

ANNUAL REPORT

IDA COUNTY, IOWA, SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

1953

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DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS

H. L. Elk, Chairman	Galva, Iowa
W. F. Burow	Battle Creek, Iowa
Wm. Rossow	Battle Creek, Iowa

TREASURER

Ray Bresnahan	Ida Grove, Iowa
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SECRETARY

Paul Peterson, Extension Director	Ida County
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TECHNICIANS

Kenneth H. Burnett	Soil Conservationist
Bruce W. Marcue	Soil Conservationist
George W. Witters	Conservation Aid

SOIL FERTILITY CANNOT BE IMPROVED
WITHOUT CONTROLLING SOIL EROSION

INTRODUCTION

The plan of action of the District continues to have the following main objectives.

1. Getting the farmer interested in Soil Conservation.
2. Helping him develop a conservation plan of action for his farm.
3. Providing him with any needed technical assistance required to put this plan into action.

Since the inauguration of the Secretary of Agriculture's Memorandum 1278 in 1952 it has been necessary in some cases to modify the above by applying step 3 before step 2. The installation of some practices ahead of the basic conservation plan has sold many farmers on the idea of a complete plan. This idea has now been extended into our District farm planning procedures which will be discussed later.

Space will not permit acknowledging all of the assistance this District has received during 1953. However, the District wishes to express its thanks to all groups and individuals for any assistance rendered. Listed below are the major contributions to our district program in 1953.

U. S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service:

Soil Conservationist GS-9 - 9 months service
Soil Conservationist GS-7 - 7 months service
Soil Conservationist GS-5 - 8 months service
Conservation Aid GS-4 - 2 months service
Conservation Aid GS-2 - 10 months service
Transportation, office space and supplies for the above.
(U.S. Post Office Department furnished office space.)

The Ida County Farm Bureau, Extension Service, and the Iowa State Extension Service cooperating with the U.S. Department of Agriculture:

Assistance from the County Extension Director in arranging meetings, schools and other educational activities and in performing the duties of Secretary for the District.

Ida County Agricultural Stabilization and Marketing Administration:

\$3900 in off-set funds for the 1953 Agricultural Conservation Program and assistance in laying out contour guide lines.

Iowa State Soil Conservation Committee

\$ 1944.00 For Clerical and Technical assistance.
\$ 438.44 For Miscellaneous expenses.

DEVELOPMENT OF INTEREST IN SOIL CONSERVATION

As has been true in the past conservation payments now known as cost shares of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Program have influenced many farmers to try some phase of conservation farming for the first time. During 1953, 749 farmers were referred to the District technicians for assistance with conservation problems. For many of these farmers this was their first contact with conservation farming.

The Sioux City Program for Permanent Agriculture jointly sponsored by the Sioux City Chamber of Commerce and the Journal Tribune publication continues to attract many farmers to perform a better job of conservation. The District participated in this program again this year and were given an area award for the best three conservation farm plans in operation. The farms represented in the contest were owned and operated by Marvin Volkert, Washta; Harlan Fredrichsen, Holstein; and Erwin Schug, Ida Grove.

There has been a veteran-on-the-farm training program in operation in the District since 1947. Soil Conservation is one of the main topics studied. During the past year this part of the training has been expanded to include some of the theory of erosion losses. In years to come the trainees should be able to provide their farmer neighbors with the why of most conservation practices.

During the past year the Local County Superintendent of Schools in cooperation with the District has been planning a conservation education program for schools under his control. This program will probably be inaugurated in September of 1954.

There are four weekly newspapers operating in the District. They have given excellent cooperation in publishing news and information we send them. It is unfortunate that none of them are in a position to prepare many news articles concerning conservation without any assistance from us.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

During 1951 and 1952 the County Extension Director conducted Leaders Land Use Training School. The school is composed of four day-time sessions of six hours each. Participants are selected and limited. Attendance has been extraordinary. Emphasis was placed on the "why" rather than "how". Information was provided by Extension specialists. Lack of personnel and facilities required that this program be given up in 1953 but plans have now been completed to reinstate the program in 1954. These plans include a meeting place, date and a complete schedule of instructors.

In order to gear our planning program to the instruction given veterans in their on-the-farm training we continued to give these individuals top priority on farm planning aid. This enables the trainee to have a farm conservation plan nearly completely in operation by the time he has finished his formal training course.

The District chairman has served on the County Extension program planning committee for the past two years. The relationship thus established has been of mutual benefit to both the District and extension programs.

The continuing change of policy and procedure for the AC program, now known as the ASC program, has resulted in considerable confusion among farmers. Meetings, letters and news releases have been used to disseminate correct information. Our work unit personnel and the local ASC committee enjoys the best of working relations and have performed together in a satisfactory manner.

SOIL CONSERVATION FARM PLANNING

As of December 31, 1953 the District had 308 active District Cooperators. This includes 54 initial plans, 23 advanced plans and 231 basic farm plans.

During the year the progressive farm planning procedure was used. This consisted of accepting requests for assistance (initial cooperators), holding meetings with groups of these individuals and providing them with basic information about their farm (advanced cooperator). The final step was drawing up a complete farm conservation plan. When this plan was finished and well on its way to installation the farmer became a basic cooperator. The procedure outlined above permits each cooperator to progress with his farm conservation plan at the speed best suited to him. We feel that this is an improvement over past procedures.

During the year the Flood Control plans for the East Aldrich Creek Watershed were discarded. In its place an alternate plan substituting 500 acres of terraces for 20 structures was set up. The alternate plan will result in a large saving of Federal funds. It also provides for more participation by the local group. We feel that the plan provides better protection and more Flood Control for the watershed than would have been provided by the original proposal. As soon as reluctance to terraces has been overcome the alternate Flood Control plan will be widely accepted.

APPLICATION AND SOIL CONSERVATION PRACTICE

During the 1953 year the technical personnel of this District rendered on-site assistance to farmers in applying the following amounts of Soil Conservation practices.

Contour Farming	9512 acres
Terraces	294 acres
Contour Field Boundaries	3298 rods
Tile Drains	70,210 feet
Open Drains	6180 feet
Outlets & Waterways	11,400 feet
Erosion Control Dams	1
Field Diversions	3700 feet

The Ida County ASC made payments on the following amounts of conservation practices in 1953.

		<u>1953</u>	<u>1952</u>
Standard terraces	miles	0	5
Contour farming	acres	26,252	28,238
Tile Drainage	rods	1757	2205

Neither of these two tables of accomplishments indicate the true extent of soil conservation within the District. They are presented here as the only available data on the subject. Many farmers not now district cooperators have established conservation measures on their farms. There is no way of determining the exact extent of this work.

PROBLEMS

The objective of the District continues to be the influencing of all farm operators to use each acre of land according to its capabilities and to treat each acre according to its needs for protection and improvement. Basically then, our principle problem is that of obtaining the interest of the remaining 1000 farmers in the District and in getting them to start a program of planned conservation on their land.

The principle problems to be overcome by a conservation plan are listed below in the order of their importance:

1. Sheet erosion or loss of soil from hill sides.
2. Maintenance of fertility.
3. Selection and maintenance of crop rotations best suited to soil type and lay of the land.
4. Grassed waterways and gully control.
5. Weed control.

The probable return of acreage controls for corn in 1954 will result in a recurrence of an old problem. The problem is the apparent inequality that will result when farmers' corn acreages are reduced after they have already made a reduction in corn acreage in line with good land use. A new method should be devised where corn acreage allotments are not based so much on historical acreages.

PROGRESS SUMMARY
 IDA COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT
 ESTABLISHED - FEB. 19, 1945
 Work Unit Office Opened - March 13, 1946

	<u>In 1953</u>	<u>To Date</u>
Sub-Watershed Groups Organized	1	14
Soil Conservation Surveys (Acres)	6800	82,309
Basic Conservation Plans (No.)	11	²⁴⁷ 231
(Ac.)	1938	43,436
Advanced Conservation Plans (No.)	23	23
(Ac.)	4522	4522
Initial Conservation Plans (No.)	54	54
(Ac.)	10891	10891
Acres Contour Laid Out	9512	
Miles Terraces Built	29	84
Educational Meetings Held (No.)	10	117
(Attend)	76	3683
Tile Lines (feet)	70,210	106,591
News Articles	26	178
Demonstrations and Tours (No.)	5	46
(Attend)	119	684
Radio Talks	0	3
Birthday Party (No.)	1	7
(Attend)	65	1350

H. L. Elk

H. L. Elk, Chairman
 Ida County Soil Conservation District

