



TIMES

Friday, September 19, 1986, Vinton, Iowa
Section B, 12 Pages

Soil Conservation

1986 Special Edition



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- ★ Reserve Program
- ★ Essay Winner

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Conservation Incentives

1985 Farm Bill threatens loss of eligibility for programs for misuse of highly erodible lands

By BRAD HICKS
Times Editor

VINTON — The food Security Act of 1985, better known as the 1985 Farm Bill, contains strong incentives for soil conservation planning and implementation. Non-compliance will deny farmers benefits of some U.S. Department of Agriculture farm programs, according to Jim Brown, District Conservationist, whose offices are here.

Interim rules regulating future cropping of highly erodible cropland and wetlands were implemented June 25. Producers who fail to meet the interim rules will be ineligible for commodity price support and other program payments, disaster payments, crop insurance under Farm Crop Insurance Act, Farmers Home Administration loans, farm storage facility loans, and other farm program benefits.

Non-compliance will deny farmers benefits of some U.S. Department of Agriculture farm programs.

Future cropping practices on highly erodible land will fall under either the conservation compliance or the sodbuster provisions. Land cropped at least one year during 1981-85 will be considered under the conservation compliance provision. Land not cropped during 1981-85, including long term hay meadows, pastures, and woodlands, will be evaluated under the sodbuster provision. Cropping of recently converted wetland will be governed by the

swamp buster provisions.

Every county in Iowa has some highly erodible land or wetlands that will be affected by this legislation. In Benton County, Brown estimates nearly 250,000 acres are affected pending the final list of soil types.

In Iowa, the Soil Conservation Service calculations show 8.2 million acres of existing cropland and 2.7 million acres of long-term hay, pasture, or woodlands are

classified as erodible. Iowa has an additional estimated 150,000 acres of wetlands that also fall under those provisions.

Brown says each soil type is assigned an erosion potential based on rainfall, soil characteristics, and length and steepness of slope. Each also has a "tolerable" soil erosion rate, or T. Soil erosion below the T value is considered negligible.

Sodbuster and conservation policies designate highly erodible soils as those with erosion potential eight times its T value. Most soils in Iowa with greater than 8 percent slope and soils with six percent slope and slope length of 150 feet or longer, are included. The Soil Conservation office has classification lists of all soils in the

INCENTIVES

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Conservation Reserve Program

Benton County has had 30 entries in three sign-up periods, entering 1,443 acres

By BRAD HICKS
Times Editor

VINTON—Thirty landowners in Benton County have bid into the Conservation

Reserve Program, started early this year, according to figures from Jim Brown, District Soil Conservationist.

The program was started to protect the nation's natural resource base by removing highly erodible cropland from production. Removal will reduce sedimentation in streams and enhance

wildlife habitat. Another goal of the program is to increase commodity prices received by farmers curbing production.

There have been three sign-up periods this year, with the last one netting better results in Benton County.

In the first two periods, according to Brown, 600 acres in Benton County (116 acres of it trees), were entered into the program. In the last sign-up period, which ended in August, another 843 acres were put into the program.

The program works this way: annual rental payments of up to \$50,000 per year in cash or commodities will be made to farm owners or operators who enter a 10-year contract to convert highly erodible cropland to permanent vegetative cover. A 50 percent cost-share payment will also be made to participants for establishment of the cover.

The designated area will be devoted to a

conserving use during the life of the contract. Harvesting, grazing, or other commercial use of forage is not allowed. Maintenance measures, such as weed control, will be required. The area may be managed for wildlife habitat and thinning, pruning, and other maintenance of tree plantings may be conducted if specified in the conservation plan.

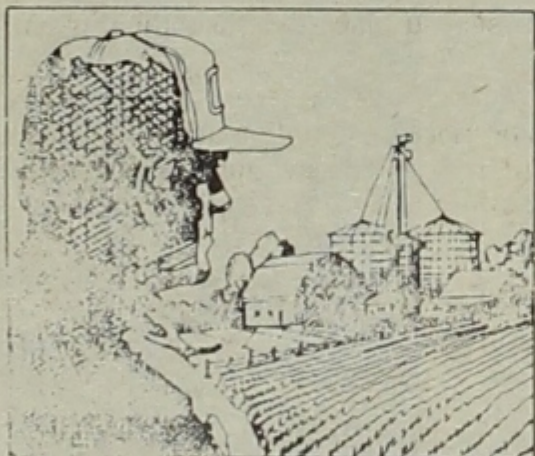
The minimum area to be signed up must have at least 10 acres, unless an entire field, with less than 10 acres, is involved.

A farmer must have owned the land for at least three years and may put all or part of fields in the program.

For other details on the Conservation Reserve Program and to check on the next sign-up periods, contact Brown at the Soil Conservation Office.

A federal limit on the amount of acres being accepted into the program has been established.

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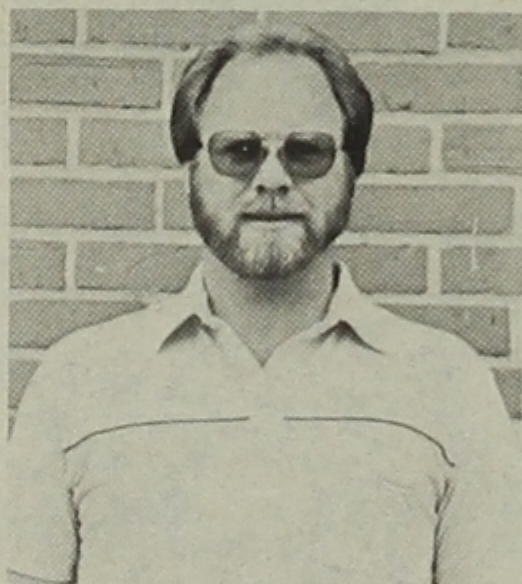
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Essay Winner

Laurie Wichman is two-time winner this year

By SHARON ALMQUIST
Times Staff Writer

VAN HORNE — When Laurie Wichman put pen to paper last spring in her high school English class, she had no idea that her thoughts on soil conservation would be so well-received.

But Wichman — an 18-year-old college freshman majoring in pre-pharmacy at the University of Iowa — ended up a two-time winner with her essay on "Soil and Water — Our Lifeline."

The daughter of Marcia Wichman of rural Van Horne and the late Edward Wichman, the 1986 Benton Community high school graduate's essay was one of approximately 132 entries submitted in the annual Benton County Soil Conservation Contest held here this spring.

Wichman took top honors in the senior division, while Ryan Karpisek, the son of Larry and Jean Karpisek of rural Dysart, placed first in the junior division.

Both received prizes — Wichman's courtesy of Eden Mutual Insurance of Vinton, and Karpisek's courtesy of the District — and both essays were then sent on to regional competition.

Sponsored by the Ladies Auxiliary of the Iowa Association of Soil Conservation District Commissioners and Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company, Wichman was named the senior winner in the Region

"It was just one of those deals where I turned it in and didn't think too much about it."

7 Soil Conservation Contest — which included 12 Iowa counties — and will be awarded \$40 for her efforts.

Her essay, which was judged on its "originality, aptness of thought and accuracy of information," was then advanced to the state level where it still awaits judging.

All of this comes as somewhat of a surprise to Wichman, who doesn't claim to be an expert on soil and water conservation.

Last semester, "everybody in college-prep English wrote an essay," Wichman

ESSAY

Continued on page 4



LAURIE WICHMAN

Break out the brushes: time for soil conservation poster contest

VINTON—Break out the crayons, paint and magic markers. It's that time of year again.

It's time for the 1986 Soil Conservation Poster Contest.

The poster contest is open to all students residing in Benton County in grades 3 through 6. Division I is for third and fourth graders, and Division II is for students in

grades 5 and 6.

Posters may be done in any type of media — paint, crayon, markers, ink and so on — and can be up to 22" x 28" in size. Themes may be taken from any area of soil conservation.

All entries must include the person's name, address, phone number, name of

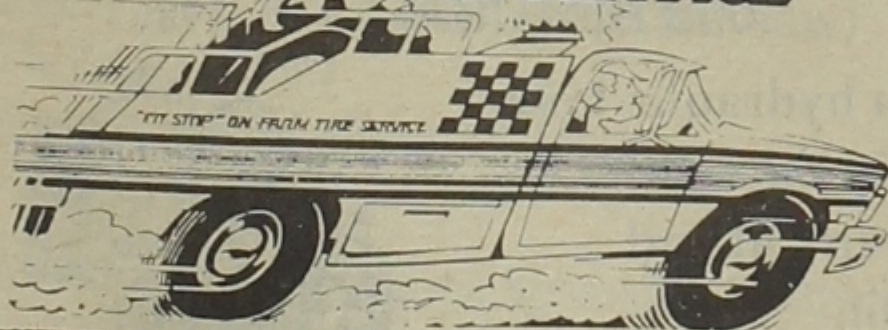
school, and division number on the back, and should be turned into the Soil Conservation District Office no later than November 5, 1986. The office address is 1701 Second Avenue, Vinton, IA, 52349, and is located across from the Benton County Fairgrounds.

The posters will be judged on originality, neatness and appropriateness of themes.

Judging will take place November 14, and cash prizes will be awarded for each of the division winners as follows: first place — \$10; second place — \$7.50; third place — \$5.

For more information about the contest, call the Soil Conservation District Office at 472-2161.

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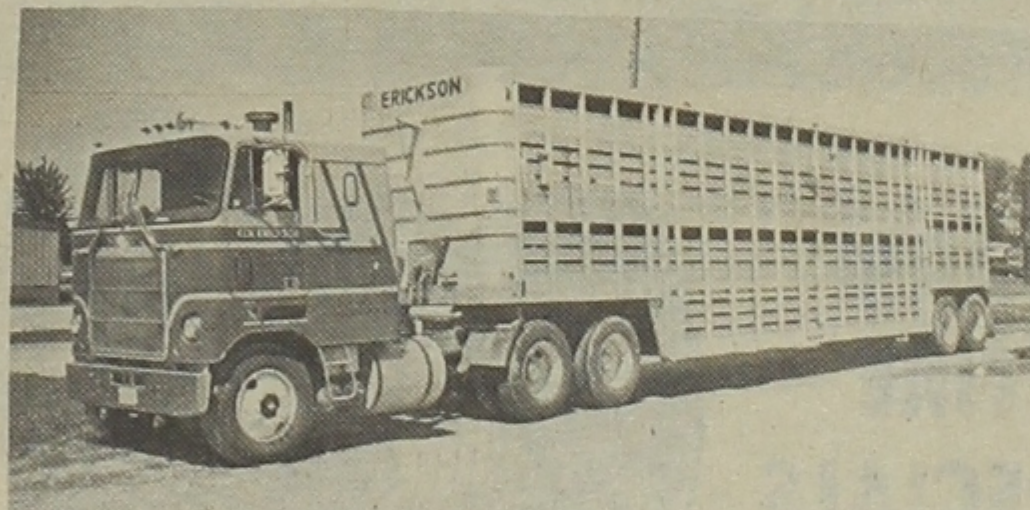
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KEN ERICKSON

Vinton

Essay

Continued from page 3

said. "It was one of those deals where I turned it in and didn't think too much

about it."

But that's not to say that she didn't have any background on the subject.

Originally from Blairstown, Wichman and her family — including her 17-year-old brother, Mark — have lived south of Van Horne for a number of years. Although they didn't farm, "we've had problems with our water — our wells and things like

that," she said.

Besides, it's hard growing up in a rural area such as this and not be aware of problems friends and neighbors have with their soil and water, she added.

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"Soil and Water: Our Lifeline"

By Laurie A. Wichman

Soil and water are truly our lifelines. Every ounce of food we consume can be directly or indirectly traced back to these two resources. Yet Americans seem to feel that these two natural resources are inexhaustable and will remain forever pure. However, in an agricultural area such as Iowa where the quality of our soil and water so greatly affect our livelihoods, we are feeling the consequences of careless attitudes. As a member of the rural community, I realize that we must become better stewards of our lifelines, soil and water, if we and future generations are to enjoy Iowa's current agricultural status and lifestyle.

Iowa is slowly, but surely, losing its number one natural resource — its soil. Half of our topsoil has been washed or blown away. Man needs only 12 years to lose, to waste, one inch of topsoil due to careless farming and industrial practices. Mother Nature needs 250 to 1,000 years to replenish that single inch.

In the face of these alarming figures, one would think that we are taking great measures to alleviate this situation. Sadly, this is not the case. Only about one-third of Iowa's cropland is adequately protected from erosion.

Disregarding statistics, I see the evidence of soil erosion year-round. White winter snow is topped by black topsoil. Hard spring rains produce snaky silt rivers in fields. Early summer winds cause billowing dust clouds. Fall plowing renews the vicious cycle. I believe that we must increase the utilization of contour plowing, terracing and conservation tillage to break this cycle.

Our water supply is another lifeline that must be carefully preserved. However, from huge chemical leaks into water supplies like the tragedy at Love Canal to individual rural well contaminations, this resource has also been abused. Iowa State University's Extension Service states: "Of nearly 10,000 private water supplies tested in Iowa in 1981, 40 percent showed unsafe bacterial content, and 20 percent (showed unsafe) nitrate (levels)." It is obvious that water quality should be a concern in Iowa.

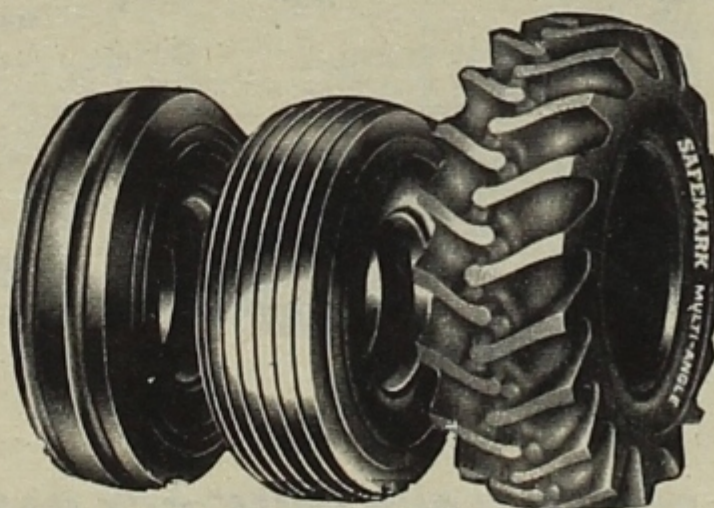
I have felt the detriments of modern farming methods on water purity on a personal level. My family's shallow well is contaminated with coliform bacteria and nitrates. They are both likely related to animal waste and chemical fertilizer. We now must distill our water. Many other rural families face problems with chemical contamination. The use of pesticides and other farm chemicals should decrease to protect our drinking water.

Soil and water must be guarded closely to ensure their availability to future generations. Our precious lifelines must be maintained if our children are to enjoy the Iowa way of life.

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The Soil Conservation Office

Conservationists help landowners and land users solve resource management problems on local level

By BRAD HICKS
Times Editor

VINTON—The Soil Conservation Office here is no different than the others located around the state and around the nation. It is nothing more than people helping people.

The conservationists help landowners and land users solve resource management problems. Typical assistance includes erosion control planning, water management planning, soil interpretation for site development planning, farm management and home

site evaluations.

Iowa Soil Conservation Districts coincide with boundaries with the exception of Pottawattamie County, which is divided into an east and west district, thus forming the 100 SCDs in 99 counties.

East district is government by five commissioners, each from a different township within the district. The commissioners are elected in the general election on a nonpartisan ballot. They serve for staggered six year terms and serve without pay.

The Soil Conservation District:

—Provides technical assistance in planning, design, adherence to specifications and maintenance of soil conservation practices.

—Provides resource inventory and evaluation data to local government units that have resource planning responsibilities.

—Provides up-to-date education material and programs for classroom use and through the mass media.

—Administers state cost-share funds where the state shares the cost of conservation practices with the owner.

—Coordinates soil, water, and related resource programs within the district and encourages maximum coordination of conservation programs.

—Helps plan and treat cropland, pastureland, woodland, and wildlife habitat in cooperation with other government agencies.

—Establishes and administers soil loss limit regulations on land within the district and classifies land in the district on the basis of topography, soil characteristics, and other factors affecting soil erosion.

Incentives

Continued from page 2

county. Potential erodibility does not take into account existing crop management or conservation practices.

Wetlands are soil areas covered with standing water or saturated most of the year, and which support water-loving plants.

Conservation compliance and sodbuster policies require farmers who request certain USDA farm program benefits, and who are farming or plan to farm highly erodible land, to apply locally approved conservation plans. The provisions will have no effect on farmers who are already using an approved conservation plan.

Conservation compliance includes a grace period for those who are not using a conservation plan. Farmers who are currently producing agricultural commodities on highly erodible land have until January 1, 1990, to develop and begin to apply a conservation plan. They have until Jan. 1, 1995, to have the plan fully in effect. If a soil survey is unavailable, producers

have until two years after a survey is made to be subject to the policy.

SCS personnel will help farmers develop and apply conservation plans and help local conservation districts review them. Farmers with highly erodible land or wetlands have several options:

—They can produce agricultural commodities on the highly erodible land without using an approved conservation plan or produce agricultural commodities on newly converted wetland and lose their eligibility for USDA programs.

—They can develop and apply conservation plans that will reduce excessive erosion on highly erodible cropland, but not convert existing wetlands, and retain their eligibility for covered USDA programs.

—They may apply to enroll their highly erodible land in the Conservation Reserve if they meet program criteria.

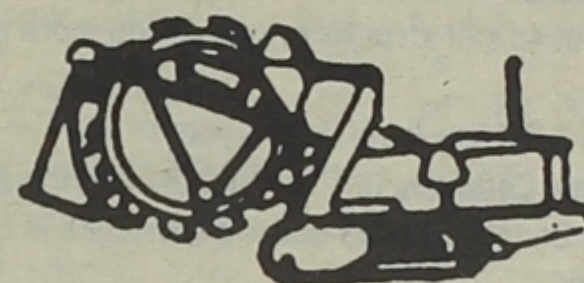
To find out how these policies affect you, visit the Benton County SCS Office, across from the Benton County Fairgrounds on 2nd Avenue in Vinton.

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CONSERVATION PAYS ACCORDING TO FARM MANAGERS OF IOWA PRO AG CORP.

The Farm Management Co. assumed management of the Virginia Gay Hospital Farm operated by Gerald Irwin in 1984. All row crops are now planted on the contour and a system of no tillage was used in 1986 to help control erosion. Waterways in 60 acres of the farm were drained in the spring of 1986 to facilitate contouring.

Before the conservation practices were applied the soil loss was 14 tons per acre per year. After the practices were applied soil loss was reduced to 2 tons per acre per year. Allowable soil loss on this farm is 5 tons per acre per year.

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Sediment Damage

"Off-Site Costs of Erosion" estimates sediment damage at \$47 million a year

AMES — Soil erosion on farm fields is costly because of lowered agricultural production, but the eroded soil that is dumped downstream may be even more costly, an Iowa study shows.

The study, called "Off-Site Costs of Erosion," estimates sediment damage in Iowa at more than \$47 million a year.

"We're looking at costs of cleaning

sediment out of drainageways and road ditches, loss of recreation value in our streams and lakes, extra costs for treating drinking water — costs that we can get some kind of estimate on," according to Mike Nethery, Soil Conservation Service state conservationist.

The SCS heads an interagency team that began gathering cost data in 1985.

"We've always known there were downstream costs associated with soil erosion," Nethery said, "but this is the first time we've made a concentrated effort to get specific damage estimates."

The Center for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) at Iowa State University gathered cost data from county engineers, state agencies, city water treatment officials and others, and is analyzing and projecting estimates statewide.

Preliminary results estimate the annual damage at more than \$47 million: \$22 million to transportation; \$10 million to recreation, fish and wildlife; \$1 million to municipal water supplies; and more than \$13 million to agricultural land because of sediment buildup and blocked drainage.

"But those estimates tell only part of the story," Nethery said. "They represent current annual expenses to ease the problems, not eliminate them. In most cases, at least twice as much should be spent to correct the problems."

Nethery said road culvert cleanout by counties is done on a priority basis. Only the most severe cases are addressed.

The \$47 million, mostly public funds, is more than is being spent each year to control soil erosion in Iowa. Federal, state and county cost-share funds are about \$15 million a year, or a third of the amount being spent trying to ease sediment problems.

"Sediment damage affects each of us," Nethery said. "Money is a concern because it usually takes tax dollars to ease

Three seats open on Benton County Soil Conservation Board

By BRAD HICKS
Times Editor

VINTON— Three seats on the Benton County Soil Conservation District Board of Commissioners will be up for grabs this November.

The terms of two commissioners, Paul Anderson and Stan Geiken, will expire January 1, 1987. In addition, a third vacancy has been created by the resignation of Dennis Duello.

The individual chosen to fill the unexpired term will serve until January 1, 1988, rather than the regular six-year term.

Individuals elected in the upcoming general election will join incumbents Lee Schrader and Maynard Krug in guiding the overall soil and water conservation program in the county.

For more information about the positions and how to file to get on the November ballot, contact the Benton County Soil Conservation Office at 472-2161.

the problems. But there are also aesthetic problems with sediment. We don't want to swim in a muddy lake or stream, or even picnic by one. As our lakes fill with sediment, we lose the capacity of the lake. The problems go on and on."

The study, to be completed later this year, details the kinds of damage caused by sediment and estimates dollar amounts for specific problems.

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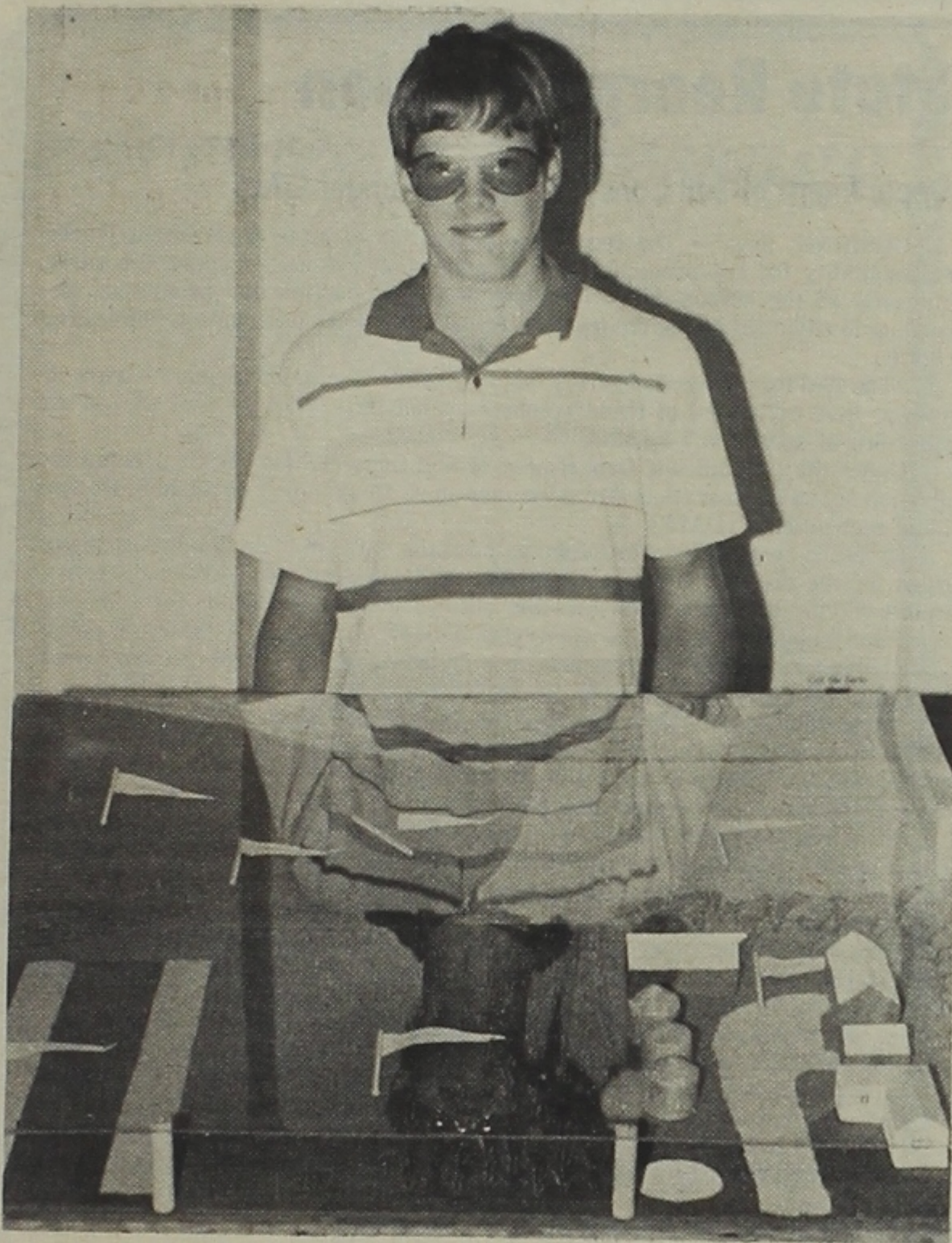
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RYAN KARPISEK and his display.

Champion Display

Ryan Karpisek is 1986 blue ribbon winner

By SHARON ALMQUIST
Times Staff Writer

DYSART—Ryan Karpisek probably knows more about soil conservation than most kids his age.

But when you've got the Champion Benton County soil conservation display and an award of excellence to go with it, as well as a blue ribbon from the 1986 Iowa State Fair, that's to be expected.

Karpisek, the 13-year-old son of Larry and Jean Karpisek of rural Dysart, took all those honors this year with his "Conservation Farm."

A member of the Monroe Happy Hustlers for the last three years, Karpisek came up with the idea for his soil conservation display from a science project he did in the 6th grade.

After expanding on his original idea, the Dysart-Geneseo 8th grade student ended up with several researched reports and a large model farm depicting the various types of soil conservation — including strip cropping, crop rotation, no-till, windbreaks, broadbase terraces, grass backslope terraces and waterways.

"I worked on it all winter long when I felt like working on it," Karpisek said. But the last couple of months were especially busy for him, as he finished typing his papers and building the farm.

But the 4-H project wasn't the only soil conservation research he did this year. In the spring, Karpisek entered the annual Benton County Soil Conservation Contest

"A farmer has to know what to do to help keep his soil in place and how to control water problems."

in the junior division, writing on the topic of "Soil and Water — Our Lifeline."

He took first place with his essay at the district level, and second overall in the Region 7 competition.

Karpisek — who has a twin brother, Brian, a younger brother Chad, 9, and a younger sister, Kelli, 6 — has more than a passing interest in soil conservation. That's because he's wants to pursue a career in farming.

As a farmer, "conservation is a big part of your farming practice," Karpisek wrote in his Conservation Farm report. "A farmer has to know what to do to help keep his soil in place and how to control water problems."

"To save soil he needs to know whether his land needs terraces," he continued.

DISPLAY

Continued on page 8

Tree Farm System

Joining takes less work than you think, says Meigs

VINTON—Joining the Iowa Tree Farm System requires less work than most woodland producers may think, according to Bill Meigs, Benton County Extension Director.

A tree farm is woodland managed by an owner for the continuous production of forest products including broadleaved and evergreen trees.

Tree growing areas provide watershed protection, better food and habitat for wildlife and opportunities for outdoor recreation, according to Paul Wray, Iowa State University extension forester.

Several standards must be met for Tree Farm qualification. Meigs said any woodland owner who starts implementing wise management decisions now can qualify in a few years.

Private or small public ownership is required. The land must be managed for growth and repeated harvest of forest crops. The land must be completely protected from grazing and adequately protected from fire, insects, and disease.

The minimum tree farm area is three acres for evergreens and five acres for hardwood stands.

Certification follows inspection by a professional forester assigned by the Iowa Tree Farm Committee. Intent and performance of the woodlot owner is important.

Wray said tree farming is not a get-rich-quick proposition, but income from forest land can be doubled or tripled by good forest management under the Tree Farm concept.

Forest products capital gains income rate is only 40 percent of the rate of ordinary income. Wray said tree farms increase the property value, wildlife populations and protect streams.

Wray said tree farmers can qualify for the forest reserve law, making forested land property tax exempt.

More information about becoming a tree farmer is available from Extension Forestry, 251 Bessey Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

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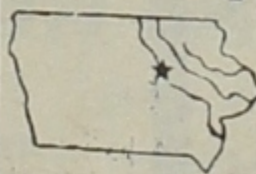


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Display

Continued from page 7

"This helps to control erosion. He learns that rotating crops helps build up the soil and helps prevent insects and diseases to grow in his soil. He also finds that strip-cropping helps to stop wind and soil erosion."

In addition, "He finds that windbreaks are really necessary to help protect farmland."

"When a farmer has water problems he finds that his waterways may end up in a creek or pond. He also finds that tiling helps control water. This is a good practice in low-lying areas to help from flooding his crop ground."

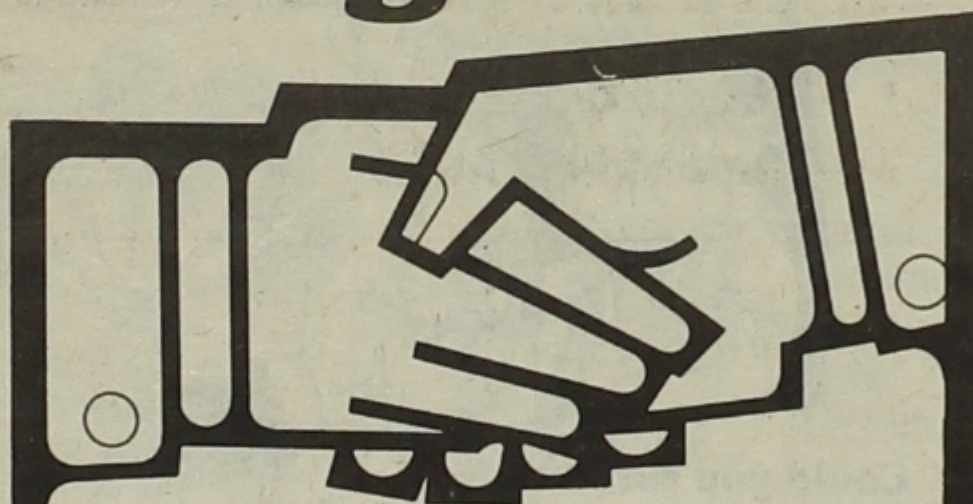
"A farmer needs to study his own soil and water problems and then set out to improve his farming operation," Karpisek wrote. "In the long run, he will benefit from these practices."

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State Reorganization

Department of Soil Conservation now under DALS

CUSHING, Iowa — The recent reorganization of state government places responsibility for the protection of soil and water resources under the same authority as the responsibility for agricultural production and promotion, according to Elvie Dreeszen, chairperson of the State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC).

"The 1986 Iowa Code recognizes, as conservation-minded farmers have long known, that protection of these resources must be a vital part of the entire agricultural operation," he said.

Under the 1986 bill, the Department of Soil Conservation (DSC) became the division of soil conservation within the new Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (DALS).

Dreeszen, who farms near Cushing, leads the SSCC in making administrative rules for the division of soil conservation and advising the division on policy matters. The division administers the state cost-share program for soil conservation, supports the 100 soil conservation districts, assists the water resource district boards (formerly the conservancy district boards) in water management and regulates coal mining in Iowa, among other duties.

"According to the 1986 revision of the Iowa Code," Dreeszen said, "it is the legislature's policy to integrate the conservation of soil and water resources into the production of agricultural commodities to ensure the long-term protection of the soil and water resources of the state of Iowa."

In addition to the division of soil conservation, the new DALS includes a broad range of agricultural activities, from commodity support sections to the state fair, brucellosis testing and the Agricultural Development Authority, among other responsibilities.

Dreeszen said this year's reorganization marks a significant development in Iowa soil and water conservation, noting that other major changes occurred in 1939 and 1970.

In 1939 the Iowa Legislature passed the Soil Conservation Districts Law and created the SSCC. Iowa was one of the first states in the country to form soil conservation districts (SCDs). Today, Iowa's 100 SCDs are led by 500 locally elected district soil conservation commissioners.

"By 1970 agriculture and state cost-share programs to support soil conservation work were expanding rapidly," Dreeszen said. The DSC was formed that year to administer soil and water conservation programs carried out by the districts. The SSCC continued its policy-making role.

The governor continues to appoint the SSCC's nine voting members for six-year terms. Dreeszen said reorganization gained the committee one new voting member, a farmer-operator of a tree farm. Ex officio SSCC committee members include the director of the Cooperative Extension Service and the director of the Department of Natural Resources, or their representatives. Committee advisers are USDA and Iowa County Engineers' Association representatives.

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Secretary's Message

By ROBERT H. LOUNSBERRY,
Iowa Secretary of Agriculture

Soil and Water Conservation Week, Sept. 14-20, 1986, is a good time to remind ourselves that Iowa's economic well-being depends directly upon the protection of its soil and water resources.

Iowa's role as food producer for the world depends upon the presence of that one rich layer of fertile topsoil. Likewise, the health of Iowans and the state's economic development depend upon a safe and viable water supply.

If we continue to lose an estimated 10 tons of topsoil per acre per year through intensive rowcropping or unprotected soils, that layer of topsoil will quickly disappear — and so will the productivity of our farms. If we continue to permit the contamination of underground water supplies, 90 percent of our drinking water will become unusable.

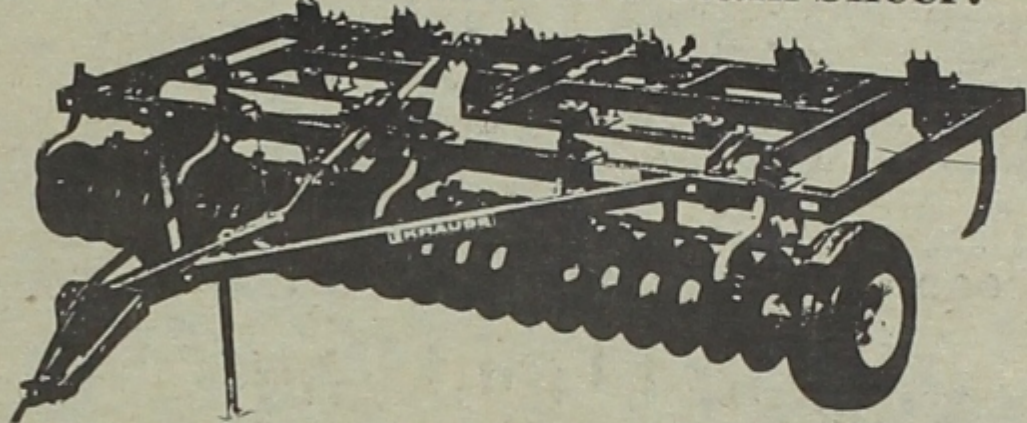
More public awareness and economic support are necessary for Iowa to develop and maintain long term soil and water conservation programs. Information and technical help for using soil conservation practices and systems are available through Iowa's 100 soil conservation district offices. The six water resource district boards of the major watershed areas can help coordinate solutions to water management problems.

But the task of conserving our soil and water resources now and for the future belongs to more than farmers. It belongs to all who benefit from Iowa's agricultural bounty and to all who use water. Public support is needed from a broad range of consumers and taxpayers who understand the importance of protecting the food and water supply, and are willing to help pay the price for their protection.

Farmers may be a minority, but the majority depend on them for food, fiber and maintenance of major land and water resources.

Today, approximately 50 percent of Iowa cropland is farmed with some kind of protective measure against erosion. With increased public awareness and support for soil and water conservation, we want to see the other 50 percent — and all groundwater — protected in time to preserve Iowa's real wealth, its soil and water.

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Protection for groundwater

AMES — "We tend to forget about groundwater because it is hidden below ground, but it is one of Iowa's most valuable basic natural resources," according to Tom Glanville, Iowa State University Extension agricultural engineer.

— More than 99 percent of the water used for livestock production and rural domestic needs comes from wells.

— Wells supply more than 80 percent of the water used for irrigation in Iowa.

— More than 80 percent of water delivered by Iowa's municipal water systems comes from the ground.

— Excluding electrical power generator stations, which rely heavily on surface water, 70 percent of the water pumped by industrial water supplies in Iowa comes from the ground.

Glanville said groundwater is Iowa's most widely used water resource because of its high quality and accessibility.

Unlike surface runoff that flows directly into lakes or streams, rainfall must percolate through several feet of soil before reaching groundwater table. As water migrates slowly through tiny soil pores, contaminants such as silt, algae and bacteria become trapped in the soil. This natural filtering process makes groundwater a high-quality water resource requiring less treatment than water from lakes or streams.

Groundwater is considerably more accessible, he said. Low-capacity wells that meet household, farm and small business needs can be drilled at most locations in Iowa.

Higher capacity wells, suitable for municipal and industrial water demands, have been successfully constructed throughout most of Iowa except the southern and western areas where extreme depth and high mineral content make high capacity wells costly to construct and maintain.

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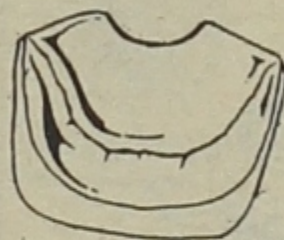
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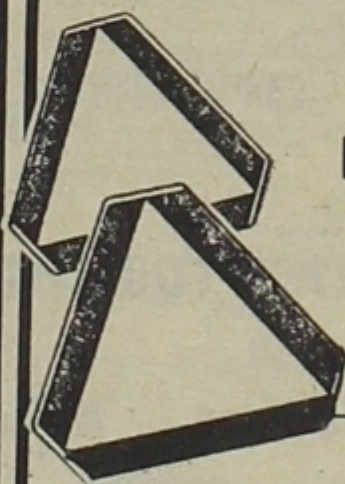
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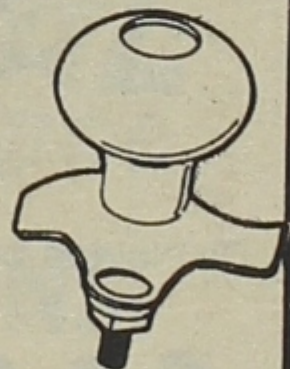
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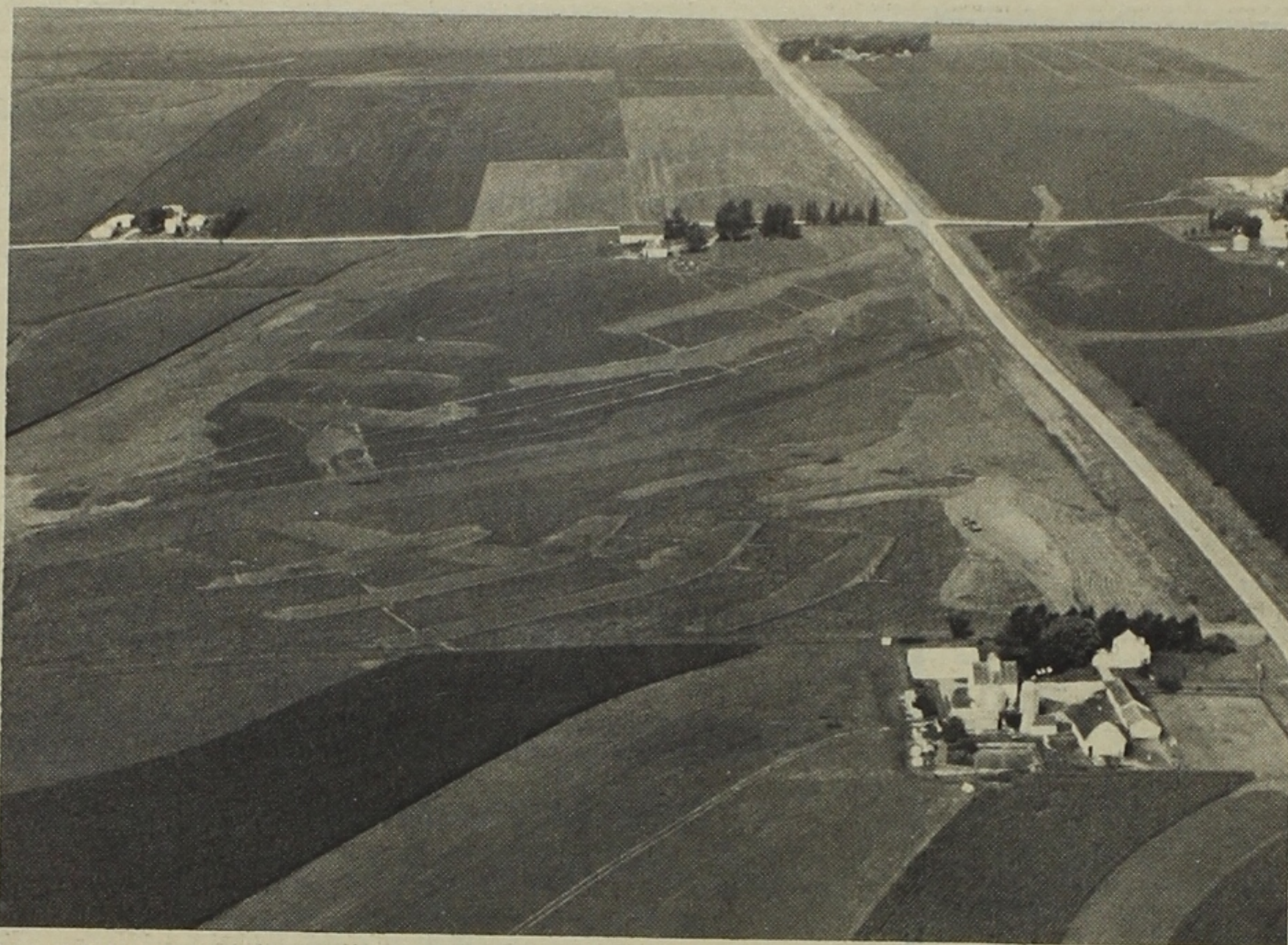
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An aerial view of the Sage property distinctly shows where terraces are being and have been constructed.

Sages add terraces

Terraces save water, soil, and headaches

By FAITH BROWN
Times Staff Writer

NEWHALL— Whenever it rains or snows the water is not the only thing that disappears, along with it goes the topsoil that farmers use to grow the crops we eat.

Erosion has been a problem for farmers for hundreds of years. Erosion has stripped half of the original 16 inches from Iowa's sloping farmland in the last century. The remaining topsoil will be gone in another hundred years if the present rate of erosion continues.

Terracing is just one of the ways used by modern farmers to combat the erosion problem.

The primary use of a terrace system is to reduce sheet erosion on cropland fields. The runoff caught can give a real boost in dry years and can reduce lowland flooding in wet years.

Terracing itself comes in three forms: broad base, grass backslope and narrow base.

Terraces can be built in a variety of designs to fit most fields and farming operations.

On unprotected slopes farmers are

TERRACES

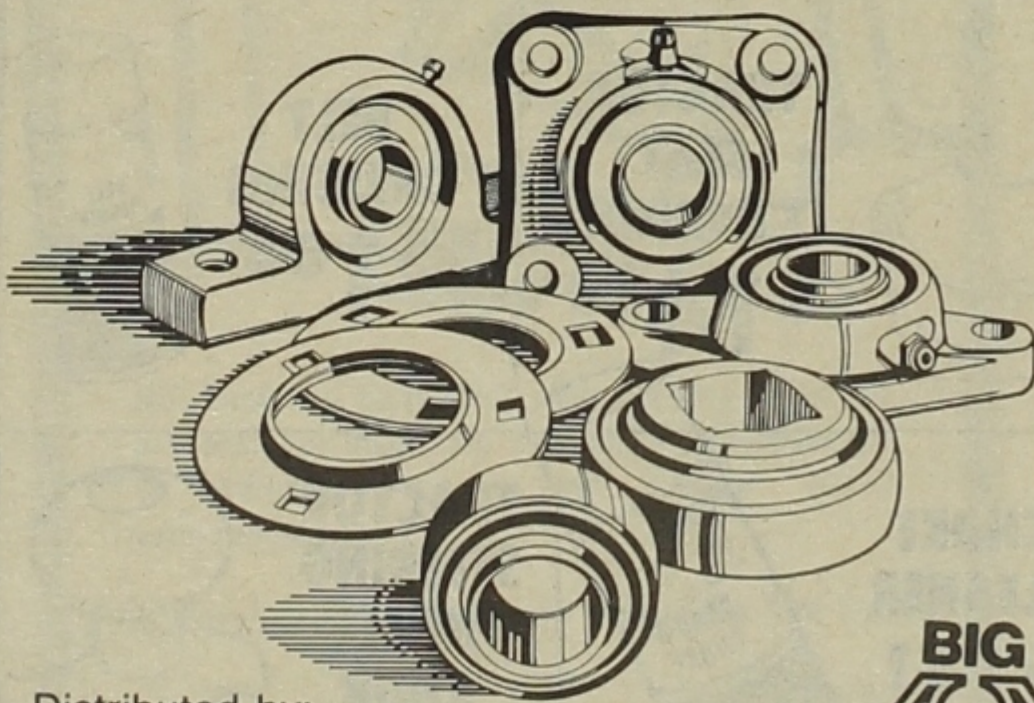
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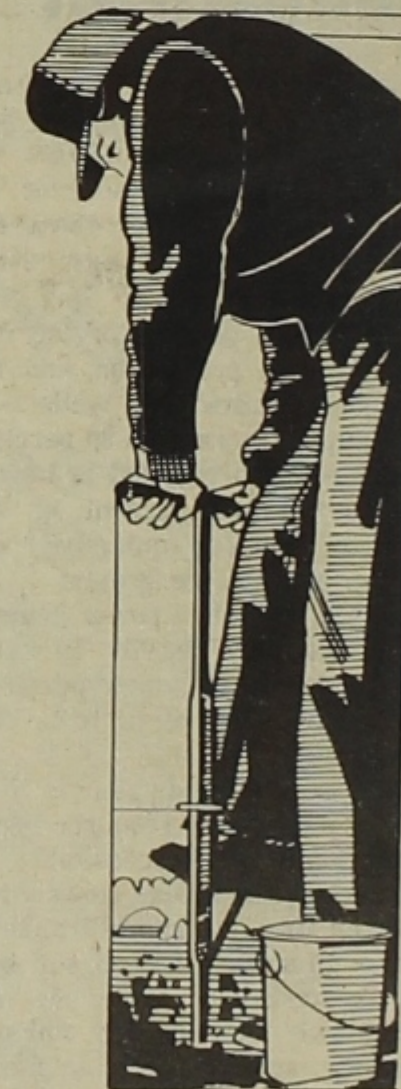
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Terraces

Continued from page 10

losing twice as much soil as the amount of corn produced each year.

One area farmer, Tim Sage, has used the narrow-base terracing system to save the soil on the land he farms near Newhall.

"We decided to go with the narrow-base system because it took more land out of production," said Sage. "The terraces are 12 to 15 wide where the grass backslopes are only about eight feet wide." He added that Lowell Mahr of Vinton had constructed the terraces on the land.

"The terraces keep the soil at the top of the slopes instead of in the valleys," he said. "The terraces break the big slopes into little slopes so the water doesn't have far to go before going down one of the intakes and through the tile."

The narrow base terracing may be built on slopes up to 14 percent. With this system the intake pipes are not out in the cropland and in the way of the tractors.

Moneywise the narrow-base is the lowest cost of the three types and takes the least amount of soil moved during the construction.

According to Sage the narrow-base terrace cost only a \$1 a foot to build. "That doesn't include all the tile and things needed to finish the system."

In the last few years Sage has put over 14,000 feet of land into narrow-base terraces. This year 6,000 feet have been terraced and during the past four years another 8,300 was terraced.

However, on the negative side of this type, the maintenance of narrow-base terracing is more difficult.

But narrow-base has a safety advantage other types don't. Neither the steep foreslope or the backslope are farmed.

All terraces are designed to hold at least two inches of runoff of rain from the

"The terraces keep the soil at the top of the slopes instead of in the valleys."

contributing area.

One of the keys to successful terracing of farmland is the outlets used. The ideal natural outlet consists of dense sod protected from overgrazing or other damage.

On most Iowa soils, water caught by the terrace must drain into a tile outlet or grassed waterway. The terrace channel is graded to the lowest point where water is safely removed.

Of course, on some soils, the soil itself is the only outlet needed. The terrace is built with closed ends and a level channel. Water soaks into the soil fast enough without harming crops planted in the terrace storage area.

Where possible, terraces are built parallel to each other to eliminate point rows and facilitate farming.

Other types of terracing available to area farmers are:

Broad base: This type allows farming over the entire terrace and may be built on slopes up to eight percent.

This type of construction is the most expensive and more soil is moved during

construction. The construction also results in steeper landslopes.

Grass backslope: This form of terrace has a steep backslope which isn't farmed and may be built on slopes up to 18 percent.

The backslope method provides a flatter area to farm. Because of this, construction requires less soil than broadbase.

"There are not that many farms around the county that have terraces," said Sage.

"There are a couple of farms south of Vinton that have terraces and then some more in the southern part of the county

near Hannen Lake.

"That area has been pumped and with the terraces they can be sure that the water will not seep back," he said.

In 1981 when Sage and his father first looked into the idea of terracing there were a number of people looking into it. "When we went up to the ASCS office this year to work on this terracing project ours was really the only major project that the office was working on. I'm sure there were a few others, but I don't think those involved as much land."

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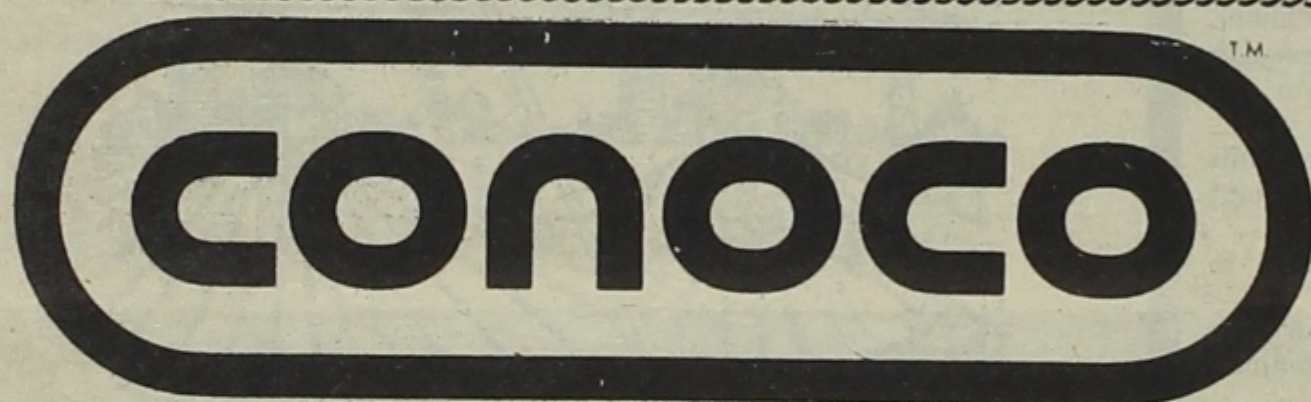
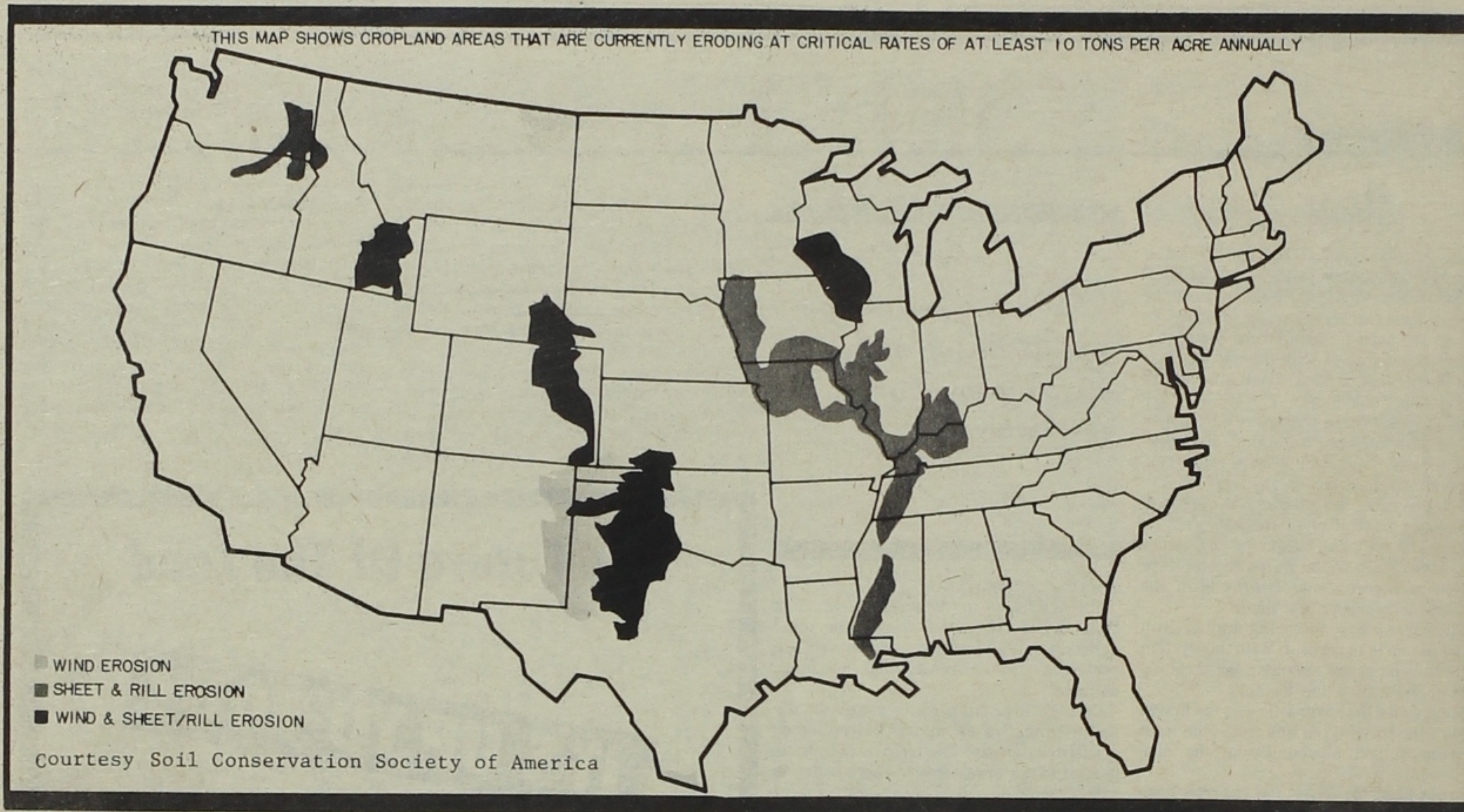
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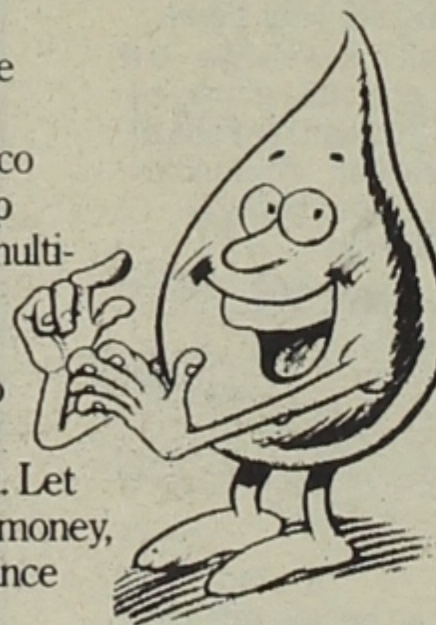


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