

2012-2013 CHEROKEE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT ANNUAL REPORT

314 Lake Street
Cherokee, Iowa 51012
Phone 712-225-3769

The Commissioners of the Cherokee County Soil and Water Conservation District are pleased to present this Annual Report of conservation accomplishments. It reflects the efforts of many individuals and groups working together to improve our environment through conservation programs. We hope our cooperative working relations continue as we work to protect our natural resources. The District is always ready to assist you with any conservation problem you may have.

Along with the landowners and operators in the county, we would like to thank the government agencies, news media, schools, businesses, and individuals that have assisted in the promotion and application of soil and water conservation.

Cherokee County District Commissioners



From left to right: Tom Bindner, Marcus; Russell Winterhof, Aurelia; Brian Mugge, Cleghorn; Gary Otto, Cherokee; and Nathan Anderson, Aurelia. Assistant commissioners Scott Osborn, Linda Bindner, and Pam Pierce not pictured.

Nathan Anderson



Why Should Iowan's Strive to be National Leaders in Soil and Water Conservation?

By Vince Sitzmann, IDALS,
Field Services Bureau Chief

By definition, *Conservation* means to protect, preserve, manage, or care for a valued resource. To quote the great Franklin D. Roosevelt *The nation that destroys its soil destroys itself*. Simply put, Iowa is blessed with some of the richest soils in the world. Add an adequate supply of fresh water and this fragile natural resource allows farmers to produce food that spans the globe, nourishing people from every continent in the world. In fact, Iowa's rich soils enables farmers to produce more hogs, corn, soybeans, eggs and ethanol than any other state in the US.

In 1973, Iowa became the first state in the nation to fund a cost share program to support soil conservation efforts on our private lands. Since that time, countless state and federal programs have been initiated and implemented on a voluntary basis by landowners who spend millions of dollars annually to protect their soil and keep it out of the water. In November of 2012, a new effort was launched in Iowa to reduce nutrient loading to Iowa's waters as well as the Gulf of Mexico. This effort is called the Nutrient Reduction Strategy. The strategy was developed by Iowa State University, the IDNR, and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) and is supported by the major Ag groups around the state. This plan is based on sound science and the implementation of voluntary conservation practices.

Why voluntary? I for one believe landowners are in the best position to determine which practices work best on their farms and in their farming operations. Iowa is a very diverse state, and regulatory policies lack flexibility needed to implement the best practice in the best location in an efficient and cost effective manner. Having said that, it's important that landowners step up to the plate and learn what they can do to address runoff from their farms and take the next step and implement these practices. Success in implementing the Strategy is critical if landowners want to continue making all their own management decisions on their land. The voluntary approach will be under the watchful eye of many around the nation and it's important that everyone do their part to reduce nutrient losses to our lakes, rivers, and streams. In closing, as one of the world leaders in production agriculture, we as Iowans should continue to be national leaders in conservation.

If you would like to view the webinar or read the most current version of Iowa's Nutrient Reduction Strategy it can be found at www.nutrientstrategy.iastate.edu. If you have any questions about the strategy or conservation practices you can implement on your farm, feel free to contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District for technical or potential financial assistance.

PERSONNEL

Commissioners

Nathan Anderson, Chairman	Aurelia
Russell Winterhof, Vice-Chair	Aurelia
Tom Bindner, Co-Treasurer	Marcus
Brian Mugge	Cleghorn
Gary Otto	Cherokee

Assistant Commissioners

Linda Bindner	Marcus
Scott Osborn	Cherokee
Pam Pierce, Co-Treasurer	Cherokee

Field Office Staff

Michael Henderson	District Conservationist
Chris Hogge	Soil Conservationist
Justin Boersma	Soil Conservationist
Julia Gubbels	Soil Conservation Tech.
Tracy Rasmussen	State/District Secretary
Patrick Kohn	District Technician
Amy Crouch	TNC Member

Cherokee County Soil & Water Conservation District And Natural Resources Conservation Service Accomplishments

(October 1, 2012 – September 30, 2013)

Access Control	71 acres
Brush Management	25 acres
Conservation Cover	229 acres
Conservation Crop Rotation	4,048 acres
Contour Farming	400 acres
Cover Crop	323 acres
Critical Area Planting	5 acres
Early Successional Habitat Dev/Mgt	9 acres
Fence	600 ft
Filter Strip	5 acres
GPS, targeted spray application	844 acres
Grassed Waterway	17 acres
Integrated Pest Management	158 acres
Nutrient Management	125 acres
Nutrient Management Plan—Written	1
Plant Tissue Testing & Analysis	1,055 acres
Prescribed Burning	172 acres
Residue & Tillage Mngt, Mulch Till	2,459 acres
Residue & Tillage Mngt, No-Till/Strip Till/Direct Seed	319 acres
Seasonal High Tunnel System for Crops	6,516 sq ft
Subsurface Drain	4,376 ft
Terrace	13,240 ft
Underground Outlet	12,417 ft
Upland Wildlife Habitat Mngt	128 acres
Use drift reducing nozzles	844 acres
Water & Sediment Control Basin	2
Wetland Restoration	2
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment	4,047 ft



From left to right: Patrick Kohn, Tracy Rasmussen, Amy Crouch, Chris Hogge, Julia Gubbels, and Michael Henderson.

2013 DISTRICT ACTIVITIES

- 19 Regular Meetings
- Organizational Meeting to Approve District Policies, elect officers, and establish committees
- New commissioner training
- Conservation Partnership Legislative Day
- Booth at the Cherokee County Ag Show
- Poster Contest Presentations
- CDI Spring Regional meeting
- Northwest Iowa Regional Envirothon (environmental competition for high schools)
- Kickoff meeting held for Development Grant
- Reviewed scholarship applications
- District Tree Sales
- 4th Grade Poster judging
- Stewardship Week - gave Activity Sheet/Placemats to restaurants/groups & promoted it on "The What's Happening" radio show.
- Watershed inspections
- Scholarships presented at MMC and Cherokee High School Awards Programs
- 4th grade posters displayed at the Sanford Museum
- Submitted nominations for conservation awards
- Paid CDI Dues
- Conservation Tour
- District Audit
- CDI Annual Conference

Conservation Tour

The Cherokee Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) held its annual Conservation Tour on Wednesday evening, July 24th. About 40 people participated in the tour this year, which began at the Cherokee USDA Service Center at 4:30 p.m. After introductions the group headed to Cosgrove Farms in Cherokee 7 to see 19 acres of beautiful native prairie ground that has never been turned or grazed by domestic animals. Participants had a chance to look at various species of wildflowers that were previously identified and flagged. Brush management was done in 2008 followed by three prescribed burns. The next stop was at Paul Ehmcke's place in Liberty 17 where participants viewed both a newly established windbreak and an older windbreak. Paul gave some tips on planting windbreaks and keeping deer away from trees. From there, participants headed to Marvin Halstrom and Janice Tjossem's farm in Liberty 11 where they viewed a grassed waterway and a field of no tilled beans. During this spring's heavy rains the grassed waterway and no tilling helped a great deal in preventing soil loss. The next stop was at Terry Meyerdirk's pasture in Cedar 35 where the group viewed a fen that has recently been restored. Kathy Koskovich from the DNR was the presenter and talked about fens and the work that Terry has done to restore his fen. The last stop was at Duane Mummert's The Grainery in Afton 7 where participants enjoyed grilled turkey fillets, chips, beans, watermelon, and bars courtesy of the Cherokee SWCD.



Windbreak at Ehmcke's



Native Prairie at Cosgrove's



Waterway at Halstrom/Tjossem's



Fen at Meyerdirk's

Cherokee County Soil and Water Conservation District

Cherokee SWCD
314 Lake Street
Cherokee, IA 51012
Phone: 712-225-4151 or 225-3769
Fax: 855-233-1296

Contact us about any of your conservation concerns.



STATE FUNDING

(July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013)

Cost Share Funds are used to provide up to 50% cost share for installing practices such as waterways, terraces, and water & sediment control basins. Management Practice Funds are used to provide a one time incentive payment to try no-till, strip-till, or planting cover crops. REAP Funds are used to provide up to 75% cost share for planting windbreaks.

Cost Share Fund

Allocation + Carryover	\$ 53,173.40
Transferred to Management	6,994.29
Total cost-share paid	26,038.07
Total approved & pending	<u>20,141.04</u>
Balance 6/30/13	\$ 0.00

Cost Share - Management Practices

Transferred from cost share	\$ 6,994.29
Total cost-share paid	5,336.25
Total approved & pending	<u>1,658.04</u>
Balance 6/30/13	\$ 0.00

REAP Practices Fund

Allocation + carryover	\$ 20,847.44
Total cost-share paid	14,184.50
Total approved & pending	<u>6,662.94</u>
Balance 6/30/13	\$ 0.00

REAP Forestry/Native Grasses Fund

Allocation	\$ 2,821.46
Total cost-share paid	1,924.33
Total approved & pending	<u>0.00</u>
Recalled 6/30/13	\$ 897.13

Commissioner Expense Fund

(July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013)

These are funds appropriated by the legislature to reimburse commissioners for traveling expenses as well as pay for district office expenses.

Allocation + Supplemental	\$ 2,300.00
Expenses	<u>2,300.00</u>
Balance 6/30/13	\$ 0.00

**Extra commissioner expenses of \$583.26
incurred, but not reimbursed.**

FEDERAL FUNDING

EQIP Funds

(Environmental Quality Incentives Program)

(October 1, 2012 - September 30, 2013)

Funded EQIP contracts in the amount of \$92,133.40

These funds are used to provide financial assistance to farmers for a wide variety of practices including waste storage facilities, livestock buildings, cedar tree removal, terraces, waterways, grade stabilization structures, no-till, cover crops, high tunnel greenhouses, and nutrient and pest management.

Little Sioux Flood Prevention Watershed Maintenance Funds

(July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013)

These funds were collected from the original landowners in the Little Sioux Watershed many years ago. These funds are used to pay for repairs, maintenance, and inspection of existing watershed structures.

Balance carried forward	\$186,010.17
Income (Interest)	\$3128.42
Expenses	<u>\$549.25</u>
Balance 6/30/13	\$188,589.34

General Fund (Revolving)

(July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013)

These funds are generated through tree sales, donations, and coop agreements. They are used to pay District expenses that are not covered by IM Funds and to hire employees.

Balance carried forward	\$17,111.01
Income	\$34,972.19
Expenses	<u>\$35,069.91</u>
Balance 6/30/13	\$17,013.29

CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions are the primary source for financing educational and promotional activities. We would like to thank the following contributors who donated money from October 2012 through September 2013. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.

Dr. Mark & Janice Carlson - Cherokee
Mike & Pam Cronin - Cleghorn
Farmers State Bank - Marcus
Fillmore & Darlene Gustafson - Cherokee
Heritage Bank - Holstein
Jenness Farms - Omaha, NE
Duane & Lucille Kent - Aurelia
Lundell Construction Co. Inc. - Cherokee
Tom & Susanne Oswald - Cleghorn
Gary & Alura Otto - Cherokee
Sand Seed Service, Inc. - Marcus
Schmillen Construction, Inc. - Marcus
Stalcup Agricultural Service - Storm Lake
Western Cherokee Mutual Insurance - Marcus
WHJ LLC - West Des Moines
Scott & Sally Wilkie - Cherokee

In Kind Contributions \$1,539.44
Financial support for program delivery \$27,818.50

The Cherokee SWCD is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.

District Awards Scholarships

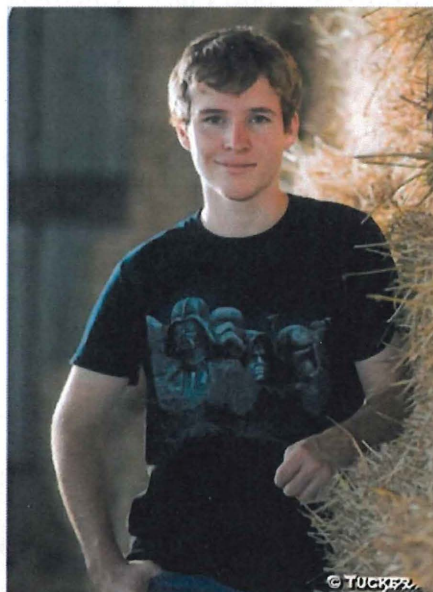
Each year the Cherokee SWCD gives scholarships to high school seniors who will be pursuing programs of study in any field of agriculture or natural resources. Scholarship applications are judged according to leadership (service, character, and self motivation) and scholastic achievement. The District forwards the top scholarship application to the Conservation Districts of Iowa regional director for a chance to compete for regional and state scholarships. Recipients of this year's District Scholarships were Marc Husman and Colby Behrens.

Marc Husman from Cherokee was the recipient of a \$300.00 scholarship from the Cherokee SWCD. Marc graduated from Cherokee's Washington High School in May. His parents are Bruce and Cindy Husman. In high school Marc participated in Football, Basketball, Track, Baseball, Group & Individual Speech, National Honor Society, Speech Club, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. His interests include hunting and fishing. Marc is currently studying Ag Systems Technology at South Dakota State University in Brookings, South Dakota.



Marc Husman

Colby Behrens from Meriden also received a \$300.00 scholarship from the District. Colby is a 2013 graduate of Marcus-Meriden-Cleghorn High School. He is the son of Keith and Deneise Behrens. Colby was involved in Concert Band, Pep Band, Jazz Band, and Quiz Bowl in high school. He was also involved with 4-H and County Council. His interests include reading, running, animals, and music. Colby is currently a student at Iowa State University in Ames where he is studying Zoology.



Colby Behrens

If you know of any high school seniors residing in Cherokee County who are planning to pursue programs of study in agriculture or natural resources please encourage them to apply for the District's 2014 scholarships. For more information they should talk to their guidance counselor or call our office at 225-4151.

Conservation Education 2013: Students Learn about Watersheds

In the spring 4th grade students from Cherokee County's elementary schools had an opportunity to participate in the Cherokee County Soil & Water Conservation District's poster contest.

The theme of this year's contest was "Where does your water shed?" Cherokee County Conservation Board Naturalist, Laura Kohn and Assistant Soil Commissioner Scott Osborn spent time in each 4th grade classroom explaining the poster contest, as well as conducting a short program on the importance of our water resources. These students also learned ways that they could conserve and protect these water resources.

Naturalist Laura Kohn had the kids playing a game, where students pretended to be water in both a protected and unprotected stream. The students learned how various conservation practices like tree planting and grass buffer strips help to slow runoff, which helps to keep our rivers and creeks clean.

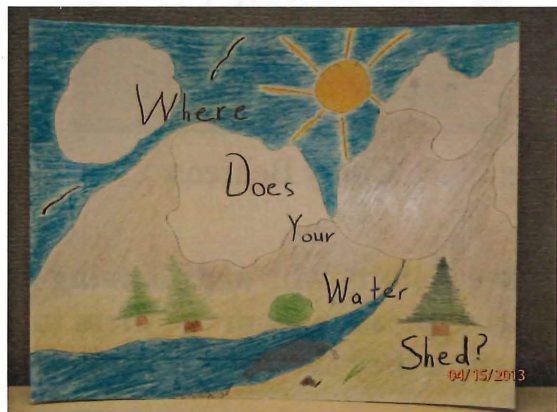
Each school received cash prizes and certificates for their top three poster entries from the Cherokee Soil & Water Conservation District.

Posters were judged on the following criteria: conservation message – 50%, visual effectiveness – 30%, universal appeal – 10%, and originality – 10%.

From Aurelia the winners were Hitszia Munguia – First Place, Elizabeth Kaskey – Second Place, and Elizabeth Gustafson- Third Place. Cherokee's winners were Ekko Kennebeck – 1st place, Rylie Bainbridge – 2nd place, and Madelyn deVega – 3rd place. From MMC the winners were Kristina Goth – 1st place, Brynn Jones – 2nd place, and Mariah Johnson – 3rd place. River Valley's winners were Danika DeWitt – 1st place, Kylee Williamson – 2nd place, and Beau Todd – 3rd place.

Kristina Goth's poster was chosen as the overall winner for Cherokee County and was sent to the Conservation Districts of Iowa Regional Director for the regional competition.

All of the students' posters were on display at the Sanford Museum during the month of June.



Kristina Goth's overall winning poster.

Aurelia 4th Grade Poster Winners



From left to right: Elizabeth Kaskey (2nd place), teacher Mrs. Kate Westphal, Hitszia Munguia (1st place), and Elizabeth Gustafson (3rd place).

Marcus-Meriden-Cleghorn 4th Grade Poster Winners



From left to right: Kristina Goth (1st place), Brynn Jones (2nd place), and Mariah Johnson (3rd place).

Cherokee 4th Grade Poster Winners



From left to right: Ekko Kennebeck (1st place), Rylie Bainbridge (2nd place), and Madelyn deVega (3rd place).

River Valley 4th Grade Poster Winners



From left to right: Danika DeWitt (1st place), Kylee Williamson (2nd place) and Beau Todd (3rd place).

Regional Envirothon Competition Held in Cherokee

The Envirothon is a team competition for high school students. Teams of five students are challenged to use their knowledge and critical thinking skills to conduct hands-on investigations, solve real-life scenarios and answer written questions covering five categories: Aquatic Ecology, Forestry, Wildlife, Soils, and Current Environmental Issues.

The Cherokee SWCD has hosted the regional Envirothon competition for many years. This year 7 teams participated in the event which is held every March at the Cherokee Community Center. This year's regional winner was a team from Western Christian High School.



Western Christian High School had 3 teams participating in the Envirothon this year.

2013-2014 Tree Price List

Cherokee Soil & Water Conservation District
314 Lake Street, Cherokee, IA 51012 PH: (712) 225-4151 or
FAX: (855) 233-1296 EMAIL: Tracy.Rasmussen@ia.nacdnet.net

Species	Size	Type	Trees Per Bundle	Price Per Tree	Price Per Bundle or Pot	No. of Bundles	No. of Trees	Total Price
If you are looking for a species not listed below, give us a call. Other varieties may be available.								
Deciduous Trees								
Male Cottonwood (seedless)	4-5'	Seedling	Bundles of 25	\$2.52	\$63.00			
Silver Maple	5-6'	Seedling	Bundles of 10	\$3.50	\$35.00			
Bur Oak	2-3'	Seedling	Bundles of 10	\$2.00	\$20.00			
Red Oak	3-4'	Seedling	Bundles of 10	\$2.60	\$26.00			
Hybrid Willow	4-5'	Seedling	Bundles of 25	\$2.88	\$72.00			
Shrubs								
Nanking Cherry	2-3'	Seedling	Bundles of 25	\$1.76	\$44.00			
Common Chokecherry	2-3'	Seedling	Bundles of 25	\$1.76	\$44.00			
American Cranberrybush	2-3'	Transplant	Bundles of 10	\$3.20	\$32.00			
Redosier Dogwood	2-3'	Transplant	Bundles of 10	\$2.30	\$23.00			
Common Purple Lilac	2-3'	Transplant	Bundles of 10	\$2.20	\$22.00			
Amur Maple	2-3'	Transplant	Bundles of 10	\$2.90	\$29.00			
Common Ninebark	2-3'	Transplant	Bundles of 10	\$2.50	\$25.00			
American Plum	2-3'	Seedling	Bundles of 25	\$1.76	\$44.00			
Evergreens								
White Pine (1 Gal)	15-18"	Potted	Any Quantity	\$10.00		NA		
Black Hills Spruce (2 Gal)	24-30"	Potted	Any Quantity	\$18.00		NA		
White Spruce (2 Gal)	18-24"	Potted	Any Quantity	\$16.00		NA		
Colorado Blue Spruce (2 Gal)	24-30"	Potted	Any Quantity	\$18.00		NA		
Special Order	Size	Type	Trees Per Bundle	Price Per Tree	Price Per Bundle or Pot	No. of Bundles	No. of Trees	Total Price

All Orders Subject to Availability!

50% Deposit Required on all orders.

Please make checks payable to Cherokee SWCD

No survival guarantee on stock sold at these prices.

Trees will be available the first or second week in April for pickup.

SUB TOTAL	
7% STATE & LOCAL OPTION TAX	
GRAND TOTAL	
CASH/CHECK#	
AMOUNT PAID	
BALANCE DUE	

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Profit from tree sales is used for conservation education projects (4th grade poster contest, scholarships for high school seniors, and yearly conservation tour)

Dear Soil & Water Conservationist:

For over 69 years the Cherokee Soil & Water Conservation District has been helping producers conserve two of our most valuable resources, our soil and water. We believe that soil and water conservation is an easy task that everyone can do and we need your help. We invite you to join our local conservation efforts by becoming a Conservation Club Member for 2014. All Conservation Club funds collected are used specifically for projects like: scholarship awards for high school seniors, conservation education materials, 4th grade poster contest prizes and materials, and our yearly Conservation Tour in which the public views newly implemented conservation practices. We also provide technical assistance in the local office by paying for part-time employees.

As Iowans, we all share similar concerns for soil and water quality as well as protecting these resources for future generations. Iowa is faced with challenges that will impact conservation programs. By donating to the Cherokee SWCD, we can continue to promote, educate, and implement these important conservation practices. Any support you can give to the SWCD is greatly appreciated. And remember, your contribution **IS tax deductible**. If you would like to make a contribution, please complete the membership form below and mail it with your donation, made payable to the Cherokee SWCD.

With Sincere Thanks,
Cherokee SWCD Commissioners

Please make your donation payable to:
Cherokee SWCD



.....

Name: _____

Address: _____

Cherokee SWCD
314 Lake Street
Cherokee, IA 51012
712-225-3769

Levels of Support

Soil & Water Supporter	\$20 - \$49.00	Soil & Water Saver	\$50 - \$99.00
Soil & Water Steward	\$100 - \$149.00	Soil & Water Sustainer	\$150.00 and above

Donation enclosed: _____ **Any Amount Welcome**





.....



Nathan Anderson receives Ken Wagner Award

Nathan Anderson, Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner in Cherokee County, received the Ken Wagner Award on September 4, 2013 at the 67th Annual Iowa Soil and Water Conservation Districts Commissioners Conference at the Sheraton Hotel in West Des Moines.

The Ken Wagner Award is given annually to an outstanding beginning soil and water conservation district commissioner of 5 years experience or less. The award is given in memory of Ken Wagner who was instrumental in the development of Iowa's soil conservation district program. He was a soil conservation district commissioner in the Johnson County Soil Conservation District and was a member of the State Soil Conservation Committee from 1948 to 1961.

Nathan is an energetic commissioner. He is fully engaged in monthly commissioner meetings and state/regional CDI meetings. He actively seeks information on district policies, state and federal programs, and on how the district interfaces with various agencies. Nathan not only fulfills his specific duties according to the District's Annual Work Plan, but also volunteers for numerous opportunities to promote conservation within the school district and local communities. He has spoken at numerous cover crop meetings and was invited to Washington DC in 2011 to lobby and educate politicians on the issues around conservation and water quality. Nathan is actively involved in various committees within the Cherokee SWCD such as the Conservation Tour committee, the Education committee, Awards committee, and he also represents the District at Cherokee's Ag Days. Nathan's personality and attitude serve as a positive influence for conservation upon local landowners and operators.



Nathan Anderson (left) receives the Ken Wagner Award from Johnson County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner Alex Schmidt (right)

Gary & Alura Otto receive award for Field Shelter-belt Windbreak

Gary and Alura Otto of Cherokee County received the Izaak Walton League Field Shelter-Belt Windbreak Award on September 5, 2013 at the 67th Annual Iowa Soil and Water Conservation Districts Commissioners Conference at the Sheraton Hotel in West Des Moines.

Gary and Alura have had two rows of tree species for 31 years. These include Red Oak, Green Ash, Black Walnut, and Black Cherry. There is a 20-25 foot distance between the two rows and a 10-20 foot distance between each of the trees. The whole purpose that the windbreak was planted in this location was for wildlife habitat and wind erosion control. To control weeds, Gary and Alura did some mowing after the windbreak (Shelter Belt) was established. Pruning and thinning activities have been completed annually for the last 31 years.



Otto's Field Shelter-belt



Pictured left to right, Tom Holm (National Director for the Izaak Walton League) and Alura & Gary Otto.

Donna Janssen nominated for Farmstead Windbreak Award

The Cherokee SWCD commissioners nominated Donna Janssen for the Izaak Walton League Farmstead Windbreak Award and she received a certificate recognizing her exemplary windbreak planting program.

Donna's father planted the primary windbreak in 1990 and the secondary one in 1994 and Donna took over the care and maintenance of this large windbreak after her dad passed away. The windbreak is located in Pitcher 17. The primary windbreak includes Ninebark, Redosier Dogwood, Grey Dogwood, Nanking Cherry, Amur Maple, Highbush Cranberry, Red Splendor Crabapple, Black Hills Spruce, Scotch Pine, Norway Spruce, Colorado Blue Spruce, Concolor Fir, and White Spruce. The secondary windbreak includes White Pine, Austrian Pine, and Barberry.

The windbreak was planted for a possible future farmstead, wildlife habitat, and as an Arboretum for those area residents that wanted to see a variety of species of trees and shrubs to help them choose the right kind of trees or shrubs for their windbreak plantings or renovations.

Conservation Reserve Program an alternative to flooded and/or eroded cropland

By Randy Phelan

Farm Bill Biologist, Pheasants Forever Inc.

Flooding occurred along the Little Sioux River, Maple River and many other Cherokee County creeks again in 2013. With the deluge of spring rain, sensitive acres were under water, received heavy erosion or siltation.

The Conservation Reserve Program can provide an alternative to the expense of replanting, loss of crop and decreased yields. Dr. Michael Swanson, Agriculture Economist states that 20% of cropland loses money, 20% breaks even and 60% turns a profit. Corn prices have fallen back to a more normal price of \$4.25 per bushel and some feel it will go lower. To optimize your net income, farm your best land and place the riskier, smaller and harder to farm acres into the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

CRP rental payments have been updated and have risen significantly to be more attractive to potential participants. Continuous CRP practices such as filter strips, grassed waterways and wetland restoration practices have an additional annual rental rate incentive of 20% for some of the bottom land, wetter and concentrated flow areas. Those soil rental rates have the potential to earn up to \$373 per acre. Some CRP practices are also eligible for a onetime \$100/acre signup incentive payment. There is also 50% cost share for establishing the new CRP seeding with an additional 40% Practice Incentive Payment when the practice is installed. The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship may also provide a onetime buffer incentive for land enrolled into the CRP that addresses the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy.

The return of wetter weather has seen depression areas and river bottoms once again temporarily flooded and ponded with water. Fortunately with the return of CRP, landowners and producers in this situation have another option through CRP filter strips, wetland restoration, and State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement to deal with those risky and sensitive acres to farm. The heavy rains also caused many gullies which can be repaired and seeded down with the CRP Grass Waterway practice. Cost share is available for earthwork, tile & grass establishment.

Qualifying lands will be enrolled in CRP for a contract length of 10 years and landowners will receive an annual rental payment based on your soil type. Native grass cost-shared through this program directly benefit the ring-necked pheasant and many other song birds that rely on the food and cover that grasses and wildflowers provide.

To check if your land is eligible or learn about which CRP practices would meet your needs, contact Randy Phelan, Farm Bill Biologist with Pheasants Forever at (712) 229-8274 or e-mail Randy at rphelan@pheasantsforever.org.

Cherokee SWCD approved for WIRB Grant for Gere Creek Watershed

In November, the Cherokee SWCD was approved for a Watershed Improvement grant for Gere Creek – a sub-watershed of Mill Creek. The Gere Creek Watershed spans 17,590 acres northwest of the city of Cherokee; which includes Gere and the lower reaches of Mill Creek. The Gere Creek Watershed Improvement Grant will fund \$299,942 over the course of three years to improve conservation within the watershed. The three-year funding will provide a higher level of cost share for applying conservation practices on and along Gere Creek in order to reduce sediment and nutrient loss. These conservation practices include: terraces, waterways, grade stabilization structures, cover crops, reduced tillage, and many more. This grant will allow the community of Cherokee to highlight the unique and valuable natural beauty and resources in Cherokee County and further advance its goal of protecting natural resources, while maintaining the economic viability and profitability of agriculture.

Although the Gere Creek Watershed Improvement grant does not cover every conservation practice, there are many other programs that can assist landowners with conservation. A program that the SWCD is offering is a \$200 per acre signup incentive for the following practices – contour buffer strips, shallow water areas for wildlife, contour buffer strips on terraces, and cross wind trap strips – through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Each Conservation Reserve Program requires a maintenance contract of 10 – 15 years, depending on the program.

Also the SWCD is offering a one-time \$300 per acre signup incentive for contour buffer strips, filter strips, and field borders through the Buffer Initiative. Applicants will receive a one-time payment of \$300 per acre, sign a five year maintenance agreement, and develop a conservation plan that offers the greatest benefit to their land.

For further information, please contact the Cherokee Soil and Water Conservation District or local Natural Resources Conservation Service at (712) 225-4151 or (712) 225-3769.

