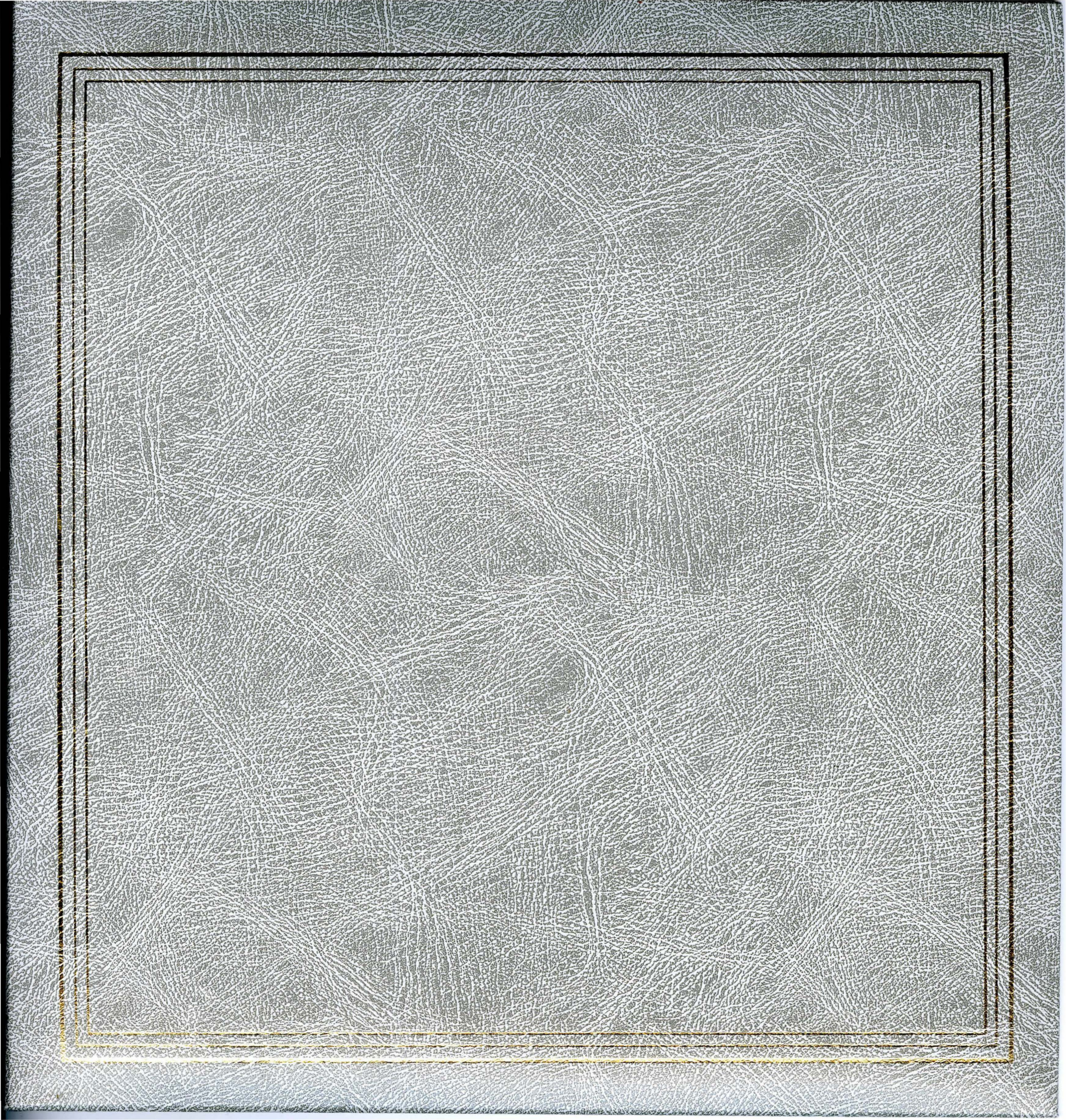




the valley, Jeff related, is weather. Due to the mountain range on each side of the

Seed companies are also growing corn in Florida, Texas, Brazil and Chili this win-

ter as there were 650 acres left to pick, but they got frosted.

United States."

Conservationist becomes steward of land

By Doris McCartney

Harry Bryant aims to keep his feet planted on fertile soil as he makes a third career change. He is switching from serving as a federally-employed soil and water conservationist to becoming an independent owner of a small orchard in Arkansas. Before earning his college degree, Bryant had farmed full time.

By mid-March, Bryant expects to be tending his apple and peach tree orchard. He is anticipating a bumper harvest. His wife, Jan, a Williamsburg high school teacher, will join him in cultivating a vegetable garden and raising herbs for market.

Since 1975, Harry has headed the Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation Service (SWCS) district office, now in its third location in Williamsburg since he arrived.

In preparation for early retirement as a conservationist, Bryant recently leaned back from his desktop computer to consider the changes through the years.

No-till expands

"No-till has stretched across Iowa County until around 20,000 acres have been signed," he said.

"At first, no-till was experimental. Drew a lot of critical remarks when the early promoters, John Maxey and John Cox, began no-till with our designs. Eventually, we helped them work out the problems.

"Conservation tillage is the most common farm plan.

"We have seen the SWCS responsibilities accelerate over recent years with the provisions of the 1985 Food and Security Act. Conservation has advanced from voluntary to compulsory. Planning is now done statewide—60 percent.

"The work load has increased. For instance the office staff has grown from three to ten. Computers were installed 18

months ago. Training and supervising to gain computer skills has been a major opportunity and challenge."

Discussing costs, Bryant remembers the most state funds allocated one year from the office were approximately \$225,000 on cost-share plans.

On an average year, the office distributes \$150,000.

Record numbers of farmers trudge to the office for farm and crop planning these days.

In Iowa County, he mentions, about 94 percent of farmers are taking advantage of the government farm program, a decided contrast to the 1970's when agriculture was a wheel of fortune venture.

Water quality

What does he see in the coming years?

"Water quality concerns. More requirements will be forthcoming on ground water. Water regulations may affect us all," he suggests.

He sees a continuation of current trends of erosion controls. A key factor is the approaching Jan. 1, 1990 deadline for the conservation plan every farm must have. The plan must show how soil erosion losses will be reduced to levels called for in the SWCS field officer technical guide.

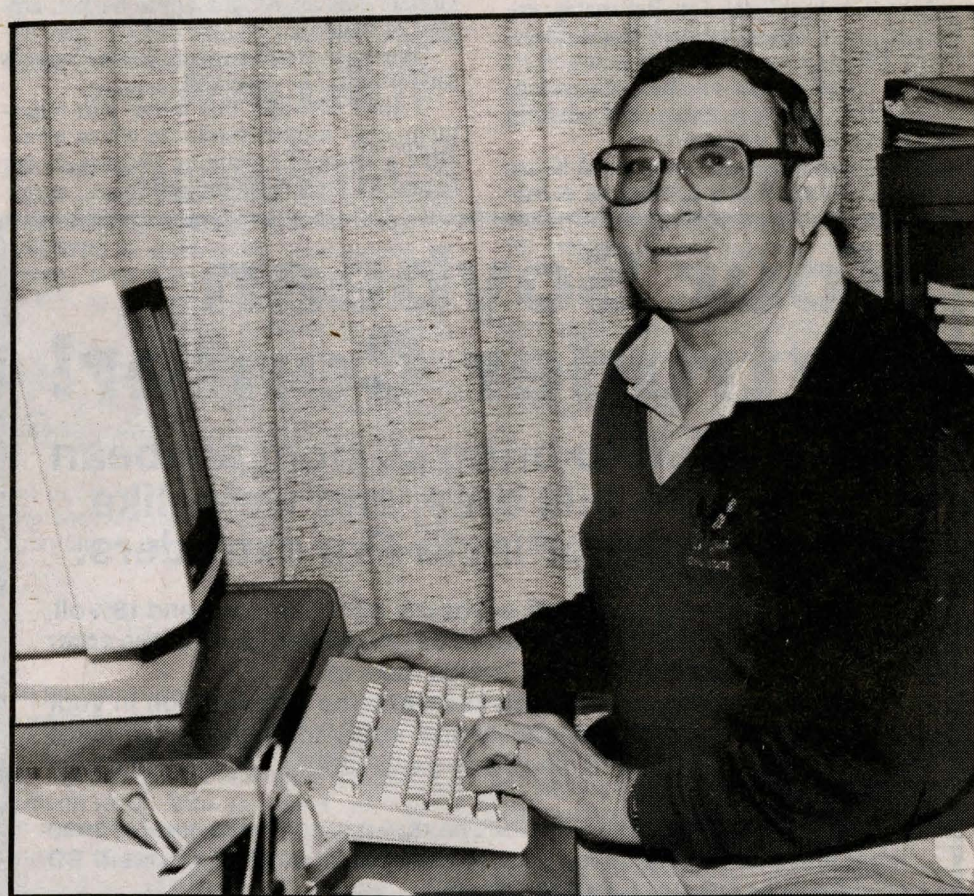
Farmers must put the plan into effect by Jan. 1, 1995.

Fewer ponds are predicted. Costs are higher with a medium or large pond priced at \$10,000.

Terraces are a real benefit, but, he admits, construction is expensive during this time when agriculture is in the doldrums.

The musk thistle and multiflora rose are continuing problems. Weed control is an ongoing battle from season to season, the conservationist continues, evidence he

(Please turn to page 4B)



Conservationist reflects on changes

Harry Bryant is retiring as Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation Service District Conservationist. SWCS work has accelerated through the years since he came to Iowa County in 1975. No-till and conservation tillage have expanded as the trend continues toward greater erosion control. He foresees more requirements coming for ground water and water regulation along with work to complete farm conservation plans by the deadline, Jan. 1, 1990.

Gingerich--

(Continued from page 1)

He has a young man, James Knagy, who helps him with the day-to-day farm work. "I get good support from the community, too, and I consider the community the businessmen of the Williamsburg area."

Iowans failed to give the Reagan-Bush administration a ringing endorsement on farm policies and, in fact, voted for the Democratic candidate, Michael Dukakis, in the November presidential election, an oc-

currence that Gingerich is not sure how to explain. "Times have been rough in the farm in the 1980s, and sometimes people just vote for a change when this happens."

"I think in general people in Iowa have been pleased with the '85 farm bill and they should be with what it has done for the state in the past couple of years. It has pumped a substantial amount of money into the state."

"I look at farm programs to be a safety net to prevent some of the extreme fluctuation in farm prices. I don't think they should be to

the place where we should continue producing for the farm programs, but we should be producing for the market itself."

"I'm sure President Bush will agree with that. He talks about cutting costs of all government programs. You've got to do that. You've got to be tough if you're going to reduce deficit spending," said Gingerich, who added that deficit spending was the "biggest mistake of the Reagan administration."

Looking at 1989

Looking to 1989 and beyond, Gingerich sees continuation of the farm bill with some "minor adjustments," but some "new things" planned for the bill to be written in 1990.

"One is the environment will be an important part of that and agriculture wants to do its share as far as protecting the environment is concerned."

"The thing we talked about (at the Dec. 16 meeting) is we need to do good research and information gathering about what the environmental problems are and how to correct them before we start regulating the environment."

"Another thing that's going to be a major item (in the 1990 farm bill) is a conservation program. We've got the most massive pro-

gram in place that we've ever had and I see a continuation in that and a gradual implementation of a program for the first half of the 1990s."

"The thing we've got to make sure is that it isn't too costly to producers as they embark on these conservation plans."

Under the current program, conservation plans must be in place by Dec. 31, 1989, and implemented entirely through 1995.

"Another thing I see is in the practical implications of farm programs at the ASCS (Agriculture Conservation and Stabilization Service) office," he continued. "Sometimes we have long lines and a lot of paperwork over there. We need to streamline that process."

"They (ASCS personnel) have done a fantastic job for all the workload that's been put on them over the last few years."

"As far as trade is concerned, we're going to be working hard at fair trade."

"Free trade isn't likely to happen in the near future. But the U.S. has just gotten beat by other countries that have tougher trade policies than we have."

Regarding import quotas

"One area which is a special interest to me — and I've talked to the vice president and

Bryant - -

(Continued from page 3B)

shares mutual concerns with those raising crops.

Volunteers

Conservation partners support activities he says, listing achievements.

"I will miss the public relations efforts," Harry exclaims.

He cites help of Andrew Rowe, Iowa Valley High School vocational-agriculture instructor, for starting the soil quiz contest.

"We were the first county to start the quiz and now we hold the tri-county meet. Teachers, parents and the public are inspired by the statements on conserving the soil given by these youth."

"Since conservation education is part of my job, I make presentations at some 10 to 12 meetings each year. Soil judging contests and essay writing contests for both elementary and secondary pupils are scheduled."

"Field demonstrations and farm tours are public outdoor classes."

Conservation photography is a 4-H fair category the SCWS board started a few years ago.

The district published a 1987 conservation calendar, using photos a few of the staff and board collected through the seasons.

"Promotion is team effort," he says. Another area is cooperation with the Iowa County Extension Director Paul Brown and Agriculture and Conservation Service Executive Director Irene Wetjen.

Tillage Show

A career highlight for Bryant is the Eastern Iowa Conservation Tillage Show, Cedar Rapids, now in its tenth year.

"The board works on the registration. Some 3,000 attend annually, and we help with program and hospitality."

"We recruited Jon Kinzenbaw of Kinze Manufacturing, Williamsburg, as a fea-

tured speaker again this year. A number of Iowa County farmers have detailed their farm programs with slides seen the past year at this seminar also."

Harry has praise for the commissioners who volunteer with the SWCS. "The board is compatible. Attendance registers 95 percent. No one misses unless it is because of illness or vacation."

The Iowa County district office will receive an "excellence" rating as a citation for performance, Harry has been informed.

"That's the type of honor another office earned the first year I was a conservationist. For this final year, I'm really pleased," he smiled.

Farm background

After farming a number of years, Harry began to pursue a college degree. The couple had five young children. The effort was considerable as he attended night classes in Burlington before he earned Iowa State University credits. By 1970 he received his Bachelor of Science degree in agronomy from Western Illinois University.

Earlier he had taken part-time employment as a soil technician. His first conservationist assignment was in Louisa County, and he has held similar posts in two other counties before accepting the Iowa County position in 1975.

Bryant will be succeeded by Steve Johnson, Fort Dodge, who arrives Jan. 28. However, Bryant may be at his post during the transition to early March.

The retirement gift from the commissioners was an Amana apple basket, created of willows.

"We'll use it and treasure Iowa County's kind people," he observed.

"I don't consider this move into retirement, only another challenge where we realize a sense of belonging because of our regard for preserving the soil."

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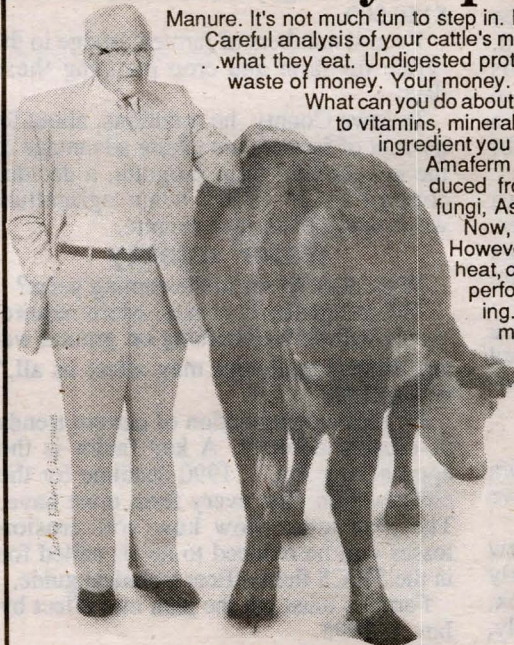
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Terrace construction rates increase

The Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District voted to raise cost-share rates for summer terrace construction at its April 18 meeting.

According to Chairman Greg Misbach, "The cost-share rate for building terraces between June 1 and Aug. 15 will be raised to 60 percent." The program will go into effect after June 1, when Iowa County receives its state cost-share allocation.

"There are several benefits provided by summer construction," said Steve Johnston, district conservationist with the Soil Conservation Service, Williamsburg. "Favorable soil and weather conditions usually provide optimum earth working conditions. The work may also be done on set-aside acreage, which may eliminate working around planting and harvesting activity."

Terraces are among the conservation practices which may be used to develop a conservation plan for Food Security

Act (FSA) conservation compliance, according to Johnston. A terrace system reduces soil loss by reducing the slope length of water runoff. With its inlet riser and tile outlet, it stores water within the terrace and delivers it off the field without further erosion damage.

When compared to other practices, he said, terraces can provide the highest measure of erosion control. Only a completely no-till contour system can compare to the potential of intensive row crop production possible on contour-terraced slopes.

According to SCS technician Ted Oswald, on 9 percent slopes, a contour terrace system would allow a corn-soybean rotation with corn planted no-till into soybeans. "On the same slopes, a contour, no-till system would require a corn-soybeans-oats rotation to meet FSA standards."

The Soil Conservation Service recommends taking a look at fields in the 5 to 10 percent slope range which con-

tour well. These fields are well suited to contour terraces and can be combined with other practices to maximize row crop production.

The SCS recommends those who will be developing an FSA plan for

their farms that include contouring, consider terracing as a means of increasing row crop acreage. Those who have already developed plans, the SCS added, may consider a revision to include terraces, if terraces fit their needs.

NEWS

The North English Record 9



Tenant-landlord citation

Steve Litwiller and his wife, Wellman, were honored for soil and water conservation efforts on the farm owned by his grandfather, Isaiah Litwiller in Greene township. Steve Litwiller, a graduate of Iowa State University, has a degree in animal science. He has been farming six years. His grandfather was not present for the award ceremony, Nov. 14 at the Seven Villages restaurant, Interstate 80 at the Amana interchange. Robert Faber cited the winners for residue management while meeting farm plant requirements.



Named new cooperator

Greg Folkmann, with his wife, Peg; and Loren Folkmann, seated right, and his wife, Dorothy, were recognized by the Soil and Water Conservation Service Nov. 14 for their new soil saving program on their farm east of Conroy. In making the award, Larry Wetjen, commissioner, noted the Folkmanns are making superior crop yields with their new expanded and more efficient farm plan.

Thursday, Nov. 23, 1989

AREA

SCS Awards cont'd



Owner-operator division winners

The Sauter brothers, Dayton township, were awarded the Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation awards for owner-operation division at the annual banquet Tuesday, Nov. 14, at Seven Villages, Interstate 80 at the Amana exit. The Sauters have established seven ponds on the approximately 1,600 acres they own and lease. The citation was given by David McCartney, North English, commissioner. Present for the event were Kevin and Dee Dee Sauter, left; and Michael and Judy Sauter, all Deep River. Not pictured, also honored were Paul and Marge Sauter.

REAP funds are available for conservation use

REAP (Resource Enhancement and Protection Program) Funds are still available for water quality protection and land use conversion practices, according to Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District Chairman Bob Faver. The funds have been directly allocated to conservation districts through REAP.

Iowa County District Conservationist Steve Johnston explained the water quality protection practices include tree plantings, timber stand improvement,

windbreaks and native vegetation plantings. Land use conversion practices include critical area plantings, grass strips, field borders, filter strips, contour stripcropping and pasture-hayland plantings. Funds are available for paying 75 percent of the cost of establishment.

Anyone interested in further information or application should contact the Soil Conservation Service office, Williamsburg, telephone 668-2359.

10 The NEWSpapers of Iowa County, Thursday, March 8, 1990

Roberts is named new SWCD commissioner

Douglas Roberts, 31, Marengo, has been appointed to the Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District as a commissioner to complete a five-year term.

The post was vacated by Greg Misbach, Marengo, who recently left farming to move to Pocatello, Idaho, where he is employed in water quality for the state. Misbach, who had served 13 years on the commission, was chairman of the board at the time of his resignation.

Roberts' appointment is announced this month by Robert Faber, Parnell, new chairman of the district, which has offices at Williamsburg.

In addition, Lucy Stevenson, Marengo, was appointed to a one-year term as assistant commissioner. Stevenson farms in Sumner township with sons, Jim and Todd.

Roberts and his wife, Shelley, who have a farrowing to finishing hog operation, are the parents of two children, Jordan, 6, and Kara, 2.

Others serving on the SWCD are: Larry Wetjen, Marengo, vice chairman; Fred White, Parnell, and David McCartney, North English. Assistant commissioners are Andrew Rowe, Marengo, and Doris McCartney, North English.

SCS Awards Banquet held



Concludes volunteer work with SWCS

Greg Misbach, Marengo, with his wife, Gloria, who will relocate to Idaho next year, were honored by the Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation Service at

its banquet, Tuesday, Nov. 14. Robert Faber, Parnell, vice president of the commissioners, left, made the presentation. Misbach has served 13 years on the county board, many years as chairman. His successor has not been named. Misbach has accepted a position with water quality department for the state of Idaho.

6-13-90

Erosion, flooding back with a vengeance

After a three- to four-year absence, soil erosion and flooding has come back with a vengeance, said Steve Johnson, Iowa County Soil Conservation District conservationist. "The multiple and heavy rains throughout the area have reminded us of the task ahead of controlling erosion. The early morning hours of June 8 produced two to three inches of rainfall north of Interstate 80, causing already saturated topsoil to erode, washing out fences, cutting ditches, silting in waterways and causing local flooding."

According to Bob Faber, chairman of the Iowa County Soil and Water District commissioners, some Iowa County fields eroded an excess of 20 tons of soil per acre just from the one storm. When erosion reaches the point of being visible, a minimum of 13 tons per acre of soil is lost. When small "rivulets" or "fingers" of erosion are seen and waterways are scoured out, much more than 13 tons are lost.

Erosion is a natural process and cannot be eliminated, only controlled, Faber continued. The Soil Conservation District (SCD) in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service has set soil loss

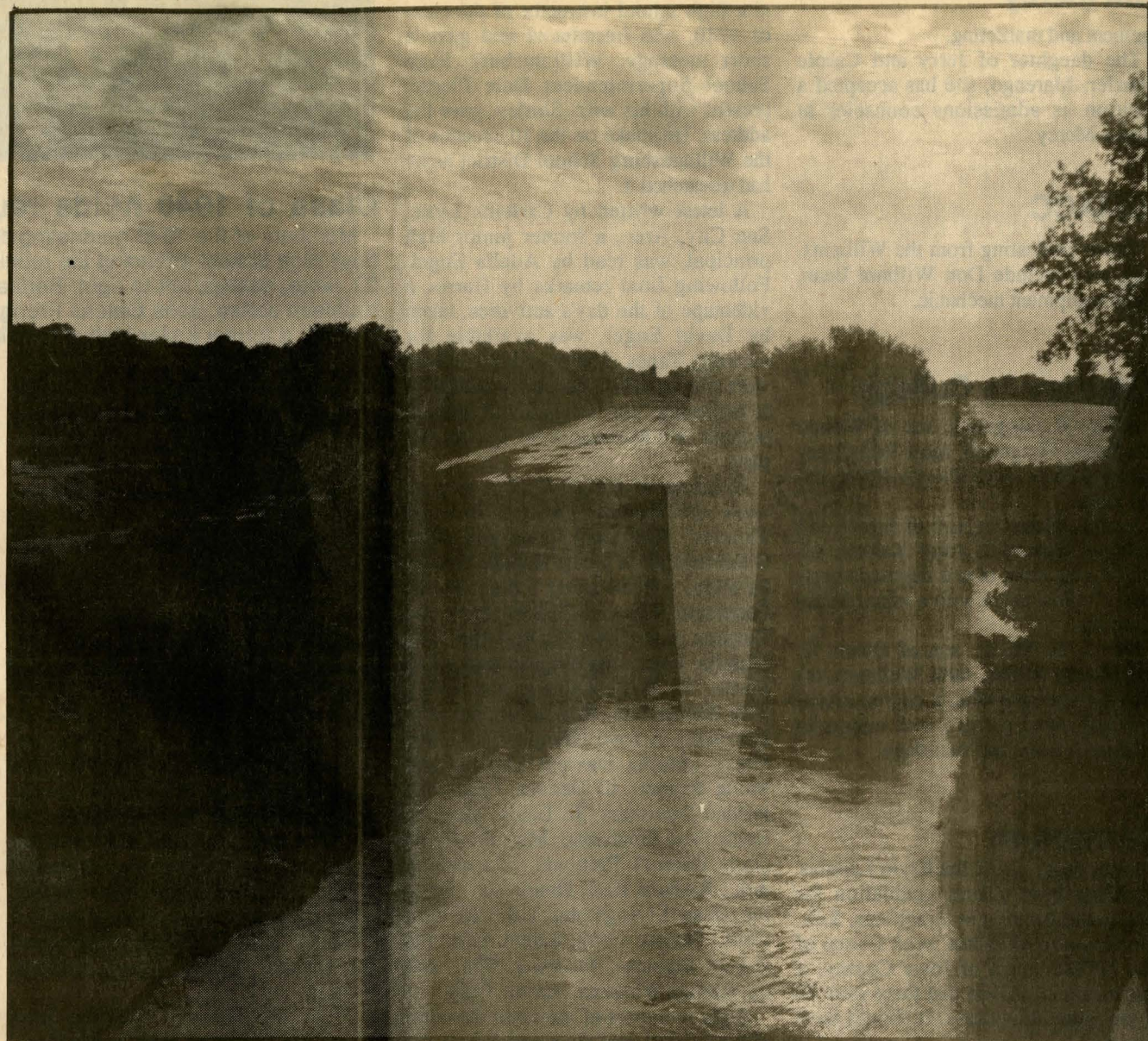
limits of an average of five tons per acre per year. That figure estimates a no-net-loss or gain of soil. Just one storm exceeded that figure by up to 400 percent or greater.

Informal roadside surveys showed fields with little residue, steep end rows and no waterways did a poor job of erosion control, Johnson said. No-till corn on corn, terraces, proper grass waterways and/or field borders reduced erosion to the point of little visible soil loss.

Farmers who participate in federal farm programs developed conservation plans that are to be in compliance by 1995. Non-compliance puts a farmer at risk of not being able to receive federal assistance, Johnson continued.

The heavy and numerous rains have shown, overall, any farmer who scheduled conservation practices at a later date should reconsider their decision if they had high erosion rates.

Farmers or landowners who had excessive erosion and who would like assistance or information to control their problem should contact the local district, telephone 668-2359. The advice is free and, in many cases, cost-share for construction is available.



School's out, drive carefully

Muddy fields

This photo was taken Friday afternoon of Old Man's Creek and the surrounding cornfields, showing the effects of the heavy spring rains. Old Man's Creek

overflowed its banks early Friday but by Friday afternoon had settled back down, leaving a muddy mess in the surrounding fields.

Benton/Iowa County Farmer

A section of The Pioneer-Republican, The Journal Tribune, The North English Record, The Belle Plaine Union and The South Benton Star-Press
Section D - Week of September 7, 1992

Harvest hazards3D
Rural-urban coordinator5D
Conservation winners.....6D, 9D

12 pages

Soil conservation runs in Maas family

By Tim Hynds

October 15, 1969.

Rural South Amana farmer Harlan Maas poses for a newspaper photograph with his father, Arnold. The reason for the recognition - the two had won a soil conservation award for new cooperators.

September 2, 1992.

Rural South Amana farmer Stewart Maas poses for a newspaper photograph with his father, Harlan. The reason for the recognition - the two had won a soil conservation award for new cooperators.

"It was really nice getting the letter from the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) saying we had won, because I won it with my father. It's a really nice feeling," Harlan said.

In 1969, Harlan and his father, Arnold, now deceased, won the award for their contouring and strip-cropping practices.

That's something Harlan and son Stewart continue, a part of the reason they are receiving this year's Iowa County SCS New Cooperator award.

"The contour we use is still the same," Harlan, 62, said. "In 1969, we put in a seven-year program for strip cropping. They (the SCS) laid out the strip and we did the contouring."

Now, in 1992, the 50/50 father-son partnership of Harlan and Stewart won the award for their no-till farming, wide grass waterways and field borders.

In the partnership, Stewart, 36, is in charge of the crop work for approximately 550 acres of corn and beans they plant on the Iowa Township farm, and Harlan runs a 2,000-head-per-year feeder pig operation.

The farm has been in the Maas name for five generations; Stewart is now living in the farmhouse, while Harlan and wife, Arlene, live in Conroy.

Stewart and his wife, Deb, have two children: Derek, 12, and Jared, 4.

Harlan and Arlene's other children are: Michael, Mendota, Ill.; Patricia, Lockport, Ill.; and Phillip, Conroy.

The no-till practice is new and something they probably wouldn't have started if not "pushed" into it by farm program requirements. It's something they don't regret doing, however.

"We'd probably not gotten into it (so soon) if we hadn't been pushed into it for the program, but it's really worked out well for us," Stewart said.

"Sometimes, you need a little forcing," added Harlan.

The only difference the two noticed in their 300 acres of no-till corn was that it emerged more slowly than their other corn.

"But you can't tell the difference now," Stewart said.

In fact, Stewart said some of their cleanest fields are those planted no-till.

"That really surprised me," he said. "It looks pretty good. We did everything wrong to it that we could and it still looks good."

One thing they would do differently is not to apply their anhydrous ammonia-fertilizer and liquid manure fertilizer along the same contour as they planted. Stewart said he felt running the machinery over the same places may have compacted the ground too much.



NPIC photo by Tim Hynds

New cooperator

Stewart Maas, left, and his father, Harlan, stand in one of their 65-foot-wide waterways in a field at their rural

Homestead farm. The two were named the Iowa County Soil Conservation

Services' New Cooperators for 1992, partly because of their wide waterways.

Harlan said one of the advantages of no-till was seen earlier this season when it was dry. "If we wouldn't have had the moisture in June, we'd still have had a better crop than most because of the no-till," Harlan said. He explained their ground retained what little moisture there was in the soil because the soil hadn't been worked.

The only adjustments they made for the no-till corn was to install heavier down-pressure springs and coulters in the planter to allow it to plant seeds in the harder ground. They also made two applications of herbicide, but noted the second application didn't seem to do any good.

Waterways

About 3 3/4 miles of waterways cross the farm land and range from 65- to 30-foot wide. Some sections of the farm have wide grass borders.

The waterways and borders present a

compromise for the Maases - the idling of some crop land to create the waterways, versus the benefit of the drainage they provide.

"They do a bang-up job of taking care of their property"

- Ted Oswald,

Soil conservation technician

Again, the two have no regrets. "The waterways really fill up," said Stewart. "It drains a lot of water from our neighbors too. But it counts up. The more waterways you have, the less you can plant."

"In my opinion, it takes at least a 30-foot waterway to do any good. If you make it too narrow, it seems like it's down to

nothing in a few years," Stewart said.

"There are about 10 to 12 acres in one field that are just waterways and borders," Harlan said. "But the waterways still do more good (than negative)."

Iowa County SCS technician Ted Oswald praised the Maases' use of contouring and waterways, citing them as reasons for them getting SCS's new cooperator award.

"They do a bang-up job taking care of their property," Oswald said. "It's really a well-kept conservation farm."

"The Maases have done conservation (practices) for a number of years. They are good at the kind of conservation you can do without doing a lot of construction," Oswald said.

"They have what I call a typical Iowa County farm. It lends itself really well to contour and strip cropping. They've learned over the years this is what they have to do to conserve their soil," Oswald said.

Extension field specialists in livestock are named

Ron Irvin and Terry Stinehart have been named ISU Extension field specialists with livestock emphasis who will service Iowa County.

Irvin will serve as beef livestock specialist for nine counties in eastern Iowa including Benton and Iowa. Other livestock species will be his secondary emphasis. Currently, Irvin serves as area livestock productions specialist in all twelve counties of the east central area. Irvin has a Master of Science degree in ruminant nutrition from Iowa State University. His office will be in Linn County, and he can be reached after Oct. 1 by calling the Iowa County Extension office.

Stinehart is currently county agriculturist/director in Keokuk County. He will give leadership to swine education programs in Benton, Linn, Iowa, Johnson, Mahaska, Keokuk and Washington counties. The field specialist/swine staff will be housed in Keokuk County. He can be contacted by calling the Iowa County Ex-

tension office.

These livestock field specialists have been named as part of a statewide reorganization of Iowa State University Extension. The changes are part of an effort to reduce costs in a period of declining revenues while maintaining statewide availability of Extension services, said Robert M. Anderson, vice provost for Extension and director of the statewide system.

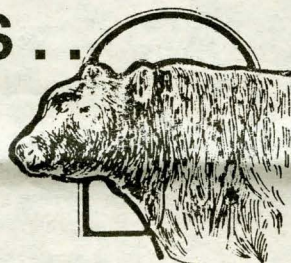
The system of field specialists replaces Extension area offices that were based in seven cities, each housing 10 to 15 area specialists. The state will continue to be divided into seven areas for administrative purposes with an area Extension education director in each division, but the area specialists have been eliminated.

The transition to the new organization is expected to be completed by Oct. 1. Information on contacting these field specialists will be available at each county Extension location.

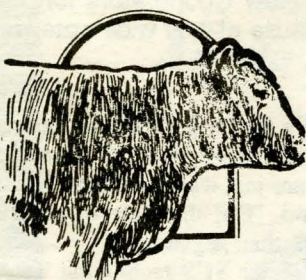
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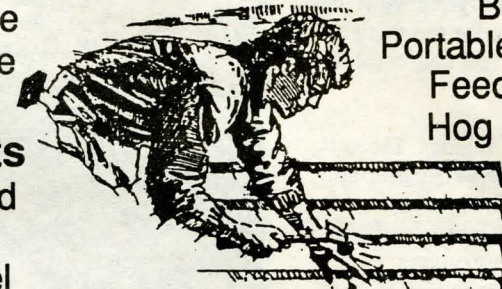
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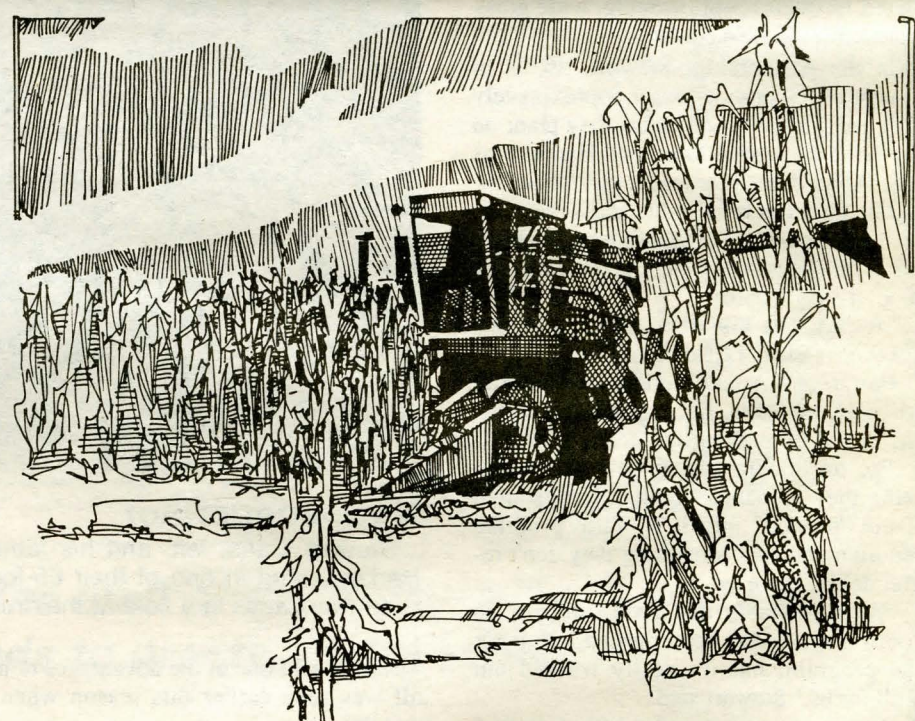
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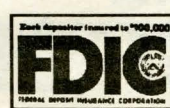
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Adams: grain harvest presents many hazards

By Ken Sweeney

Prior to October 1986, Marilyn Adams was about as typical a farm wife and mother as you could get.

In addition to caring for her three children, she taught Sunday school and was a youth group leader. She and her husband, Darrell, owned and operated a 700-acre farm about four miles west of Earlham.

In October 1986, a tragedy struck her family that would inexorably alter their lives. Her 11-year-old son, Keith, was working around a gravity-flow grain wagon when he slipped into the grain and suffocated.

"In dealing with our own grief," she recalled, "we made some safety decals to put on existing wagons" and contacted manufacturers and asked them to use the stickers.

A year later, in an effort to help prevent similar accidents, Adams formed a safety group, Farm Safety 4 Just Kids (FS4JK). "Firestone in Des Moines, which was my employer at the time, sponsored the FFA to put danger stickers on wagons when they crossed the scales at elevators," she said.

The decals created much interest. In October 1988, Adams was attending a farm safety conference in Des Moines, where another group, the National Coalition for Ag Safety and Health, was formed. The group asked Adams if she would consider becoming a national spokesperson.

Preventing childhood injuries

Purpose of FS4JK is to prevent farm-related childhood injuries, health risks and fatalities. While Adams said the group's

efforts are directed primarily toward children, they involve adults as well.

The group's objectives are:

- To increase public awareness and understanding of the hazards to children and adolescents on the family farm;
- To provide individuals and communities with appropriate skills and resources to make the family farm a safer environment and
- To motivate and empower individuals and communities to make positive changes regarding family farm safety and health issues.

The group, she said, has grown from a one-family effort to eight full-time employees, four of whom travel across the country to promote farm safety. In June, the organization hired its first executive director, Victor Korelstein. "We had grown so fast," Adams said, "I wasn't sure where to go from here. The public demand is still there and the media really help a lot to keep the awareness level high."

The increased demand for information on farm safety, she said, has prompted formation of a chapter operations department that is in the process of developing FS4JK chapters across the U.S.

Concern over grain harvest

Adams told The NEWSPAPERS of Iowa County one of her primary concerns lately relates to the grain harvest. Because of the potential late harvest and high moisture content, she said, "everyone is going to be in a rush" to harvest and may be combining wet corn. "If that happens, a lot of people are going to be getting up in there (in the wagon), kicking the grain down physically because of the stickiness."

Adams recommends when unloading grain, farmers should plan ahead and have a long pole to poke into the wagon to make the grain flow easier.

In addition, she suggests pouring a small hill of gravel where the grain wagon is unloaded, allowing the driver to put the back wheels on the hump. This will make the wagon tilt slightly, allowing the grain to flow easier.

"That's one of the easier solutions to make your grain flow out easier," she said.

With farmers going into the bins often

to check on the moisture content, Adams stresses working on the buddy system for help should an emergency occur.

"We also stress using lock-outs to make sure someone doesn't turn the auger on while you're in there. People really need to be in tune with things when working around power equipment."

Tractors, she said, are the biggest killers on the farm for two reasons: the extra rider and the lack of roll-over protection.

While the newer tractors have roll-over protection, Adams said farm people often use older tractors that don't have the roll-over protection for such duties as cutting weeds on hillsides.

Farm equipment and chemical manufacturers are increasingly concerned about safety, she said. For example, the new power takeoff equipment now has a hinged shield to protect bystanders from getting entangled.

"There's still a problem with the old equipment that most of us use," Adams added. "The older tractors, which don't have the safety equipment, are the ones we usually use to hook up with the auger."

Proposed funding cut

The government also is becoming more responsive to the issue, although Adams said she is quite concerned over a proposed \$22 million cut in funding of farm safety programs at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. The money funds various safety design research and public education programs throughout the nation.

She urged people who are concerned about farm safety to write their congressmen and the president to voice their concern for continued federal funding of farm safety programs.

She also encouraged people to attend the first Farm Safety and Health Awareness Walk at 2 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 20, in Des Moines. The walk will begin at Meredith Publishing Corp., 1716 Locust Street and proceed east to the State Capitol, a distance of 1.7 miles. Participants will be given a farm safety T-shirt compliments of Successful Farming magazine.

The event is being held in conjunction with Farm Safety Week, Sept. 20-26.

Farm safety facts:

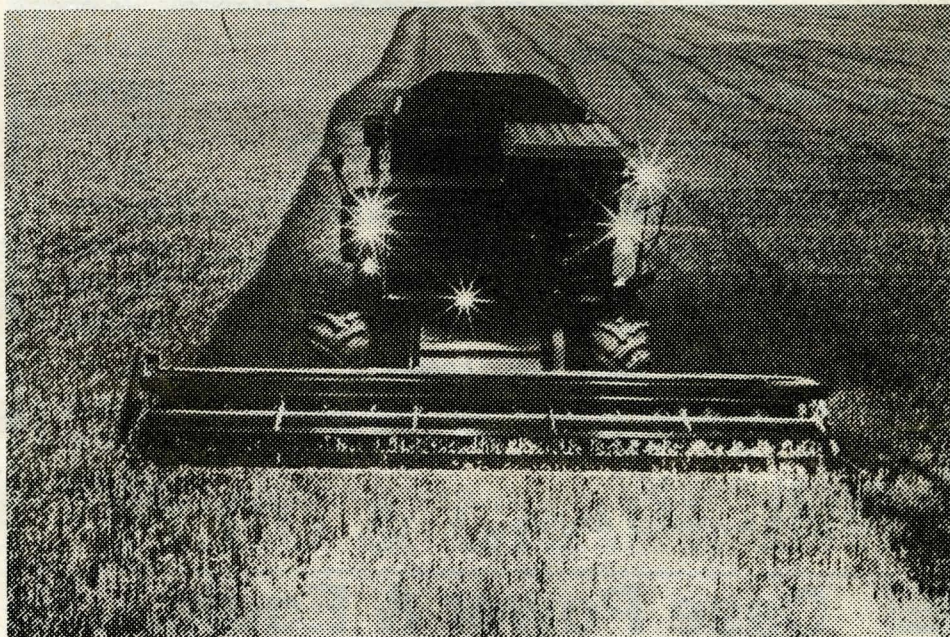
- Approximately 1,600 people die from farm-related accidents each year in the United States. Another 170,000 suffer debilitating injuries, according to the Iowa attorney general's office. Last year, 68 people were killed in Iowa farm accidents, including 10 children, and 2,559 were injured, according to the Iowa Department of Public Health.
- Forty-two percent of the children are killed by grain augers on farms, 25 percent by tractors, 11 percent by power take-offs, 6 percent by conveyor belts and 16 percent by other machinery, according to Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minn.
- A Cornell University study indicates 35.6 percent of the accidents on farms involve children ages 5-14. Another 14.2 percent involve young people 15-24.
- About 65 percent of farm boys drive tractors before age 12, according to Successful Farming magazine.

Farm safety tips

- Don't allow children as extra riders on equipment.
- Don't allow children to play with idle machinery.
- Leave equipment that might fall — such as front-end loaders — in the down position.
- When self-propelled machinery is parked, brakes should be locked and keys removed from the ignition.
- Always leave tractor power takeoff in neutral.
- Know where children are when starting machinery, especially when reversing it.
- Maintain machinery in good repair — particularly protective shields, roll-over protection and seat belts.
- Don't permit children to operate machinery until they have completed safety training.
- Fence farm ponds and manure pits.
- Place fixed ladders out of reach or fit with a protective barrier; store portable ladders away from danger areas.
- Shield dangerous machinery components and electrical boxes and wiring and place out of reach of small children, or fit with locking devices.
- Store chemicals and pesticides in a locked area.
- Place warning decals on grain bins, wagons and trucks.
- Maintain lights and reflectors for all equipment used on roads.
- Devote a day to family safety instructions and rules.

Source: Successful Farming magazine

For more information, contact Farm Safety 4 Just Kids, 130 E. 1st St., P.O. Box 458, Earlham, Iowa 50072, telephone 515-758-2827.



See and be seen

Safety experts say a key to farm equipment safety is to "see and be seen." According to Murray Madsen, a product safety engineer, "If you must operate equipment at night, proper lighting is crucial." Rear-facing work lights on tractors, combines or other types of harvesting equipment should provide ample lighting to allow the operator to clearly see the implement. The lights should also provide enough light for easy adjustment and maintenance of the equipment.

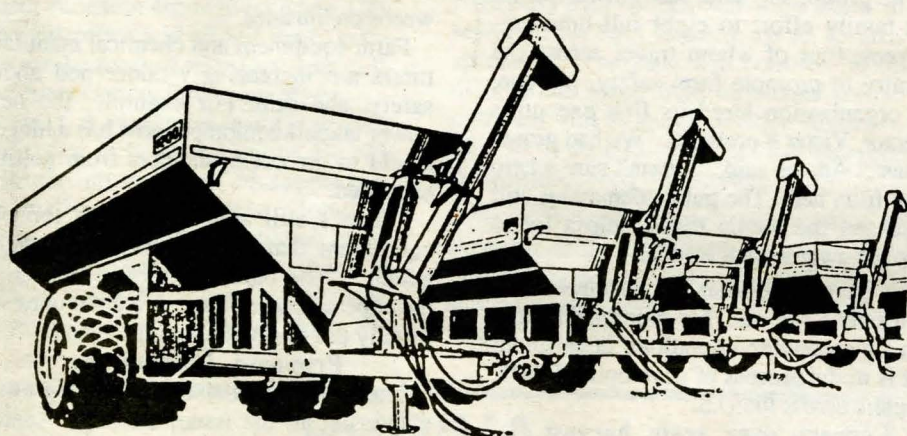
Provision halts deregulation of grain shipping rates

An Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) move to end regulation of railroad rates for grain sold for export will be placed on hold, according to Iowa Senator Tom Harkin. His provision on the transportation appropriations measure sets a moratorium on such deregulation.

On July 16, the ICC proposed to deregulate rates for a number of products, including corn and soybeans for export.

Last week the Senate appropriations committee approved a one-year moratorium to be placed on the ICC's efforts.

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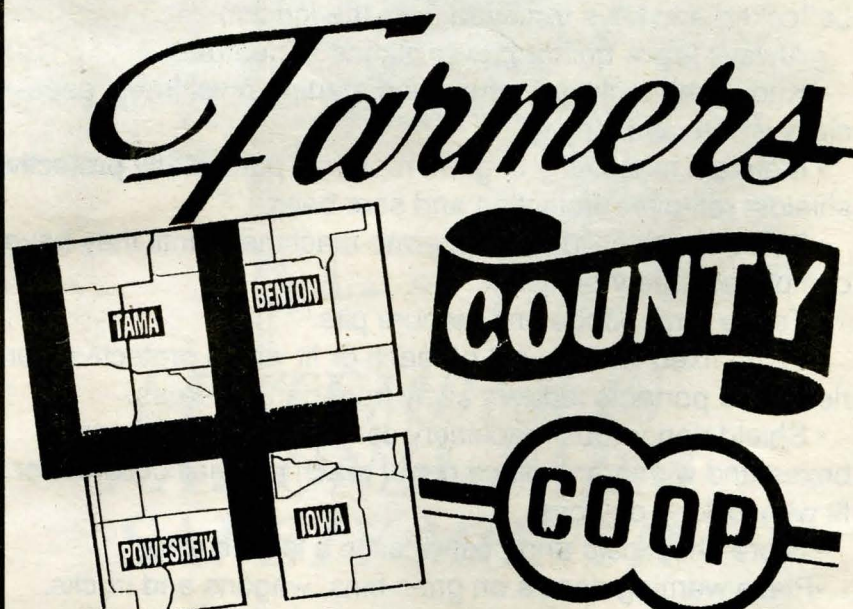
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BDG hopes to get funding for rural-urban coordinator

Benton Development Group (BDG) officials will know soon if the BDG will receive a grant to fund its rural-urban coordinator position.

The position was created this year and received funds from the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED) to coordinate rural activities in Benton County. The rural-urban coordinator, Willis Hansen, has helped to set up the Iowa Producers Cooperative in Benton County, set up an agricultural forum on grains last fall, and has explored value-added opportunities for Benton County's agricultural products. Also helping has been Marlyn Jorgensen, Garrison, who works with the Iowa Producers Cooperative and works with the rural-urban committee of BDG.

Instead of seeking rural-urban funds from the state, BDG will try for a \$17,000 grant from the Agricultural Enterprise Fund. If approved, the coordinator will work on a three-day-a-week basis, dealing with agricultural tourism and identifying farm families who "might have an extra bedroom" for those touring farms in Benton County.

Agricultural tourism will come from planned tours of test plots in Benton County. One test plot is planned at the Urbana interchange at Interstate 380, giving those passing through Benton County a first-hand look at farm work.

If the position is funded by the state, the Iowa Producers Cooperative and Benton and Eastern Iowa Farm Feeders (BEIFF) will help with funding. Money will also come from the produce from the test plots.

The coordinator will also promote Benton County's agricultural products.

A recent example was a visit last month by the Taiwan Food Quality Soybean Study Team, which looked at soybeans in Benton County geared toward their tofu needs. BDG worked with the Iowa Producers Cooperative, Iowa Soybean Association and Iowa Soybean Promotion Board on the project.

Benton County has 140,000 acres of land producing about 600,000 bushels annually. There are approximately 57 area farmers specializing in high-quality soybeans to be used for food.

Local officials learned Taiwanese officials are concerned about quality, protein and shipping costs.

Dan Van Steenhuyse, who works with the Iowa Producers Cooperative, felt there would be no direct benefit from such a visit, but in the future, the visit can help in getting contracts with soybean companies who contract with Benton County farmers.

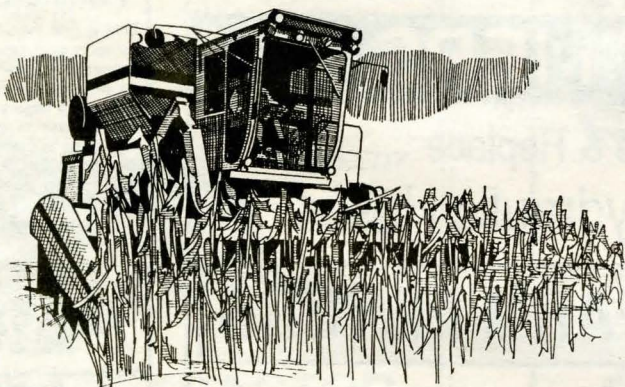
Van Steenhuyse also felt benefits will come from the customer meeting those who grow the products.



Soybean visitors

Members of the Taiwan Food Quality Soybean Study Team visited last month with Benton County officials to explore food-quality soybeans for tofu. The visit is part of the many rural-urban activities being coordinated by the Benton Development Group. Shown is a Taiwanese official taking a picture of the varieties of soybeans grown in Benton County, at the meeting last month at Tara Hills Country Club.

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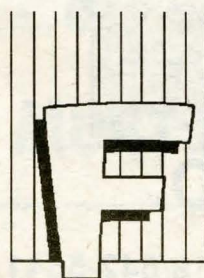
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Broad-based terraces

Larry and his father Clement Dermody, son and father, stand in front of their broad-based terraces created last year. The Dermody's are the 1992 winners of the Iowa County Soil Conservation Service tenant-landlord award. The Dermody's have close to 30 terraces.

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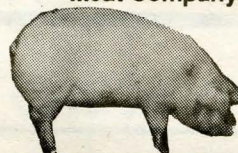
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Dermody's deal in volume with terraces

By Pat Axmear

When Clement and Larry Dermody, rural Parnell, decided building terraces was the way they wanted to conserve soil, they started a large project. So far they have close to 30 terraces on their land.

"We decided (building terraces) is the best way to hold the soil and control soil erosion," Larry said. "We'd like to build more of them. The plan was originally to terrace the whole farm if the funding is available."

For their work in conservation the Dermody's will receive the Iowa County Soil Conservation Service award in the landlord-tenant division. They have 360 acres that are farmed 50-50 by Clem and Larry (father and son) and Larry farms an additional 80 acres. They rotate corn and soybeans on their land.

The Dermody's had their first terraces built in 1977. The seven terraces built then were cost shared 50-50 through the SCS. They have continued in the cost-sharing arrangement.

"The Dermody's do a fine job of conservation," Ted Oswald, soil conservation technician with SCS, said. "They are very good operators and very up to date."

"They didn't want to go with no-till. Terraces are permanent conservation practice with some maintenance needed."

Build own terraces

In 1989, when Larry's brother Jim decided to build some of his own terraces, Larry and Clem decided to build their own also. When they first started, they used two small tractor scrapers, one owned by Jim. They worked all winter in 1988-89 and did most of their own work. They hired someone else to do their tiling work.

After a couple years of building terraces they bought a backhoe and dozer, to use with their scraper, and a tractor and loader which they use to back-fill.

Although the Dermody's say it is a time-consuming job to build the terraces on their own, they say it's worth it. Larry

says it would cost quite a bit to pay contractors to do the work, and they've had good luck with building them.

The Dermody's say another reason they like to build terraces is the hills aren't sharp on their land and the layout is ideal for terraces.

Broad-based terraces

The Dermody's build broad-based 30-foot terraces which are farmable on one side with a grass backslope. Twelve rows of corn can be planted on the side of a terrace.

Larry said he thinks their terraces are more compacted because they travel over it so many times with the small scraper. All of the terraces they have built have held so far.

To finalize and grade the terraces the Dermody's use a level and a two-by-four. All of the grading has to meet SCS specifications that are set by Oswald.

Larry says they terraces are definitely worth the effort. He says he is used to farming around them. They have a lot of topsoil and he can see the difference the terraces make with soil erosion.

In the last couple of years the weather has been difficult for building. The terraces they've set up in the fall have had to be finished in the spring. When they first started working in the winter of 1989-89, Larry says they only missed one month of work.

Waterways

"We tried to maintain waterways, but they are a short-term deal," Larry said. "They either cut out or wash out on both sides."

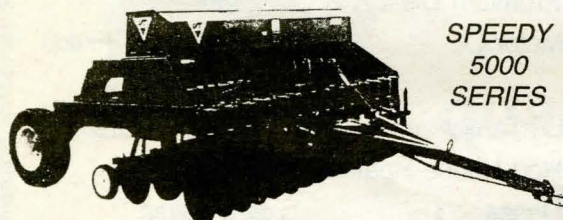
The Dermody's have built some waterways on their own. Where a ditch was started, they closed it in and seeded and tiled it. They have one waterway that is three-quarters of a mile long they built last year in conjunction with SCS.

Larry is currently working on a waterway on his acres also. He has removed the trees and has been moving soil from a nearby hill to fill in the waterway.



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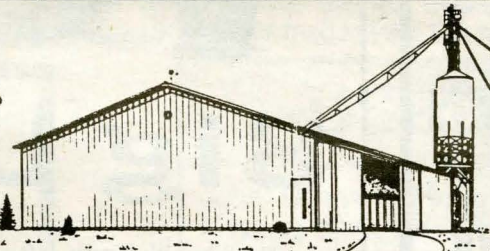
New waterway

Although terraces make up the majority of the Dermody's conservation structures, they constructed this quarter-mile waterway with help from the SCS last year.

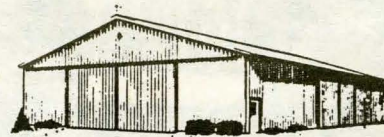
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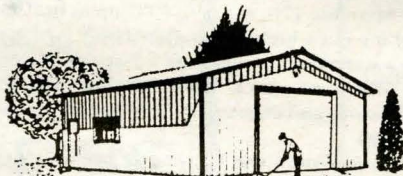
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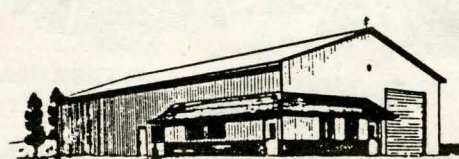
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Conservation compliance status is reviewed in county for 1992

Each year the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) is required to perform status reviews on at least 5 percent of the conservation plans developed for farms currently enrolled in US Department of Agriculture programs. Status reviews are used to monitor the progress of planned conservation practices.

The Iowa County SCS has completed the scheduled spot checks of conservation plans for 1992. The results of the spot checks indicate approximately 80 percent of the conservation plans have practices being applied as scheduled, 15 percent of the plans have practices scheduled for 1992 that still need to be applied (status review is pending until application of practices), and 5 percent of the plans are not being actively applied.

Findings of the status reviews, according to John Bruene, Iowa County SCS, show several areas of concern for planned practice application including conservation tillage, contour farming and grassed waterways. Conservation tillage is an indication of percentage of residue cover remaining after planting in the spring. A good portion of the plans were slightly low in residue levels. This situation needs to be addressed individually for each plan, Bruene said. "Be sure to take the time to review your planned residue levels and make necessary adjustments to achieve these levels. In years such as this past year, even less tillage may be allowable in order to compensate for the winter deterioration that may occur," he added.

Farms scheduled to have contouring in place also showed

some problems, he continued. If a plan calls for contouring, strict row direction along the contour is a must and most of the time will need to be checked by SCS for accuracy of the line, he explained. If cross-slope farming is in the plan, row direction may be more flexible as long as up and down rows are avoided. Contours should be checked with SCS if one is uncertain if the contours are acceptable.

By far the biggest area of concern found as a result of the 1992 compliance checks are grassed waterways, Bruene said. The majority of the waterways checked were found to have problems in several areas. Many were too narrow for the drainage area; some were too short, even more were not properly maintained. In some cases, they were not even there, according to Bruene.

At the very minimum, waterways need to be at least 20 feet wide and .8 feet deep - this applies to drainage areas of six acres or less. Drainage areas of 6 to 30 acres usually need waterways of 30 feet width and 1 foot depth. Above 30 acres typically are larger and sometimes need to be surveyed. The SCS office has several job sheets on grassed waterways that detail small waterway construction and maintenance that are helpful in establishing adequate grassed waterways, Bruene added.

Those who have a question on the status of waterways or other practice that is part of the current conservation plan should stop or call the SCS office in Williamsburg. By Jan. 1, 1995, all planned practices are to be applied to be in compliance.

Focus on farm safety

Last year, 68 people were killed in Iowa farm accidents - including 10 children - and 2,599 were injured, according to the state Department of Public Health. Because children contribute so much to farm work, they often are the victims.

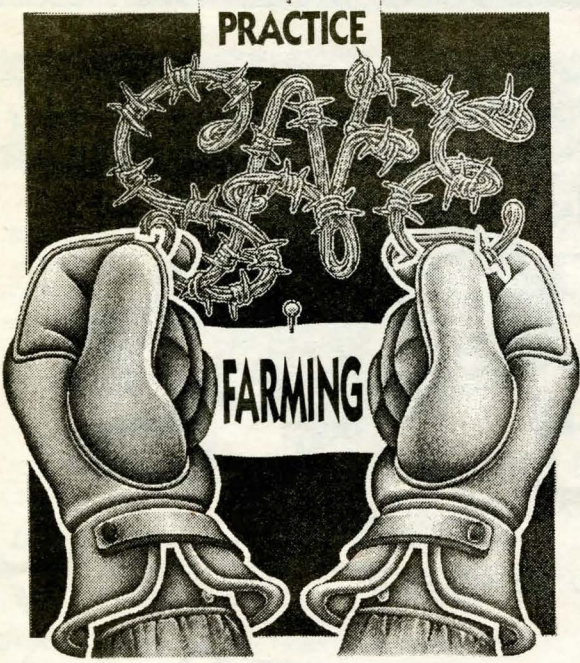
When accidents happen, farmers often are alone in the field or feedlot or barnyard. The dangers are multiplied by the longer emergency response time in rural areas. The crucial time averages 3.5 minutes in the city but often takes half an hour or more for farm victims.

The attorney general's farm division has prepared a 26-minute video giving basic safety advice for all members of

the family. Topics include tips on safe use of farm equipment, how to handle farm chemicals, and first-aid techniques. There is a cost for the video.

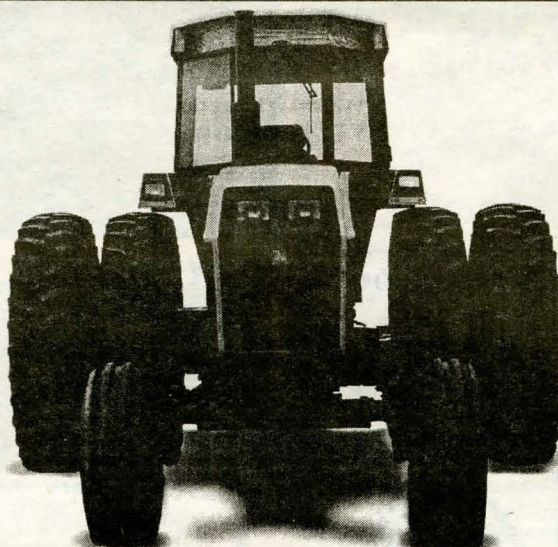
Basic tips for farm safety include:

See Farm safety tips page 10D



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Gene Cobb wins owner-operator award

No-till, terraces, dry ponds comprise conservation efforts

By Doris McCartney

"It is a big job, taking a run-down farm and making it productive. (It) Takes years, a gradual and steady effort toward improved production.

A quiet and reserved farmer, Gene Cobb, 57, who farms near North English, demonstrates optimism when he starts talking conversation.

He finds it astonishing that his program of no-till farming, terracing with dry ponds, and tiling on 350 acres have been recognized with an award this fall. The Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation Service (SCWS) district has notified Cobb he will be cited as the outstanding owner-operator. Cobb rents an additional 40 acres.

"In the early 1980s, we decided to try no-till corn. This year, all except 35 acres were planted no-till," Cobb says.

Some sod acres were chiseled, disked then planted no-till. Soybeans were drilled by a custom operator. Beans were planted in seven and one-half inch rows.

Dry ponds were effective to hold the soil during those July monsoon rains. Rainfall in this community varied from 13 to 16 inches for the month, Cobb estimates.

Crops produced this season include 150 acres corn, 50 acres soybeans, and a number of acres of oats plus large hay bales.

The Middle English River cuts through a tract of their land, a benefit to production, they say.

According to Cobb, "Conservation is the least expensive farming program."

In addition, he believes no-till farming cuts labor, reduces costs, and saves the crop residue. Conservation compliance is met also.

Technical help from the SCWS with Ted Oswald was rewarding, Cobb says. "When we began the switch to no-till, it was a daily and yearly learning experience. Every year the weather patterns are different. We've seen them all from drought to wet spring and muddy harvest seasons.

Oswald says, "Gene Cobb has evidence here of the success of no-till farming and the effective use of the sediment basins, which are known in this area as dry ponds. Waterways will continue to show improvements. A lot of tiling has been

established on the farm.

"Besides farming practices, the Cobbs have managed livestock and hay programs," Oswald notes.

Oswald mentions a well-maintained waterway is a lifetime commitment to the farm.

On the day of the interview, Oswald was collecting color photographs of the farm projects for a conservation program.

Cobb recalls renting land in 1955 before buying and moving here in 1960. "We decided to apply the best farming practices, starting with picking up rocks. Slowly, the farm began to take shape. The changes came in the 1980s with the emphasis shifting to conservation.

Discussing hog production, Cobb says he is switching to a Duroc-Hampshire cross after years of raising Chester White-Duroc swine. He has a farrowing to finish operation, a partnership with son, Michael, 30. Mike Cobb and his wife, Sandra, live in North English.

The father-son team also share some machinery and a steady diet of support and encouragement. Mike also rents tracts of land nearby.

Cobb maintains a cow-calf herd of approximately 40 Simmental-Black Angus units.

Participation in 4-H has been a vital part of their farm family, too, Cobb notes. His wife, Martha, served a 4-H club 30 years. Only recently she resigned and now has a part-time off-the-farm job. Besides the family, 4-H has been a real special interest," he says.

Their family includes two other sons: Lonnie, who is a dry wall taper in Minneapolis; Jeff, 21, a student at Indian Hills Community College, Ottumwa; and daughter Cindy Sellers, her husband and children, Sigourney.

When Cobb sums up farming years, he says, "We constantly have to be patient and study when it comes to cropping.

"The economics of agriculture are serious. The cost of machinery in comparison to grain prices takes more than good management to succeed."

Cobb concludes softly, "The farming operation load is lighter with the advantages of close family ties."

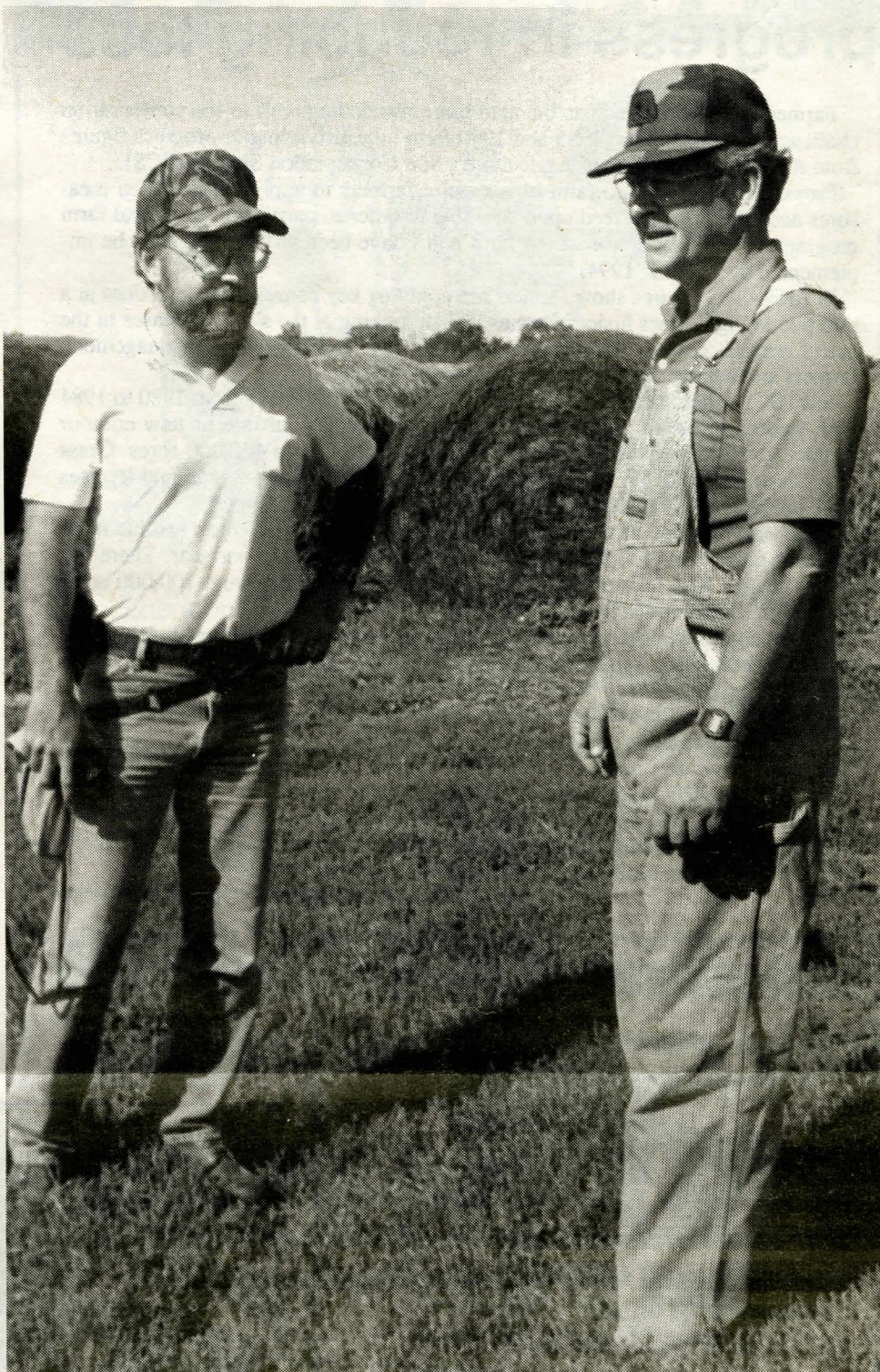
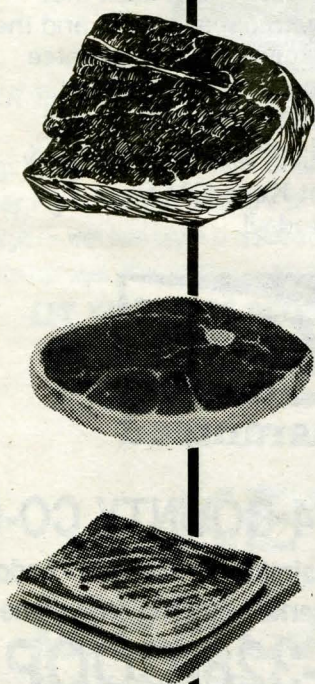


Photo by Doris McCartney

Discuss conservation practices

Gene Cobb, 57, right, North English, who farms in Fillmore township, talks summer rains and dry ponds with Ted Oswald, Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation Service District technician. Oswald advised Cobb through projects which earned the farmer the owner-operator division winner for SCWS this fall. Gene and Martha Cobb have resided here since 1960 and farmed in Iowa County since 1955. --



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Conservation efforts show progress in reducing loss

Farmers in Iowa and across the nation are responding well to the conservation challenges outlined in the 1985 and 1990 farm bills, according to progress figures from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service (SCS).

Provisions in those two farm bills require farmers to apply conservation measures according to an agreed upon schedule in order to participate in federal farm programs. Individual conservation farm plans have been written and must be implemented by Dec. 31, 1994.

In Iowa, SCS figures show farmers are applying key conservation practices at a rate two to three times historical rates. When looking at the sharp increases in the use of terraces, contour farming, grassed waterways and crop residue management, farmers are making progress in controlling soil erosion.

Iowa SCS officials recently compared annual progress figures from 1980 to 1984 with figures from the last three years. The average annual rate of new contour farmed acres grew from a little more than 100,000 acres to 400,000 acres. Grass waterways jumped from 2,500 acres to more than 9,000 acres a year, and terraces were up from about 1,800 miles to more than 2,400 miles a year.

The "new" acreage of corn and soybeans being farmed with crop residue management grew from 417,000 acres in 1980 to 650,000 acres last year. There has been a nearly 10-fold increase in no-till acreage since 1980, from 100,000 acres then to 973,000 acres last year.

Some people have been critical of the progress being made toward reaching the nation's conservation goals. They suggest the conservation compliance cup is half empty and leaking at every seam. The fact is the cup is half full and filling fast.

Because the work was scheduled to run through 1994, a high percentage of conservation plans shouldn't be expected to be completed yet. Farmers are using this five year period as a time to learn new practices, to invest in equipment to help them do the job and to schedule construction of permanent practices.

Farmers have a good track record of voluntarily taking steps to reduce soil erosion. Conservation compliance has furthered the process. Progress is being made and will continue to be made over the next two and a half years.

- By Susan Anderson, Iowa Farm Bureau

Safety tips

(Continued from page 8D)

- Know how to use equipment and leave intact all safety devices, such as power-takeoff shields. Teach children farm safety, too.

- Know emergency medical number; post it on all phones. Write down directions to the farm and post them by all phones so adults and children can read the address in an emergency.

- Keep first-aid kits in farm vehicles and try to have CB (citizen band) radios handy,

too.

- If you think someone may be hurt and are going to check, take another person with you, so one can stay with the victim and one can go for help.

For a farm safety video or for information on farm safety, call or write the Attorney General's Farm Division, 1223 East Court, Des Moines 50319, telephone 515-281-6634.

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- * Have an emergency communication plan in case of injury or sudden illness.
- * Wear appropriate protective equipment to reduce risk of injury and health damage.
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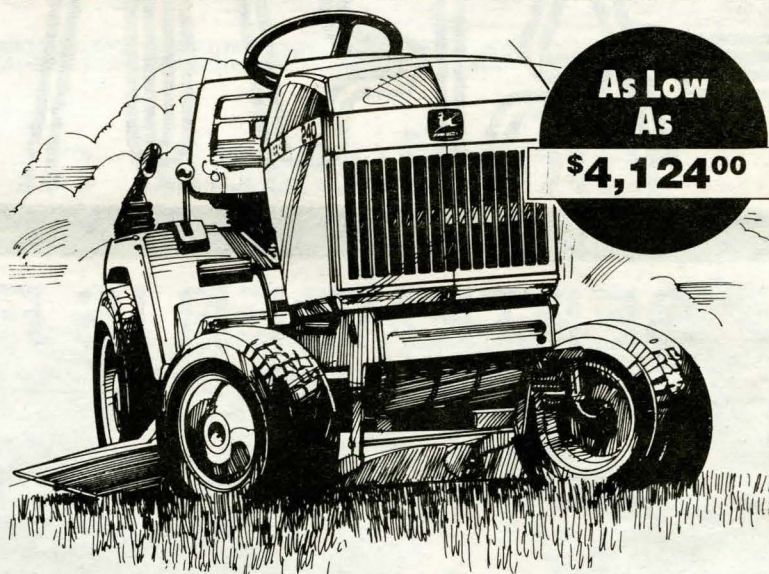
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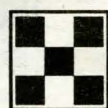


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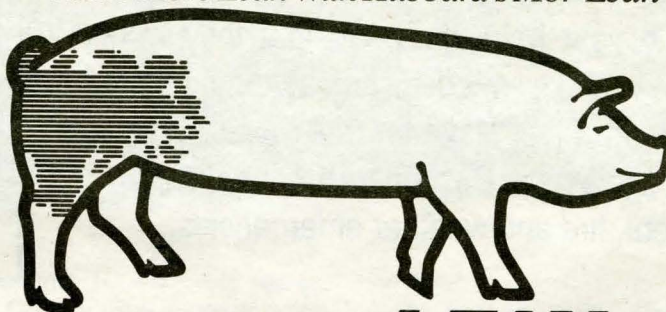
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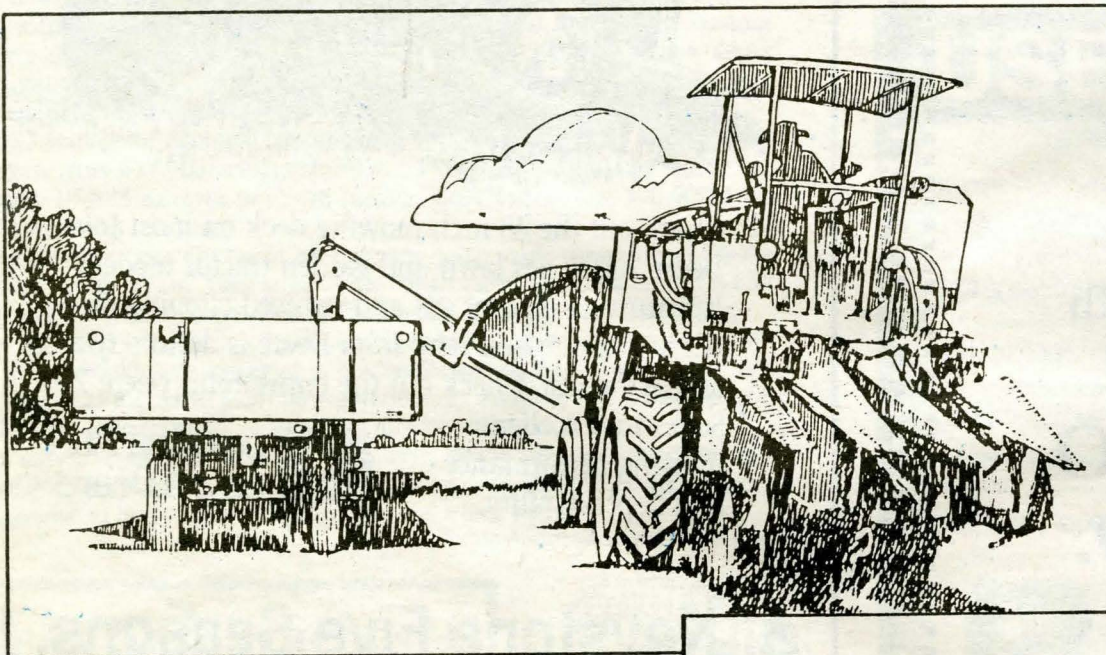


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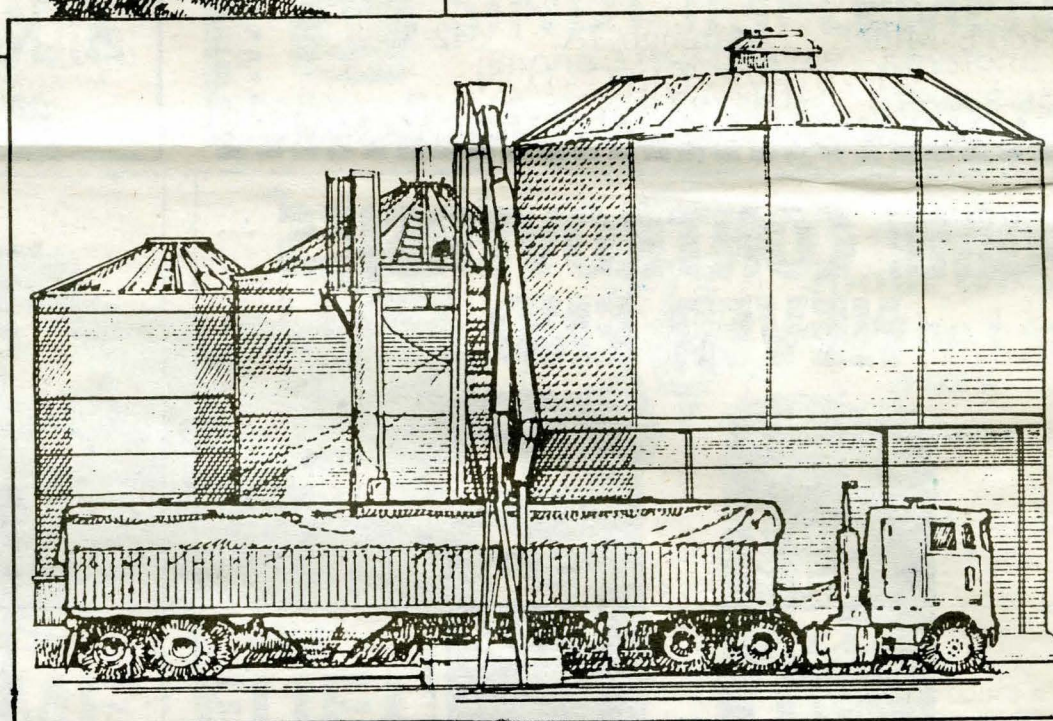
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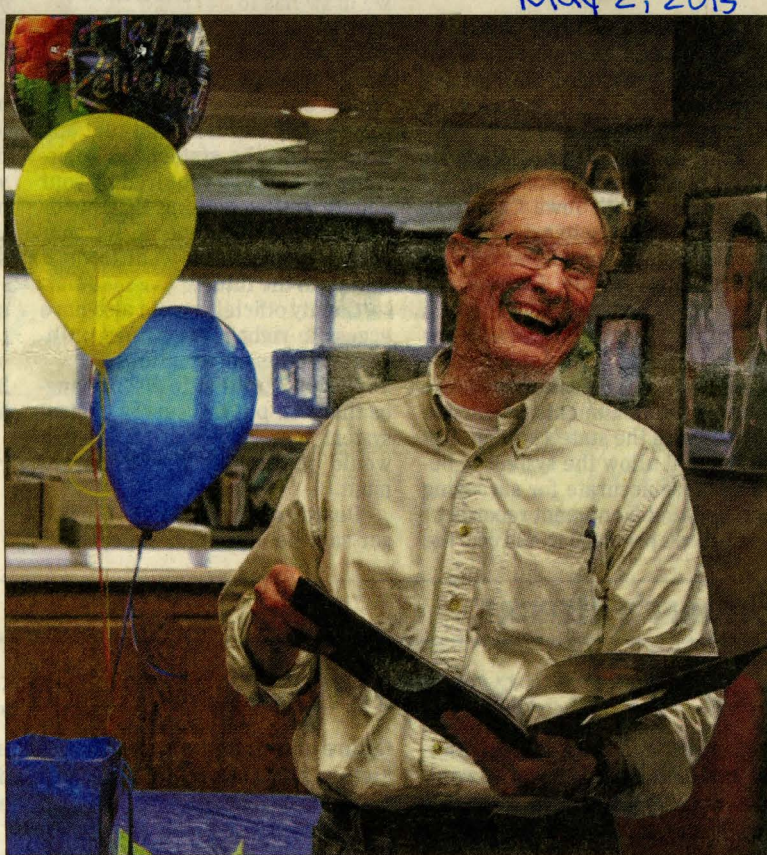


Photo by Callie Wetjen Wiebold

An open house was held April 26 to recognize NRCS District Conservationist Steve Johnston's retirement after 25 years of service to the community. Here, Johnston shares a laugh with well-wishers while looking at a photo album created by co-workers.

Reflecting on 25 years with Iowa County NRCS

■ Steve Johnston steps down after prolific career as NRCS district conservationist

By CALLIE WETJEN WIEBOLD

Special to MPC Newspapers

For the past 25 years, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) District Conservationist Steve Johnston has been busy behind the scenes working diligently to conserve and protect natural resources in Iowa County.

Countless financial reports, tedious grant writing and project spearheading has taken up much of those 25 years; but it's been the

many grass root opportunities to assist landowners and communities in making practical, yet long lasting improvements to land and water quality that make him feel good about his job at the end of the day.

Johnston is retiring this month; and while he's more comfortable boasting about his staff at the Williamsburg office or the local board of Soil and Water Conservation commissioners he works with, it's

See JOHNSTON, page 10

Johnston: Reflects on successful career with NRCS

Continued from page 1

quite evident by the lasting imprint he's left on watershed projects and soil conservation efforts carried out throughout the county that Johnston's Gore-Tex boots will be hard to fill.

The paperwork never seems to leave Johnston's desk. He's written countless applications to fund projects as unique as the non-profit Iowa Valley RC&D Council created in 1998, to a watershed protection project that covers over 50,000 acres. Whether it's a buffer strip, a retention pond or a wetland

or under on its way to a stream, river or lake. Every one lives in a watershed and everything we do in a watershed affects the soil, water, air, plants and animals.

Johnston remembers something his predecessor, Harry Bryant, often said, in that it made much more sense to take care of the top of the watershed first. Of the four primary watersheds in Iowa County – Iowa River Corridor, Price Creek Watershed, Clear Creek Watershed and Old Man's Creek Watershed – the latter two begin in the county. All four

development in Iowa City, where it dumps into the Iowa River. Downstream communities like Iowa City and the university draw drinking water from the Iowa River. It was in 2004 that water samples taken of Clear Creek in Iowa County showed the sewer system being used in an unincorporated community was impairing the water. Johnston procured a \$500,000 grant from the state Watershed Improvement Review Board (WIRB) to be applied toward a viable sewer system. Through a partnership between the NRCS, Poweshiek Water Association and state and county officials, additional funding was obtained to build a rural water system and sewer lagoon system. Today, Clear Creek water samples show significant improvements in water quality.

IOWA RIVER CORRIDOR PROJECT

"For most farmers along the Iowa River, the 1993 flood was the straw that broke the camel's back," Johnston said.

The Iowa River Corridor Project has been the largest watershed project in Johnston's career. The area, encompassing 50,000 acres within 45 miles between Tama and the Amana Colonies, was known to flood. Located in the floodplain and in part, due to channelizing of the river upstream, the area had flooded 80 times over a 40-year average. However, the 1993 flood was much more extensive and had lasted longer than previous floods. Damages were severe. Over 50 percent of the corridor in this area was cropland and crop losses had exceeded \$6.9 million. The severity of the 1993 flood would catch the attention of the politicians in Des Moines and in Washington, D.C.: Something had to be done.

In the past, floodplain landowners in the corridor received flood assistance in the form of crop insurance, price support programs and disaster payments. However, the money was not helping the problem. Regardless of the financial assistance, many of these landowners were ready to throw in their hats. Johnston said it was obviously time for a new way of thinking.

"It was perfect timing for the project. There was a lot of interest by both landowners and legislators. A lot of federal and state money was allocated for flood recovery," Johnston said.

A unique partnership formed between the NRCS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Johnston met regularly with Jim Munson, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Rick Trine from the Iowa DNR. A solution began to emerge through a series of public meetings that Johnston facilitated. The solution would be three-fold: Landowners would work voluntarily with conservation officials to create economic alternatives to traditional farming; landowners would retire flooded cropland through Emergency Wetland Reserve

Program (EWRP) or Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) easements with the NRCS that allowed them to retain title to the land; or landowners would sell the land (at appraised value), plus the title, to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This land would become a part of the Port Louisa Wildlife Refuge System.

The response was staggering. Over 100 landowners – 40 in Iowa County alone – placed their cropland in EWRP or WRP programs, while many landowners sold thousands of acres outright to the Fish and Wildlife Service. Within 10 years of the project's inception, the easements paid for themselves, Johnston noted. Today, the NRCS office continues to receive easement applications from landowners in the corridor.

Johnston admits the project was massive. Taking ownership of the project, he had walked both sides of the Iowa River along the entire corridor, completing field work and collecting data and photos. Right around Christmas in 1993, the lingering cold he was fighting developed into pneumonia.

"I'd been going hard since July. I was totally exhausted, mentally and physically. But I felt good about the project. Between the public meetings and field work and getting to know the landowners and hearing their stories, it was the biggest grass roots project I'd ever completed," Johnston said. He added, "Best of all, it was good to see the government doing something smart. Rather than paying recovery money for cropland that flooded year after year, alternative land uses were put in place. It was a win-win situation for everyone. It was a team effort and I had a great staff getting things done."

The corridor project is the only flood recovery and floodplain management project of its kind in the state of Iowa. A 3,000-acre wildlife management area was developed in the corridor to provide the public with wildlife recreation opportunities. The project area was designated as one of Iowa's key bird conservation areas, as well.

"The Iowa River Corridor would not be here if it wasn't for Steve," Rob Sproat, state soil technician and Johnston's co-worker, added.

CHANGES DURING JOHNSTON'S CAREER

Agriculture has been an ever changing industry and Johnston has observed nearly every step of its evolution.

Today's farming has become more big business. There's less diversity in today's larger farms. Row crops have changed. Twenty-five years ago there weren't a lot of soybeans. Today, it's about 50/50.

Johnston noted, "If you would have looked at the USDA parking lot 25 years ago, you would have seen farmers in overalls driving well-used pickups with stock racks. Today's farmers are high-tech business men with really great records. Today's smaller farm is run by the guy who probably works off



Several signs, like the one shown above, can be spotted along the Iowa River Corridor Project, a large watershed area located between Tama and the Amana Colonies. The Iowa River Corridor Project was a massive watershed project implemented and funded by several local, state and federal organizations to improve water and land quality in a 50,000-acre cropland corridor after the area was heavily damaged by the historic flood of 1993. Local NRCS District Conservationist Steve Johnston was instrumental in getting the project off the ground and running.

the farm at a job like Kinze Manufacturing, and maybe the wife works out of the home for insurance benefits."

When the 1985 Farm Bill was enacted, conservation became more regulatory opposed to voluntary, a change Johnston believes isn't always in the best interest. He remains confident today's farming practices will continue to evolve, with farmers wanting to improve and to implement the best practices both economically and environmentally. He's seen it already, watching young farmers doing things differently from their dads. Farming has a lot to do with peer pressure, he adds, but sometimes that can be a good thing.

Johnston has seen a decline in some conservation programs, while others continue to grow. According to Johnston, national participation in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is down by half of what it was 10 years ago because of federal budget cuts and a high demand for land.

In the last 25 years, the change from owner shares to cash rent has changed today's farming practices, too. Johnston explained that with owner shares in the past, the owner received a share of the profit made by the renter, and he could be picky in how the land was farmed because he lived there. Now, there are so many more absentee landowners owning farmland that they rarely see, so they tend to not care how the land is farmed. Johnston said, "The family in California can say 'farm it hard' because they want that rent check."

"Rental values have tripled over the last 25 years. Land values are high and CRP payments can't keep up with cash rent," Johnston noted. He likened the trend

to discovering gold. "Once you have a goldrush, your town is never going to be the same again. With high demand for land we're seeing land that's never been cropped put into production. Our landscape will never be the same again."

ON THE HORIZON

Steve Johnston has been involved in conservation much longer than the two decades he's worked in Iowa County. Following college, he operated the family farm for some time. Since 1979, he's been a district conservationist with the NRCS offices in Fort Dodge, Skaloosa, Mount Ayr and Sheraton. Like most new retirees, he assumes the lifestyle may take some getting used to. Obviously, he'll take the opportunity to spend more time with his family – wife Lori and sons Nate and Andrew and Taylor. But for Johnston, conservation is in his blood for good. He plans to volunteer his time lobbying for the Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI).

"For nearly 25 years the land owners and farmers of the Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District have been very ably served by Steve Johnston. A one of the five locally elected commissioners, I have worked with Steve and his staff as the programs and policies of the NRCS were implemented. Steve's passion for getting conservation practices on the land will be felt for many years to come throughout the entire county. All of us, upon his retirement, feel indebted to him for his dedication and contribution to the county," added Bob Faber.

Editor's note: Callie Wetjen Wiebold is a former editor of the Williamsburg Journal Tribune.



Photo by Callie Wetjen Wiebold

The Delmar Wetjen Memorial Award was presented to NRCS District Conservationist Steve Johnston at the 2012 annual conservation awards banquet. Johnston is retiring in 2013 after 25 years of service to the community. Above, from left to right, are Larry Wetjen, Steve Johnston and Ron Wetjen.

easement, Johnston's passionate but practical, common sense approach to helping landowners become successful stewards of the land while continuing to earn a living has been a necessary step toward improving the health of the land we live on and the quality of the water we consume. His natural ability to lead is obvious in

watersheds have been included in the state's list of impaired waters due to a number of reasons – high bacteria levels as a result of livestock and human waste, sediment and nutrient levels from agricultural runoff, extensive flooding and land use erosion. It only made sense these watersheds became priority projects for



Steve Johnston was presented with a print and clock by his co-workers at the retirement open house held for Johnston April 26. (Above) Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner Bob Faber, left, presents Steve Johnston, right, with a print at his retirement open house.

the quality and dedication of his staff and the fact these employees make up one of the most successful NRCS offices in the state.

"I've got a great staff doing a great job, technically, of getting things done," Johnston said. He added, "Today, our office is more things to more people and we've tried hard to make sure that our ability to improve water and soil conservation doesn't get watered down."

WATERSHEDS

REMAIN PRIORITY

The Iowa DNR website describes a watershed as the land that water flows across

the NRCS staff.

Johnston said Iowa County is somewhat unique in that a third of the county lies in a flood plain and 200,000 acres are considered highly erodible farmland. The combination of the two has led to significant water quality issues.

"Some of the best cropland in the county is located in these watersheds, so it's farmed hard. It's not farmed any worse than any other area, but it's farmed hard," Johnston said.

Of the watershed projects, Clear Creek, for example, begins near Conroy and ends in an area of urban



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April 7, 2014

2011 IOWA COUNTY CONSERVATION SWCD AWARDS



Price Creek Watershed Coordinator Rose Danaher presents the Conservation Owner/Operator Award to James Schmuecker, rural Amana, for conservation practices applied on his 140 acre farm in Washington Township at the SWCD's annual awards banquet.



Chairperson Robert Faber, center, presents the Conservation New Cooperator Award to Darrell Schafbuch, rural Victor, left, and Kevin Schafbuch, rural Williamsburg, right, for their new terrace and waterway construction work in Lincoln Township.



Courtesy photos

Board member Maria Koschmeder, left, presents the Iowa County SWCD's 2011 Conservation Teacher Award to Iowa Valley fourth grade teacher Deb Hinrichs for 34 years of using creative methods to teach conservation education.

5 honored for work during past year

Several Iowa County residents were honored for their conservation efforts at the Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District's (SWCD) annual awards banquet Nov. 17, 2011, held at the Seven Villages Restaurant in Little Amana. Each year the district recognizes farmer and educators for their contributions to soil and water conservation.

The district's 2011 Conservation New Cooperator Award was awarded to **Darrell Schafbuch**, rural Victor, and **Kevin Schafbuch**, rural Williamsburg. The Schafbuchs received the award for their terrace and waterway construction work in Lincoln

Township.

Iowa City residents **Ron and Christine Amelon**, who farm in Ladora, were awarded the Wildlife Management Award for activities including native prairie establishment, timber stand improvement, tree plantings and a grade stabilization structure to control gully erosion on their farm in Pilot Township.

Property owner **Bonnie Voss**, Williamsburg, and tenants **Todd and Janelle Roberts**, rural Marengo, were the recipients of the Landlord/Tenant Conservation Award. This year's winner serves as an excellent example of an owner carrying

on the family conservation ethic through the efforts of the tenant. The conservation practices on their farm in Hilton Township include hay rotations, contour buffer strips, field borders, grass waterways, filter strips and contoured row crop fields using no-till and conservation tillage systems.

The Conservation Teacher Award was presented to Iowa Valley fourth grade teacher **Deb Hinrichs**, for 34 years of using creative methods to teach conservation education.

James Schmuecker, rural Amana, was awarded the Conservation Owner/Operator Award for conservation

practices applied on his 140 acre farm in Washington Township. Schmuecker's practices include grass waterways, terraces and conservation tillage systems on the upland crop area and wetland conservation practices along Price Creek. He recently enrolled filter strips and built a shallow water wetland using the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).



Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner Doug Roberts, left, presents the 2011 Wildlife Management Award to Ron and Christine Amelon, who farm in Ladora, at the SWCD's recent annual awards banquet.



Iowa County SWCD Commissioner Larry Wetjen, left, presents the Landlord/Tenant Conservation Award to owner **Bonnie Voss**, Williamsburg, and tenants **Todd and Janelle Roberts**, rural Marengo. This year's winner is an excellent example of an owner carrying on the family conservation ethic through the efforts of the tenant.

...DSC's Newest Employees continued

Barbara McDonald

Marion County Soil Technician

Hi, my name is Barb McDonald. I was born and raised in Iowa. I graduated from Madrid High School. I have three wonderful boys that are all grown up and starting lives of their own. My oldest has given me the gift of a grandson that is now two years old.



I graduated from DMACC Boone campus with an associate's degree in Civil Engineering Technologies, from there I went on to work for Polk county Engineers office doing design work and construction inspection. I then decided I would work full time at farming with my late husband, and raise my children. We did row crops, hay, cow/ calf and bred heifers, along with the few goats, sheep, horses and pigs.

In April of 2009 I started working as a district employee for the Marion County SWCD. I was mainly working with CRP but then soon starting working on layout and designing terraces, basins and waterway.

Some of my favorite things to do in my free time are spending time with my family, fishing, camping, walking, gardening or just about anything that keeps me outdoors.

Leslie Osweiler

Iowa County State Secretary

Hi! My name is Leslie Osweiler and I am the new state secretary in Iowa County! I was previously employed as the Iowa County District Technician. I am excited and so thankful for this opportunity!

I was born in Iowa and raised on a hog/grain farm in Keokuk County. After high school, I received my associate's degree from AIB College of Business and transferred to Iowa State University and graduated with my bachelor's degree. Following college I moved to Colorado and worked in the golf industry.

In my free time I enjoy attending Iowa Hawkeye football games, Newton Speedway races, traveling, boating in the summer, and most of all spending time with my family and friends.

I look forward to serving the Iowa SWCD as their new secretary.



Gina Parker

Clayton County State Secretary

Hello! My name is Gina Parker. I am the new State Secretary in the Elkader Field Office. I attended Union Community Schools in La Porte City, IA and graduated from Upper Iowa University with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration. I grew up in Washburn with my parents and four older brothers.

My husband, Jeremy, and I live on an acreage in Clayton County with our 2 year old son Wyatt and Chocolate Lab, Bailey. We are definitely an outdoors family, enjoying time spent deer hunting, fishing and boating on the Mississippi, gardening and trail riding on my horse, Lacey. I've also developed a guilty pleasure of antiquing!

Prior to this position, I worked during college at a bank in the Trust Department and most recently in the Business Office at a critical access hospital. I serve as Secretary on the Kids Kampus Community Childcare Board, a non-profit daycare center Wyatt attends in Guttenberg.

I am so thankful to have the opportunity to work for IDALS. I find conservation efforts fascinating and am excited to be a part of the team!

Please feel free to contact me at the information below:

Gina Parker
IDALS/DSC State Secretary
Clayton SWCD
500 Gunder Road NE Ste. B
Elkader, IA 52043
Ph: 563.245.1048
gina.parker@ia.nacdnet.net



Rebecca Pankow

Winneshiek County State Secretary

Hi. I am Rebecca Pankow, Winneshiek County SWCD's newest State Secretary. A little about myself...

I graduated from Iowa State University with a B.S. in Agronomy, with an environmental emphasis. I currently live in Decorah with my husband of ten years, our five year old daughter and our two vizsla dogs. Hobbies of mine include sewing and family time.

For the past nine years, I worked as a district employee. I am excited for this new position as Winneshiek's secretary and look forward to making a difference in my community.



CONSERVATION *Showcase*



Flooding Victim Fights Back

As many farmers experienced this past spring and summer, it's tough to stay in farming when your cropland floods an average of four out of every five years, says Larry Beyer. He should know. It used to happen to him before 1993, but not any more thanks to state and federal groups working together to reduce the impact of flooding in the Iowa River Valley. Work that still benefits local farmers today.



Larry Beyer stands next to his wife, Nancy, holding the gavel he used as chair in the 1980s of the Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District. The Beyers' worked with NRCS and other agencies to reduce flooding along the Iowa River.

Beyer, 68, farms 1,000 acres with his son Michael and his wife Nancy near Marengo. They grow corn and soybeans using conservation tillage.

One of the agencies Beyer credits for helping him fight floods is USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

"The 1993 flood put a lot of the state's land underwater and severely impacted the Iowa River Valley between Tama and Amana," said Steve Johnston, NRCS district conservationist in Williamsburg. "After the flood, we contacted many affected farmers, including Beyer, to talk about options. One of their choices was to retire flood-prone farmland and put it into the Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program (EWRP). EWRP and the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) are NRCS easement programs which allow farmers to retain title to their land and get a payment to take it out of production."

After the 1993 floods, Beyer and 101 others in Iowa, Benton and Tama counties signed EWRP and WRP easements on 12,547 acres along the Iowa River corridor between Iowa City and Tama. Many sold their residual rights to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

Beyer put 142 acres of his most flood-prone bottom ground under easement. Like some farmers, he used the easement payment to buy land outside the floodplain to stay in farming.

During the easement process, Johnston said many people, including Larry Beyer, asked, "What do you do with all of this easement land? How should it be managed? How should it be used?" Johnston said Beyer was a leader encouraging others to help answer these questions.

CONSERVATION *Showcase*



Beyer helped form the Iowa River Valley Corridor Corporation (IRVCC)—a non-profit citizen group that recommends management plans for the easement land. Beyer said the group talked to many people and looked at many options. “We didn’t want to build more dikes and levees,” said Beyer. “However, we did want to treat the land so it could be used in a way which would improve both the environment and the economy of the area.”

The recommendations called for planting native grasses, trees and shrubs to attract birds and increase wildlife diversity. Land was set aside for public hunting and wetlands were restored to attract migrating birds.

Johnston said their goals changed over time. “We first started with flood recovery work. We soon looked to improve the wildlife habitat for bird watchers, canoers, anglers and hunters. We installed conservation practices and plantings to increase the ability of the Iowa River Valley to store more water to reduce downstream flooding. It wasn’t just one thing, but it was all work to reduce the impact of future flooding and to improve the environment and people’s lives,” said Johnston.

Beyer says the flood waters of 2008 were a good test of everyone’s conservation work. He says they saw a few things that need to

change, but they are happy with their flood prevention work.

“The 2008 storms showed us a drainage ditch needs to be dredged and the county needs to make culvert changes,” said Beyer, “but we didn’t lose money in 2008 like we did in 1993. In ‘93, we lost 300 acres of planted crop. The plants were simply drowned and washed away. In 2008, our old bottom ground still flooded out, but it is now owned by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Our loss in 2008 was not being able to plant 110 acres of ground in the secondary floodplain because it was too wet. That wasn’t just our problem. It was a problem many Iowa farmers experienced regardless of whether the land was in a floodplain or not.”

Beyer added, “We really made some serious changes to the landscape after the 1993 flood. The work we did together after ‘93 really helped us stay in the farming game. That’s why we have such admiration for Steve Johnston and his NRCS co-workers, Iowa DNR and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. We could not have done all of this as individuals.”

--30--

*Dick Tremain, Public Affairs Specialist
USDA-NRCS, Des Moines
February 2009*

**CONSERVATION DISTRICTS OF IOWA (CDI)
HONORARY MEMBER NOMINATION FORM**

This nomination form will be the basis for selecting the recipients of The Honorary Member Award. The Award seeks to recognize an individual who has made a significant contribution to the conservation and improvement of Iowa's natural resources as an Honorary Member of CDI.

The Conservation Districts of Iowa is a sponsor of the award. The following criteria shall be used during selection. It is advised the criteria be addressed in the application by the nominator.

1. Candidate has made significant contributions to the conservation and improvement of Iowa's natural resources (soil, water, air, plants and/or animals) through personal or professional actions. This can be through many avenues such as; education, policy or work on the land.
2. Form is complete and does not exceed four pages.
3. Up to four pages of additional, relevant information is included in the application. Examples might be; news releases, pictures, awards letters of recommendation.

Name of Nominee: _____

• ~~Bob~~ Bob Faber
• Tanya

News Releases

Nominee Contact Information:

Address: _____

Phone Number and/or Email: _____

Nominated by: _____

Nominator's Contact information:

Address: _____

Phone Number and/or Email: _____

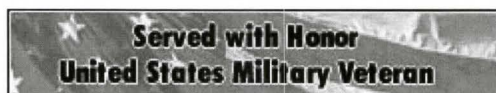
Please complete the following in regards to your nominee. Form is fillable.

Current or past vocation or avocation relevant to this award, you may list several titles if applicable:

Specific work accomplished by the nominee:

Achievements and Awards (if applicable to soil & water quality issues) – please include brief description of each:

Explain what sets this nominee apart and distinguishes them from other possible candidates:



Delmar Wetjen
March 18, 1921 - November 04, 2004
Williamsburg, Iowa

Funeral Service: 10:30 a.m. November 10, 2004 at St. Mary's Catholic Church

Delmar Fred Louis Wetjen, 83, Williamsburg, died Thursday, Nov. 3, at Marengo Memorial Hospital, Marengo, following an extended illness. His family was at his side. Services, with military rites, will be held at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, Nov. 9, at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Williamsburg. Rev. Dave O'Connor will officiate the service. Visitation will be held from 3 to 8 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 8, at Uhlmann-Powell Funeral Home, Williamsburg. Online condolences may be left at www.powellfuneralhomes.com, under obituaries. Delmar Fred Louis Wetjen was born March 18, 1921, in the family home east of Williamsburg, the son of Albert and Emma Sandersfeld Wetjen. He attended school at Immanuel Lutheran. He met Agnes Walsh Wetjen, Parnell, in 1938. They were married Feb. 10, 1942 at St. Joseph's Church, Parnell. He was called into the army in 1943 and completed basic training as a surgical technician in the medics. He felt in order to better serve his country, he volunteered for the infantry and fought with the Third Army, 347th Infantry, 87th Acorn Division, Company K under General Patton. Delmar was a rifleman sharpshooter and fought in several Rhineland, Ardennes and Central European battles, including the Battle of the Bulge, Battle of Bastogne, Battle of Bonarue and Battle of the Rhine River Valley. He was promoted to platoon sergeant, supervising 38 riflemen, leading men in combat operations and training men for replacements. Having grown up speaking German in his home, Delmar worked with the intelligence section while fighting in Germany, crossing enemy lines at night to talk with German troops, urging them to surrender. He received the Bronze Star medal for the capturing of these German soldiers. His company was also instrumental in discovering and liberating the concentration camp in Ohrdruf, a subcamp of the Nazi concentration camp in Buchenwald, Germany. Delmar received the Combat Infantry Badge with Silver Wreath,

the European-African-Middle Eastern Theatre Campaign Ribbon, three battle stars and the Good Conduct Medal. He received a Purple Heart medal for freezing his feet while marching in the Battle of the Bulge. He was honorable discharged Oct. 24, 1945, and returned home to resume life with his wife and young daughter, Carolyn. Through Agnes saving money and Delmar sending it home during the war, the couple was able to buy a farm west of Conroy. Delmar was a true steward of the land. He was one of the first farmers in the area to follow conservation practices, building terraces, laying tile, planting grass buffer strips and contouring the hills he farmed. He did it not because he was suppose to, but because it was the right thing to do. He wanted to preserve for future generations the land he farmed. He taught his sons the importance of leaving back a few rows of crops for the wildlife each fall and he taught them to respect and give back to the wildlife and habitat they hunted and harvested from. Both Delmar and his wife were active in the community. Delmar was elected as Iowa County Supervisor, Hilton Township Trustee and Conroy school board member. He was a Knights of Columbus fourth degree knight and a long-time director at St. Mary's Catholic Church. He was a 4-H leader for many years and an honorary 4-H member. He was instrumental in founding the Iowa County Cattlemen and was active in the Farm Bureau and ASC organizations. For the last 20 years, he volunteered regularly at the Iowa County NRCS office, assisting the field specialists and office staff with conservation projects. He sincerely enjoyed his volunteer opportunity at the NRCS office and considered the staff there his family. His extended family also included the many friends he made as a lifetime member of the Williamsburg VFW Post 8797, where he was also post commander. A quiet veteran, he overcame the many nightmares he experienced from the war through the close friendships he formed with fellow veterans. They were his counselors, his confidants and his best friends. Delmar will always be known for his pragmatic leadership and his self-discipline in analyzing all sides before making a decision. His wisdom and insight was greatly respected and often sought, and it was not unusual to find senators and state officials visiting him to discuss policies and legislation. Most of all, he was humble and a true Christian. He strived to see the best in people and the good in a difficult situation. He gave much to many and he did it anonymously. Family always came first for Delmar and his one great love in his life was his wife of 62 years, Agnes. Their love and devotion for each other never waived - not through the war, or the farm crisis or even when Agnes entered the advances stages of Alzheimer's Disease. Delmar cared for her for many years until it became too much for him to care for Agnes in her condition. It truly broke his heart when she was moved to a nursing home and it became only the second time in their lives, after World War II, when they were apart. Until he was physically incapable of making the drive these last months, Delmar visited Agnes at the nursing home every day, at least twice a day. He was so punctual in his commitment to her, you could set your watch by his visits. Even in his last days, enduring great pain, he worried about Agnes more. His stoicism, integrity, honor and sense of duty will always remain his family's inspiration. And his selfless spirit is only something we can strive to achieve. He will be greatly missed, but he is now in a better place, without pain and suffering, without worry. Where he deserves to be. Delmar is survived by his wife, Agnes, Williamsburg Care Center; two sons, Larry and wife Wanda Wetjen, Marengo, and Ron and wife Sheila Wetjen, Dubuque; one daughter Carolyn and her husband Tom Schwarte, Granger, Ind.; 11 grandchildren Dave and wife Deb Schwarte, South Bend, Ind.; Lisa and husband Chris Runge, Washington, D.C.; Matt Schwarte, Granger, Ind.; Nick and wife Erin Wetjen, Washington, D.C.; Mark and wife Nicole Wetjen, Reno, Nev.; Sean Wetjen, Washington, D.C.; Melissa Wetjen and Amanda Wetjen, Ca.; Callie Wetjen and Rebecca Wetjen, Marengo, Rachael Wetjen, Ames, and fiancé Kurt Braun, Muscatine; two great-grandchildren Coley and Owen Runge, Washington, D.C.; one sister, Shirley McMenemy, Williamsburg; three brothers Eldon and wife Pauline Wetjen, Adrian and wife Fern Wetjen, both Williamsburg; and Millen and wife Nina Wetjen, Minn. He was preceded in death by his parents, Albert and Emma Wetjen, two brothers, Harlan and Richard and one brother-in-law, Dean McMenemy.

If you would like to share your thoughts and memories,
we will deliver your message to the family.

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A WordPress weblog for Benton, Iowa and Poweshiek Counties

Reflecting on 25 years with Iowa County NRCS

by Brathjen on April 30, 2013

By CALLIE WETJEN WIEBOLD

Special to MPC Newspapers

For the past 25 years, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) District Conservationist Steve Johnston has been busy behind the scenes working diligently to conserve and protect natural resources in Iowa County.

Countless financial reports, tedious grant writing and project spearheading has taken up much of those 25 years; but it's been the many grass root opportunities to assist landowners and communities in making practical, yet long lasting improvements to land and water quality that make him feel good about his job at the end of the day.

Johnston is retiring this month; and while he's more comfortable boasting about his staff at the Williamsburg office or the local board of Soil and Water Conservation commissioners he works with, it's quite evident by the lasting imprint he's left on watershed projects and soil conservation efforts carried out throughout the county that Johnston's Gore-Tex boots will be hard to fill.

The paperwork never seems to leave Johnston's desk. He's written countless applications to fund projects as unique as the non-profit Iowa Valley RC&D Council created in 1998, to a watershed protection project that covers over 50,000 acres. Whether it's a buffer strip, a retention pond or a wetland easement, Johnston's passionate but practical, common sense approach to helping landowners become successful stewards of the land while continuing to earn a living has been a necessary step toward improving the health of the land we live on and the quality of the water we consume. His natural ability to lead is obvious in the quality and dedication of his staff and the fact these employees make up one of the most successful NRCS offices in the state.

"I've got a great staff doing a great job, technically, of getting things done," Johnston said. He added, "Today, our office is more things to more people and we've tried hard to make sure that our ability to improve water and soil conservation doesn't get watered down."

WATERSHEDS REMAIN PRIORITY

The Iowa DNR website describes a watershed as the land that water flows across or under on its way to a stream, river or lake. Everyone lives in a watershed and everything we do in a watershed affects the soil, water, air, plants and animals.

Johnston remembers something his predecessor, Harry Bryant, often said, in that it made much more sense to take care of the top of the watershed first. Of the four primary watersheds in Iowa County – Iowa River Corridor, Price Creek Watershed, Clear Creek Watershed and Old Man's Creek Watershed – the latter two begin in the county. All four watersheds have been included in the state's list of impaired waters due to a number of reasons – high bacteria levels as a result of livestock and human waste, sediment and nutrient levels from agricultural runoff, extensive flooding and land use erosion. It only made sense these watersheds became priority projects for the

NRCS staff.

Johnston said Iowa County is somewhat unique in that a third of the county lies in a flood plain and 200,000 acres are considered highly erodible farmland. The combination of the two has led to significant water quality issues.

"Some of the best cropland in the county is located in these watersheds, so it's farmed hard. It's not farmed any worse than any other area, but it's farmed hard," Johnston said.

Of the watershed projects, Clear Creek, for example, begins near Conroy and ends in an area of urban development in Iowa City, where it dumps into the Iowa River. Downstream communities like Iowa City and the university draw drinking water from the Iowa River. It was in 2004 that water samples taken of Clear Creek in Iowa County showed the sewer system being used in an unincorporated community was impairing the water. Johnston procured a \$500,000 grant from the state Watershed Improvement Review Board (WIRB) to be applied toward a viable sewer system. Through a partnership between the NRCS, Poweshiek Water Association and state and county officials, additional funding was obtained to build a rural water system and sewer lagoon system. Today, Clear Creek water samples show significant improvements in water quality.

IOWA RIVER CORRIDOR PROJECT

"For most farmers along the Iowa River, the 1993 flood was the straw that broke the camel's back," Johnston said.

The Iowa River Corridor Project has been the largest watershed project in Johnston's career. The area, encompassing 50,000 acres within 45 miles between Tama and the Amana Colonies, was known to flood. Located in the floodplain and in part, due to channelizing of the river upstream, the area had flooded 80 times over a 40-year average. However, the 1993 flood was much more extensive and had lasted longer than previous floods. Damages were severe. Over 50 percent of the corridor in this area was cropland and crop losses had exceeded \$6.9 million. The severity of the 1993 flood would catch the attention of the politicians in Des Moines and in Washington, D.C.: Something had to be done.

In the past, floodplain landowners in the corridor received flood assistance in the form of crop insurance, price support programs and disaster payments. However, the money was not helping the problem. Regardless of the financial assistance, many of these landowners were ready to throw in their hats. Johnston said it was obviously time for a new way of thinking.

"It was perfect timing for the project. There was a lot of interest by both landowners and legislatures. A lot of federal and state money was allocated for flood recovery," Johnston said.

A unique partnership formed between the NRCS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Johnston met regularly with Jim Munson, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Rick Trine from the Iowa DNR. A solution began to emerge through a series of public meetings that Johnston facilitated. The solution would be three-fold: Landowners would work voluntarily with conservation officials to create economic alternatives to traditional farming; landowners would retire flooded cropland through Emergency Wetland Reserve Program (EWRP) or Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) easements with the NRCS that allowed them to retain title to the land; or landowners would sell the land (at appraised value), plus the title, to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This land would become a part of the Port Louisa Wildlife Refuge System.

The response was staggering. Over 100 landowners – 40 in Iowa County alone – placed their cropland in EWRP or WRP programs, while many landowners sold thousands of acres outright to the Fish and Wildlife Service. Within 10 years of the project's inception, the easements paid for themselves, Johnston noted. Today, the NRCS office continues to receive easement applications from landowners in the corridor.

Johnston admits the project was massive. Taking ownership of the project, he had walked both sides of the Iowa River along the entire corridor, completing field work and collecting data and photos. Right around Christmas in 1993, the lingering cold he was fighting developed into pneumonia.

"I'd been going hard since July. I was totally exhausted, mentally and physically. But I felt good about the project. Between the public meetings and field work and getting to know the landowners and hearing their stories, it was the biggest grass roots project I'd ever completed," Johnston said. He added, "Best of all, it was good to see the government doing something smart. Rather than paying recovery money for cropland that flooded year after year, alternative land uses were put in place. It was a win-win situation for everyone. It was a team effort and I had a great staff getting things done."

The corridor project is the only flood recovery and floodplain management project of its kind in the state of Iowa. A 3,000-acre wildlife management area was developed in the corridor to provide the public with wildlife recreation opportunities. The project area was designated as one of Iowa's key bird conservation areas, as well.

WHS FFA chapter looks to "Thank-a-Farmer"

BY BENJAMIN S. EVANS

bevans@registermedia.com

Ethan Von Ashen, a student at Williamsburg High School and member of its Future Farmers of America chapter, drove his pickup down into a corn field and waited as seven field workers gathered in a circle. Von Ashen began handing out styrofoam containers containing BBQ pork sandwiches, beans, cookies and bags of chips.

These were meals prepared and delivered as part of Williamsburg High School FFA's Thank-a-Farmer initiative.

John Daniels, high school teacher and FFA faculty coordinator, said the Thank-a-Farmer initiative, which provides and delivers dinners to working farmers for three Thursdays, Oct. 10, 17 and 24, was a way for the students to show their appreciation to farmers in the area.

"They wanted to do something to tell the farmers that whatever they do for the community, for the nation, the world, that the students just to say thank you in some way," he said.

Daniels said it started out as an idea for a community service project in an FFA meeting earlier in the academic year. The students, he said, thought taking meals to farmers during harvest time could really help out. Quickly, the idea became action.

For three Thursdays, a group of students goes to the high school and packages meals according to how many farmers have called or emailed in. The students then call the farmers and get an exact location of where the workers will be and when, so that the students can deliver the meals directly to them in the fields.

The meals are delivered wherever the farmers want, houses or fields, Daniels said. The amount of meals

is also not capped per farmer so the students can provide meals for to the farmers and "all the guys and all the gals that work for them."

John Armstrong, the FFA chapter president and four-year member, said this was just a small way for the chapter members to say thanks to the farmers.

"We all just thought it was a great idea to help support the farmers in this area, to say thank you a little bit," he said. "It's just been wonderful, we've got a bunch of feedback from people saying it's an awesome idea and they love it."

Jacob Donohoe, FFA chapter Vice president and four year member, said that the small act of delivering a meal can go a long way to helping out the farmers.

"All the farmers out in the community work really hard all day long and some of them don't have time to stop and make a meal or maybe their family members don't have time to make something," he said. "So we're just helping them out and keeping them in the field, and they're able to eat while they are working."

Donohoe also said he had relatives who worked on farms and knew from experience that this initiative would help the workers out.

"It'll just make it a lot easier," he said. "They don't have to stop, they can just keep on going."

Daniels said this proximity to farming is typical within the high school FFA chapter and that the students brought their personal experience with farming to the creation of the initiative.

"The majority of the students we have here in FFA either live on a farm or work on a farm or some combination of the two, the officer team, all but one or two live on a farm, so they have a very good understanding of what it entails," he said. "We have a number of students in our FFA chapter that will have to take a few days off of school because mom and dad need help harvesting the stuff. So most of the kids have a pretty good understanding of the work it entails and the rigor that is going to happen over the next few weeks."

The first delivery day on Oct. 10 saw around 27 meals delivered out to farms, but the second delivery day saw that number double to over 60 meals.

"The first week the guys didn't really understand that we were going to come to them, that we'd call them and arrange where they were going to be, and thought it'd be too much of a hassle to stop and go get the meals," Armstrong said. "It's amazing how much it grew from the first week to the second week."

But he said he wanted to stress that the chapter would bring the food to the fields where the farmers were working. Armstrong also said he hopes this initiative would keep going every year and keep spreading.

"I think this makes our community grow and I think it will come back from other people. We sent a meal out to a farmer that had a kid from Kirkwood working for him that thought that it was great and he wanted to go back and tell his chapter to go do it," Armstrong said. "So I think we're going to keep going at it and keep spreading the word."

The FFA chapter will make one more round of deliveries on Oct. 24. The chapter said it urges farmers to call into the school so the members can bring them meals.





Photos: (Top to bottom) Ethan Von Ashen hands Mike Von Ashen a bag of chips as part of the Thank-a-Farmer meal; Members of the Williamsburg High School FFA chapter prepare and package meals to be delivered to farmers; Ethan Von Ashen hands Al Rudin a meal in the field where Rudin is working; A group of farmers enjoy the meals delivered to them by Ethan Von Ashen as part of the FFA's Thank-a-Farmer initiative. (R-I) Derek Von Ashen, Al Rudin, Ethan Von Ashen, Gene Von Ashen and Mike Von Ashen.

NpIC photos by Benjamin S. Evans

Conservation groups to host Clear Creek field day event Dec. 10

The Iowa and Johnson County Soil and Water Conservation Districts will host a field day that will honor the achievements of the Clear Creek Watershed Project.

The event is at 10 a.m. Friday, Dec. 9, near Conroy. The field day will also provide attendees the opportunity to view first-hand the installation of alternative tile intakes and discuss their water quality benefits.

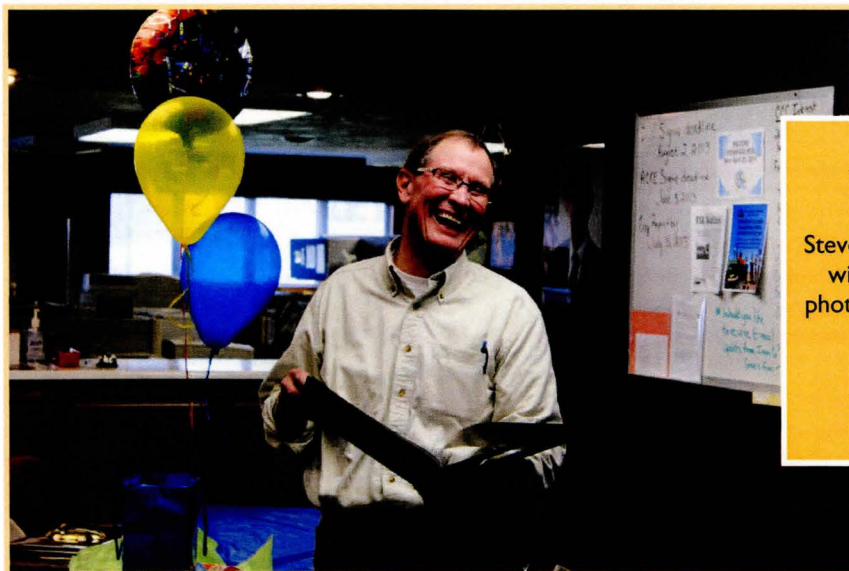
Begun in 2006, the Clear Creek Watershed Project has succeeded in reducing sediment delivery to Clear Creek by 7,851 tons per year. The Clear Creek Water Project was awarded Watershed Protection Funds (WSPF) and Water Protection Funds (WPF) from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship - Division of Soil Conservation, in addition to Section 319 funds from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Agency. With these grants, the Iowa SWCD was able to provide increased financial assistance to landowners in the watershed for implementation of best management practices that reduce erosion and protect water quality.

Bob Faber, chairman of the Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District, stated, "We are pleased with the achievements of this watershed project, and would like to thank all of the landowners that participated to make it a success. We're also excited to provide the public an opportunity to learn about new practices we're utilizing for water quality improvement in the watershed."

An alternative tile intake will be installed above a terrace during the field day, made possible through a Conservation Innovation Grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The alternative intake, which is buried beneath layers of wood chips and rock, is hoped to promote removal of nitrogen from tile drainage water before it enters the creek. Reductions will be monitored and used to calibrate a computer model to forecast if and where additional intakes could benefit Clear Creek watershed. The field day will be held 10-noon at the Stewart Maas Farm, 1852 S Avenue in Iowa County. The farm is approximately three miles north of Interstate 80 and two miles east of Conroy. The Iowa County Cattlemen will provide a lunch.

The Clear Creek Watershed is a 66,000-acre area with three headwater streams converging in Iowa Township (T80N R9W) section 25 in Iowa County, extending 25 miles. Clear Creek flows into the Iowa River in Coralville, approximately four miles upstream from the University of Iowa water intake. The watershed includes 340 commercial farming units, approximately 250 rural-non-farm residences, the towns of Oxford and Tiffin, and 80 percent of urban Coralville.

July 2013



Steve shares a laugh with well-wishers while looking at a photo album created by his co-workers.

Congratulations to Steve Johnston!

Steve retired after 36 years with NRCS on May 3, 2013. He spent 25 of those years at the Williamsburg Field Office in Iowa County. One of Steve's major projects while in Iowa County includes the Iowa River Corridor Project. Steve was instrumental in getting this project off the ground and running. On Friday, April 26 the Williamsburg Field Office hosted a retirement party for Steve. It was well attended by numerous colleagues from Area 5. Many previous employees of Steve's were also able to attend. Thank you to Steve for all he has done to conserve our natural resources!

If you would like to send Steve any well wishes you may send them to 435 North Highland Street, Williamsburg, Iowa 52361. Our staff will forward them on to Steve.



Steve Johnston with Bob Faber (left), Commissioner/Chairman of the Iowa SWCD, after the staff and many well-wishers presented Steve with a keepsake print from a local Iowa County artist.

Submitted by: Leslie Osweiler

July 2013



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Steve Johnston with Bob Faber (left), Commissioner/Chairman of the Iowa SWCD, after the staff and many well-wishers presented Steve with a keepsake print from a local Iowa County artist.

Submitted by: Leslie Osweiler

Iowa County Soil Conservation to offer free testing

The Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is offering free Soil Health Tests for up to 25 participants.

The District will offer free testing utilizing the Haney method. Local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff will take several composite samples in mid-April.

The Iowa County SWCD will host its first Soil Health Test field day this summer, using the anonymous results to

educate others about the benefits of the test. Results are confidential and will be provided privately to the participants at the field day.

The Iowa County SWCD is offering this opportunity for 25 participants to utilize the Haney Soil Health Test. A maximum of three tests are available for each participant – one test per crop or pasture management system. The local staff will meet the participant in the field, complete the sample questionnaire, and collect

the soil samples. This will take place during the weeks of April 7-18. The SWCD will send the samples to Ward Labs in Kearney, Nebraska. The SWCD will get a copy of each set of results. All participants agree to host a field day, should their tests yield one of the top results for overall soil health. The field day will take place on Wednesday, June 25 (rain date of Thursday, June 26). The results will be anonymous, other than the field day host. Only ground located in Iowa County, Iowa is eligible.

The Haney soil health test is a step above the traditional soil test because it allows the producer to assess overall soil health, not just specific macronutrient levels. In addition to analyzing the nutrients that are available to the crop and giving Nitrogen (N), Phosphorous (P), and Potassium (K) recommendations, it also analyzes the Organic Carbon to Organic Nitrogen (C:N) ratio (used to make cover crop recommendations) and uses the Solvita

CO2 Burst Test to look at microbial activity. Balanced C:N ratios and proper microbial activity are linked to higher yields and better plant vigor.

Anyone interested in learning more about improving soil health on their farm or the Haney Soil Health Test and its benefits is welcome to attend the field day.

The purpose of this activity is to increase awareness of soil health and educate our local producers about the Haney Soil Test. The overall goal of this project

is to increase soil quality, decrease soil erosion and improve water quality.

This event is made possible through generous donations by Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS), Natural Resources Conservation Service, Iowa County ISU Extension, Iowa County Farm Bureau, Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI), Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE), Ward Laboratories, Heartland Co-op, and the Price Creek Watershed Project.

CONSERVATION TESTING



Iowa County Conservation offers free soil tests

FARM NEWS

Registration period open for cost-share opens

Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey announced the 2017 sign-up period is open for statewide cost share funds to help farmers install nutrient reduction practices.

This program has been popular with farmers interested in adding additional practices to their operation. Practices eligible for this funding are cover crops, no-till or strip till, or using a nitrification inhibitor when applying fertilizer.

"Iowa farmers are continuing to take on the challenge of improving water quality and this program has played an

important role in helping farmers get started with a new practice on their farm focused on protecting water quality. We have seen thousands of farmers try cover crops on hundreds of thousands of acres through this program," Northey said. "We were excited to have funds available again this year and encourage farmers to contact their local Soil and Water Conservation District to learn more and potentially sign up to participate."

The cost share rate for farmers planting cover crops is \$25 per acre (\$15 per acre for past cover

crop users) and for farmers trying no-till or strip till is \$10 per acre. Farmers using a nitrapyrin nitrification inhibitor when applying fall fertilizer can receive \$3 per acre.

Any farmer not already utilizing these practices will receive priority consideration for this assistance. Farmers interested in cover crops, but have already used this practice on their farm are also eligible for this funding, but at a reduced rate of \$15 per acre. Farmers are only eligible for cost share on up to 160 acres. The funds will be made available in

July, but farmers can immediately start submitting applications through their local Soil and Water Conservation District office.

Farmers are still encouraged to visit their local Soil and Water Conservation District office to inquire about additional opportunities for cost share funding through other programs offered at their local SWCDs. Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District is located at 435 North Highland Street, Williamsburg, or call about information at (319) 668-2359.

AREA BRIEFS

Livestock waste storage open house

Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District, in conjunction with Accu-Steel Fabric Covered Building manufacturer and others, will host a livestock waste storage open house and field day on Thursday, Sept. 15, from 3 to 6:30 p.m. at David Dermody's farm, 3.5 miles south of Williamsburg. The event is free and open to the public, and includes a complimentary meal prepared by the Iowa County Cattlemen's Association. Contact Deb Conrad at (319) 668-2359 x3 or email debra.conrad@ia.nacdnet.net for reservations and special accommodations.

David Dermody is leading by example on his Century Farm by containing the manure that was running off his feedlots and utilizing it as a source of nutrients for his crops. David, and his son Travis, have two hoop buildings that

have the capacity of 350 head. They have a cow/calf operation and utilize the buildings to finish the calves. David and Travis will be hosting a walk-thru tour of the facility. They will offer their experiences, changes they've made, and the benefits of their hoop buildings. David and Travis will be joined by Andy Smith from Accu-Steel, the manufacturer of the structure, to discuss the benefits of the facilities.

COUNTY NEWS

SWCD Awards given out



Each year the Iowa County Soil and Water District (SWCD) Commissioners hold an event to recognize local landowners, producers and conservation professionals for going above and beyond in their roles to protect Iowa's water quality and wildlife habitat. The 2016 award winners are shown below.

COURTESY PHOTO
The Iowa Valley FFA Team is recognized for their second-place finish at the Quad County Soil Judging contest by Soil Conservationist, Eric Adam.



COURTESY PHOTO

Mike Bode (right) receives the Delmar Wetjen Memorial Award from Larry Wetjen, SWCD Commissioner.



COURTESY PHOTO

David and Colleen Eckhart receive the Wildlife Management Award from Vanessa Spratt, Chair of the Iowa SWCD.



COURTESY PHOTO

Jason Steele, NRCS Area 5 Soil Scientist receives the Conservation Education award from Kate Timmerman, District Conservationist.



COURTESY PHOTO

Ruth Beran and Scott Shafbuch receive the Landlord-Tenant Conservation Award from Rob Sproat, State Technician.



COURTESY PHOTO

Kip Ganger receives the New Cooperator Conservation Award from Eric Adam, Soil Conservationist.



COURTESY PHOTO

Galen Yoder receives the Owner-Operator Award from Bob Faber, SWCD Commissioner.



COURTESY PHOTO

Cover crops are part of soil conservation measures used by farmers and others.

Iowa County SWCD celebrates conservation week

The Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District is helping to celebrate the 76th Annual Soil and Water Conservation Week, which runs April 30-May 7.

The 2017 Soil and Water Conservation Week theme is "Healthy Soils Are Full of Life!" as soil is the starting foundation of all the food humans eat.

The week is an opportunity to recognize the important conservation practices placed on Iowa's landscape and bring attention to the ongoing work by farmers, landowners and urban

residents to protect the state's soil and water resources.

Iowa's Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and others provide leadership in soil health, soil conservation, water quality and the protection and enhancement of Iowa's natural resources.

The Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District will be celebrating by distributing trees for fifth graders and

"Healthy Soils are Full of Life" activity booklets to the local schools. "Healthy Soils are Full of Life" activity booklets will also be available at the USDA building in Williamsburg. Producers can come in and sign up for cost share on cover crops.

To learn more about these and other opportunities, contact Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District, 435 N Highland St., Williamsburg, email Debra.Conrad@ia.nacd-net.net, or call (319) 668-2359.

Art entries encouraged for 'Farm to You' calendar

Iowa students are being asked to create and submit artwork for the "From the Farm to You" calendar.

The calendars are distributed by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship at the Iowa State Fair and include artwork that emphasizes the connection between the production of Iowa's farmers and the

products used by people every day.

Students of all ages are invited to submit artwork. Pictures should be drawn using only black lines on plain white paper, 8½-by-11 inches. The pictures should not be colored. They can be submitted to the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Calendar Kids, 502 E. Ninth St., Des

Moines, Iowa 50319.

Drawings must be received by Monday, May 1, to be considered.

"These calendars are extremely popular at our booths at the State Fair and do a great job of showcasing Iowa agriculture. I'm always impressed by the creativity and ability of these student artists as they help educate fairgoers about where their

food comes from," Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey said.

Northey will recognize the students whose artwork is selected to be in the calendar during the State Fair. An electronic version of the current calendar can be seen at www.iowa

agriculture.gov/press/pdfs/2016/FarmToYouCalendar2016.pdf.

Program for women features disease management

Women interested in learning more about agriculture, with a special focus on the production side, are invited to attend the July 23 session of Agronomy in the Field, which will feature a discussion on crop diseases, disease management and fungicide decisions.

Dr. Alison Robertson, ISU Extension and Outreach plant pathologist, will discuss crop diseases and what diseases are prevalent in crop fields this year. This session of Agronomy in the Field will start at 6 p.m. at the Amana Farms, which is located at 3225 Highway 6 Trail, Homestead.

Agronomy in the Field is a multi-session and hands-on workshop being offered to women landowners, farmers, conservationists and other women interested in learning more about agronomy.



So far attendees have been learning more about agronomy by taking a closer look at how corn and soybean plants grow and develop, pasture and forage management, conservation practices, and pre-harvest grain marketing strategies.

This series of workshops is being held monthly between Benton and Iowa

counties during the 2019 growing season, and it is designed to be hands-on and conducted in the field to see real-time conditions.

The door is always open for new women interested in attending one of these sessions. Future dates for Agronomy in the Field are Aug. 20 and Sept. 24 from 6 to 8 p.m.

Agronomy in the Field participants learn more about foliar corn diseases at a recent session.

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The goals of the Agronomy in the Field series are to strengthen agronomic skills for women that allow for better decision-making, provide a better understanding of inputs for crop production, see and understand different conservation practices and increase confidence in communication with spouse, farming partner, ag retailer or tenant.

If you are interested in learning more or wanting to attend an Agronomy in the Field for women, contact Extension Field Agronomist Rebecca Vittetoe at rka8@iastate.edu or (319) 653-4811. There is no cost to attend these sessions and no previous experience is needed.

Agronomy in the Field is sponsored by ISU Extension and Outreach, Benton County Extension, Iowa County Extension, Price Creek Watershed, and the Benton/Tama Watershed Project.



KEEP YOUR PLANTS WATERED,
IT WILL HELP THEIR ROOTS,
JUST LIKE IT WILL HELP
THE ROOTS TO YOUR FAMILY!!

2019 District Poster Winner

KEEP YOUR PLANTS WATERED
IT WILL HELP THEIR ROOTS.
JUST LIKE I WILL HELP
THE ROOTS TO YOUR FAMILY!



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