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Conservation interest is high

10-11-73

Interest in soil and water conservation in Iowa is as high as it has ever been, according to Wilson T. Moon, state conservationist for the U.S. Soil Conservation Service in Iowa.

Moon says conservation progress figures and recent legislative action both support the contention that Iowans, whether they be landowners or concerned citizens, are more interested than ever in conserving soil, water and other natural resources.

An SCS survey shows that conservation tillage, the practice of leaving plant residues on the soil surface for erosion control, increased by 90 per cent from a year ago. One-fourth of the state's corn and soybean land was planted using disks, field cultivators, or some other machine to help protect the soil, Moon reported. Since conservation tillage requires fewer trips across a field, it also conserves energy, he adds.

In 1973, 89 miles of terraces were built in Iowa. If all the terraces built in the state were laid end to end, they would stretch to the west coast and back 18 times. About a thousand acres of trees were planted to help control erosion and give wildlife food and shelter. About 700 ponds were built for the same purpose with added recreational benefits.

Soil survey field work has been completed in 44 Iowa counties, with surveys published in 19 counties. Federal, state and local monies are pooled to make the Iowa soil survey

program one of the most successful in the nation.

More than two thirds of Iowa's landowners are cooperating with Soil Conservation Districts to voluntarily improve rural and urban environments. Most have a conservation plan they use as a guide in establishing conservation measures over the entire farm or tract of land.

"Soil and Water Conservation Week, October 7-14, is a good time to review progress in conservation," Moon says. "I think the record is an enviable one. Yet, there is much to be done—soil and water conservation is a never ending task. With the current emphasis on food production, conservation measures will be needed more than ever before."

The Iowa Legislature recently provided soil conservation districts \$1.5 million annually for the next two years to cost-share on permanent soil conservation measures. The cost-share rate is 50 per cent with district cooperators who voluntarily apply soil conservation practices. Cost-sharing will also be available to meet responsibilities under the Soil Conservancy Act, passed by the Legislature in 1971.

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Moon also pointed out that conservation tillage or minimum tillage should be considered by farmers and a recent survey by the Soil Conservation Service shows that such tillage jumped by nearly 90 per cent this year.

"Our survey shows that 5½ million of the state's estimated 18.8 million acres of corn and soybeans were planted without the use of the moldboard plow," Moon said. "This means that more than one-fourth of the corn and soybeans were planted by some type of conservation tillage."

Moon says some of the big increase in conservation tillage is due to the increase in total acres of corn and soybeans planted this year. "With the emphasis on production, conservation tillage and other conservation measures are more important than ever before," Moon says. "Iowa farmers are being asked to produce all they can, but they must also protect their land."

Conservation tillage, the practice of leaving crop residue on the surface, is highly effective in reducing wind and water erosion. About three-fourths of the corn and

soybeans were planted after disking, or using a field cultivator or some other machine without a moldboard plow. This leaves some plant residue on the surface for erosion control.

Even better erosion control was provided with special conservation tillage machines and methods. The most popular of these special methods was the chisel plow, used on more than a million acres. Other top erosion control methods, in order of popularity, were till planting, 265,184 acres; rotary strip tillage, 147,510 acres; and no-till planting, 110,414 acres.

"The reduction in fall plowing, especially of soybean land, has been encouraging," Moon says, and he cautions farmers against fall plowing this year. Waiting to disk, chisel, or use another method in the spring saves time, energy, money and soil, he says.



What it can do

What conservation can do is illustrated in these before and after pictures. The picture at left shows an area on a farm owned by Mrs. Dale Dixon. Above, the same area is shown after a structure has been constructed.

To show slides

The Davis County Soil Conservation District will show slides of Davis County soil conservation practices from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Thursday in a tent in the Davis County Courtyard during Bloomfield's Barbecue Day.

At workshop

Mrs. Evelyn Scott, a teacher in the Davis County Community School District, will attend the Teachers Conservation Workshop Friday and Saturday at the State 4-H Camp under the sponsorship of the Davis County Soil Conservation District.