

A LOOK AHEAD-THE NEXT TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

given by Marvin Volkentohm
@ 25th Anniv. Banquet in 1969

My purpose tonight is give you some idea of what the Ida Soil Conservation District hopes to do in the next twenty five years. We have ~~made~~ made a good start in the past years, but we have a long way to go. In addition, new challenges are appearing all the time.

During the past years, much emphasis has been placed on working with the individual landowners and operators. We still intend to do that, but in addition, will stress and promote the advantages of group and community action. I point to the watershed programs that have been completed in our district thus far as examples: Kirkholm and Perion east of Ida Grove, East Aldrich north of Battle Creek, and Pleasant Valley and Quadvalley between Ida Grove and Battle Creek. These five ~~examples~~ are excellent examples of people working together to solve a problem that they couldn't solve individually.

Three fourths of our district is prime territory for watershed project developments, yet less than ~~less~~ 10% of that area has been completed.

Another area where we feel group action would possibly solve a resource problem is in the area of water supply. Community water systems have proven workable in other communities, why not ours?

The district feels the key to any effective conservation effort is land treatment. This simply means applying the appropriate conservation practice to the land in order to reduce soil and water losses to an acceptable level. This will vary with the slope of the land and other factors. This can be carried out by the individual land owner, and no matter what excuses we use, we cannot pass off this stewardship responsibility to someone else. As rowcrop acres continue to increase in our county, the need for land treatment increases too. Big machinery, large farms, and cheap fertilizer are poor excuses for not practicing soil stewardship! From the taxpayers standpoint, it is much cheaper to prevent silt pollution with land treatment than it is to dredge a lake or stream when it begins to silt full.

To give you an idea of what has been done so far with respect to land treatment, here a few basic figures. Approximately 40-45% of the cropland is now being contoured, yet nearly all of it should be. Some 5000 acres in the district are now being stripcropped and an estimate 20-25,000 acres are managed under some form of minimum tillage. But these two practices could provide adequate land treatment to about half the crop acres in the district.

About 700 miles of terraces have been built so far in the district. We need 15 times that many! This is the practice that could do the most good in controlling soil and water losses, yet it is used the least. One mile of terraces will hold a half million gallons of water, the amount needed to grow 60 bushels of corn. The terraces we build today are just as modern and functional as the latest farm tractor, yet too often they are judged on the merits of the 1950 models.

Another area the district hopes to place more emphasis on ~~during~~ in the future is conservation education. As farm population declines, it becomes even more imperative to education non-rural folks to appreciate and help care for our natural resources. Teachers workshops, conservation laboratories, field trips, and better conservation education materials all need to be used more fully in our district. We intend to continue and improve upon the materials and services for use during Soil Stewardship Week observed each year in May. We are indebted to the ministers of Ida county who spread the stewardship theme from their pulpits during that time.

Our soil is our basic commodity-- it serves us best when we manage it properly. To that end, the district's objective is to have completed a standard soil in the next 10-12 years. In addition to being the best basis for judging a soil's productivity and worth, a soil survey information is the most accurate method for determining a fair and equitable rural property tax.

A more recent goal of the conservation district in Iowa is to bring cities and towns into their boundaries. When conservation districts were first conceived, people felt erosion was simply a rural problem. Today we know different. Building sites are more vulnerable to erosion than the corn field across the fence. Consequently rural and urban folks have similar problems and concerns, why shouldn't we work together to solve them?

As you can see, we have just begun the fight-- there is much left to do. One manⁿ said "We have a thin layer of soil, a little rain, some atmosphere-- what we do with it is up to us." There hinges the prosperity of a great county, a great state, and a great nation. We ask your help in our effort to keep our soil productive and our environment livable .