



Earth Team volunteer award

Earth Team Volunteer Jody Tubbs, left, was recently presented with an Earth Team sweatshirt by Ed Andrews of the Natural Resources Conservation Service for her hours of volunteer service for the organization. The presentation was made in conjunction with National Volunteer Week, April 19-25. Earth Team volun-

teers serve in several capacities throughout the year, in positions ranging from clerical to field work. Anyone interested in helping to conserve natural resources should call 1-888-LANDCARE, or contact the local the Natural Resources Conservation Service, to find out more about Earth Team activities.

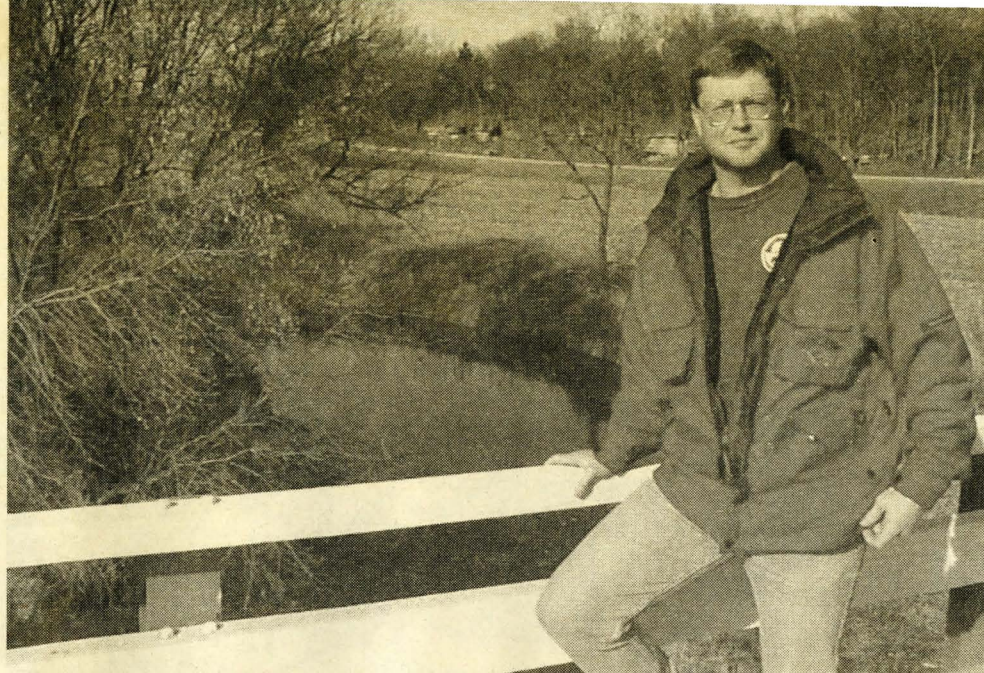


Photo by Lowell Carlson

Terry Nims, project director for the Maquoketa River Alliance, will coordinate a study of subwatersheds within the huge river basin to identify hot sources of

sedimentation. Behind him is one of them, Lytle Creek subwatershed. The alliance will support demonstration projects to control erosion within the watershed.

River study project looks for 'hot' sources of silting

By **LOWELL CARLSON**

The Maquoketa River has a justly deserved reputation as one of the dirtiest rivers on the Upper Mississippi River.

Below the mouth of the Maquoketa, just north of the village of Green Island the watershed's discharge into the Mississippi has even forced the Army Corps of Engineers to dredge silt deposits because it halted tow traffic.

The huge watershed, which stretches northwest to Fayette County near Arlington, drains a wide range of geography and soil types. Therein lies the challenge. Not all of the Maquoketa Watershed's subwatersheds carry the same load of sediments when a storm comes over the area.

Two years ago a group of area conservation agency representatives met in the Nelson Unit Lodge at Bellevue State Park to discuss the Maquoketa and its reputation as a dirty river.

The Maquoketa River Alliance (MRA) was formed following that initial meeting as soil and water conservationists, wildlife biologists, state hydraulists and others discussed studying the sources of sediments.

Since then hydrology data has been collected from streams throughout the watershed. Last year, six subwatersheds were

identified as those contributing the most sediments and nutrients to the river system. The six major contributors identified include: Deep Creek, Farmers Creek, Lytle Creek, Plum Creek, Prairie Creek and Whitewater Creek. Three of those six subwatersheds are within Jackson County.

Still in its early stages the MRA leadership agreed earlier this year to work with the Clinton County Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) on an Environmental Quality Incentives Program grant for the Upper Deep Creek Demonstration Area. That area includes portions of the subwatershed around Charlotte and Goose Lake in Clinton County. That project will look at specific conservation practices and locations. Other demonstration sites are being

Terry Nims, project director for the MRA, is coordinating information on the subwatersheds and contacts with the public as well as cooperating agencies. The MRS is providing technical support for the Upper Maquoketa River Watershed Project, a sediment and erosion study located in Buchanan, Clayton, Delaware and Fayette counties.

Nims said the MRA's next step is to decide how many acres in each subwatershed to work with and what water quality practices to concentrate on.

may 6, 1998

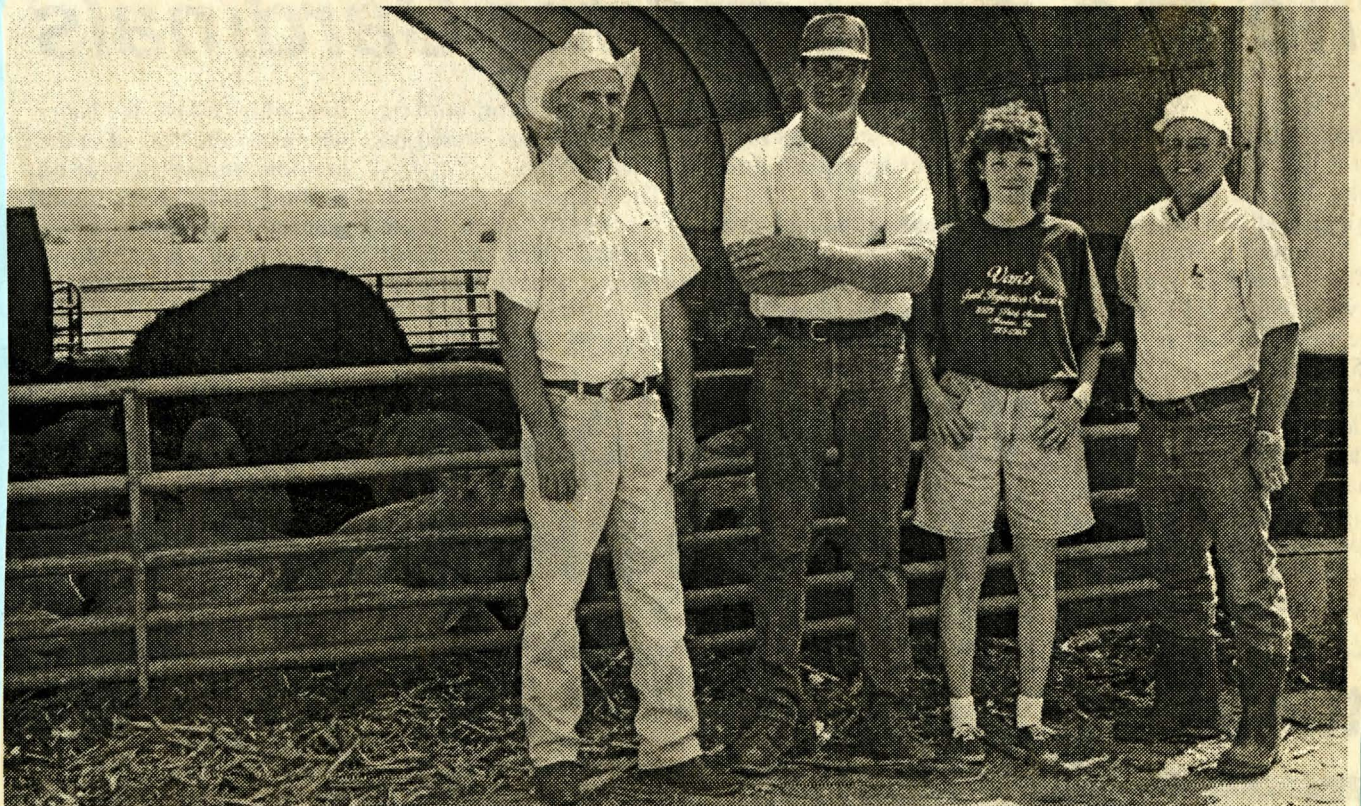
Corneliuses host crowd at Chamber farm tour



Photos by Nathan Winegar

Joel Cornelius, left, leads a discussion of 20" rows during the Maquoketa Chamber of Commerce's Farm Tour on Sunday. Cornelius and his father, Floyd, hosted the

annual event at their farm west of Maquoketa. Cornelius' Hoop Buildings were also featured.



The Maquoketa Chamber of Commerce's annual farm tour was held last Sunday, June 28, at the Joel and Floyd Cornelius farm west of Maquoketa. Ed Andrews, left, helped with the event; Joel

and Laurie Cornelius, middle, were the hosts; and Larry McMullen, swine specialist from the Iowa State University extension office, stands to the right.

Grassed waterways as wildlife habitat

With hundreds of acres of Jackson County's CRP acres plowed up this crop cycle, the role of remaining grassed areas will become crucial once again.

Grassed waterways can not only prevent soil erosion in crop fields, but they can also be managed for wildlife.

By following some basic management steps you can provide nesting and living

space for many species of birds in grassed waterways.

With fencerows being removed, grassed waterways are even more important as an alternative habitat to many wild animals that used grassy fencerows in the past.

These areas appeal to birds because of the height and density of the vegetation. The width of the waterway also affects bird usage. The wider the waterway, the

more birds nest there. Most nests are found in waterways 50-100 feet wide.

To make them most effective restrict and delay mowing. do not mow until the end of August or early September.

Reduce vehicle disturbance. Crop rows that follow the contour of the land result in less disturbance to birds.

Sign-up period opens

A new sign-up period for the Environmental Quality Incentive Program has been announced by the U.S. Farm Service Agency and the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, local officials announced.

The sign-up period will begin Monday, June 15, and continue through June 25 for producers whose land is in the Smith Creek watershed in Jackson County or the Bear Creek watershed in Clinton, Jones and Jackson counties.

The program is a cost-share program to install conservation practices, such as contour strip-cropping, ponds, water and sediment control basins, waterways, manure management systems, tree planting and oth-

ers.

Persons wanting additional information should contact the office of either agency in Maquoketa.



Ed Andrews, director for the Jackson County Natural Resource Conservation Service, visits with a group of Bellevue Community School District students during their recent visit to the Andrew Jackson Demonstration Farm. Each year the farm plays host to students from Jackson, Clinton and surrounding counties as they make use of its growing outdoor education facilities. Andrews explains the nature of plant and soil relationships.

Photos by Lowell Carlson

CRP sign-up deadline is Feb. 11

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) officials announced the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) 20th general sign-up will be during a 4-week period from January 18 through February 11, 2000. The CRP is a voluntary program that offers landowners annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term resource-conserving covers on eligible environmentally sensitive croplands for a 10 to 15 year period.

"For landowners with CPR contracts expiring in September of 2000, and for those whose CRP bids were not accepted during the previous general sign-up's, and also for those landowners considering entering land in CRP for the first time, this is another excellent opportunity to offer to enroll your most environmentally sensitive land into this cost effective,

voluntary program," said Bob Soukup, State Executive Director of the Farm Service Agency.

Land bid into the CRP which offers the highest protection to natural resources for the lowest cost to the taxpayer is generally the land USDA will accept. The Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) scoring system, in place for the 20th sign-up is very similar to the EBI used for last year's sign-up, allowing points to be given for positive environmental effects on our soils, wildlife, water, air, and pristine lands. The EBI system is used to determine the most desirable land for the purposes of the CRP. The USDA will continue to evaluate and rank eligible offers throughout the sign-up period, however the EBI cutoff will be decided after sign-up ends.

The following is examples

of actions that may enhance the acceptability of offers submitted:

- offering only the most environmentally sensitive acreage for enrollment

- planting an approved mixture of covers that benefit wildlife

- enhancing the existing seeding to provide an approved mixture that benefits wildlife

- lowering the offer amount below the maximum payment rate

- developing a permanent water source for wildlife on acreage offered

- restoring wetlands on the site

- establishment of wildlife food plots

- establishing cover that will provide enduring benefits past the life of CRP-1

- declining available cost-share funds

CRP contracts accepted

under this 20th sign-up period will become effective on October 1, 2000. The USDA is authorized to maintain enrollment of up to 36.4 million acres of land in the CRP. In Iowa, this program has helped protect over 1.5 million acres of environmentally sensitive land on an annual basis. In addition, over 171,000 acres have been enrolled in the Continuous CRP program throughout Iowa.

Iowa producers and landowners should carefully review all the facts and alternatives before making any final decisions. Producers and landowners are highly encouraged to visit with USDA representatives at the Service Center Offices to find out ways to maximize their EBI points and increase the chances that their land offered will be accepted.

The CRP is administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency with technical assistance provided by Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Feb 2000

USDA announces signup period

The USDA has announced a signup period for the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) now until the end of February.

The EQIP Program is a federal cost share program to assist landowners to install conservation practices on their land. The signup takes place at the USDA Service Center, located at 601 East Platt St., Maquoketa.

Practices that are eligible under the EQIP Program include manure containment structures, water and sediment control basins, contour stripcropping, waterways, tree planting, planned grazing systems, streambank stabilization and others.

Jackson County has two priority areas for EQIP. They are Smith Creek in the east part of the county and Bear Creek in the west end of the county. They have been allocated \$23,000 and \$29,000 respectively for 2000. The statewide allocation for those not in a priority area is \$936,000.

The priorities for the statewide concerns are livestock manure and pasture management, and soil erosion. These applications are ranked on an environmental point system to determine which applications are funded.

For more information call the USDA Service Center at 652-3237. Questions can be directed to either the FSA or NRCS offices

Feb 2000

NRCS offers cost share programs to landowners

The local Natural Resources Conservation Service office, Maquoketa, is offering federal cost share funding for the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) through the end of February.

Jackson County has two EQIP priority areas and one of them is Smith Creek near Green Island and Bear Creek near Baldwin. The office has allocated \$23,000 and \$29,000 respectively for each watershed area.

Included are manure containment, water and sediment basins, contour stripcropping, waterways, tree planting and streambank stabilization.

Readers may call 319-652-3237 for more details. Feb 2000

Environmental Quality Incentive Program sign-up period now until January 22

The USDA has announced a sign-up period for the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) from now until Jan. 22, 2001.

The EQIP program is a federal cost share program to assist landowners to install conservation and water quality practices on their farms. Landowners can visit the USDA Service Center at 601 E. Platt in Maquoketa to sign up.

There is a wide range of practices that are available for assistance through the EQIP program. Livestock producers are eligible to apply for cost share to build manure containment structures and other components connected to waste management. Planned grazing systems are also cost shared under this program, including fencing and watering systems.

Practices for crop fields include contour

strip cropping, no-till planting, water and sediment control basins and others. Landowners that are getting into organic production can get cost share on 40 acres to assist them in getting certified organic. Tree planting and stream bank stabilization are also practices available in the program.

The priorities for statewide concerns are controlling livestock waste runoff, pasture management and soil erosion. The applications for the program are ranked based on an environmental point index. The index is based on soil loss and soil properties on the farm, proximity to a protected area, size of the contract and conservation practices that the landowners agree to install.

For more information call the USDA Service Center at 652-3237. Questions can be directed to the FSA or NRCS offices.

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Maq. Sentinel Press July 24th **Funds now available for quality improvements of environment**

The 2002 Farm Bill increased funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) by seven times over the course of the bill, greatly increasing conservation cost-share funds available to Iowa farmers. Iowa may receive \$4 million to \$7 million in additional funding before Sept. 30. Funds in 2003 are expected to be between \$8 million and \$14 million.

Under EQIP, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helps farmers apply conservation practices that optimize environmental benefits on working agricultural lands.

According to NRCS, the 2002 Farm Bill made several changes to EQIP that offer more program flexibility to agricultural producers. The revised program offers farmers up to 75 percent cost-share to implement conservation practices. Beginning in 2003, new farmers and limited resource farmers may

receive up to 90 percent cost-share for certain practices. Other changes include more local flexibility on priority concerns and areas and no animal unit cap on large confinement livestock operations. In addition, there is an increase in the payment cap to \$450,000 per producer for the life of the Farm Bill.

The majority of EQIP funds — 60 percent — will be used to fund contracts that address livestock related issues while 40 percent will be used to treat other resource concerns. The revised program specifies that livestock producers who receive funding for animal waste manure systems must have a comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP).

"The increase in cost-share and available funds through EQIP provides a great opportunity to improve Iowa's land, water and other resources," said Leroy Brown, state conservationist for the NRCS in Iowa. "The

revised EQIP offers landowners additional flexibility to address their resource concerns and apply practices included in their conservation plans."

Brown added that applications are now being accepted at local USDA Service Centers. The EQIP signup is continuous. Applications will be ranked and funded periodically. Revised program guidance is interim and for new fiscal year 2002 contracts. Interim guidance will be used until the EQIP rule is published.

EQIP was originally established under the 1996 Farm Bill. It provides technical, financial and educational assistance to landowners to voluntarily address soil, water and related natural resource concerns on private lands. The NRCS provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain and improve our natural resources and environment.

Tri-State Grazing Conference to be held on March 15

The first Tri-State Grazing Conference will be held on March 15 at the Dubuque Midway Hotel from 9:45 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The program is sponsored by grazers, NRCS and the Extension services of Iowa, Wisconsin and Illinois in cooperation with the ISU Leopold Center for Sustainable Ag.

The conference will focus on "What's New in Forages" and "My Favorite Forages" with Larry Tranel, ISU Extension field specialist and a panel of producers.

Afternoon dairy breakouts will include "Starting from Scratch - Making it Grazing" with Russ Thompson, Wisconsin dairy producer; "Dairy Grazing Benchmarks" with Larry Tranel, ISU Extension; and "Feeding Dairy Cows on High Duality Pasture" with Dr. Dave Combs, UW-Madison dairy scientist.

Afternoon livestock breakouts will include "Tools in the Hayshed" by Dave Lubben, Iowa beef producer; "UW Lancaster Grazing Trials" by Dave Wachter, Grant County Dairy/Livestock Agent; and "What I wish Somebody Would Have Told Me" by Scott Weinberg, Iowa beef, sheep and dairy heifer producer. The program will adjourn at 3:30 p.m.

The Midway Hotel is located on US Hwy 20 (3100 Dodge Street) Dubuque. Cost is \$8 in advance, \$10 at the door which includes lunch and materials.

Le Roy

RECYCLE!! Sell your "Don't
Wants" with a classified ad today.

New personnel join staff at county's NRCS office

By MICHELLE TURNER
NRCS Soil Conservation Technician

District Soil Conservationist Ed Andrews announced new personnel on his staff at the Jackson County Natural Resource Conservation Service Office.

Area landowners visiting the NRCS office in Maquoketa to update farm plans or sign up for funding programs will be greeted by some cheerful, but likely unfamiliar faces.

The NRCS has been understaffed for several years, but increased funding opened several soil conservationist and technician positions.

The four new soil and water conservation agency members bring a range of education and experience with them to their positions.

Shaun Holcomb is a soil conservationist from Correctionville. He is responsible for Resource Management System planning, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and Conservation Reserve Program

(CRP).

Before taking the NRCS position in Jackson County Holcomb worked as a Soil Conservation Technician in Woodbury and Poweshiek counties and was employed as a breeding manager on a 625-sow farrow to finish farm.

Holcomb graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in ag studies and farm operations and a minor in agronomy. He resides in Cedar Rapids with his wife Lorrie and their two children.

Chandra Gravert holds the position of soil conservationist. Her main duties include developing Resource Management Systems and processing EQIP and CRP applications.

Chandra was previously employed by the University of Illinois-Urbana as a research specialist for the Department of Crop Science. She graduated from Iowa State University with a bachelor of science degree in plant health and protection.

Michelle Turner serves as one of the new Soil Conservation Technicians and works primarily with the CRP and managment

plants.

She taught vocational agriculture and biology in Florida before moving to Maquoketa last year with her husband, Randy Turner, and two daughters. Turner graduated from Kansas State University with a master of science degree in agriculture.

Sue Balsamo is also a Soil Conservation Technician. She is involved with the design of conservation practices in the field as well as RMS plans.

Balsamo is an Iowa State University graduate and her experience includes construction, management and grant writing. She recently completed a water quality pro-



BH-L photo by Lowell Carlson

New NRCS staff members at the Jackson County office include, left to right: Chandra Gravert, Sue Balsamo, Michelle Turner and Shaun Holcomb. They are focusing on a

range of management plans and new conservation projects funded under the new Farm Bill.

Bellevue Herald November 11, 2004

EQIP funding available for conservation needs

Jackson County landowners may apply for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding now for a number of prospective conservation practices on their farms.

Ed Andrews, Jackson County NRCS District Conservationist, invited county landowners to consider applying for the federally funded conservation assistance program.

Signup for the program is continuous and applications are prioritized for funding at the local level. Applications signed prior to Friday, Dec. 17, will be considered for 2005 EQIP funding.

The USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) recently received \$18.1 million for cost share and incentive payments to producers. Most of that funding (\$11.6 million) is being distributed to county offices to implement EQIP at the local level.

Who can apply and for what?

Livestock producers, for example, can get cost share for manure storage structures, rotational grazing, including fencing, seeding and watering systems and nutrient management. Forest owners can receive assistance with tree planting, timber stand improvement and windbreak establishment. Money will also be available for practices to reduce soil erosion.

Andrews said a \$6.5 million of this EQIP state funding allotment will be reserved to treat resource concerns related to livestock feedlots. These funds are being held in reserve to specifically address issues faced by large concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) that require a National Pollution Discharge elimination System permit.

To apply locally for EQIP funds readers should stop by the Jackson County NRCS office at 603 1/2 East Platt Street or call 563/652-2337 Ext. 3.

The applications will be prioritized for funding using ranking criteria that includes resources treated and location of the contract.

More information for readers about local EQIP ranking criteria and resource concerns may be found by contacting Andrew at the local NRCS office or by going to the Iowa NRCS website at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/stateeqip.html.



ED ANDREWS
Local NRCS
District
Conservationist

ISU researcher: Winter grazing can cut feed costs

Workshop: Managed rotational system is recommended

By **JOHN EVERLY**

TH staff writer

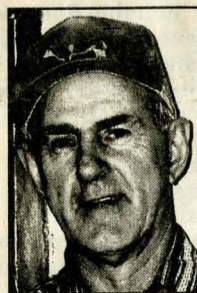
MAQUOKETA, Iowa — Feeding cows through the long, hard tri-state winters can be an expensive proposition.

Some experts suggest farmers can make winter a bit less taxing by letting the cows harvest their feed through the winter.



Jim Russell
Iowa Beef Center

"If we want to be profitable in our cow-calf operations, we want to get stored feeds, as much as possible, out of the system," said researcher Jim Russell, with Iowa State University's Iowa Beef Center.



Ed Andrews
Conservationist

Russell spoke last week at a Pastures for Profit Workshop in Maquoketa, hosted by the Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Farmers who raise cows and calves can reduce feed costs by extending the grazing season well into the winter, he said. Russell said the key is managing feed resources.

A managed rotational pasture-grazing system, where cows are moved from pasture to pasture during the growing season, is a low-cost alternative to feeding baled hay and other stored feeds, he said.

To minimize stored feed use through the winter, Russell recommended removing cows from pasture for 70 to 100 days before the end of the growing season. Cows can then be returned to pastures to graze on the "stockpiled" forage for

several more days through the winter, he said.

Ed Andrews, district conservationist with the Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District, hopes techniques like winter grazing will keep more cows on the land. That would be better for Jackson County's farm economy, and better for the environment, too, he said.

"If people can make a profit with their cow herd, they're going to leave the land in pastures instead of tearing them up for cropland," Andrews said.

Well-managed grass pastures provide environmental benefits, Andrews said.

"Not only keeping the soil where it belongs but keeping that sediment out of the rivers and out of the Gulf of Mexico," Andrews said. "We still look at livestock as a value-added product," he said.

Cattle convert forages and corn into beef, which can bring a higher return for farmers than crops alone.

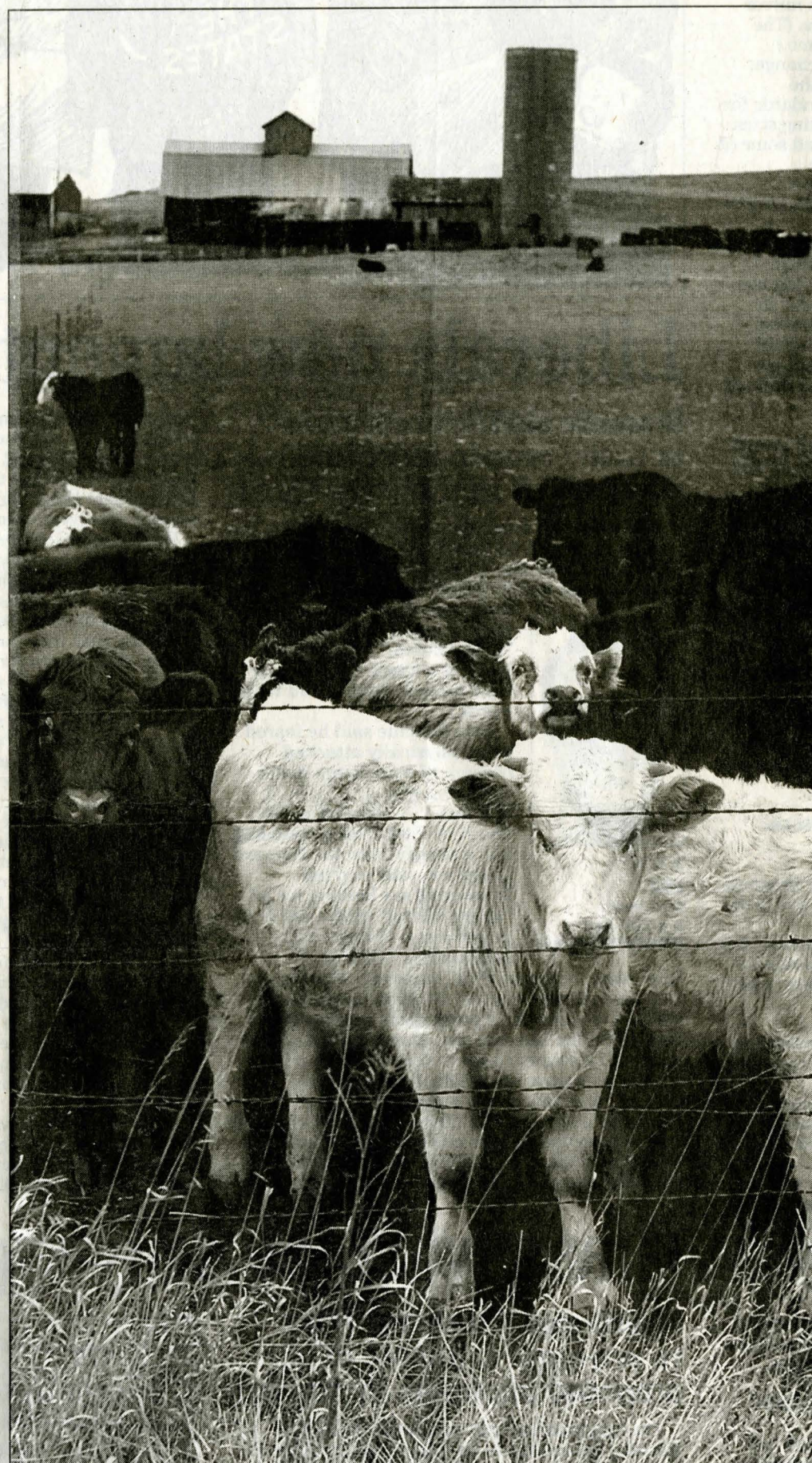
Although many tri-state farmers graze cows on harvested crop residues through the winter, Russell said the practice can be made even more efficient through "strip grazing," where cows are moved periodically from one section of a field to another.

Movable electric fence can be used to create temporary "paddocks" within the field, he said.

When designing a feeding system, Russell said producers should consider their cows' nutritional needs and how the forages available to them can best be utilized.

Jackson County is Iowa's top cow-calf producing county, with about 25,000 beef cows on more than 600 farms.

The county has the potential to increase its cow herd. Jackson County has about 45,000 acres currently enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program, which takes land out of production for 10 to 15 years.



TH: Jenna Bowles

Cattle spend Monday afternoon grazing in the fields at a farm near Bernard, Iowa. Extending the grazing season can reduce feed costs for farmers.

Funding to landowners made available for conservation practices

Funding for Jackson County farmers and landowners interested in installing or implementing conservation management practices on their land is now available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the program, which is intended to provide cost-share and technical assistance to landowners for the protection and enhancement of water quality, wetlands, wildlife habitat, soil, air quality and other natural resource areas.

Applications for EQIP will be selected through a competitive ranking process that evaluates the environmental benefit of the conservation plan proposed. A higher priority goes to applicants who use cost-effective conservation practices, treat multiple resource concerns, address national, state or local priorities and provide the most environmental benefits. The assessment results in a score that determines if the project can be funded.

Up to 50 percent cost share is available for 2006 contracts. Applicants who live within the Farmers Creek watershed may be eligible for an additional 25 percent cost share or practice incentives. Jackson County has been obligated \$317,000 in funding for this year's sign up.

Funded practices may include building waste storage facilities, pasture fencing, wells, pipelines, and ponds in conjunction with rotational grazing, sediment basins, waterways and streambank stabilization.

The Maquoketa NRCS office often receives more applications that they are eligible to fund, so those interested in obtaining assistance for projects through EQIP are encouraged to visit the NRCS office as soon as possible. Forms are now computer generated on an individual basis, so it is suggested that you call the NRCS office at (563) 652-2337, ext. 3, before your visit to expedite the process.



Five members of the Hope, Kan., FFA chapter and their vocational agriculture instructor, Dale Davidson, toured ag-related sites in a recent daylong tour of Jackson County. Pausing for a photo at the Jackson County Demonstration Farm north of Andrew were, from left, Clint Reed, Paul Bentz, Kyle Goracke, Davidson, Kevin Morgan and Dallas Goracke.

Contributed photo

Field trip includes tour of area agricultural sites

Five members of the Hope, Kan., FFA Chapter and their vocational agriculture instructor, Dale Davidson, traveled from central Kansas last week to tour agriculture-related sites in the Quad Cities and Jackson County.

Davidson's wife and three sons also attended.

On April 17, students Clint Reed, Kevin Morgan, Paul Bentz, Dallas Goracke and Kyle Goracke toured the John Deere Training Center, combine manufacturing plant, world headquarters, warehouse and pavilion.

John Deere representatives gave the stu-

dents caps and other souvenirs and then surprised Davidson with a state-of-the-art metal-cutting circular saw to be used in the chapter's agriculture mechanics classes.

The group then traveled to Maquoketa, where they were given tours sponsored by the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service staff.

Michelle Turner, a soil technician with the NCRS in Maquoketa, served as host and guide. Turner and Davidson are alumni of Kansas State University and were classmates in the agriculture education program.

Friday's tour began in Hurstville, where

members climbed above the lime kilns and viewed waterfowl at the interpretive wetlands.

The next stop was the Jackson County Demonstration Farm north of Andrew, where Turner discussed the conservation methods used and compared them to Kansas practices.

Of special interest were the contour strips, which are not used in central Kansas. Davidson expressed surprise at the relatively low number of terraces Jackson County's sloped farmland, since broad base terraces are common on the relatively flat Kansas cropland.

■ FFA, Please turn to page 3



Contributed photos

Paul Tabor of Tabor Home Vineyards & Winery of rural Baldwin explains the filtering process of wine as visiting students from Hope, Kan., look on.

FFA: Kansans visit farm, caves, winery

Continued from page 1

Davidson jokingly said that all Jackson County farms are out of compliance, according to Kansas regulations.

Other projects conducted at the demonstration farm, such as the rotational and stockpile grazing experiments, were explained to the FFA members as they viewed the cattle pen and surrounding paddocks.

After visiting the demonstration farm, the students stretched their legs at Maquoketa Caves State Park, where they enjoyed the natural wonder of the caves and learned about geology and topography of the area.

The daylong outing ended with a visit to Tabor Home Vineyards & Winery in Bald-

win.

Paul Tabor took the group into the vineyard to discuss grape varieties and pruning techniques.

Inside the winery, the members watched wine being filtered and then transferred to other holding tanks.

Davidson, a dairy farmer, said he found it interesting that the winery equipment was often the same as that found in the milkhouse.

Davidson said he was impressed with the tours and the area. He told his Jackson County hosts that he plans to bring another group back again next year.

The Kansan joked that his only complaint was that he couldn't find any level ground to stand on.



Paul Tabor explains grapevine pruning techniques to the visiting FFA members from Hope, Kan.

Farm News

Stiff mandatory penalties for HEL violations in Jackson County

By LORI J. SCHNOOR

District Conservationist

The landscape of beautiful Jackson County can be a challenge for farmers! Although the hills, bluffs and trees make for great scenery, Jackson County Farmers are required to go that extra mile when it comes to conservation. Overall, Jackson County is known for its great conservation throughout Iowa; however, with heavy rains last year and other challenges, it is very important for farmers and landowners to be even more aware of conservation and Farm Bill Compliance issues.

The Jackson County Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) cannot stress enough how important it is to notify the Farm Service Agency (FSA) or NRCS that you are clearing an area, tiling wet areas, or bringing new land into production *before* you do it. Some of these areas will be limited as to what crop rotation and tillage can be done and some may be required to be seeded down completely.

Typically, we will always find out about areas cleared or tilled. Concerned citizens call in quite frequently reporting



Lori J. Schnoor, District Conservationist for the Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District urges operators to contact her office first, not last.

these sites. So, protect yourself and report it before you do it and work with us to do it the right way.

Also, for HEL compliance, the FSA Committee will *no longer* be able to determine Good Faith Relief for HEL violations without a monetary penalty being assessed, according to the new 2008 Farm Bill. The new regulations mandate a minimum penalty of \$1000 be assessed; the maximum is \$10,000. These penalties will offset against any and all USDA payments earned by the producer for the program year. All USDA benefits are lost by the producer if the FSA Committee cannot determine good faith.

With the excess rainfall and flooding that occurred in the 2008 crop year, there are many fields with sheet and rill erosion, and/or ephemeral gullies present. Before applying ANY TILLAGE on these fields, review and discuss your options with the NRCS office. Once a HEL violation has been recorded by NRCS, it is too late to correct it for that program year and there will be a monetary penalty assessed.

What does NRCS look for? During a random status review or whistleblower complaint NRCS will measure residue and check the field for gully erosion. Basically on steeper slopes no-till or a rotation with hay is required to meet compliance. Ephemeral gully erosion typically occurs anywhere there is a concentrated flow of water. Producers should have conservation practices (i.e. grassed waterways) in place to eliminate this type of erosion. Grassed field borders where end rows are going up and down the hill may also be a requirement if there is gully erosion present or if a producer is required to farm on the contour.

All producers are highly encouraged to work with NRCS to take preventative measures. Jackson County NRCS staff is more than willing to review your conservation plan with you. For more information contact 563-652-2337 ext. 3 or stop in at 603 ½ East Platt, Maquoketa.



BH-L file p

Upcoming Events

'Growing Up Country' author visits Jackson County libraries

Carol Bodensteiner, author of *Growing Up*

into several vignettes, *Growing Up Country* captures rural life in the Midwest, in the mid-20th Century. The reader is treated to stories of events and individuals that shaped the life and values of the

p.m. in the Multi-Purpose Room.

They will be giving a two, 20 minute presentations, with 10 minutes at the end of each for question and answer. If you would like to learn more about this oppor-

Good faith exemptions could be a thing of the past for operators of highly erodible land who fail to notify the NRCS office first, not last. Mandatory fines are now part of the response for operators who participate in farm programs but fail to comply with limitations on cropping procedures connected with HEL designated land on their farm.

cattle feeder from Hull, is also a director. These five directors are elected by cattle producers at the annual meeting held in December.

Other members serving on the Iowa Beef Industry Council Executive Committee are Bill Northey, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture; Wendy Wintersteen, Dean of the College of

The Iowa Beef Industry Council administers the Iowa portion of the national beef checkoff. The 2006-2007 Iowa budget will invest about \$1.65 million in state and national beef promotion, research, consumer information, and industry information programs. In addition, Iowa forwards approximately \$1.65 million to the National Cattlemen's Beef Board

Applications being accepted through Feb. 2

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Maquoketa has announced it will be accepting applications for the 2007 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) through Feb. 2.

EQIP is a cost-share program offered to agricultural producers in order to promote agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals.

The NRCS works with landowners and agriculture producers, large and small, to conserve their natural resources.

NRCS is a non-regulatory agency offering technical and financial assistance to those looking to improve and/or protect soil, water air, plant, and animal resources.

EQIP provides farmers with an effective program that offers financial assistance to install conservation practices related to statewide concerns involving animal waste and manure storage, runoff control, soil erosion, nutrient management, forestry and prescribed grazing.

EQIP provides 50 percent cost-share on certain conservation practices such as grassed waterways, manure management facilities, erosion control structures and prescribed grazing. Incentive payments are offered to encourage farmers to perform land management practices such as nutrient management, livestock exclusion, and prescribed grazing.

Landowners in the Farmers Creek Watershed may be eligible for an additional 25 percent cost-share on certain practices.

This conservation program also allows the leveraging of EQIP funds with other conservation programs to provide even greater stewardship of natural resources. Most practices eligible for EQIP are also eligible for the Local Water Protection Program, which provides low-interest loans to farmers and landowners at interest rates of up to 3 percent fixed. Although EQIP applications are accepted all year, ranking of these applications will begin on Feb. 2.

If funding allows, a second ranking date may be set in the future.

For more information contact Lori Harris, District Conservationist, at the Maquoketa NRCS office at 563-652-2337 Ex. 3 or visit the office at 603 ½ East Platt Street on weekdays between 7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Identity theft
is a growing crime.



Maquoketa Sentinel
Feb 2nd, 2007

NRCS reflects on its first 75 years

Since the first horse-drawn plows broke the prairie grasslands, farmers have depended on the productivity of Iowa's rich soils to provide for their families. Despite great advances in farming technology and crop production, the same basic relationship between farmers and the soil exists today. Healthier soils have greater capacity to produce more and better provide for Iowa farm families, the state's economy and a healthier environment.

Seventy-five years ago, after the devastating Dust Bowl, the United States formed a new government agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture under the guidance of Hugh Hammond Bennett. This agency helped farmers nurture their relationship with the soil by adopting new crop production methods and building conservation practices which better protected the soil while helping farmers maintain profitability.

Today, that agency is called the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Its mission remains the same: Helping People Help the Land. Agency professionals work with Iowa landowners on a voluntary basis, providing guidance on land management decisions through cooperative conservation planning. NRCS suggests ways farmers can maximize their produc-

tion while still protecting soil and water quality and helps them implement decisions through a variety of Farm Bill conservation programs.

These programs, administered by NRCS, provide eligible producers financial assistance to help pay for new farming methods that improve stewardship and the construction of conservation practices and structures.

For example, Iowa landowners received more than \$20.4 million in financial assistance and incentive payments through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) in fiscal year 2009. These

practices included terraces, small grassed waterways, nutrient management, rotational grazing, and tillage management.

Boone County farmer Steve Gustafson is one example of how NRCS helps Iowa producers through EQIP. He built a concrete waste storage facility for his 2,000-head hog finishing operation last spring to supplement the small manure pits that sit beneath his hog buildings. This increased storage capacity allowed him to avoid applying manure to his cropland this winter eliminating the risk of runoff from frozen ground.

In addition to helping farmers improve soil productivity and protect water, NRCS also responds to flood emergencies and works to help prevent future floods by restoring frequently flooded cropland to floodplains and wetlands.

With funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), Iowa NRCS has purchased 39 floodplain easements on 5,000 acres of frequently-flooded cropland. The easements, valued at nearly \$15 million, will protect communities and farm ground by helping to reduce the potential of downstream flooding near the easement areas.

One of these easement areas belonged to Felipe Urquiza of Wapello. He knew floodwaters would always threaten his home and 13-acre farm that sit in the Iowa River floodplain in Louisa County. With his home damaged beyond repair and cropland inundated by floodwaters in 2008, Urquiza decided to voluntarily retire his flood-prone cropland and enter it into a permanent easement. The land will be restored to deep-rooted permanent cover of wildlife habitat this year, and be allowed to flood naturally.

Although its primary mission remains the

same, the type of help NRCS provides continues to evolve with the needs of its customers. In 2009 the agency added an Organic Initiative to EQIP to help established organic producers add conservation practices to their operations and assist others transition into certified organic production. Iowa provided nearly \$3.5 million for organic farming practices through this Initiative in fiscal year 2009. This year NRCS is starting another Initiative to reduce nutrient loading in the Mississippi River Basin. Iowa is among 12 states which will offer special financial assistance opportunities in key watersheds through partnership projects. The agency will devote up to \$80 million a year until 2013 for this Initiative. Signups for this funding are expected later this summer.

So what began 75 years ago to prevent another destructive Dust Bowl and help America's farmers maintain sustainable ag production has evolved to meet the broader conservation needs of our nation's private landowners: improving soil productivity, protecting water quality and providing wildlife habitat. All of which continue Hugh Hammond Bennett's legacy of helping people help the land.

Rich Sims

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Guest Commentary

"Country Life" Thurs Oct 20, 09

\$6.5 million available for repair of conservation practices

Jackson County conservation practice repair and watershed projects are in line for some of the \$6.5 million available from a state bonding plan. The funds are aimed at repair of damage earlier this year from storm events. It is also earmarked for watershed projects aimed at flood control and erosion damage repair.

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship set \$3 million aside for repairing damage and \$3.5 million for Soil and Water Conservation Districts to address water quality issues.



LORI SCHNOOR

funding and watershed improvement committees, public water supply utilities, county conservation boards, cities and counties are all eligible to apply. Individual farmers could apply for funding to repair 2008 flooding damage as well as other natural disasters. They were eligible for up to 75 percent of the repair costs.

Those applications need to be submitted to the Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District office by Thursday, Dec. 31. Only repairs of conservation practices, not maintenance, are eligible for funding.

February 18th, 2010

Conservation Stewardship Program details

Interested farmers and landowners in Jackson County should apply now for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) at the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office in Maquoketa before the second CSP signup cutoff date expected to occur this winter. CSP is a voluntary program that encourages agricultural and forestry producers to maintain existing conservation activities and adopt additional ones on their operations.

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) authorizes CSP. Congress renamed and revamped the former Conservation Security Program completely to improve its availability and appeal to agricultural and forestry producers. The new CSP is available to all producers nationwide. Eligible lands include cropland, pastureland, and non-industrial private forestland.

CSP is administered by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Eligible applicants may include individual landowners, legal entities, and Indian tribes. Although CSP is a continuous signup, NRCS periodically ranks applications for funding.

To apply for CSP, potential participants are encouraged to use a self-screening checklist first to determine whether the new program is suitable for them or their operation. The checklist is available online at www.nrcs.usda.gov/new_csp and at NRCS field offices. After self-screening, the produc-

er's current and proposed conservation practices are entered in the conservation measurement tool (CMT). This tool estimates the level of environmental performance to be achieved by a producer implementing and maintaining conservation activity. The conservation performance estimated by the CMT will be used to rank applications.

NRCS field staff will also conduct on-site field verifications of applicants' information obtained from the CMT. Once the potential participant has been field verified and approved for funding, he or she must develop a conservation stewardship plan.

NRCS costshare for wildlife habitat and environmental quality due Jan. 21

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is extending a deadline for programs to improve water quality and wildlife habitat.

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary costshare that provides financial assistance to landowners to establish and improve wildlife habitat. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) works with participants to develop a wildlife habitat management plan.

Projects that focus on establishing habitat for threatened and endangered species or declining species receive a higher priority.

Applications for both programs are accepted year round at the local NRCS

office, but to compete for this year's funding, applications must be received by Jan. 21.

Practices that can be funded through WHIP include prescribed burning, invasive species control, brush management, establishment of native grasses or trees, forest stand improvement, wetland restorations and windbreak or shelterbelt establishment or renovations.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) costshare funds are available for livestock and crop production lands.

Measures include grassed waterways, manure management facilities, terracing, pest management, ag drainage wellhead protection and pasture manage-

ment.

For more information on either program, contact the Natural Resources

Conservation Service (NRCS) at 603 ½ E. Platt St in Maquoketa or call (563) 652-2337, extension 3.

NRCS offers funding to increase wildlife habitat

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program that provides financial assistance to private landowners to establish and improve wildlife habitat.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) works with participants to develop a wildlife habitat management plan. Projects that focus on establishing habitat for threatened and endangered species or declining species receive a higher priority.

Applications are accepted through a continuous signup process at the local NRCS office. Applications received by Jan. 21 will be ranked to compete for this year's funding.

Practices that can be funded through WHIP include prescribed burning, invasive species control, brush management, establishment of native grasses or trees, forest stand improvement, wetland restorations, and windbreak or shelterbelt establishment/renovations.

For more information about WHIP, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) at 603 ½ E. Platt St. Maquoketa, IA, or call (563) 652-2337.

BUSINESS/AGRICULTURE

Take opportunity to voice opinion on EPA proposal

By **BILL NORTHEY,**
Iowa Secretary of Agriculture

The Obama administration's recent proposal to significantly reduce the amount of clean-burning renewable fuels that must be included in the fuel supply in 2014 is a shocking capitulation to Big Oil that threatens to significantly damage our state's economy, puts consumers at risk through higher prices at the pump and would hurt the environment.

The renewable fuels standard (RFS) was passed with strong bipartisan support to promote the development of a domestic renewable fuels industry. It requires an increasing amount of renewable fuels to be included in nation's fuel supply, and it has worked extremely well.

Consumers have seen significant savings at the pump as renewable fuels have helped hold down the price of both gasoline and diesel.

A study by Iowa State University and the University of Wisconsin found that in 2010, domestic ethanol production helped keep gasoline prices \$0.89 lower per gallon than they otherwise would have been.

In addition, Iowa farmers, businesses and

communities have invested heavily to support the development of the renewable fuels industry to help meet the standard and have seen tremendous benefits from having these facilities in their communities.

Iowa is fortunate to lead the nation in the production of ethanol and biodiesel with 42 ethanol refineries capable of producing over 3.8 billion gallons annually and 12 biodiesel refineries with a combined annual capacity of over 315 million gallons. We also have three cellulosic ethanol facilities under construction, all of which are associated with an existing corn ethanol plant.

Unfortunately, EPA's proposal would move us backward on both the ethanol and biodiesel requirements for 2014. Specifically, the proposal lowers the "corn ethanol" level from 13.8 billion gallons in 2013 to only 13 billion gallons in 2014 and freezes the biodiesel level at 1.28 billion gallons despite the fact the biodiesel industry is currently operating at an annualized rate of 2 billion gallons.

The renewable fuels industry has the capacity to produce well beyond the levels set by the EPA. What they need now is fair access to the fuel distribution system, which

is unfortunately controlled by the Big Oil companies.

In their opposition to the RFS, Big Oil refer to the "blend wall," which is their effort to limit renewable fuels to just 10 percent of the fuel supply. This artificial ceiling is just another effort by the oil industry to prevent more lower-priced, clean-burning renewable fuels from entering the fuel supply.

In fact, there are lots of opportunities for higher ethanol blends. The vast majority of cars, all of those made since 2001, can run on E15 (15 percent ethanol) and many cars, those that are flex-fuel, can run on E85 (85 percent ethanol).

It makes me scratch my head that an administration so focused on climate change would take action to limit access to renewable fuels that have been shown to significantly reduce greenhouse gas and other harmful emissions.

The oil industry wants to limit the fuel choices for consumers and keep them buying their high-price, non-renewable petroleum based fuels. It is wrong for the EPA to support them.

The EPA is currently accepting comments on the proposed changes and it is extremely

ly important that Iowans take the time to comment and express their opposition to the EPA's proposal. Comments can be submitted online at www.regulations.gov or via email at a-and-r-docket@epa.gov

All comments should reference Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2013-0479.

Iowa is fortunate to have a Governor who understands the importance of the renewable fuels industry and has created a website, ProtecttheRFS.com where you can sign a petition encouraging the EPA to support clean-burning, homegrown renewable fuels.

Now is the time to be heard. The renewable fuels standard needs to be protected and it is important that we as Iowans stand up and let the EPA know we don't want to be held over a barrel by Big Oil.

Northey, a fourth generation corn and soybean farmer from Spirit Lake, is serving his second term as Secretary of Agriculture.

His priorities as Secretary of Agriculture are promoting the use of science and new technologies to better care for our air, soil and water, and reaching out to all Iowans to tell the story of Iowa agriculture.

To learn more visit www.IowaAgriculture.gov

Apply for stewardship program by Jan. 17

DES MOINES, IOWA, Dec. 3, 2013-USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications at local field offices for the 2014 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) signup. Iowa farmers who apply by Jan. 17, 2014, will receive first consideration for funding selections.

CSP is offered through a continuous signup, but NRCS periodically makes funding selections. Last year, Iowa NRCS obligated more than \$3.8 million through 381 contracts covering 175,346 acres.

The program emphasizes conservation performance - producers earn higher payments for higher performance.

Through CSP, producers install conservation enhancements to make positive changes in soil health, soil erosion, water quality, water quantity, air quality, plant resources, animal resources and energy.

CSP also supports the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy through various enhancement options. The Iowa strategy includes practices designed to reduce nutrient loads from nonpoint sources such as farm fields.

Some popular nutrient reduction enhancements used by Iowa farmers include:

- * Cover crops to scavenge residual nitrogen;
- * Precision application technology to apply nutrients;
- * Split nitrogen application (50% after crop emergence or pasture green-up);
- * Plant tissue tests and analysis to improve nitrogen management.

A CSP self-screening checklist is available to help producers determine if the program is suitable for their operation.

The checklist highlights basic information about CSP eligibility requirements, stewardship threshold requirements and payment types.

Learn more about CSP by visiting the Iowa NRCS website <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ia/programs/financial/csp/> or your local NRCS field office <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=ia>

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YOU'RE INVITED!!!

SEASONAL HIGH TUNNEL TOUR

Sponsored by: NRCS, River Bend Buy Fresh Buy Local, and ISU Extension



What: Tour a High Tunnel Currently Growing Vegetables.

When: November 16th, 2014 from 10:00 a.m. - Noon

**Where: Mike and Lorri Schmidt Farm
41237 17th St. Preston, IA 52069**

Guest Speakers: Mike & Lorri Schmidt, Hosts
Laura Krause from Abbe Hills Farm in Cedar County
Lori Schnoor, NRCS, Funding Opportunities
Brittany Bethel, ISU Extension, Local Foods Coordinator

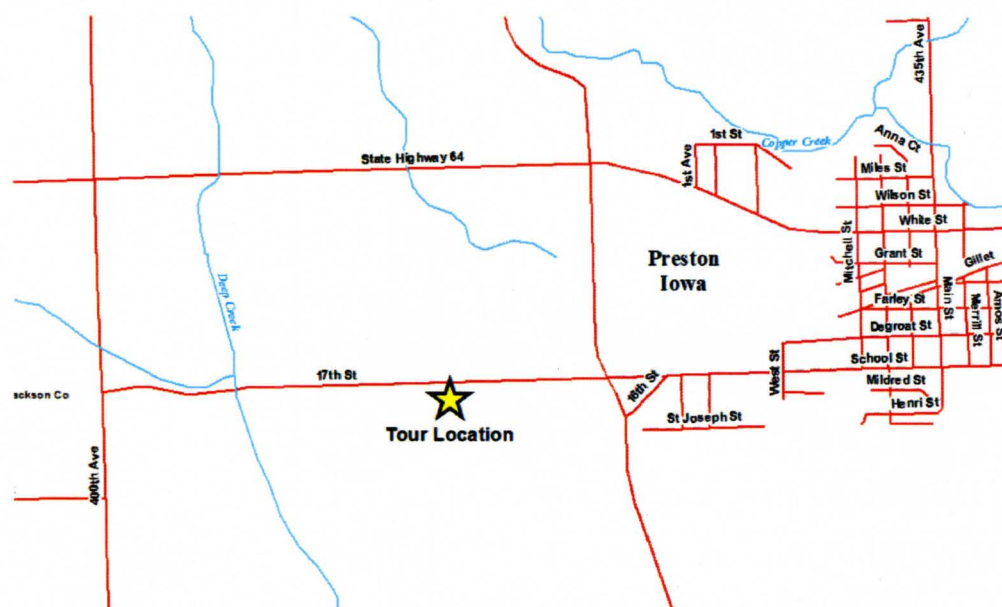
This tour will provide the opportunity to learn how a seasonal high tunnel is constructed and operates. Other topics that will be covered include what types of financial assistance are available, marketing, and the production of fruits and vegetables. Along with ample time to ask any question that you may have.

**For More Information, Please Contact
Lori Schnoor @ 563-652-2337 x 3**

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!

Jackson Soil and Water District is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

Map to High Tunnel Tour



Take Highway 64 East towards Preston

Turn Right onto 400th Ave.

Turn Left onto 17th Street

End Location: 41237 17th St. Preston, IA 52069



High tunnel tour set near Preston

Learn more about growing fruits and vegetables in high tunnels, also known as hoop houses, on Saturday, Nov. 16. A tour will be held at Mike and Lorri Schmidt's farm located at 41237 17th Street, Preston, from 10 a.m. to noon. The Schmidt's high tunnel was built in 2012.

Cool season vegetables are currently being grown in it.

"The tour will provide interested people an opportunity to see first-hand how it was built and how it is working and to ask a lot of questions," said Lori Schnoor, Jackson County District Conservationist of the Natural Resources

Conservation Service (NRCS).

NRCS has funding opportunities for high tunnels as part of the Secretary Vilsack's objective of increasing local food production.

The tour will cover construction and operation, financial assistance, marketing, and fruit and vegetable production. Laura Krause, Abbe Hills Farm, will also share her experience and expertise. Krause runs a very successful vegetable farming operation in Cedar County utilizing high tunnels.

High Tunnels are simple, plastic-covered, passive solar-heated structures in

which crops are grown in the ground. Benefits include: extending the growing season; improving quality and yields; receiving higher prices for out of season crops; and planting, maintaining and harvesting can be performed without being affected by weather.

The tour is being sponsored by The Schmidt's Jackson County ISU Extension, River Bend Buy Fresh Buy Local and NRCS. For more information call Lori Schnoor, NRCS, 563-652-2337 ext. 3. EEC Provider.

Maquoketa Sentinel-Press, Wednesday, February 19, 2014

AREA ACTIVITIES

Donations sought

■ **Loads of Love** – During the month of February Operation: New View CAA is collecting donations of personal or household products for low-income families. Donations of laundry soap, shampoo/conditioner, toilet paper and many other products go a long way in meeting the needs of families. For more information on contributing to Loads of Love within our community, call 563-652-5197.

Dancing set

■ **Double D.J.** Twirlers will square dance Wednesday, Feb. 19 from 7:30 to 10 p.m. at DAC Building, 1712 East Maple St., Maquoketa. The caller will be Doug and Tommy Russell. Sweetheart Dance.

Breakfast served

Forestry seminar scheduled for March 6 at HIC

The Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will host a forestry seminar from 6 to 9 p.m. March 6 at the Hurstville Interpretive Center one mile north of Maquoketa.

Traditional forestry practices will be discussed, along with new and exciting alternatives.

Guest speaker Tom Wahl, owner of Red Fern Farm in southeast Iowa, grows high value tree crops including chestnuts, heartnuts, persimmons, pawpaws and aronia berries. He will describe forestry farming systems and options for landowners.

David Gossman of Hidden Bluffs Farm in Jackson County has a certified tree farm and will discuss caring for his timber, marketing traditional lumber and non-traditional forestry products.

Dave Bridges and Steve Swinonos, foresters with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), will discuss current issues such as emerald ash borer, timber stand improvement and financial incentive programs.

A forestry panel will answer questions at the end of the presentations.

No reservations are necessary. The public is invited to attend.

For more information or special accommodations, contact NRCS at 563-652-2337, Ext. 3.

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Forestry and tree crop seminar held in Maquoketa

Standing room only crowd learns more about high value tree crops

"Standing-room only" events are usually reserved for rock stars, but when people kept streaming into the forestry seminar long after the last chair was filled, it became evident that "Forestry" was a rock'n hot topic in Jackson County.

Over 90 people attended the Forestry and High Value Tree Crop Seminar on March 6 at the Hurstville Interpretive Center.

The Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District and Natural Resources Conservation Service in Maquoketa organized the evening event, scheduling several guest speakers and a panel of experts to address questions and concerns.

Key-note speaker Tom Wahl, owner of Red Fern Farm in Wapello, kept his audience charmed with his dry wit and sense of humor as he explained the fascinating topic of chestnut production.

"The hardest part is getting the chestnut tree established," stressed Wahl. "Certain soil conditions and well-drained soils are needed. That's where the labor is."

American chestnuts were once very common throughout the country, but in 1904 a deadly fungus called chestnut blight began killing them, almost to the point of extinction. Since then, the Chinese chestnut, a close cousin, has been cultivated in its place. Japanese and European varieties are more suited to a Mediterranean climate and do not do well in the U.S.

Wahl noted that outside of being familiar with the reminiscent Christmas song about roasting chestnuts, most Americans are unfamiliar with the tasty nut. He said that people from Europe, Asia and Africa consider the chestnut to be an important staple food. Most of his customers are immigrants from other parts of the world.

Chestnuts are called the "un-nut" because unlike walnuts or pecans, they have trace amounts of fat and high levels of vitamin C.

Wahl explained that chestnuts were harvested off the ground, and usually by hand.



Over 90 people attended the Forestry and High Value Tree Crop Seminar on March 6 at the Hurstville Interpretive Center.

He showed pictures of his "nut wizard," a rolling wire basket attached to a long handle. As he rolls the basket over the chestnuts "as thick as cobblestones on the ground", the nuts pop through the wire and into the basket, saving wear and tear on the picker's back.

Although the audience seemed to have an endless list of questions about chestnuts, Wahl went on to discuss the growing of hazelnuts, paw paws, heartnuts, persimmons, and aronia berries. He invited the audience to contact Red Fern Farms if they needed any more information or wanted to schedule a farm tour.

The second speaker of the night was

David Gossman of Hidden Bluffs Farm in Jackson County. Gossman has a certified tree farm and discussed caring for his timber, marketing traditional lumber and non-traditional forestry products.

The seminar concluded with a panel of forestry experts consisting of Department of Natural Resources (DNR) foresters Steve Swinonos and Dave Bridges, and Kevin Oetkin, owner of Woodland Forestry, LLC. Guest speakers Wahl and Gossman also joined the panel.

Lori Schnoor, District Conservationist of

the Jackson County NRCS commented that it was very encouraging to see so many people in attendance with an interest in planting more trees and caring for their existing timber stands. "We were very pleased with the turnout. In recent years the trend has been to clear timber to gain more cropland. Hopefully, this is an indication that the trend is changing. We need to protect our most fragile soils and steeper slopes." For more information about timber stand improvement and tree planting, feel free to contact NRCS at 563-652-2337 ext. 3.



We would like to thank our local agricultural community for all their contributions.

Pasture walk set for Tuesday noon

A pasture walk will be held on Tuesday, July 8, at 12 p.m., at the Louise and Harold Horst farm at 52919 17th Street, Miles, for anyone interested in pasture and grazing improvements.

Producers Alan Horst and Dustin Johnson will discuss the pros and cons of various watering systems for cattle and lead the group on a paddock tour to show improvements made through new seeding.

Jess Jackson, Grazing Specialist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will be speaking on forage and grazing management practices to maximize grazing returns and how to improve production.

Virgil Schmidt, Iowa State University Extension Field Agronomist, will be discussing pasture fertility management.

Lunch will be provided at noon by Crop Production Services.

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unite to look at
future of Little Bear



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Lippens named third
runner-up at state fair



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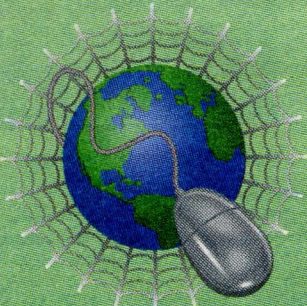
SUPPLEMENTS

- Buyer's Guide
- Menards (2)
- Stroke Detection

Due to a varying number of supplements purchased by our advertising customers for insertion in *The Maquoketa Sentinel-Press*, subscribers in some areas may not receive all the supplements listed.

PUBLIC NOTICES

- Bruce A. Heuer probate
- JC Board of Supervisors - July 30, 2012 meeting
- Delmar City Council - Aug. 8, 2012 meeting
- Andrew School Board - Annual Wages
- Public Hearing - Abandonment of 45th St. - Lease County Care Facility
- Maquoketa City Council - Aug. 6, 2012 meeting

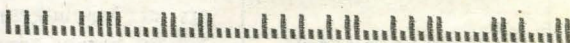


OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER

- Jackson County
- City of Maquoketa
- City of Andrew
- City of Baldwin
- City of Monmouth
- City of Delmar
- Delwood School District
- Maquoketa School District

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MAQUOKETA SENTINEL-PRESS

Volume 159, No. 22 ■ 12 pages Plus Supplements ■ Wednesday, August 15, 2012 ■ \$1.00 per copy



Aerial photo shows the crater created by the natural gas explosion on April 25 on a farm about four miles southwest of LaMotte. The explosion was caused when equipment of Kunde Dozing & Tiling of Maquoketa struck a Mid American Energy natural gas pipeline. Destroyed equipment of the Kunde firm is seen at the bottom of the crater. The firm agreed last week to pay a civil penalty of \$10,000 in connection with the incident for failing to notify Iowa's One Call center before starting the excavation.

Photo courtesy of Iowa Attorney General's Office

Kunde agrees to pay civil penalty

By DOUGLAS MELVOLD

A Maquoketa drainage tile contractor has agreed to pay a \$10,000 civil penalty for causing a natural gas explosion that occurred last spring in northern Jackson County.

Donald Kunde, doing business as Kunde Dozing & Tiling of Maquoketa, entered into a consent decree with the Iowa Attorney General's Office, assessing the maximum civil penalty and permanently enjoining him from further violations of Iowa's One Call law, Attorney General Tom Miller said Friday, Aug. 10.

The case was one of two such actions taken against Iowa excavators in separate cases that led to natural gas explosions in Jackson and Plymouth counties in April.

In both cases, excavators failed to provide a 48-hour notice of the excavations so that underground facilities could be located and marked, Miller said.

The incident involving Kunde occurred on the afternoon of April 27 as Kunde conducted excavations to install drainage tile on the farm of Wayne Althoff in the vicinity of 25544 216th Ave. about four miles southwest of LaMotte.

Kunde did not contact the One Call Notification Center regarding the excavations as required by Iowa law, according to Miller.

The law requires that before any excavation, the excavator must contact the statewide notification center at least 48 hours before beginning the excavation and provide information about the location and type of planned excavation.

Operators of underground facilities then mark the location of their lines or other facilities.

Instead of contacting the statewide notification center, Kunde proceeded with the excavations

without any underground facilities having been located and marked on the property, Miller said.

While conducting the excavations, the Kunde firm's tiling equipment hit and ruptured a 16-inch diameter natural gas pipeline that was owned and operated by MidAmerican Energy.

The pipeline was under 640 pounds per square inch of pressure at the time.

The released natural gas

exploded, causing a fireball that shot into the sky and could be seen from miles away.

It created a large crater, scorching farm fields and resulting in substantial property damage to the pipeline company, including loss of natural gas, damage to the pipeline, repair and remediation costs.

Natural gas customers lost service during repairs, according to the petition. The Kunde firm's tiling machine, pickup trucks and

reel trailer were destroyed.

Kunde and two employees were on the site at the time of the explosion, but they managed to escape without injury.

Emergency response was made by the LaMotte, Bellevue, Key West and Bernard volunteer fire departments and Jackson County sheriff's deputies.

■ EXPLOSION,
Please turn to page 2



MSP photo by Kelly Gerlach

New teachers in four area school districts received recognition – and two goody bags each from local businesses – during the annual New Teacher Luncheon Monday, Aug. 13. They include, first row from left, Lauren Breitbach, Kate Degner, and Jenna Olson. In the second row are Kristen Wright, Brenda Nelson, Rhyan Dailey, and Rachelle Kober. In back are Shannon Witt, Ashley Johannsen, Christina Kopp, Sarah Kelley, and Michael Schmidt. Not shown is Michelle Landa, Delwood.

Additions made to district staff

By KELLY GERLACH

The education system – not necessarily the people inside it but the system itself – must change and that change needs to begin at the community level.

That's the education new educators in Andrew, Delwood, Maquoketa and Sacred Heart schools, as well as Maquoketa Area Chamber of Commerce members,

received Monday, Aug. 13, during a presentation by internationally acclaimed speaker Jamie Vollmer.

The new teachers were introduced and recognized Monday during the annual New Teacher Luncheon,

■ EDUCATORS,
Please turn to page 3

AREA ACTIVITIES

Activities noted

■ **Bellevue Arts Council's Fish-Tival** with Art Vendors Saturday, Aug. 18 and Sunday, Aug. 19, 2012 from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. This celebration of "art, music, food, and culture" takes place in the Mississippi River town of Bellevue, Iowa from Friday, Aug. 17 through Sunday, Aug. 19. On Saturday and Sunday, Maquoketa Art Experience will have a booth near the riverfront along with other art vendors during the times listed above. We encourage you stop by and learn more about us. There will also be entertainment and many fun, family-friendly activities throughout this three-day event during more than just the times listed above. For more information about this event, visit the Bellevue Arts Council's website.

Clinic slated

■ **Jackson County Home Health**
Department is holding an evening Immunization Clinic Wednesday, Aug. 22 at the Home Health Dept., Jackson County Regional Health Center. For an appointment, call 563-652-4048. Donations welcome; no fee required.

Classes offered

■ **Adult Beginner Computer Classes** will be held on Wednesday, Aug. 22 and Wednesday, Aug. 29 from 9:00-9:45. These classes are designed for individuals who want to learn the basics about computers in a small, private group. Please call 652-3874 if you are interested in being added to the list for future classes.

Event to be held

■ **Annual Roast Beef and Pork Dinner** will be held Sunday, Aug. 26 at St. John's Lutheran Church in Preston, serving from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. Menu includes roast beef, pork, mashed potatoes and gravy, vegetable, salad, dessert bars and beverage.

Programs planned

■ **"Hooks & Ladders"** Campground Programs, will be held Friday, Aug. 31 at 7 p.m. at the South Sabula Lake Campground; and Saturday, Sept. 1 at 7 p.m. at Spruce Creek Campground. Free Public Program, you don't have to be a camper to join! Prepare for a wild journey through great hazards and dangerous animals as we explore the exciting path a salmon takes to migrate. All ages are welcome.

Laptops, facility improvements await MMS students

By KELLY GERLACH

Seventh and eighth graders at Maquoketa Middle School barely contain their excitement this year as, following in the footsteps of upperclassmen at the high school, they look forward to the 1:1 laptop initiative this fall.

Christine Snell, middle school principal, said the 1:1 laptop initiative is all the buzz amongst her students preparing to head back to school Thursday, Aug. 16.

Each seventh and eighth grader will receive a laptop, probably during the first full week of school, Snell said. She said some parents decided not to permit their child to take the computer home in the evening and on weekends. Those students will still have access to the laptop during the school day by checking it out in the morning and returning it before they go home in the afternoon.

As a result of this technology expansion, Snell said staff trained on various computer programs during the summer. These include Study Six, which resembles an online classroom where teachers can post assignments, leave feedback, and interact with the students taking their classes. Staff also trained in the LAN School program, which gives teachers control over what computer programs students use while in their physical classroom.

Snell said staff will also begin implementing their plans for the Iowa Core into this year's lessons. Middle schoolers will hone their reading and writing skills in each grade level this year. "It's something that you use everywhere and you just never stop learning," the principal said. She said staff doggedly set out to write the purpose statements and outcomes for their lessons to better connect them to the Iowa Core.

"We got such a great group of people here. They're all lifelong learners and that's great for the students to see that learning doesn't end after you graduate," Snell praised.

Students will reap the benefits of an expanded Be a CARD program, which promotes and rewards positive behavior among middle school students. Students seen doing something positive and helping others in the school receive a card. They will be able to collect those cards and "buy" a variety of treats during the course of the school year, such as executive lunches. The program will also include study hall privileges, including Wii time and 30-minute walk-and-talks, according to Snell.

She said teachers will devote more homeroom time to teach expectations to the students instead of assuming they know. They'll work on how to behave in the classroom, what to do and

not to do in the lunchroom, etc. "We did do it on a small scale last year and noticed a decrease in the number of office referrals, so we're going to step it up a notch."

Snell said she'll also begin a Student-of-the-Month program next month to offer students more recognition for the good things they do.

The middle school adds two teachers to the staff - Rachelle Kober in eighth grade language arts and Christina Kopp, a Maquoketa graduate, in math and language arts.

The middle added a new eighth grade exploratory class this year. The communications class, under the guidance of Jane Schmidt, lets students explore various forms of media, including publishing a newspaper and possible work with radio and television broadcasting.

Another change, Snell said, is having only four sections of seventh grade this year. The middle school

typically had six sections of seventh grade. "It's very noticeable," the principal said, adding that some staff will be teaching dual subjects as result.

Snell said she's planning to start a book club for students this year. "I hope to get community volunteers to read a book the kids are reading and come in and discuss it with the kids," she explained. "We're trying to connect more between the kids and the community and get community and parents to connect and promote reading with the students."

People wanting more information about the book club can call Snell at the middle school.

There's good news and frustrating news on the middle school facility improvements front this year. The school will finally install new windows throughout

■ **MIDDLE SCHOOL, Please turn to page 12**

EXPLOSION:

Continued from page 1

In addition to the civil penalty, Kunde also was ordered to pay an unspecified amount of costs of the action.

Two days before the Jackson County incident, another drainage tile contractor failed to provide the 48-hour notice of excavation and its tile plow struck and ruptured a 24-inch diameter natural gas pipeline in rural Plymouth County near Hinton in northwest Iowa.

The damage caused a massive explosion and fire, injuring two employees, creating a large crater and causing substantial property damage, including destroying an overhead high voltage power line.

One week later, the same contractor again conducted excavations to install drainage tile about one-quarter mile from the first site, also without providing the 48-hour notice of the excavations.

As a result, Patrick DeRocher and Cynthia DeRocher, doing business as DeRocher Construction, entered into a consent decree assessing a civil penalty of \$20,000 and a permanent injunction against further violations.

"These are both very serious cases that warrant the maximum penalties," Miller said.

"One of the incidents caused injuries and in both cases the excavators put themselves, emergency responders and the public at great risk.

"All they had to do was make one free phone call that the law requires, and they didn't do it," Miller added.

One Call Center open 24/7

Iowa's One Call Center is reached at (800) 292-8989 or via the national 811 number. It is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Customer service personnel handle more than 50,000 calls a month during peak seasons.

Iowa One Call sends "locate requests" to utility companies, which are required to mark underground utility locations within 48 hours with flags or paint showing where underground lines are located.

The Iowa One Call Web site is www.iowaonecall.com.

Iowa's One Call law has been in effect since 1993. The service is paid for by owners and operators of pipelines and other underground facilities.

Services provided by Iowa One Call are free of charge to homeowners, contractors and professional excavators.

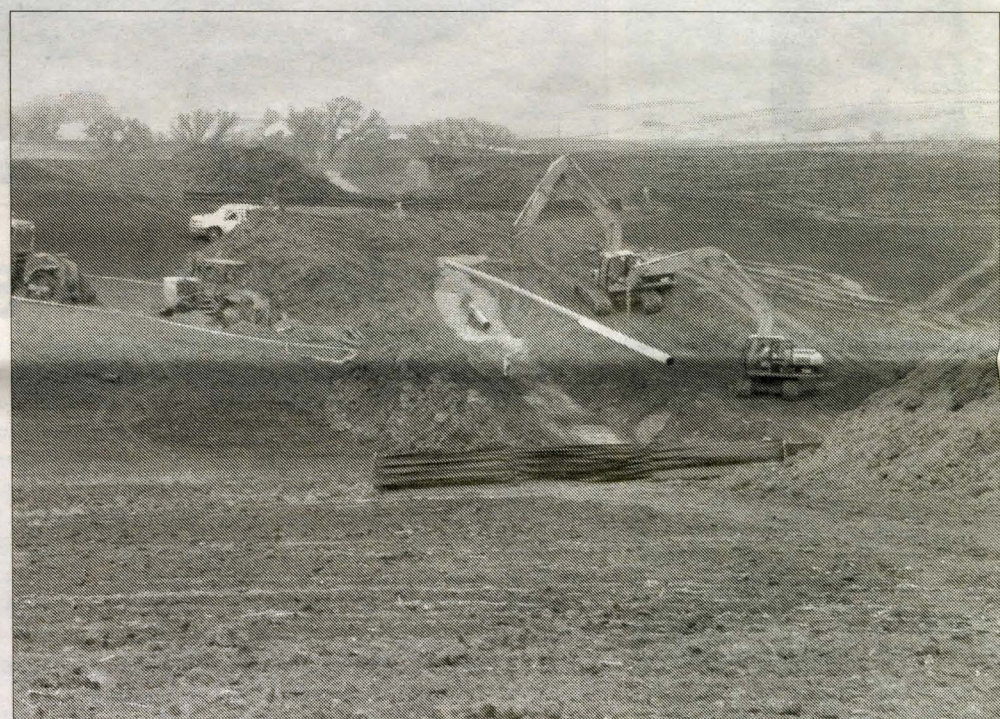


Photo courtesy of Iowa Attorney General's Office

A new section of pipeline is laid to replace sections that were destroyed in the April 25 natural gas explosion in northern Jackson County.

Firefighters called to brush fire on Saturday

Firefighters from Maquoketa and Andrew were called last weekend to battle a brush fire that got out of control.

Andrew volunteer firefighters were summoned at 4:19 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 11, to the area of Iowa 62 and 154th Street one mile north of Andrew.

Maquoketa firefighters were called to assist shortly after the initial call.

According to a Maquoketa Law Center report, Terry Bagley was burning some brush. The fire damaged some fence owned by Brian Dunne and Brian Schwager.

Maquoketa firefighters were at the scene for about an hour while Andrew firefighters remained at the scene for about an hour and 40 minutes.

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Phone: (563) 652-2441 • Toll-Free (800) 747-7377
FAX (563) 652-6094
E-Mail - mspress@mspress.net
Website: www.maqnews.com

Office hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday

Official Newspaper: Jackson County, Cities of Maquoketa,
Andrew, Baldwin, Monmouth, Delmar and Andrew, Delwood and
Maquoketa Community School Districts

PUBLICATION DATES
The Maquoketa Sentinel-Press (USPS 589-540) is published
semiweekly on Wednesday and Saturday by Maquoketa
Newspapers Inc., 108 W. Quarry St., Maquoketa, Iowa 52060-
2244. Periodicals postage paid at Maquoketa, Iowa 52060-9998.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Maquoketa Sentinel-
Press, 108 W. Quarry St., Maquoketa, Iowa 52060-2244.

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Jackson and adjoining Iowa counties: \$50 year or \$35 for 6
months
Elsewhere in Iowa and adjoining states: \$65 year or \$42 for 6
months
Remainder of United States: \$72 year or \$45 for 6 months

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BRIEFLY

2016 bald eagle days slated

Winter around the Mississippi River provides ample opportunities to glimpse the national symbol of freedom – the bald eagle. Various viewing opportunities are scheduled in the area in January.

■ Clinton Bald Eagle Watch: Saturday

This event is in its 32nd year, providing educational opportunities and family entertainment with bald eagles.

The event includes outdoor viewing at Lock & Dam 13 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., live bird and nature programs at Clinton Community College from 9:45 a.m. to 2 p.m., with exhibits from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

There will be free bus service from the college to the outdoor viewing area. For more information call 815-259-3628

■ Mississippi River Visitor Center on Arsenal Island: Saturdays and Sundays, Jan. 2-Feb. 7, Rock Island, Ill. Hours are 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Reservations are recommended because group size is limited. For more information, contact visitor center staff at 309-794-5338

■ Quad Cities Bald Eagle Days: Jan. 9-10 at the QCCA Expo Center, 2621 Fourth Avenue, Rock Island, Ill.

The event includes numerous exhibitors and wildlife artists and plenty of activities for the family. Hours are 4-8 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. It includes live eagle and bird of prey programs by the World Bird Sanctuary.

For more information, contact the Mississippi River Visitor Center at 309-794-5338 or Arlynn Hartwig at 309-788-2543

■ Dubuque Bald Eagle Watch:

Jan. 16 at the Grand River Center with environmental-themed exhibitors. Outdoor viewing will be available south of Lock and Dam 11 at A.Y. McDonald Park from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Live eagle and bird of prey programs will be presented by the World Bird Sanctuary at 9:30 a.m., 12:30 and 3 p.m., with indoor exhibits from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and trolley rides from Grand River Center to outdoor viewing area

For more information call 563-556-4372 or 563-582-0881.

Knights of Columbus sponsor free throw contest

All boys and girls ages 9 to 14 are invited to participate in the local level of competition for the Knights of Columbus Free Throw Contest. The local competition will be held on Saturday, Jan. 16 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the Maquoketa YMCA.

The Knights of Columbus Free Throw Contest is sponsored annually with the winners progressing through local, district and state completion. All boys and girls 9 to 14 are eligible to participate and will compete in respective age divisions. Parental consent will be required.

For additional information contact Bernie Nie at (563) 652-4589 or Dennis Ihrig at (563) 652-3079.

Nominations open for Friends of Agriculture

The Maquoketa Area Chamber of Commerce Agriculture Committee and Maquoketa Rotary Club seek nominations for the annual Friends of Agriculture awards.

The awards recognize outstanding contributions of men and women of all ages in agriculture in Jackson County and the surrounding area.

Three award categories are:

■ Farmer of the Year: a farmer who is an operator, owner or both

■ Agri-business: an agri-business person, including labor and management entries

■ Public service: a public service person in agriculture, including public relations, teachers, journalists or public officials

Selection will be based on contributions to agriculture at home and abroad; character qualifications such as integrity and initiative; and community involvement such as family, church and service club activity.

Previous nominees will be reconsidered.

Nomination forms are available at the Chamber office in Maquoketa and on the chamber's website. Return nominations to the chamber office by 4 p.m. Jan. 22.

Awards will be presented at 12:30 p.m. Feb. 4 at the KMAQ Farm and Home Show.



MSP photo by Kelly Gerlach

Hannah Davison, new soil conservation technician with the Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District, compares data on her computer with that on maps of a piece of land in the county.

Techs dig into conservation

By KELLY GERLACH

Despite the winter chill that's starting to set in, Hannah Davison and Russ Wolf want nothing more than to work with property owners in the great outdoors.

The two 24-year-olds are the newest soil conservation technicians at the Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District office in Maquoketa.

Davison returned home to start her career with the JSWCD. The daughter of Joel and Renee Davison, she graduated from Maquoketa Community High School in 2009. She studied ag business and ag education at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville then worked as a sales agronomist at a co-op in Wisconsin.

"I wanted to come back to Jackson County, and when I did, this job opened up," said Davison, who started during Thanksgiving week. She works through the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Division of Soil and Water Quality.

"I'm looking forward to getting back to work with farmers. I grew up surrounded by agriculture on our farm. It's not just a job, it's a lifestyle."

Wolf, who is working through the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service, grew up in Dyersville. He graduated from Western Dubuque in 2010 then studied ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville.

After some internships and job opportunities that took him across the state, Wolf said he, too, wanted to work closer to

home.

"I love being outdoors and in the field," Wolf said.

Wolf and Davison's jobs include surveying land and designing waterways, basins and other ways to prevent soil erosion while protecting water quality.

"Landowners can contact our office with their resources concerns," said Lori Schnoor with the JSWCD. "If they have concerns, Hannah and Russ will go out, look at the land and provide ideas for best management practices. They'll work with the landowners to develop a conservation management plan to help the landowner meet their goals."

Schnoor said many of the local district's projects involve water projects, "concentrating its flow because it can cause erosion pretty quickly." Grade stabilization structures, waterways and basins assist conservation efforts.

"Our goal is to keep the soil in its original place," Schnoor said. "We'd like to see the field covered year round, that's why we've always promoted no-till practices and cover crops."

"Helping people help the land is the NRCS motto."

Wolf, who started the job in October, has a head start on Davison.

"I've been out on properties examining fall construction projects. I've checked on four or five of the structures," Wolf said.

Any actions toward conservation practices are voluntary, the technicians emphasized. Some financial assistance is available for projects such as stabilization structures,

HANNAH
DAVISONRUSS
WOLF

rotational grazing, season high tunnels, organic initiatives and more.

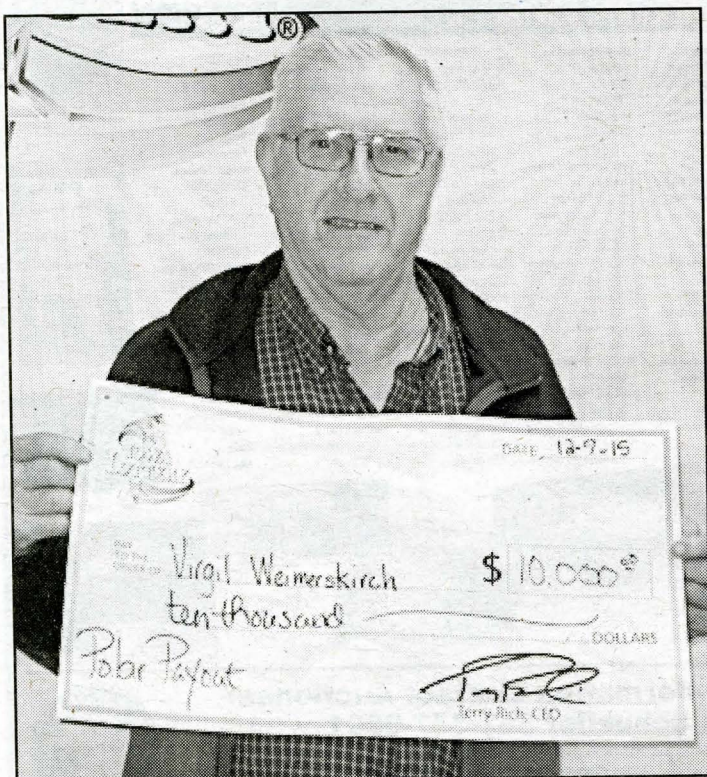
"Jackson County is one of the busiest counties in the state" when it comes to such conservation measures, Schnoor said. A couple of years ago, the state funded \$1.3 million for conservation efforts in the county, helping to complete more than 57 projects.

Because there is no snow on the ground, Wolf said now is still the ideal time for winter visits to survey land and waterways.

"You can see the land because the crops are out," he explained. But when the snow starts piling up, "winter becomes design time indoors."

Landowners in the area are invited to contact Wolf and Davison at the Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District office in Maquoketa.

"I'd like to work with the landowners," Davison said. "Their piece of ground isn't cheap, and we'd like them to keep it there."



VIRGIL WEIMERSKIRCH

LaMotte man wins \$10,000

A store clerk's scratch ticket choice ended up being lucky for a LaMotte man.

That man, Virgil Weimerskirch, stopped at Casey's in Bellevue last Sunday and asked the clerk to get him a scratch ticket. The clerk chose a "Polar Payout" ticket for Weimerskirch, and that ticket ended up winning the third of 11 top prizes of \$10,000 available in the game.

"I told the gal, 'Give me a \$2 ticket.' She says, 'Which one?' I said, 'Whatever you give me,'" Weimerskirch told lottery employees Monday as he claimed his prize at the lottery's regional office in Cedar Rapids.

Weimerskirch who is retired, said he and the clerk knew he won a big prize when the lottery terminal started printing out prize claim forms when he checked his ticket.

"We were both really surprised to see the amount," he said.

Weimerskirch said he immediately shared his good news with his wife, Verla, who was waiting in the car for him.

"I don't think she believed me at first, but after I talked enough she did," he said.

Weimerskirch said his lottery winnings will help pay for an upcoming home remodeling project.