

ANNUAL REPORT
DES MOINES COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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The Des Moines County Soil Conservation District has finished its first year of active operation. Interest in soil conservation has been growing slowly but continuously. At first people had a "stand-offish" attitude but are now much more receptive. More and more they are raising questions about district activities and seeking help with conservation measures.

Raymond Audsley was assigned as farm planner by the Soil Conservation Service to assist the district. Mr. Audsley worked with four planning groups and has helped 34 farmers to develop complete conservation plans on 6319 acres. He also helped many others to get started with conservation practices. Other help was given by the Soil Conservation Service in making soil surveys on approximately 14,580 acres.

Engineering assistance was furnished in completing a survey and a report of drainage and conservation needs on Des Moines County Drainage District Number Seven in Huron, Jackson and Benton Townships. Although the report and recommendations have been forwarded to the supervisors of the drainage district, no formal action has been taken. It was hoped that the suggestions would stimulate activity within the drainage district and the watersheds draining into it.

During the year Howard Gieselmann was appointed to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Noah Schrock. An election was held at which time Kenneth Redfern was elected to succeed Edwin Cling and Howard Gieselmann to complete his unexpired term. John Blaul acted as chairman during the entire year.

Cooperation with other groups has been very good. The amount of contouring done within the district was in excess of 2,000 acres. One outstanding feature is the annual soil conservation contest sponsored by the Burlington Chamber of Commerce. The commissioners set up and supervised an attractive booth at the local county fair as another feature of the year. Working with AAA officials a large amount of contour layout was done during the year.

Attendance from this area at the state conservation field day at Indianola was quite large and brought back to the leaders the feeling of a need for some such activity, but on a smaller scale within this district. District officials attended and assisted with several similar field days in nearby areas. Chairman Blaul attended the short course at Ames last spring.

The activities of the educational field were quite varied. Five radio programs were devoted to soil conservation. The local newspaper has been very cooperative in getting the program before the people. Mr. Eyre, county extension director, has used soil conservation films on many occasions and has "plugged" the program at meetings of Farm Bureau, 4-H clubs and the like.

The extension program included getting about 27 farm leaders together to stimulate interest in the work of the district. The district plans to follow this with a two-day training course for a select group to be held late in January 1948.

Mention could be made of a few farmers who are taking active interest and are sold on the program. Leland Bezarth of Washington Township pulled out most of his inside fences so as to give freedom in planning the new layout. He has developed a complete plan and is getting it in operation. He is assisting the district by the production of adapted certified bromegrass seed for distribution within the area.

Kenneth Redfern, the newly elected commissioner, does not yet have a farm plan but he has been doing an outstanding job of conservation in his pasture improvement program. Over a period of years he has been improving different portions of a run down 80 acres that was one time badly overcropped. He is convinced that the money spent in rebuilding a pasture will make a much greater return than other dollars spent on corn land. The fact that he has repeated the operation until the whole field has been covered proves his conviction.

The winner of the conservation contest was Richard Anderson of Yellow Spring Township. He did a good job in getting his conservation practices started but before the plan was approved had found ways to improve it by using more terraces in place of less effective erosion control measures. It was said of his contouring that more of his rows were on the level than any other field in the county.

There seems to be a lot of interest in farm ponds. Most of them have very little direct erosion control value, but indirectly they bring about better cropping practices in the watershed above. Most of them are started for their recreational and wildlife value. It is the hope of the commissioners to capitalize on this interest to get to the other conservation measures.

The 1947 season was adverse. Many conservation measures did not show up well because of the wet weather which prevented proper seedbed preparation and weed control. Contouring was often blamed for conditions traceable to other causes. The wet and late spring prevented the application of many useful measures.

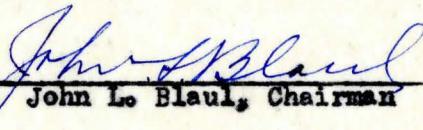
Other educational activities include three contour demonstrations, seven soil sampling demonstrations and three field tours. Mr. Audsley assisted with a veterans training program and in adult night school. The commissioners recognize the need for a comprehensive and continuing educational program as a means of acquainting farm operators with the seriousness of the problem and what can be done about it. To this end, they are seeking more assistance from the Extension Service during 1948.

One of the hopeful signs for continued progress is the interest of outside groups such as farm implement companies. These people are stimulating and fostering interest in their clients and customers. The commissioners plan in 1948 to integrate this into the district program.

To date the commissioners have received 153 applications for assistance in farm planning. Eight groups have been organized covering about 20,000 acres. Conservation soil surveys have been made on these and plans are started on 6319 acres.

Respectfully submitted,

DES MOINES COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT


(By) John L. Blaul, Chairman

Soil Conservation District
ANNUAL REPORT OF EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

DISTRICT Des Moines County
Soil Conservation District
(Name) Burlington Iowa
(Headquarters of Dist. Gov. Body)(State)
Period Jan. 1 19 47 to Dec. 31 19 47

ACTIVITY		This Year	To Date
Educational Meetings	Number	12	34
	Attendance	338	1088
Tours	Number	2	4
	Attendance	16	41
Demonstrations	Number	10	11
	Attendance	140	152
Leader Training Meetings	Number		2
	Attendance		-
Exhibits	Number	1	2
Radio Talks	Number	5	8
News Articles	Number	65	90
Commissioners Meetings	Number	12	21

Applications Received - 153 Active applications - 59
Conservation farm plans - 34 on 6326 Acres.
Conservation Surveys - 27,050 Acres.