the district to help maintain interest and at the same time provide useful and worthwhile information. While the survey is not yet complete, the following things might well be considered as worthwhile accomplishments:

1. It was discovered that Kossuth County did not have on file a county map indicating the location of anywhere nearly all the open drainage ditches, and that many of those that were mapped were not correctly located. As a result, the county board of supervisors arranged for an engineer to prepare a complete and up-to-date map.
2. In organizing for the survey, five county meetings were held to explain the project and inform the public of the soil conservation district program. A total of 154 farmers attended the five meetings. In addition, 131 of these men attended five training schools held in the field to observe ditch conditions. This all provided a good means of disseminating soil conservation and ditch maintenance information.
3. In walking the ditches and mapping conditions, valuable information was obtained regarding efficiency of the ditches and information of a nature that had not otherwise been realized. It was discovered that time and Nature alone had not caused all the trouble. Man-made dams had been built in some of the ditches for crossings; ditches had been used for dumping

grounds, including dead livestock and sacks of weed seed screened out by combines, etc. All in all, the ditch survey activity proved quite educational.

The Extension Service will continue to cooperate with the Kossuth County Soil Conservation District in carrying out their program of work, because Extension is equally interested in developing a better soil conservation program for Kossuth County. By nature, soil conservation is and will continue to be pretty much of an educational program.

Kossuth County Schools

A. E. Lauritzen, County Supt. of Schools

Fifty-three rural and thirteen independent schools were contacted concerning the special observance on Harvest Home Sunday, sponsored by the Kossuth County Soil Conservation District. Parent-letters were mailed to the families represented in the county schools extending a special invitation to attend the observance. The schools were also asked to make special announcement of the program in their school programs and to urge attendance.

Suggestions were made several weeks in advance for a special study of soil conservation in the science period of the school program, and literature from the Soil Conservation Service was furnished. Material of special benefit included flat pictures of various types of conservation practices, with a brief explanation. These photographs helped the pupils understand the reason for this important program. The parents were contacted through the pupils in regard to soil conservation practices in use upon their own lands.

Interesting projects developing from this observance may be possible for future county fair exhibits and for local school exhibits at the close of the year.

Kossuth County Banks

Ralph Miller, President
Iowa State Bank, Algona, Iowa

It was my privilege, as a representative of the bankers of Kossuth County, to be called into a meeting held for the purpose of making plans and preparations for the Observance Service - Souls and Soil - held in Algona on November 21, 1948. The earnestness and enthusiasm shown by those in attendance at that preparation meeting was inspiring.

No one is more aware of the value of soil conservation than the banker. Our wealth and well being stem from the soil. Here in Kossuth County, where our soil is level and of excellent quality and fertility, we do not have the serious erosion problems which confront the people of many other and less for-

tunate localities, but we cannot afford to neglect our soil and the maintenance of its fertility.

The work of Mr. Skow, Mr. Weber, and Mr. Droessler, Kossuth County Soil Conservation District Commissioners, and Mr. Laird, Soil Conservation Service technician, is commendable; and everyone of them inspires confidence of others in their work. The interest of people generally of our community in the work of the Commission and in the preservation of soil fertility was demonstrated forcibly by the fine attendance of over 500 people in the first annual meeting called by the committee.

You can be assured, I am certain, of the wholehearted support of the Kossuth County banking fraternity in your good work.

Numerous civic and service organizations have called upon the district for information regarding the relationship of soil conservation to public welfare. Interest has increased throughout the county, until the work load is developing into a near overload in the nine months just past.

The commissioners have received splendid cooperation from the schools, churches, and banks in the county, from local newspapers, the Extension Service, the Production and Marketing Administration, the Soil Conservation Service, and many others, in bringing to the people the need for conserving the soil in this highly productive area.

The commissioners are confident that with increasing interest in soil conservation and the cooperation from other agencies and organizations, the Kossuth County Soil Conservation District can look forward to an ever-increasing program of conservation of soil and other natural resources, so that future generations will have a stable foundation on which to build for permanent agriculture through a democratic way of life.

(s) J. C. Skow

J. C. Skow, Chairman
Board of Commissioners
Kossuth County Soil Conservation District