

Plymouth County native moves up Iowa conservation ladder

BY JOLENE STEVENS
Contributing writer

Vince Sitzmann says he knows his days will be busy as he sets out on his new position.

The Kingsley native is now field services bureau chief for the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship's (IDALS) Division of Soil Conservation.

Sitzmann says he's ready for the challenges ahead and feels "fortunate" in his selection for his new job.

"Iowa leads the nation in the production of many ag products," he said. "Our agriculture sales from Iowa farms are estimated at nearly \$30 billion in 2011."

The expected increases in population and resulting demands for food, fuel, fiber and clean water will make the need for maintaining Iowa's soil resources higher than ever, he added.

"It's important, I feel, that we continue to lead the nation in ag production," Sitzmann said. "At the same time, we need to do this in a manner that keeps our water clean and our soil in the fields where it belongs. It's essential that these fields continue to be productive now and for many generations to come."

Sitzmann cites Iowa as a "national leader" in implementing water quality and watershed projects with over 60 of such programs across the state.

He said the state also currently leads the nation in what is a continuous conservation reserve program buffer initiative with over 600,000 acres involved.

Other important items on Iowa's conservation agenda are its additional ongoing soil and water conservation projects and reclamation of mined lands within the state, Sitzmann said.

"Our role within the framework of the IDALS is to provide statewide leadership in the protection and man-



(PHOTO CONTRIBUTED)

Jim Gillespie (left), director of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Division of Soil Conservation, welcomes Vince Sitzmann (right), a Kingsley native, named March 2 as the field services bureau chief, soil conservation, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. Sitzmann says he welcomes his opportunity to be among those who aid and advance Iowa's conservation goals and programs.

agement of our soil, water and mineral resources as we work with these programs," he said.

It is also IDALS' job to provide support to the 100 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) within the state and to farmers and private landowners in order to help them meet their environmental and agricultural needs, Sitzmann said.

"We of us a member of our IDALS conservation team stand ready to shoulder these responsibilities," he said.

The son of Emmett and Lucy Sitzmann, of Kingsley, Sitzmann started out early on his journey into soil and water (and, periodically, wildlife) conservation.

Growing up on an Iowa Century Farm livestock and grain operation near King-

sley, the new Bureau chief graduated in 1988 from Gehlen High School, in Le Mars.

Sitzmann later enrolled at Iowa State University, in Ames, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in fisheries and wildlife biology.

His first post-graduate job was as a member of the staff of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, spending several years working with seasonal wildlife research and management projects.

"At that stage of my life I had felt this was what I wanted to do with my career," he said. "Then came the opportunity to work with the IDALS on the Rathbun Lake Water Quality Project in south central Iowa."

He took on the responsibilities as an environmental

specialist project coordinator for the project in 1998.

Sitzmann has since served in similar positions within the IDALS' Mines and Minerals Bureau with his work focusing on abandoned mines and in the Water Resources Bureau of the IDALS.

He served most recently as IDALS' southeast Iowa field representative.

"My whole career has been tied to conservation work. Each of the positions I have had during my career I feel in some way helped me to acquire different skills," Sitzmann said. "I see this as valuable as I start my new job and can build on all of the things I've previously done."

Sitzmann said he feels there are outstanding people working for the department, which makes taking on his

new duties much easier, he said.

He also said he believes it is important to continue Iowa's agriculture leadership role in the nation's production of corn, soybeans, hogs and eggs.

"Continuing to work together with many of those I've worked with in the past

— both producers and organizations and industries — to foster an understanding of the importance of good soil and water conservation is important for all of us," Sitzmann said. "I welcome the opportunity to assist in strengthening this understanding."

Among Sitzmann's responsibilities will be supervision of the bureau's 136 employees who — from their 100 offices across the state — assist farmers and landowners in the design and construction of conservation practices.

Headquartered in IDALS' Des Moines office, Sitzmann will also work in partnership with Iowa's 500 elected Soil and Water Conservation Commission commissioners in implementing Commission programs across Iowa.

Iowa Agriculture Secretary Bill Northey said in a news release he's excited about what Sitzmann brings to the position and what he can do for the department and Iowa agriculture.

"Vince's broad experiences within the Division of Soil Conservation and his strong understanding of the people and programs within the bureau will serve him well as he continues the bureau's programs with farmers and landowners to protect our air, soil and water," Northey said.

E85 Sales Set Iowa Record in 2011

The Iowa Renewable Fuels Association's (IRFA) Monte Shaw says sales of E85 reached a record all-time high in 2011.

Shaw, IRFA's executive director said sales by Iowa retailers reached 10,728,997 gallons last year according to

to gasoline in the last half of 2011, E85's growth streak was curtailed somewhat, he said.

"Today, however, wholesale ethanol prices are quite attractive, and that translates into very enticing E85 prices," Shaw said. "E85 is the best way for fuel consumers