

ANNUAL REPORT
DES MOINES COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT
STATE OF IOWA

Period Ending December 31, 1952

1952 has been a good year for the Des Moines County Soil Conservation District. Although short handed for part of the season a lot of conservation practices were applied to the land. 45 basic plans were approved by the commissioners and 47 farmers were added as initial and advanced conservation agreements.

Working with the agronomist at the Iowa Ordnance Plant plans were developed for proper land use on over 3700 acres within the area controlled by the army.

Soil testing has increased about 43 percent during the year. A study of rotations adapted by district cooperators shows that on the average farmers have added a year of meadow or reduced a year of row crop per rotation. In many cases farmers have done both. This trend toward the better rotation has been quite general and has resulted in improved internal drainage, better soil texture, increased fertility, increased production and better weed and pest control.

Changes are also noticeable in the increase and improvement of forage crops. Farmers are using more grass in the meadow mixtures. This increase of forages has tended to change the method of livestock management and many cooperators and neighboring farmers are feeding cattle on grass. More farmers are harvesting meadow crops as grass silage.

Pasture renovation has increased considerably with many farmers plowing up old bluegrass pastures, taking a crop of corn, and reseeding to a mixture of legumes and bromegrass. In order to stimulate interest and review progress the district sponsored a grass tour during the summer.

There has been a big increase in the use of dams for erosion control with farmers moving into the larger and more costly structures. During the year 24 earth dams were built, 10 concrete structures and 5 mechanical spillways in earth dams. The outlook for 1953 is more than double this amount.

One of the principle features of the year is the recognition dinner sponsored by the Burlington Chamber of Commerce. At this event farm families that have done an outstanding job in some phase of conservation are given tokens of recognition, supplemented with prizes by the local district. This is carried on annually and represents an outstanding cooperative effort and educational medium, both for farmers and city folks. Along with recognition for conservation is a farm institute and recognition of high corn yields. This year it was interesting to note that of the top 16 in the 10 acres corn yield contest 11 were cooperators with the district. Also that only two of the bottom 12 were cooperators with the district. Also that only seven of the 28 contestants checked their corn. This seems to quite the complaint of many farmers that you must check corn to keep it clean, otherwise your yield will be reduced.

During the year the SCS staff spent considerable time on the AC program of PMA. This tended to reduce the time available for getting district work done but all has not been bad as it did give opportunity to work with more farmers and to improve the quality of the application of conservation measures paid for from ACP funds. The local PMA office has set up funds for use by SCS, however, because of the competitive wage scales in this area it has been difficult to employ adequate and competent help. The district has enjoyed very fine cooperation on the part of the local PMA office. The present trend appears to be toward the more permanent and long time conservation measures. More could be accomplished if more help could be obtained.

There is still a big job to do in the field of farmer education. Farmers need to learn to do more for themselves with less technical assistance except on the more complex jobs.

The new planning procedure set up at the suggestion of the Soil Conservation Service hasn't made too much difference in this district as we had been using the general plan of helping farmers on a starting practice basis when they requested it. However, we now count the man sooner as a cooperator. There is one disadvantage that the commissioners are farther removed from the complete conservation plan as finally worked out.

During the year Mr. Homer Woodward was elected to replace Howard Gieselman as commissioner. The chairman for the year was Hugh Jamison with Kenneth Redfern as the third member. The secretary is James C. Hodges, Extension Director, Horace Sutton, Jr. is treasurer and R. H. Audsley is the local soil conservationist.

We as district commissioners are concerned whether there will be enough trained help to meet the needs in 1953. With loss of one good man to a fertilizer company because of better wages and another in the reorganization of the SCS it appears that the district will be very short handed right when we need to be going the other way.

Summarizing the general outlook we believe that this district can show a big increase in the application of conservation measures during the coming years, providing men with technical knowledge can be provided to help farmers.

Respectfully submitted,

DES MOINES COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

By: Hugh Jamison, Chairman