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Fayette SWCD Annual Report

Arlington man is Ruth Wagner Award winner



Joe Wingert was recognized as the Ruth Wagner Award winner. The award is given in memory of the late Ruth Wagner of Johnson county and honors the Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner.

Joe Wingert of rural Arlington was recently named the Ruth Wagner Award winner for 2004. The award was started in 2001 to honor Soil and Water Conservation District Assistant Commissioners. It is given in memory of Ruth Wagner, who served the Johnson SWCD for 53 years.

Candidates for the assistant commissioner award must be nominated for their contributions to accomplishing the work plan goals, involvement in field days, round table discussions, special observations and educational activities. The candidate must be involved in public outreach or conservation education and show a high interest of knowledge and interest towards soil and water conservation.

Wingert, of Arlington, has served as an assistant commissioner for the past five years. He has represented the Fayette SWCD on the Upper Maquoketa River Watershed Headwaters Council since its inception. He operates the district's fabric laying machine and

has done numerous status checks of CRP plantings, while monitoring the water quality.

As assistant commissioner, Wingert takes an active role in discussions at meetings and uses his knowledge and experience to help make decisions. He has shown his dedication by attending 90 percent of all meetings since being with the council, only missing while being out of state. He also monitors customer contracts and deals with buffers and terraces.

Before becoming an assistant commissioner for the Fayette SWCD, Joe worked at John Deere in Waterloo for 32 years until he retired.

Wingert is an Earth Team Volunteer, and is active in his church and other community groups. Over the last several years he has given wildlife presentations at the third grade conservation field day held on the Richard Jensen farm.

The three day event held at the Dick Jensen farm, is held annually for schools in Fayette and

Winneshiek counties. Wingert discusses wildlife with the kids in eight sessions a day and handles animals and birds as part of some of the displays.

On his farm ten miles east of Oelwein, Joe has worked with the ISU Extension conducting experiments on land that is considered non-highly erodible and was the first in his area of the county to do so.

Wingert also installed riparian buffer strips, and to do his part to see more buffers installed in Fayette County he has personally contacted nearly every landowner and land user in the county and explained to them the Continuous CRP.

When asked what the benefits of the buffers are, Joe explains, "I tell people the advantages of the buffers along streams and rivers, and even dry land altogether. Not only do they eliminate herbicides and pollution, but they reduce rental payments of land and property."

Soppe named 2004 Woodland Owner of the Year



The Woodland Owner of the Year for 2004 was awarded to Leroy Soppe of West Union, for his maintenance and management of 28.5 acres of woodland he owns in Fayette County.

Leroy has conducted most of the timber management activities on his property by himself. From the list of his accomplishments it is evident that he really cares about the importance of woodland conservation.

In 1998, Leroy created a written management plan for his woodlands, and by 2001 nearly everything in his plan had been accomplished. Feeling there might

still be room for improvement, he revised his plan, and to this day he continues to build and rebuild the wildlife habitat on his property.

Soppe enrolled 30 acres of his woodlands into the Conservation Reserve Program Wildlife Habitat Program, establishing native grasses that include cedar and shrub plantings, all while maintaining cool season grass plantings.

In 2002, Leroy improved 13.5 acres of woodlands by conducting a weed tree removal program. That same year he fenced 6.7 acres from grazing without any share funds.

To ensure wildlife habitat development, Leroy developed a 1.7 acre stand of cedar trees and manages that area strictly to enhance the availability of cover for wildlife.

Leroy says the addition of new trees is key to conservation of woodlands, and he is frequently planting new trees on his property.

In 2003, Leroy added three acres of red oak, white oak, and walnut varieties. In fact, each year he buys new trees to fill in the areas where old plantings had been, or he plants new areas to add to his woods.

Soppe, cont. to pg. 9

Left: Leroy Soppe stands by his woodlands south of West Union. Soppe was named Woodland Owner of the Year for his continuous work towards maintaining and managing his woods and the conservation of plant and wildlife. In 1998, Leroy created a written management plan, and by 2001 all of his goals were nearly completed.

Strudthoff selected as Owner/Operator of the Year



Bill Strudthoff was awarded an owner/operator of the year for his actions devoted to soil and wildlife conservation.

The Fayette Soil and Water Conservation District has named William Strudthoff as the 2004 Owner/Operator of the Year for his work to conserve soil and stop erosion on his land in rural Hawkeye.

Although he is a retired school teacher as well as farmer, Bill and his wife Marge still work hard in their retirement to prevent land and soil erosion on their relatively flat land that catches a lot of winter winds.

Bill began farming on his parents' farm after returning home from the Korean War in 1954. He and Marge have been married 48 years. While the couple started their marriage as farmers years ago, Bill also received a teaching degree from Upper Iowa University, and Marge has a degree in nursing.

The couple farmed the land where they grazed thirty head of beef cows, and relied on corn, hay, and pasture to supplement the

herd.

Bill took a teaching job at Turkey Valley High School in 1965. By 1978, he decided to rent out the farmland instead. This brought to his land a rotation of soybeans and corn, and the pasture was tiled and cropped.

Over the years, Bill and Marge have witnessed dust storms on their land, that have blown soil across the road south of their house in near zero visibility while driving. Then in 1999, heavy rains washed away fertile farmland, and the amount of rilling that was occurring on the farmland was obvious.

This pushed Bill to start scheming ways that he could conserve his land and stop the punishment the weather caused on his soil. Although the Strudthoffs' land near Hawkeye is considered Not Highly Erodible (NHE), the erosion that was occurring caused the couple to explore other practices. Field windbreak, shelterbelt, contour buffer strips, and waterways were some of the practices they attempted.

In the future, Bill says he would like to create a wetland for wildlife, which would increase the amount of his land considered conservation.

While the Strudthoffs' operations of conservation are great, they credit many other people for helping their cause.

Bill says his son, David, did

a lot of the paper work required, contributing to the completion of construction, and making their goals a reality. The couple also credits their farmstead renter, Norman Gee, who has planted trees and has done other seedings.

They also thank Pat Rochford who rents land and allowed for the contour buffer strips and also farms the land on the contour. While hard work and labor has been done by all, Bill says that good communication is very important and has greatly contributed to the successful conservation

of his land.

Besides the construction of a wetland in the future, Bill says the maintenance of the lands already established will be very important. He plans to continue to pull weeds by hand along the shelterbelt on the north and west sides of his home, because he says it's good therapy.

And finally, Bill's goal in life is to keep the farm a place for wildlife, have good conservation on the land, and keep the land in good condition for the generations of the future.

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From left: Jerry Burrack, Chris Rasmussen, Glenda Campbell, and C.J. Lensing

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The Fayette Soil & Water Conservation District's Annual Report

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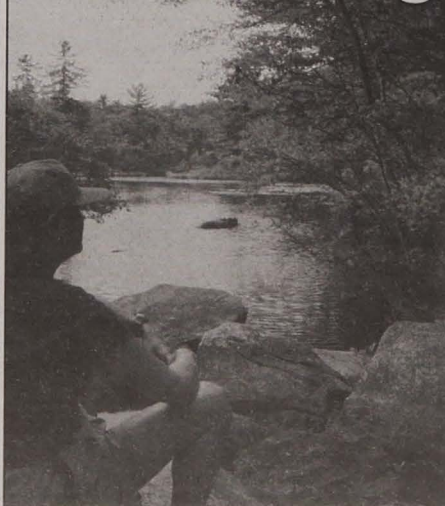
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Sperflage awarded SWCD scholarship

Shawn Sperflage of Aurora is the winner of the 2004 scholarship awarded by the Soil and Water Conservation District.

Shawn, a 2004 Oelwein High School graduate, was chosen and recognized for the hard work, dedication, knowledge, and leadership skills he has shown during school as well as in his community. A dedication to agriculture and conservation were other notable qualities considered in choosing the awarding of this honor.

Shawn is the son of Daniel and Diane Sperflage of Aurora.

As a student at Oelwein High

School, Sperflage was involved in many extra-curricular activities including band, wrestling, drama, FFA, and others. He was in the marching band, concert band, pep and Jazz bands each of the four years he attended high school. In band he achieved being named to Meistersinger Honor Band, received the Outstanding Performance and NEIBA Jazz Festival honors, the Excellence in Academic Achievement Award from the Iowa HS Music Association, and attended the Honors Recital at Wartburg College Band Camp.

Sperflage wrestled for the



Shawn Sperflage of Aurora was awarded a scholarship by the Fayette SWCD for his accomplishments in academics and agriculture. Shawn attends the dairy science/agriculture program at NICC and plans to transfer to Iowa State University to become a large herd dairy manager and operator.

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Huskies for three years while being a team captain for one. While active in drama for four years, he was an actor and a stage hand captain. Shawn also volunteered to work at wrestling tournaments, All-State band, and vocal and speech contests. In four years as a member of the FFA, Shawn was elected Vice President, Treasurer, and an Officer-at-Large. He won a Star Greenhand Award, participated in the FFA state conference for three years, and the national conference for one year. He also placed fourth at state as a member of the FFA District Dairy Judging

Team.

Outside of school, and while not volunteering for his church and community, Shawn has worked hard his entire life for his father, Daniel, on his family's dairy farm. He has done everything from feeding calves and shoveling manure to selecting semen for breeding purposes. In his experiences on other farms, he has learned about hogs and crops, as well as cultivation, disking, baling hay, hauling grain, grinding feed, and spreading manure.

Besides the work he's done for neighbors on their farms, Shawn worked full-time the past two summers for Oelwein Commu-

nity Schools in the maintenance department. His duties included cleaning classrooms and bathrooms, waxing floors, cleaning carpets and windows, as well as outside work like trimming trees and bushes and even pouring concrete for building ramps.

Sperflage is attending NICC in Calmar, majoring in general agriculture/dairy science. After two years Shawn plans to transfer to Iowa State University in Ames. His career goal is to become a herd manager for a dairy operation.

In his free-time, Shawn is a stock car racing fan, and he enjoys movies, tactical video games, and listening to all kinds of music.

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Dallenbach receives Izaak Walton League Windbreaker Award

The Fayette County Soil and Water Conservation District has chosen William Dallenbach as its Izaak Walton League Windbreaker Award winner for 2004.

The SWCD chose Dallenbach for his accomplishments and dedication toward decreasing land and soil erosion on his family farm near Arlington.

Through a continual program of planting trees, superior management and maintenance, Dallenbach has achieved some of his personal goals. He has also created grassed waterways, shelterbelts, and bufferstrips on his property in efforts to reduce erosion.

In hopes of reducing wind erosion and surface run-offs, in only

a few years William has planted a total of 3,526 trees and shrubs over 14.3 acres, covering nearly a mile of land. Each windbreak is 135 feet wide.

Some of the trees planted include Red Osier Dogwood, Eastern Red Cedar, White and Red Spruce, White and Red Pine, as well as Common Lilac. In efforts to obtain control of weeds, each field is mowed two to four times per year, depending on weed pressure.

To assure growth and health, William does frequent maintenance of the trees. He likes to use a gas powered weed cutter for trimming, and he is sure to trim around every single tree. He has

also mulched about 75% of his trees.

In addition to reducing land erosion, William believes in the importance of animal habitat. His trees create wildlife habitat for deer and pheasants.

Regarding weed control and management, he says there have been few problems concerning animal, insect, or rodent disease. However, mother nature is one problem that hasn't cooperated with his conservation efforts. Due to the drought in 2003, he lost several hundred trees. To make up for the loss, he replanted new ones in place of every one he lost.

Besides planting trees, Dallenbach has focused on the fight

against soil and water erosion in farm fields and around his home. William has also installed CRP vegetation strips, CRP grassed waterways, wetlands, contour buffer strips, and a shelterbelt for his home.

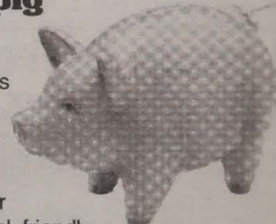
Another way that Dallenbach has been active in soil conservation is as a participant in the Up-

per Maquoketa River Water Quality Project, a council that follows land, water, and animal conditions of the northeast Iowa river. In 2005, Dallenbach plans to continue the maintenance of his trees and land, and to continue to develop new methods to conserve his farmland.

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Straight rows versus contour rows

By Jody Recker

In 2001, I purchased my farm in section 22 of Smithfield Township. I had rented this farm for about three years prior to the purchase. I was aware of the problems that were occurring with erosion.

The farm has a four to five per cent grade with long slopes. I decided to go to the Fayette County SCS and check out the possibility of contour. I went to West Union and talked to Jerry Muff. He made an appointment to come out to look at my farm and discuss the options I might have.

Jerry and LaVonne Koch came out looked over everything and explained to me the benefits that contour would have on my farm.

It was very hard for me to think of trading in my straight rows for the contour ones. After much thought and consideration, I finally agreed to have LaVonne lay out some contour buffer strips.

The first year I didn't seed any grass buffer strips, we just planted it all on the contour to see how I would like it. I did find out that it does take some getting used to planting on the contour rather than in straight rows, but I also realized there were many benefits.

One of the benefits that I had

not thought of was how much better the 12 row bean head works because running with the contour of the land helped keep the head running parallel to the ground. Another benefit of the contour rows, are that they help channel the water to the waterway. In 2003, I seeded the contour buffer strips and was able to get even rows of crop between the strips.

It goes without saying that farming on a contour does take a different thought process that farming straight rows, but once I saw the benefits, I feel that it is sure worth the added effort. Now as I look back over the last two years, I feel that it is very worthwhile in putting in the contour buffer strips. After all the heavy rains this past year, I was able to see the reduction in soil movement. Several areas in the grass strips had sediment collected and but left the soil on the land. It is such a good feeling to know that I am doing everything in my power to preserve the land for the next generation.

It goes to say, that without the help of LaVonne Koch and Jerry Muff and their dedication to soil conservation, this would have never become a reality.



The Fayette County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners are pictured above, from left to right: Collin Jensen, commissioner-elect, Rod Marlatt, assistant commissioner, Bill Bennett, commissioner, Joyce Trotter, commissioner, John Grafenberg, commissioner, Paul Nuss, commissioner, and Dick Jensen, commissioner.

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Judy Bennett Receives National Distinguished Service Award

Judy Bennett, an Assistant Fayette Soil & Water Conservation District Commissioner was honored at the National Association of Conservation Districts North Central Regional meeting in Springfield, IL for her volunteer work. Judy was presented with the eight state North Central Region's Distinguished Service Award for her service as an officer of the Conservation Districts of Iowa Auxiliary, an officer of the North Central Region of the National Association of Conservation Districts, and her many local efforts. Among her many activities within the local area are her hours

given as an Earth Team volunteer for the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, a Reach To Recovery volunteer for the American Cancer Society, hosting several forestry field days with her husband teaching children how to plant trees, serving as an officer of the Illyria Community Church and as the Ladies Aid officer. She is also active in the Elgin Community Betterment Committee and other community groups.

In early February 2005, she received the National Association of Conservation Districts Auxiliary National Distinguished Service Award. Over 3,000 Conservation

Districts located in the states and territories of the USA are divided into seven regions with Judy representing the North Central Region. Judy is the first person from Iowa to be receive the national award. However, NACD has honored Senator Tom Harkin with its version of this award.

The Fayette SWCD congratulates Judy on receiving this prestigious award. The District would also like to say a big "Thank You" for the work she does for the district and the support she has given her husband in his conservation efforts over the last twenty years.



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Evergreen Package			
5 White Pine 12-18"; 5 Blue Spruce 12-18"; 5 Norway Spruce 12-18"	\$55.00	x	=
Nut Tree Package			
3 Northern Pecan 12-18"; 3 Shellbark Hickory 12-18"; 3 Hazelnut 12-18"; 3 Walnut 2-3'; 3 Butternut 2-3'	\$55.00	x	=
Shade Tree Package			
3 Sugar Maple 3-4'; 3 White Oak 2-3'; 3 Red Oak 2-3'; 3 Silver Maple 2-3'; 3 Swamp White Oak 2-3'	\$60.00	x	=
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Memories of a Fayette SWCD Commissioner

By: William E. Bennett

My first memory of doing conservation activities was when we took out all of our interior fences and put in new ones on the contour. In 1953, when I was a high school freshman we planted corn on the contour because my dad's health condition would not allow him to lift the eighty pound bags of fertilizer up to the boxes of our front mounted corn planter. After buying my first farm in 1956, I started contour strip cropping because there was too much erosion with our five year rotation of one year of corn, one year of oats and three years of alfalfa hay. I only planted so called straight rows twice in my life. After the first year, I was able to convince the owners to let me plant on the contour.

I remember when Howard Boyle (a Soil Conservation Service employee and a high school friend of my dad's) came to our farm and asked my dad to run for the office of Fayette Soil District Commissioner. I remember helping Howard lay out our first contours on dad's farm, our farm, and a farm dad and I bought in partnership before dad was asked to run for commissioner. When dad was first elected as commissioner, commissioners were elected at the annual banquet and only people who bought tickets to the banquet were allowed to vote. A few years later, dad was reelected when everyone was allowed to vote for commissioners as their names were placed on the general election ballot. The terms were for six years. The first two times I was elected the terms were for six years.

We discovered that even with contouring, crop rotation, and having switched to a chisel instead of a plow, we still had ditches in our fields. Bill Granger built our first terraces. The Fayette Soil Conservation District didn't have anyone at the time that was qualified to lay out parallel grass back sloped terraces. A Soil Conservation Service employee from Clayton County laid them out. We installed intakes by cutting the bottom out of a ten gallon milk can, taking the lid off the can, and setting it upside down over a clay tile tee. Perforated steel pipe stood upright in the can and was filled with concrete. These terraces were constructed by the cut and fill method. The topsoil was not pushed back, stock piled, and then spread back over the disturbed area like it is now. We had areas where all topsoil was removed. It took twenty years before we were able to get a good crop off those areas. This shows what happens when topsoil is removed by any method including erosion. After I was elected a commissioner, Jerry Muff convinced me that if you shoved back the topsoil and then replaced, you could grow good crops where terraces had been constructed. He was right. I constructed several miles of terraces with my own tractor and equipment.

In 1984, I saw an announcement in the paper that the district was looking for people to run for the position of Fayette Soil Conservation District Commissioner. I had my name put on the ballot. Carl Nus and I were elected. I found out that some things changed since Dad was a commission-

er. When he was a commissioner all they approved were cooperator agreements and hired the clerk who was paid by the state. Belva Bauer, who dad helped hire was still clerk, but she retired shortly after I was elected. As secretary of the district, I took the minutes. We also administrated, set priorities, and decided cost-share rates to be used in estimating projects for the Iowa Financial Incentives Program (state cost-share program).

The Food and Security Act of 1985 required that land determined highly erodible needed a conservation plan. This required more work from district officials. Each new farm bill since then has increased conservation work and required more from the elected officials of the district. Some time in these last twenty years the Soil Conservation Service became the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the Soil Conservation District became the Soil & Water Conservation District. These names do a much better job of defining each of our missions.

After a period without a state clerk, the commissioners along with Jerry Muff, District Conservationist and Paul Valin for the Iowa Department of Soil Conservation (now the Division of Soil Conservation within the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Soil Conservation) were allowed to interview people for the position of state clerk. This position changed to state secretary. Lori Kohlmeier was hired as the new secretary.

When I started as a commissioner, the district sold trees, had a tree planter built by an FFA member, and had fifty dollars that the commissioners could use for local programs. We tried several methods to raise funds so we could do more educational and other things in the district. These efforts were without much success. We decided to hold a conservation education field day for third graders, even if we had to take money from our own pockets to do it. With cooperation from many sources including the Fayette County Conservation Board, the Fayette County Cattlemen's Association, the office staff, Deb Desel, and many others, we held our first event with third grade students from the North and Valley school districts. Since then, we have received wide spread support for our efforts from hundreds of people, who have contributed money, products, and time.

One of the biggest contributions made to the district and the largest single contribution given at one time to the district was Ralph Houg willing the Fayette Soil & Water Conservation District his farm. Ralph knew Dick Jensen and me since we were young kids and felt he could trust us to use this property to teach people how to live in harmony with the land. This has been one of my biggest joys and also my biggest disappointments. We have built a pond, two types of wetlands, a parking lot, planted several acres of trees, planted several acres of native plants, held several forestry events for adults, and have taught a few hundred Valley High School students about forestry. However, we have not been able to reach out and use this wonder-

ful tool to it's full potential.

The district has reached out to find what the people of Fayette County see as problems with our natural resources and how we might solve these problems. We held meetings so that lady landowners might better understand government programs, conservation programs, and farm management of their land. We have led efforts to put conservation on the land by visiting with state and federal legislators to get programs and funding to protect our natural resources. I haven't tried to get someone to do a conservation practice that I haven't already done or been willing to do. The best way to lead is by example.

The district has been able provide many services with computers for the office, software unavailable from the federal or state government when it was needed, GPS units, a utility vehicle, and additional staff. We have started eight watershed projects in cooperation with other districts and have completed three. In 2005 two more watersheds will be completed. The district was one of the first in the area to provide a fabric-laying machine to stabilize newly constructed waterways. Now many land improvement contractors have them. The district has also worked with the Fayette County Chapter of Pheasants Forever to provide native grass drill services with their no-till drill.

I am fortunate to have attended every short course, training session, and regional and annual meeting of

the Conservation Districts of Iowa since I was first elected a commissioner. I have only missed a Fayette SWCD meeting when my father passed away. Judy and I have been able to attend eleven annual meetings of the National Association of Conservation Districts. I was privileged to serve six years on the board of directors of NACD and ten years on the board of directors of CDI. I enjoyed traveling across the state and nation meeting people involved in the conservation movement. I truly believe they are the finest people in the world, because they give freely of their time and resources to try to make the world a better place. They don't ask "what is in it for me?" The six years I served as vice president, president, and then as past president gave me many opportunities to serve and meet outstanding people. I could not have given all the time, money, and effort I have for conservation without the wholehearted support of my wife and family. Not only does being a commissioner not pay any monetary wages it requires you to pay for many things out of your own pocket, but the non-financial rewards are worth it to me. I feel good about having been able to help make the world a better place for present and future generations.

I have also been able to represent the Fayette SWCD on the board of directors of the Northeast Iowa RC&D (Resource Conservation and Development) since it was started. We have been able to help start many

businesses and organizations to serve the people of northeast Iowa. We have helped with trails, day care centers, water quality projects, industrial development, alternative crops, alternative livestock, and many other things to improve the quality of life in the area. The list of ways that the RC&D has helped northeast Iowa is long and varied. If you are thinking of starting or expanding a business or organization here in northeast Iowa, I urge you to contact the RC&D in Postville or your local SWCD for assistance.

I would like to ask you to consider giving of yourself and serving as commissioner, an assistant commissioner, or an Earth Team Volunteer. These are rewarding positions that give you an opportunity to give back to your community and world. I would urge you to not let anyone keep you from voting for the persons you feel will best represent you as a Soil & Water Conservation District Commissioner. Every person that is eligible to vote has a right to and should vote for these positions. At least twice in the last 20 years this right has been denied to many voters in the district. Please protect your right to vote on who represents you.

In closing, I want to thank each and every person in the Fayette Soil & Water Conservation District of the memories I have of serving you. I will still serve you in other capacities to make this area one of best in the world in which to live and raise a family.

Thanks for the Memories!

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The Fayette SWCD would like to thank those who made contributions to the supporter club in 2004. The SWCD Commissioners and office staff work to educate and inform the public of the programs available to them. Below you will find the names of individuals and businesses of Fayette County and beyond who have made our programs possible. Please acknowledge these people for their generous contributions. Through continued conservation efforts, we can all make a difference.

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District activities

cont. from front

In addition to additional plantings, Soppe routinely harvests trees from his woods. In 2000, he conducted a harvest on all 28.5 acres. The thinning of the woodlands yielded 16.5 MBF of mainly walnut, elm, and cottonwood.

The harvest, he says, is an excellent way to rejuvenate a forest and helps the growing process for seedlings planted later.

As a result of the excellent and creative management skills in Soppe's woodlands, the recreational benefits like hunting in the area have increased.

Leroy and his family enjoy hunting in their woods, so conserving habitat for wildlife on the property is an important goal. His main focus involves aesthetics and improving timber quality.

When he is witness to increased wildlife in his woods, it is evidence that his conservation plan has been a success. He says it's great motivation to continue the process of woodland conservation.

JANUARY

- Election of Officers, appointment of Treasurer, and appointment of Assistant Commissioners was held.
- CDI & NACD dues were paid.
- Civil Rights, EEO, and Mutual Agreement were reviewed with the SWCD Board.

FEBRUARY

- Annual Plan of Work was reviewed.
- District Employee Handbook was adopted.

MARCH

- SWCD purchased 2 Compaq IPAQ computers.
- Thirty-two EQIP applications were ranked.
- Spring Regional meeting was held.

APRIL

- Jeremy Bahls, Upper Iowa intern student, volunteered assistance to the NRCS office for field layout.
- The Fayette County Volunteer Group was chosen for the State of Iowa group volunteer award.

MAY

- Mink Creek Watershed Assessment was done.
- Budget and Plans of Operations were submitted for Grannis and Mink Creeks.

JUNE

- Breanna Lenth was hired as a high school intern to assist the field office during the summer months with various projects when needed.
- Don Kamaus, CPA, will be doing the payroll for the SWCD.
- Award winners were selected for 2004.
- Upper Maquoketa Watershed Coordinator will be working in the South Fork Watershed _ time and in the Upper Maquoketa Watershed _ time.
- Budget and Plan of Operations were submitted for the Upper Maquoketa River and South Fork River.

JULY

- IDALS/DSC Buffers Agreement was completed.
- Fayette SWCD received \$28,459 for the 2004-2005 Iowa Financial Incentive Cost-Share Program.
- A new CDI/IDALS/DSC Buffer Agreement was signed.
- Judy Bennett received the NACD North Central Region Distinguished Service award at the North Central Regional meeting in Springfield, IL.
- Fayette SWCD had a booth at the Fayette County fair.
- Fayette County is ranked #2 for contour buffer strips in the state.
- Tree planting also ranked high.
- Grannis Creek Watershed Coordinator will be working in the Mink Creek Watershed.

AUGUST

- Mink Creek 2005 budget was reviewed.
- Fayette SWCD received \$7,940.00 for REAP Practices program.
- Fayette SWCD received \$1,985.00 for REAP Forestry program.

SEPTEMBER

- Fall Regional meeting was held.
- Farm Bureau banquet was held in Fayette.
- The EQIP meeting was held with the locally led group at Kerndt Brothers Savings.
- Upper Maquoketa 2005 budget was reviewed.
- Upper Maquoketa Annual Meeting was held at Backbone Country Club.
- A new Watershed Bureau will be established within the Division of Soil Conservation.

OCTOBER

- Iowa State Forestry Field Day was held at the William Bennett farm.
- Lisa Bahe was hired at a temporary District Employee.
- SWCD Employee evaluations were completed.
- Grannis Creek Watershed Coordinator is working in the Mink Creek Watershed and the Grannis Creek Watershed.

NOVEMBER

- A Turkey River Watershed Coordinator will be hired for promoting CRP in Chickasaw, Clayton and Fayette counties.
- Annual Conference was held in Marshalltown.
- Fayette SWCD received \$2,933.00 in supplemental cost-share for REAP Forestry program.
- EQIP changes were made for the 2005 program.
- The Turkey River and Wapsipinicon Rivers were approved for the Conservation Security Program (CSP) taking in 94% of Fayette County.

DECEMBER

- NACD dues were paid.
- Approximately 155 Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) applications have been signed up for flood damage repair.
- Informational Conservation Security Program meeting was held in West Union.

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South Fork of the Maquoketa River watershed sustains significant damage and soil loss due to flooding

By Tom Sperflage,
Environmental Specialist
Iowa Department of Agriculture

Flood waters raced through the South Fork of the Maquoketa River watershed at least five separate times this past summer, causing significant damage to infrastructure and tremendous soil loss from farm fields.

The South Fork Maquoketa River runs through the southeast corner of Fayette County, west of Starmont Schools. The South Fork confluences with the Upper Maquoketa River in Backbone State Park, and forms the upper reaches of Backbone Lake. The South Fork has a drainage area of about 36,400 acres, 88% (32,000 acres) of which is used for crop production. The communities of Lamont and Aurora are located either fully or partially inside the watershed boundaries.

In late July 2004, the South

Fork of the Maquoketa River Water Quality Project officially started operations with a goal of helping watershed residents improve the quality of water that reaches the River and eventually Backbone Lake. Sponsors for the project include the local SWCD's, EPA, DNR, Iowa Dept of Ag, NRCS and others. It is estimated that the South Fork Maquoketa project will be in operation for 3-5 years.

Below is a photograph from the watershed documenting the power of the flood water and the resulting scour holes. The damage depicted in the photograph occurred over an area almost 55 acres in size. For all practical purposes, this particular field is essentially no longer usable for crop production.

Historically, the South Fork Maquoketa was filled with thousands of wetlands, especially in the floodplain. Among other benefits,

these wetlands helped to dissipate flood water, and keep damage to a minimum. Since the 1920's many of these wetlands were tilled out in order to gain cropland.

So far, landowners in the watershed have been receptive to restoring wetlands back in areas where they were once found. In fact, one South Fork Maquoketa watershed landowner plans to restore 37 acres of cropland to wetland in the spring of 2005. Many times, the Conservation Reserve Program offers financial incentives to do the work. Wetlands are critical to water quality...and they work wonders for reducing the effects of damaging floods.



Above is a photograph from the watershed documenting the power of the flood water and the resulting scour holes. The damage depicted in the photograph occurred over an area almost 55 acres in size. For all practical purposes, this particular field is essentially no longer usable for crop production.

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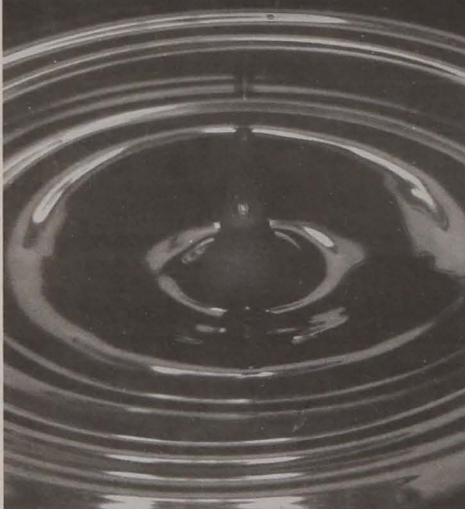
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Fayette SWCD Revolving Fund statement

JULY 1, 2003 through JUNE 30, 2004

District Revolving Fund

Beginning Balance	\$1,480.20
Receipts	
Fabric Income	958.00
Grain Drill Income	408.72
IM Reimbursement	1,500.00
Houg Money Market Transfers	2,043.23
Money Market Transfers	10,864.00
Regional Meeting Income	24.00
Supporter Club	1,124.00
Tree Sales	4,343.15
Upper Maquoketa Reimbursement	821.31
Total Receipts	\$22,086.41
TOTAL	\$23,566.61
Expenses	
ATV	\$334.74
Donations	200.00
Education	2,897.40
Fabric	2,883.28
Gifts Given	40.00
GPS	338.70
Grain Drill	408.72
Grannis Creek	365.58
Houg Property	2,138.63
IM Commissioner	1,383.40
IM Office	123.84
Meeting Expenses	816.03
Memorials	35.00
Office Supplies	1,967.49
Postage	957.59
Sales Tax	959.00
Trees	4,941.98
Upper Maquoketa River	1,582.34
Total Expenses	\$22,373.72
Ending Balance 6/30/04	\$1,192.89
Checking Savings	
Beginning Balance	\$668.48
Interest Earned	3.05
Ending Balance 6/30/04	\$671.53

Grannis Creek Water Quality Monitoring

Fayette SWCD Report February, 2005 Page 11

By Rick Klann
Upper Iowa University

Upper Iowa University conducted initial water quality monitoring on Grannis Creek from April through November of 2001. Monitoring recommenced in July of 2002 and continued through November of 2004. Samples were collected monthly from three sites along the creek. Additionally, samples were collected immediately following significant rain events (more than 0.6 inches of rain in a 12 hour period).

Each sample was analyzed for the following physical and chemical parameters of water quality: temperature, pH, conductivity, dissolved oxygen and turbidity are measured on site, while samples returned to the lab are analyzed for suspended solids, fecal coliform bacteria, ammonia, nitrate-nitrite, total nitrogen, soluble reactive phosphorus and total phosphorus.

Twice a year (May and September), each site was sampled for benthic macroinvertebrates (primarily insects and scuds that live on the bottom). Since different species of benthic macroinvertebrates vary with respect to their ability to tolerate pollution, they can be very useful as indicators of water quality. Specifically, they can indicate input of pollution that may be missed by a monthly sampling regime.

Despite efforts to improve the water quality of Grannis Creek through land improvement practices, the water quality of Grannis Creek declined during the monitoring period. 2003 and 2004 were interesting years in terms of precipitation, both in respect to the frequency of rainfall and

the amount of rainfall per event. Although rain events during the spring and summer were few and far between (particularly in 2003), when it did rain, we often received an inordinately large amount of precipitation. The summers of 2003 and 2004 were marked by a large number of significant rain events in which there were two days or more of heavy rain.

Light rains allow the water to percolate through the ground. This water is filtered before it returns to the surface at a spring or seep. Heavy rainfalls saturate the ground. Any rain that falls after the soil is saturated will not be able to percolate and be filtered. Instead, it flows directly to streams as runoff. Runoff from bare ground strips topsoil (and the chemicals it contains) and carries it to the stream. Buffer strips are so valuable because they can perform the function of filtration, limiting the amount of sediment carried by runoff.

The heavy rains that fell this past summer led to a tremendous amount of sediment introduced to Grannis Creek by runoff. Many organic pollutants (nitrogen and phosphorus) were washed in as well, as evidenced by the increase in aquatic vegetation (normally, nitrogen and phosphorus levels are low, limiting plant growth).

When comparing data from 2002 to that from 2003 and 2004, an examination of individual parameters of water quality produced some striking results. Measurements of turbidity, which are normally less than 10, exceeded 4000 following significant rain events, indicating a tremendous influx of sediment into the stream. On average, levels of phosphorus

were two to three times higher, and measurements of suspended solids were two to four times higher. Measurements of nitrogen also increased, but not as significantly.

There was a dramatic change in the benthic macroinvertebrate community inhabiting the stream. There was a decline in the number of species found at each of the three sites. Many species that could not tolerate the increase in organic pollution disappeared from the sample sites. Those species that could tolerate the increased pollution thrived and produced abundant numbers of individuals at the expense of the less tolerant species.

As far as fecal coliform bacteria were concerned, levels of bacteria tended to be higher following significant rain events, as runoff introduced bacteria from animal manure. It was not unusual for these levels to exceed the limit set for water sources with primary contact recreation (such as swimming). Though Grannis Creek is not utilized for swimming, it does see significant use from anglers who come into contact with water in the stream.

Most of the sediment and nutrients entered the creek through what is normally a dry run that joins Grannis Creek immediately below the spring. This dry run courses through a significant portion of the watershed and only carries water following heavy rain events.

Land improvement practices are the key to maintaining a healthy Grannis Creek. It is clear that additional efforts are needed to reduce the sediment load carried by runoff and to make sure that runoff is filtered of organic pollutants.



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Where Have All the Oak Trees Gone

By Greg Heidebrink

In the 60's Peter, Paul and Mary were wondering "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" Over the next 2 decades, I think we will be asking "where have all the oak trees gone?" The "times they are a changing" and so are our forests. In the Forest Service inventory from 1974, 67% of Iowa's forest resource was the oak/hickory timber type. In the 1990 survey it was 37%. Why is this happening? The answer is succession. Succession is the natural transition of a plant community from an early invader type species to a climax species. We all know what happens to a grass field surrounded by timber. If no mowing or burning is done, in 15 to 25 years the field may look like a new forest. This is the process of succession. In the past, fire was responsible for keeping succession at bay. As we all know there aren't many prairie fires anymore. Our timbers are slowly converting from Oak/hickory to Maple/basswood. Fire keeps thin barked trees like maple and basswood out of the understory while the thicker barked oak and walnut are unaffected. Once a timber gets

to the Maple/basswood timber type, without major disturbance it will never go back. The reason for this is that species like maple and basswood are very shade tolerant and can regenerate under the shade of the parent trees. Species like oak and walnut are not shade tolerant. They have to have full sunlight to regenerate. So you can see that without fire or certain logging practices, Northeast Iowa will naturally convert to a Maple/basswood timber type. This is not all bad, because this community provides beautiful "Cathedral" forests and is a joy to work in. It is very easy to manage this community of trees. The down side is that this reduces diversity in our timbers and is bad for wildlife. There are over 80 species of animals in Iowa that eat acorns so it is important to keep oak trees around.

Recently I was watching a show on public television about the history of logging. The show was quite interesting and I learned a lot about how logging developed in the United States in the early 1800's. As I usually do with most shows about timber management and forestry in today's media, I

found something troubling about the program. They painted a very poor picture of clearcutting. In their defense, logging and forest management was not a very pretty picture in the 1800's, but this does not mean that the management tool they were using was bad; it was the way in which the tool was used that was bad. This is also true in Northeast Iowa. One of the best ways to set back or alter succession is to use harvesting methods like clearcutting or a shelterwood cut (A shelterwood cut is a 2 stage clearcut). A clearcut is not a bad thing if used correctly. It is not the end of a forest but the beginning of a new one. This does not mean that it is the only answer either. There are many things that should be considered before doing this type of management. You should look at the effects that it will have on esthetics, wildlife and plant communities in the area. These effects can be both positive and negative. A clear cut creates very dense and brushy wildlife cover in its early stages and is very beneficial to some species. It may also be detrimental to others if their habitat niche is mature woodlands.

One ways that this can be remedied is to adjust the size of your cut. In the 1800s the size of the cut equaled the side of the mountain, today in Iowa it may be 3 acres out of 30 acres of woodland, or it may be 5 out of 10. It will all depend on the landowner's goals and the ability of the timber to respond. The thing to keep in mind is that clearcutting is not a bad thing. It is a great way for us to grow oak and walnut trees in Iowa.

I get to work in an ecosystem that provides beauty, solace, habitat, clean water, lumber and the list goes on. The great thing about timber/woodlands/forests is that they are renewable resources. I know that with wise management, this ecosystem will be there for my children, grand children and generations to come. I know where the oak trees are, and would like to keep them there for years to come!

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Iowa Soil Conservation Award winner for Fayette County, Bill and Marge Strudhoff

By LaVonne Koch,
Soil Conservation Technician

William (Bill) and Marge Strudhoff started farming on his parents farm in 1954 after Bill returned home from the Korean War. They have been married for forty eight years and are parents of four children; David and his wife, Denise, Paul, Kim and her husband Kelly, and Michelle. Bill graduated from Upper Iowa University with a teaching degree and Marge has a Nursing degree.

The Strudhoffs built a house on the other 80 acres of the farm to make room for the children. When Bill's parents purchased the farm they purchased it in eighty acre plot, first the farmstead eighty. Both building sites are very well groomed. The property line fences are very well kept up and have good weed control.

During Bill and Marge's early farming days, they had 30-head of beef cows, raised the calves to 400-pounds, raised corn, hay, and pasture. In 1965, Bill began teaching at Turkey Valley School and in 1978, he decided to sell the cows and rent the farmland. The farm ground then went to a corn and bean rotation, tiled and cropped the pasture.

Bill and Marge have faced

some challenges over the past years. One afternoon when Marge was driving home, a dust storm occurred. South of their house soil was blowing across the road so bad she needed to use headlights to see. This occurred for two more days. Then in 1999, the area was hit with a heavy rain storm. Bill and Marge saw the amount of rilling that occurred on the farm. This prompted them to get conservation on the land and stop erosion even though the land is marked Not Highly Erodible. They showed interest in several practices, field windbreak, shelterbelt, contour buffer strips, and waterways. They have completed all of these practices and are still thinking about constructing a shallow water wetland for wildlife. Currently, 23.4 acres in Contour Buffer Strips, 5.9 acres in Grassed Waterways and 19.2 acres in Windbreaks and Shelterbelts with a total of 48.5 acres in Conservation Reserve Program.

The Strudhoffs give lots of credit to their son, David, who did the paper work to get these practices completed, their farmstead renter, Norman Gee, who did the seeding and planting of trees, and Pat Rochford, who rents the land and allowed the contour buffer

strips and farms the land on the contour. Bill stresses how important good communication and planning plays in putting conservation on the land.

Bill believes that maintenance on the practices now established is very important. He has hired his farmstead renter who is a landscaper to control the weeds and keep the trees healthy. The shelterbelt on the north and west side of Bill's home is hand weeded not only to control weeds but as therapy for Bill.

This past year with the heavy rains, the Strudhoff's farm was put to test. Bill and Dave drove the farm and were totally amazed at the minimal soil movement and damage that had occurred. This made them a firm believer of these conservation practices that were applied to the land.

Bill and Marge are very proud of their farm as it looks today. As you walk into the front door of their house, there hangs a photo of the farm with all the practices implemented.

Bill's goal in life is to keep the farm a place for wildlife, have good conservation on the land and keep the land in good condition for the next generation.

Fayette SWCD Report February, 2005 Page 13

SWCD financial report

USE OF STATE FUNDS
FINANCIAL STATEMENT
JULY 1, 2003 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2004

IM BUDGET

Allocation	\$1,500.00
Commissioner Expenses	\$1,383.40
Office Supplies & Expenses	\$123.84

3M BUDGET COST-SHARE PROGRAM

2003-2004 Allocation	\$28,459.00
Supplemental Allocation	11,915.50
Total Allocation	40,374.50
Allocated	26,214.90
Spent	10,882.70
Balance	\$3,276.90

2002-2003 Allocation	\$16,979.00
Supplemental Allocation	34,576.00
Total Allocation	51,555.00
Allocated	35,158.79
Spent	8,727.25
Balance	\$7,668.96

2001-2002 Allocation	\$43,659.00
Supplemental Allocation	14,569.00
Total Allocation	58,228.00
Allocated	5,957.50
Spent	52,008.44
Balance	\$262.06

2004 REAP Practices Re-Allocation	\$14,190.62
Allocation	\$7,968.00
Spent	\$12,358.28
Reallocated under 2005 Funds	\$9,800.34

2004 REAP Forestry Re-Allocation	\$375.00
Allocation	\$1,992.00
Supplemental Allocation	\$5,174.00
Spent	\$286.33
Recalled	\$842.17
Reallocated under 2005 Funds	\$6,412.50

2004 Volga Lake Allocation	\$17,187.00
Spent	\$5,597.14
Recalled	\$11,589.86

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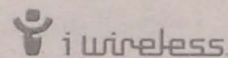


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Fayette SWCD and Iowa SSCC meet with state legislators



Fayette SWCD Commissioners Bennett, Jensen, and Ogle along with Iowa State Soil Conservation Committee member Jodi Kerns met with state legislators in Des Moines. They met with 75 of the 150 members as several of the legislators were in Washington D.C. that day. Among the other legislators they met with and discussed conservation issues with were Senators Brunkhort and Ziemann and Representatives Lalk and Gipp. Pictured from left: Bill Bennett - Fayette SWCD, Senator Brian Schoenjahn, Will Ogle - Fayette SWCD, Richard Jensen - Fayette SWCD, Jodi Kerns - Iowa SSCC, and Representative Roger Thomas.

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Accomplishments for 2004

Practices

Contour Farming	1,396 ac.
Contour Buffer Strips	1,078 ac.
Filter Strips, Wildlife Habitat Buffers, Wetland Buffers	10,507 ac.
Grade Stabilization Structures	2 structures
Grassed Waterways	122.4 ac.
Livestock Exclusion	1,573 ac.
Manure Storage Structures	4 structures
Nutrient Management Applied	192 ac.
Pest Management	24 ac.
Prescribed Grazing	45 ac.
Residue Management	1,156 ac.
Riparian Forest Buffers	23 ac.
Stripcropping	323 ac.
Terraces	9,650 ft.
Timber Stand Improvement	240 ac.
Tree & Shrub Plantings	116 ac.
Upland & Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	1,364 ac.
Water & Sediment Control Basins	3 structures
Wetland Restoration	81 ac.
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	
Total Contracts = 2,147	Total Acres = 26,240 acres

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Amount

1,396 ac.
1,078 ac.
10,507 ac.
2 structures
122.4 ac.
1,573 ac.
4 structures
192 ac.
24 ac.
45 ac.
1,156 ac.
23 ac.
323 ac.
9,650 ft.
240 ac.
116 ac.
1,364 ac.
3 structures
81 ac.

Trout population trend in Grannis looks favorable

Fayette SWCD Report February, 2005 Page 15

By: Carrie Davis, Grannis
Creek Watershed Coordinator

Grannis Creek, located in eastern Fayette County, is a cold water trout stream that has been the subject of a watershed project the last three years. One of the goals of the project has been to have Grannis Creek support a viable, productive, and naturally reproducing population of brown and possibly rainbow trout.

Sedimentation is a major cause of decreased trout habitat, impeding trout populations. Silt will fill up the deep holes and buries the gravel and rocky habitat that trout need. Excessive sedimentation in a trout stream absorbs sunlight causing water temperatures to rise, which can be very harmful to trout which need cool water temperatures to survive.

During the summer of 2004 Big Springs Fish Hatchery in Decorah re-sampled a portion of Grannis Creek open to public fishing. The area was sampled by sending an electrical current into the water that stuns the fish long enough to be caught, weighed, and measured. They are then released back into the stream unharmed.

This same area was previously sampled in 2002 so some comparisons can be made between the



two samplings. For this sampling fish over 6 inches in length are considered adults. There has been a significant increase in the populations of both rainbow and brown trout in Grannis Creek. The number of rainbow trout increased 31% and brown trout increased 26% in the two years between samplings. Overall health, which is based on relative weight, was also determined to be good for both species.

While it is difficult to pinpoint the exact reasons for this increase, the vast amount of conservation practices that have been installed within the watershed recently can claim credit for a large part of this increase. Since the projects incep-

tion in 2002, watershed landowners have worked together to make great advances in conservation. A wide variety of practices have been completed within the watershed.

- 1 animal manure structure
- 2 grade stabilization projects (ponds)
- 60 acres contour buffer strips
- 396 acres no-till
- 328 acres nutrient management
- 19.6 acres pasture management
- 4,222 feet of terraces
- 18 water and sediment control basins
- 4.7 acres of waterway reestablishment
- 1,930 feet of stream bank stabilization
- 2.4 acres wildlife habitat buffer
- 36.2 acres filter strips
- 10 acres of riparian buffer
- 1.0 acre CRP waterways
- over 420 acres have been enrolled into the general CRP program

The producers within the watershed should be commended on the amount of best management practices that have been implemented in this area. Hopefully this is just the beginning of a great future for Grannis Creek.

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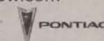
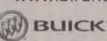
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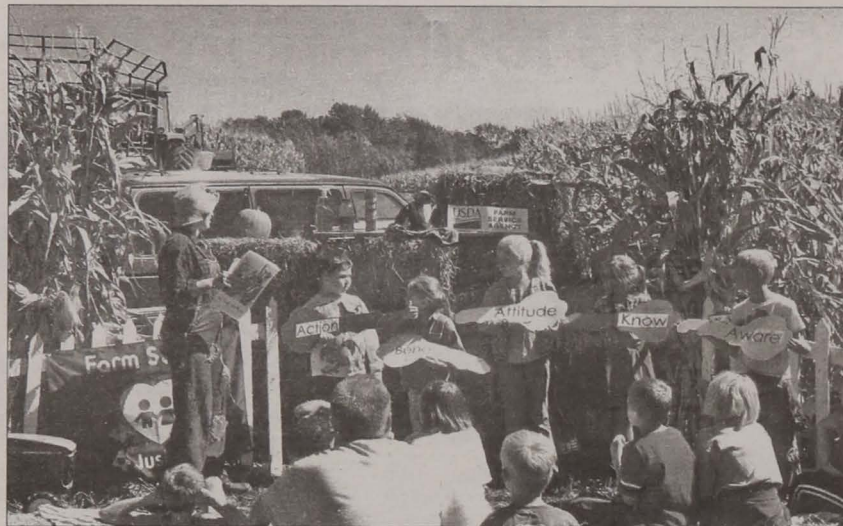
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Conservation Days a success



By Richard Jensen

One of our districts most successful efforts is the Outdoor Conservation Field Days for third graders. If you don't know what event I'm referring to, these thank-you notes out of hundreds written by kids will enlighten and amuse you. Teachers and students alike from all over the county look forward to our annual three day Sept. field and forest educational fun days. The combined efforts of many are the key to the success of this hands on conservation learning program. Nearly 400 kids rotate through 8 stations including Woodlands, Bees, Wildlife, Pond, Soil, Erosion, Recycle and our newly added Safety Skit. A huge mid-day picnic was enjoyed by all

as the Fayette Co. Pork Producers serve those yummy pork burgers.

For many of these 3rd graders it is their first experience and opportunity to gain an understand-

ing of the natural environment they live in. With this early in life encounter with nature the student will grow up with a respect and appreciation for the land.

Dear Fayette SWCD,

It was fantastic to see the bees. I never knew that they would stay on the outside of the hive when it was full of honey. It was funny when the carp fish jumped out of the guys hands and flopped all over the ground! I loved farm safety because the crow was really, really funny. Woodlands was cool because I never knew that the number of rings that were in the middle of the tree was how old it was. Thank you for the delicious pork burgers. That was the best part!

Your friend, Kimberly

Dear Fayette SWCD,

Thank you for inviting us to your farm. I really learned a lot at your place. I had fun at the erosion station. I thought the pond station was interesting. I had a fun trip on the hay wagon. I also had fun at the Farm Safety. I had fun walking through the corn. I thought the lunch was excellent. I had fun at the lines and soil and the recycling station.

Sincerely,
Matthew

Fayette Tops in the State for CRP Contracts

By Jerry Muff and Lisa Bahe

A recent report shows Fayette County to lead the state in total CRP contracts with 2,147. This is primarily due to the high rate of application for the continuous CRP (CCRP) or buffer strips.

The buffer strips are designed to improve water quality which is why they are placed next to rivers, streams or wetlands. They are established to grass, native prairie or trees and are typically 30 feet to 180 feet wide. There are also many wetland development or restoration practices which can be enrolled in the CCRP.

These buffer practices are very effective in filtering out agricultural related pollutants before entering rivers, streams or wetlands. Research has shown that up to 90% of the nitrates and atrazine concentrations moving through the soil solution are reduced by the buffer strips. The resulting concentrations would be well below the maximum contaminant levels specified by the EPA. In many cases sediment is also retained in the buffer strips and kept from moving into our perennial streams.

The CCRP pays annual rental payments in addition to signup incentive payments. These programs have high rates of cost share along with many bonus incentives included with the annual rental payments. The average annual rental payment for Fayette County is \$128.96 per acre.

One of the most heavily applied buffer practice is contour buffer strips. So far, Fayette County has contracts on over 2200 acres which benefit or protect ap-

proximately 8800 acres. These 30 feet wide grass strips are laid out on the contour and alternate with row crops. Therefore, they not only filter the runoff at regular intervals on the slopes, but are effective in reducing soil erosion within the field.

Bottomland Timber is an excellent practice for floodplain areas. Many farmers that encountered flooding this past year have decided to plant hardwood trees to reduce soil erosion and downstream flooding impacts. Timber also promotes carbon sequestration and provides habitat for wildlife.

CCRP also has several wetland restoration and or development practices. Wetlands improve water quality, reduce flooding impacts and provides excellent habitat for wildlife. Establishing wetland areas entails excavation, seeding and possibly breaking tile. However, breaking tile may seem like a big job, the benefits received by restoring wetlands are worthwhile.

Many different options to produce a wetland are available. The first is shallow water areas for wildlife producing excellent habitats. Produced on all soil types it is typically 6-18" deep. The second option is wetland restoration, located on floodplains recharges groundwater. A minimum 20 foot buffer is required. A third option is farmable wetlands pilot wetland located in upland hydric soils not located in floodplains. The average soil rental payment for farmable wetlands pilot wetland in Iowa is \$164/ac. Producing wetlands not only have great soil rental payments, but are excellent for the environment.

Many people in the office have contributed to buffer installation. Joe Wingert and I, Lisa Bahe, are SWCD employees whose salaries have been paid in the past by many conservation partners such as Conservation Districts of Iowa, IDALS Division of Soil Conservation, Pheasants Forever both local and state, NRCS, and Fayette County Supervisors. We have been very active with determining eligibility for practices to producing the contract. Joe Wingert has been an asset to the staff and employed with Fayette SWCD for the past five years. I graduated from Iowa State University in May, and joined the SWCD in October. We look forward to discussing buffer and wetland options on your field.

Congratulations to Bill Strudthoff

Bill Strudthoff, Hawkeye, was named Owner/Operator of the Year as well as the Iowa Soil Conservation Award winner by the Fayette County SWCD.

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An answer to your manure concerns

By Rubyana Grimmus

The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) is helping producers find answers to their manure concerns. Through EQIP, producers can receive a design and funding for a manure storage structure. EQIP is purely a voluntary program so is not connected with DNR regulations. The only requirement with the manure storage structure is the development of a nutrient management plan which is provided by the NRCS staff or a Technical Service Provider (TSP). However, NRCS ensures that all state and local regulations are met with our manure storage structure designs and nutrient management plans.

Jim and Robert Franzen, who

are grain and beef producers near Waucoma, just recently installed a manure structure of their own with the use of EQIP funding. A settling basin and a stacking area were constructed in order to help manage manure coming off of their beef cattle operation. Their reasoning for wanting a structure was to help reduce runoff issues and as a preventive step. They are trying to keep up with the changing regulations. The project was just completed last fall, but they are already seeing the advantages. Jim & Robert say the lot is easier to clean and has flexibility in field application. The manure can be stacked for a later use or hauled directly to the field depending on need. The Franzen Brothers have



Jim and Bob Franzen, cattlemen south of Waucoma, installed a manure storage basin last fall to help control the run off from the cattle lots. The Franzen farm was selected to work with the JOXX program because of its proximity to the Turkey River and to a sink hole downhill from the lots. This spring will be the first real test of the system. As part of the program Franzens have agreed to share their records on yields, manure and soil testing over the next five years. The manure and run off is directed at the upper basin and towards the filter. The lower basin stores the solid deposits until it can be spread in the field.

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improved their cattle operation with the use of EQIP funding.

EQIP program offers many advantages to a livestock operation since it provides funding, assistance, and benefits to the landowner. For manure storage structures cost share is 50% up to \$50,000.

Assistance can be provided for recommendations and design of structures. Structures included are storage tanks, settling basins, stacking areas, and compost facilities. The benefits to a landowner vary depending upon the site, but some common ones are flexibility

in application, easier to clean, and longer storage. If you have a livestock operation and are concerned with you manure management then EQIP may be the answer for you. Contact the NRCS office if interested or if you need more information about EQIP manure storage structures.

Keeping residue where it belongs

By Dan Burkhart, Fayette
County Extension
Education Director

It has taken years, but Fayette County farmers are using less tillage than ever before. Years of research have proven that soybeans don't care what kind of tillage farm operator's use. Yields tend to be equal across the board. More corn is being no-till planted in soybean residue every year. This is good. However, even with everything being good, we encounter a new set of problems that we have to deal with. We used to be concerned with ditches filled with soil, and in some areas, we still are. In areas where no-till farming has gained acceptance, soil filled ditches after a "gully washer" are now filled with cornstalks. County road crews are now pushing stalks off of roads and cleaning stalk piles out of culverts. Farmers, NRCS employees, as well as County Supervisors are receiving complaints about the mess.

It's time to put a few things in

perspective. Which is better: several hundred tons of topsoil lost off a field forever and the county having to clean this valuable soil out of culverts and ditches, or most of the topsoil staying in place and having to clean up stalk residue? Just think how much worse soil loss would have been without all the corn stalk residue. However, it is still a concern that we need to address.

There are ways to keep corn stalks in the field where they belong. Here are just a few things that farm operators should think about:

- don't chop your stalks. It consumes a lot of time, energy, and machinery expense. Stalks will break down quickly enough on their own. Most equipment can or has been modified to handle more residue. Cut off stalks will float.

- use no-till planters that don't cut residue or loosen up the top 2-3 inches of soil across the whole width of the planter. We have seen whole layers of disturbed soil

moving off fields, along with most of the residue.

- consider using strip till planters that are designed to plant into a 4 inch strips of tilled soil without cutting the cornstalks. This is ideal. Undisturbed vertical residue will not lift and float.

- the most valuable residue is residue that stays in place. It does you no good in the ditch or plugging a culvert.

In summary- no-till is not just no-till anymore. There are many different types of no-till. It's time to pick the method that leaves the residue in the field, along with your valuable topsoil. It CAN be done. It IS BEING DONE by more Fayette county farmers every year.

ISU Extension and your Fayette County Soil District Commissioners are planning a residue management field day this spring. Be watching for more information. Quality Iowa Water-It's Our Future!

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Large equipment-grassed contour buffer strips

By LaVonne Koch,
Soil Conservation Technician

We can't do that, it won't work! Contour buffer strips with twelve row or larger equipment.

How many farmers farming ten years ago, said I'd never work on a computer, use GPS or use equipment of twelve rows or more? Times change, technology changed and farming has changed!

As you drive the County one can see the changes that have occurred. Fences removed, larger fields, fewer trees; less livestock, less hay, more corn and beans; fewer moldboard plowed fields, more mulch tillage and no-tilled fields.

If you have adapted to any one of these changes, you can also adapt to contouring or grass contour buffer strips. Look at the benefits you are putting on the land. On cropland where sheet and rill erosion are problems, contour buffer strips are an excellent filter for runoff and will improve surface water quality. Contour buffer strips slow runoff and trap sediment. Grass strips established on the contour can significantly reduce sheet and rill erosion. Sediment, nutrients, pesticides and other contaminants are removed from the runoff as they pass through the buffer strip. Grass strips also provide food and nesting cover for wildlife.

You may say I don't have sheet and rill erosion. Rill erosion is common on agricultural land lacking permanent vegetation. Following rainfall in cropped fields after tillage, rill erosion occurs. Muddy runoff also indicates high sediment loss. The main agent of

soil erosion is water and wind. The amount of soil carried away is related to two factors; speed of water, the faster it moves the more velocity water picks up and the more soil is lost, and plant cover, plants protect the soil and in their absence wind and water can do much more damage. Take a soil probe or dig a hole on the top of the hill and check the depth of top soil. Do the same at the bottom or lower part of the field. Compare the amount of top soil left on top with that at the bottom. If you find more top soil at the bottom, you have had erosion. The loss of top soil and nutrients reduces productivity greatly.

In some cases prior to layout, landowners may consider making changes in field boundaries to improve the effectiveness of the contour buffer strips and help with the farmability of the row crop. Buffer strips are laid out to best facilitate operation of all machinery and still meet the NRCS standards and specifications.

Grassed contour buffer strip widths vary depending on the slope length and whether the producer enrolls them in the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP). For hay in your operation, the grassed contour buffer strips widths vary from fifteen to sixty feet. For CCRP, the grassed strips vary from fifteen to thirty feet with the bottom buffer strip eligible to be sixty feet wide.

In order to reduce rill and sheet erosion on any slope of ground and improve water quality, consider adding grassed contour buffer strip to your land.

Conservation Security Program (CSP) is coming to town

By Jerry Muff

The CSP is a relatively new voluntary program with 2004 being the first year for 18 watersheds nationally. This year CSP is approved for 202 watersheds. It is designed to reward farmers who have developed ongoing, high levels of environmental stewardship on working land. CSP helps producers maintain and further their conservation commitment plus is an incentive for others to follow the example.

The CSP has been approved in four watersheds in the state of Iowa, two of which include Fayette County. These watersheds are the Turkey River and the Upper Wapsipinicon River Watersheds. They cover 95% of Fayette County. The program will be available and active this year. Signup time has not been announced yet, but is planned for later this winter or early spring.

CSP provides financial assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal resources within the selected watersheds. The program will affect primarily cropland and pastureland. The benefit will be for producers who have already been implementing good stewardship practices plus acts as an incentive for others to improve their operations to eventually enroll into the program.

Interest in this program is high. The early announcement of this program has generated a lot of questions to our office. At this time we have a basic understanding of the program but the final rules have not been made available to us. Consequently we are not able to answer many of the specific questions. By printing time of this report, we may know a lot more.

A series of public day and night meetings will be held in West Union and Oelwein plus additional towns not far from Fayette County borders.

Applicants will be asked to fill out self-assessment forms regarding their management which affects soil and water resources at a minimum. For example, crop rotation, residue management, nutrient management, pesticide application and management will be needed during the signup time period. It

has been made clear that farmers can begin to pull records and receipts together. Records requested will include soil tests within four year time frame, all forms of fertilizers including manure and pesticides applied for the past two years for the farming operation.

The self-assessment is available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp>. Additional information will be required for our local watersheds but they are not yet available. NRCS will determine which program tier and enrollment category the applicant may participate. Payments will be made in part based on the tier level the participant is enrolled. There are three tier levels. Tier I has a five year contract with maximum payment of \$20,000 annually. Tier II has five to ten year contracts with maximum payment of \$35,000 annually. Tier III has five to ten year contract with maximum payment of \$45,000 annually.

The following article entitled "Talking Points" may help to answer more questions.

2005 CSP Talking Points

1. When can I sign up?

The sign up will be announced after the final rule is released, sometime in the next month or so. This signup period will likely last 30 days or less.

2. How do I sign up?

The process will begin with a self-assessment. This tool can be accessed on the NRCS web site, as a CD, or as a hard copy workbook at field offices. Producers in the watershed will have an opportunity to attend workshops in their neighborhood to help guide them through the self assessment process. You will be notified through the media and a letter when the workshops will be held.

After a producer determines,

through use of the self-assessment, that he or she qualifies for the program NRCS will conduct a follow-up interview to complete the enrollment process. The producer will be required to bring a benchmark inventory of conservation practices, the completed assessment as well as all records and documentation that support the assessment, to the interview.

It is likely the signup process for producers will take 5 to 8 hours of producer time. This includes completing the assessment, gathering farm and production records, and conducting the interview with NRCS field staff.

3. How will applications be funded?

If implemented like last year, all eligible applications will be forwarded to Washington DC where NRCS headquarters will make the selection on which categories of applications are funded. After this contract will be written for funded applications

4. How much money can I get?

The size of your contract is determined by how much of your farm you enroll and the type of conservation practices you have installed and the management practices you follow. The most anyone can receive for CSP by law is \$45,000 per year. Last year the average CSP contract in Iowa was around \$9,000.

5. What if I don't qualify?

Through the self assessment process, producers should learn what natural resource concerns need to be addressed in order to qualify for the program or qualify at a higher payment level. Through conservation planning assistance from NRCS, these producers can make the necessary changes and improvements to qualify for the program in the future.



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Conservation Security Program

By Dave Brommel

The new Conservation Security Program (CSP) was announced this past fall. Northeast Iowa had the largest amount of area approved for the CSP program in the state. There were two separate watersheds approved in northeast Iowa, the Turkey River Watershed and the Upper Wapsipinicon River Watershed. These two watersheds run parallel to each other. The Upper Wapsipinicon River Watershed starts just across the Minnesota border and runs south to the dam at Anamosa.

No dates have been set for the upcoming signup period at this time. When the signup dates are announced meetings will be organized to provide information about eligibility requirements and opportunities provided by the CSP program. The CSP program is designed to reward those that are currently practicing good stewardship in their farming operation. A common quote from the US Secretary of Agriculture is the CSP program is meant to "Reward the Best and Motivate the Rest".

Activity has been ongoing for a few months to prepare for the upcoming CSP signup. It has been decided that the program will be offered with the same requirements for both watersheds. This will

maintain consistency throughout for all of Northeast Iowa. There are 15 counties involved in the 2 watersheds. The counties and amount of acres involved are:

Fayette	433,524 acres
Clayton	363,560 acres
Chickasaw	270,450 acres
Buchanan	241,130 acres
Howard	212,606 acres
Bremer	151,332 acres
Winneshiek	131,812 acres
Linn	96,831 acres
Delaware	65,595 acres
Black Hawk	39,430 acres
Mitchell	33,639 acres
Jones	23,369 acres
Dubuque	7,560 acres
Floyd	1,931 acres
Allamakee	819 acres

In December four separate meetings were held within the two watersheds for Ag Partners. The meetings were to help prepare the Partners for the types of questions and requests producers may have during the signup period. Natural Resources Conservation Service staff is currently being trained on program requirements to prepare for the upcoming signup.

Please watch for announcements about signup and meeting dates.

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NEW LISTING: Section 22 of Illyria Township - 115.65 acres, 73.4 tillable (62.9 in CRP), balance timber/pasture; spring. Deer & turkey hunting potential; scenic area.

Sections 5 & 6 of Pleasant Valley Township - 40.22 acres, 23.2 CRP, balance pasture with pond. Building site potential located on paved road.

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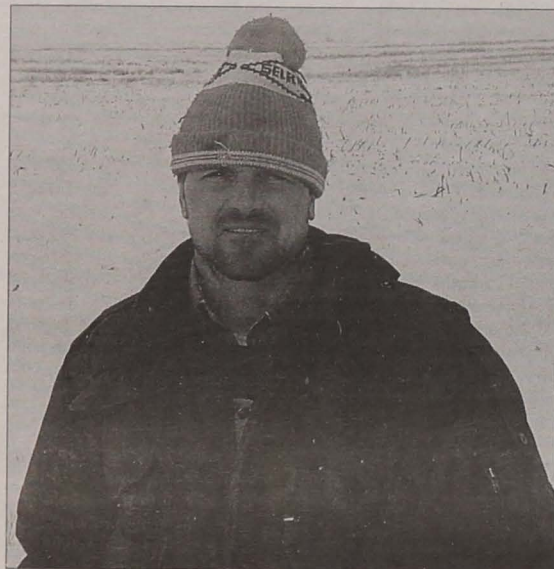
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Rand Rod Farms earns Watershed Achievement Award



Randy Hamlett pictured, standing in front of one of the fields that he has made conservation improvements to.

The Watershed Achievement Award of 2004 was earned by Rand Rod Farms LLC of rural Arlington.

Randy and Rodney Hamlett, and their father Charles, are the owners/operators of Rand Rod Farms, located in rural Arlington near the Maquoketa River.

Rand Rod was nominated for its demonstration and appreciation of interdisciplinary approach to resource management and the im-

portance of watersheds in relation to community needs.

Joint sponsors of the award are the Conservation District of Iowa and the State Soil Conservation Committee.

The Hamletts' farm operation consists of dairying, crop farming including hay, corn, and soybeans.

"Controlling runoff and maintaining soil is very important to the farming community," said Randy Hamlett. "When developing ex-

tensive steps towards conserving soil, we consider erosion caused by wind and rain while thinking towards the future." Some of their watershed activities include the installation of 92.5 acres of vegetative filter strips, 45.8 acres of grassed waterways, 18.4 acres of contour buffer strips, and nutrient management on 226 acres in the Upper Maquoketa River Water Quality Project, or UMRWQP. When developing their watershed, the land where rain flows from fields downwards towards bodies of water, the Hamlett's worked with Tom Sperflage through the NRCS, West Union.

"Conservation farming is a process that shows results in the long run," Sperflage says, is an environmental specialist for the Iowa Department of Agriculture. By means of nutrient management, farmers keep watchful eye on when, where, and how much fertilizer they use in the fields. "The results are evident when we take special precautions to our land, such as nutrient management and watershed protection. When we take these steps, we will be limiting cost and saving soil in the future."

In addition to the numerous dairy awards that Rand Rod Farms has achieved, the Hamletts are involved in their communities.

Randy is a member of the Star-mont School Focus Committee as well as the Parish Council of Immaculate Conception in Masonville. Charles frequently attends the Headwaters Council meetings, which is a group of local farmers that help decide the direction of

the UMRWQP. Rod Hamlett has also frequented the Headwaters Council meetings.

In effect to their efforts, they have prevented well over 709 tons of sediment a year from reaching the Upper Maquoketa River from the conservation work they have completed. In the future, they plan on constructing additional waterways and vegetative filter strips. "Our land is not considered highly erodible, but we still need to conserve it. It is important not only for us, but the next generation as well."

Why did the Hamletts go to the expense of installing 92.5 acres of vegetative filter strips?

What does the nutrient mgmt. on 226 acres consist of (what does that mean?)

Who did they work with (who made the recommendations) for this work as part of the watershed?

They're saving tons of soil ... is their land highly erodible? flat and gets hit by wind? who were their mentors in deciding to take what some consider expensive steps to "just preserve soil."

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The NRCS staff- front, from left: Lori Kohlmeier, State Secretary, Lisa Bahe, District Employee, Rubyana Grimmus, Soil Conservationist, Joe Wingert, District Employee. Back: LaVonne Koch, Federal Technician, Alan Crowe, State Technician, Carrie Davis, Grannis/Mink Watershed Coordinator, Jerry Muff, District Conservationist. Absent: Tom Sperslage, Upper Maquoketa/South Fork Watershed Coordinator, Jim Wolfe, Part-Time Soil Conservationist.

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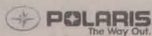
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Funding Awarded for Mink Creek Watershed Project

By Carrie Davis

The Fayette SWCD is pleased to announce the start of a water quality project on Mink Creek. Located in eastern Fayette and western Clayton counties, the Mink Creek Watershed encompasses over 12,000 acres. Mink Creek is stocked with trout from April to October by the IADNR Big Springs Trout Hatchery. The Iowa DNR 2000 Trout Angler Survey indicated an alarming decline in angler trips to the stream. In 1995 it was estimated that Mink Creek received 3,543 angler trips. In the year 2000, the number dropped to only 388.

The goal of the project is to improve the water quality of Mink Creek and establish a permanent trout population in the stream. The District feels that this important cold water resource needs to be protected. Fisheries Biologist, Bill Kalishek said, "the silt in Mink Creek is causing the decline in angler trips. Silt fills up the deep holes and buries the rocky habitat and gravel that trout need." The primary focus of the project will be on reducing sediment de-

livery into the stream. Practices installed through this project will be provided up to 75% cost share and will be prioritized bases on reduction of sediment delivery to the stream. Structural practices will include terraces, water and sediment control basins, grade stabilization structures, waterway re-establishment, and constructed wetlands. In addition to funding provided through the watershed project, additional funding sources such as CRP, REAP, and EQIP will be promoted and utilized.

The Fayette County SWCD stated it believes that voluntary efforts in improving conservation practices will delay or prevent en-

vironmental regulations from being passed. In addition, the organization noted that Fayette County has been proactive in requesting additional funding for special watershed projects. Fayette County currently has four water quality projects in progress. In addition to the Mink Creek Project, the Granis Creek project is nearing completion, and the Upper Maquoketa and South Fork Maquoketa both have active water quality projects.

Any questions regarding the Mink Creek Watershed Project can be directed to Carrie Davis at the West Union NRCS Office, phone number 563-422-3868 ext 3.



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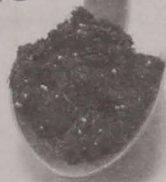
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