

County Experiences Boom

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Davis county is experiencing a boom in watershed activity that has seen one project for \$1-million given federal authorization while two more applications are in the works.

Contracts will be let in early August for the first work on Big Wyacondah Watershed, the \$1-million development that will stretch over about eight years.

Federal funds amounting to about \$800,000 will apply to construction and engineering for structures that will "walk" water off the land, stop gullies and erosion, and preserve productivity.

The difference between the federal allocation and \$1-million is local contributions in the form of easements, land rights,

and individually-applied land treatment practices.

Verle Arnold, work unit conservationist with the local Soil Conservation Service District, said seven stabilization structures (earthen dams which control water run-off and back up pools of 4-6 acres) and a structural waterway are the Big Wyacondah projects on tap for this year. The first year cost, including engineering, is estimated at \$80,000.

Before federal money goes into a project, it must show that benefits outstrip costs. For Big Wyacondah, there will be an estimated \$1.60 returned in benefits for every \$1 spent. Benefits involve savings in road and bridge maintenance, stabil-

izing gullies, removing flood threats, and enabling land once virtually discarded because of flooding to be turned from poor pasture and trees to crop production.

Two other watershed proposals have been launched through the same procedure that resulted in approval of Big Wyacondah — but it's a long road to authorization.

Applications have been sent to the State Soil Conservation Committee for North Wyacondah and Carter Creek watersheds and the committee is expected to make its decision in July on whether to accept or reject either one or both applications.

Assuming both applications

are accepted, the next step would be eventual approval for formulating work plans. The state committee selects projects for planning on the basis of local interest and the land treatment farmers have already applied on an individual basis.

Once plans have been formulated and reviewed by local people, the big step is reached—sending plans to Washington, D. C. for congressional authorization. Approval on that level would bring an appropriation for construction.

Arnold said it is difficult to estimate how long it might be before authorization might be given the Carter and North Wyacondah projects. If all goes well, action on Carter Creek invol-

in Watershed Activity

ving 24,500 acres, might be from 3 to 5-years away.

North Wyacondah presents a problem because it involves 72,000 acres in all, about 50,000 of them in Missouri, meaning both states must be pulled into the picture. Missouri farmers are initiating action there, however, much as Iowa farmers have done here.

Although southwest Iowa got into watershed activity faster than other parts of Iowa, due partly to more need, Davis county paces southeast Iowa in watershed activity. Appanoose is also moving along these lines and one watershed—about 7,000 to 8,000 acres—has been authorized.

The Big Wyacondah involves

36,275 acres in a 19-mile long finger pointing diagonally into Missouri, going between Bloomfield and West Grove.

The eight-year construction program includes two flood water retarding structures, 57 grade stabilization structures, 3.9 miles of stream channel improvement on Little Wyacondah, and 9 acres of structural waterways.

The eight projects this year are confined to the Little Wyacondah area of the watershed.

Following authorization last fall, a move was made to establish a county-wide levy which would permit up to a quarter-mill each year to pay for watershed maintenance. The board of

supervisors agreed to this levy this spring. When other watersheds are authorized and constructed, funds for their maintenance will come from this same source, but millage cannot exceed one-fourth mill.

The Soil Conservation District, in cooperation with watershed officers, have also been contacting land and lien holders to obtain signatures giving easements, land rights, and in some instances applying for water storage permits.

Arnold said cooperation has been good and the only difficulties in obtaining easements and agreements has not been with individuals, but with lien holders such as federal land banks

and insurance companies, where requests seem to get lost in a paper shuffle.

However, he indicated that land owners in Big Wyacondah are going to have to step up participation in land treatment practices. The overall development hinges on measures applied farm-by-farm. In this first year projects have been confined to farms where land treatment practices are virtually completed.

"Farmers planning such practices as terracing and contouring should make application for cost-sharing soon after July 1," Arnold said. The Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, with an office in Bloomfield, handles these applications.