



The Toledo Chronicle's

27th Annual

Soil Conservation Report

For

Tama County



Barn Owl Research Conducted In Tama County



by Doug Reeves,
Game Wildlife Biologist

This past summer residents of the Tama-Toledo and Chelsea area became accustomed to seeing a station wagon equipped with a huge antenna roaming the countryside at night. The vehicle was used for the radio-location of 19 barn owls that the Iowa Department of Natural Resources released during August and Septem-

ber. Barn owls are listed as endangered in Iowa and the Nongame Wildlife Program has been attempting to increase their numbers by releasing owls that have been raised in captivity. The research last summer was conducted in order to determine if barn owls that are reared in captivity can adapt to life in the wild. The first "release" at the Dennis and Tina Nieland farm was

unusual in that the owls did not leave the barn right away. In fact the birds remained in the barn even after the second group of owls was released at the Larry and Sharon Beck farm a week later. The owls at the Beck farm left the barn pretty much on schedule and immediately began providing information that was very useful. The third release was at the red barn on the Otter

Creek Marsh Wildlife Area. Owls released at the marsh stayed close to the barn and appeared to adapt fairly quickly to the wild.

The telemetry project led to several discoveries about barn owls. Some of the birds regularly roosted on the ground during the day. This unexpected behavior did not result in any particular problems for the birds and in

fact, might be more common in wild barn owls than was previously believed. One owl was located in a soybean field roosting on the ground, but others used areas of tall grass. Most of the owls stayed within 10 miles of their release site. They attempted to adjust to local conditions rather than seeking special areas a long distance away. As expected, the barn owls picked grassy areas including hayfields, road ditches and marshy places to hunt for their primary food items which are meadow voles (meadow mice). They seemed to make the switch from being fed to catching their own food rather easily once they left the barns.

Unfortunately many of the barn owls did not survive as long as hoped. By the first week of November, nine of the owls had been killed by predators (mostly great-

horned owls) and two were killed in collisions with automobiles. Three owls were still alive by November 10 while the fate of five other birds was unknown because of transmitter failure.

In addition to the owls that were released, researchers spotted two wild (unbanded) barn owls at Otter Creek Marsh. Hopefully that is a good sign. If wild barn owls can be encouraged with nest boxes in the right locations, they will probably perform better than captively reared birds.

NOTE: Even though the research project on barn owls has ended in this area, biologists are still very interested in documenting sightings of barn owls. Anyone observing a barn owl should contact Bob Kurtz, Wildlife Biologist, Dept. of Natural Resources, 203 W. High St., Toledo, Iowa 52342 (515) 484-3752.



Pasture management.



Contour strip-cropping.

1986 District Activities

January

--Reorganization of officers: Dan Bruene, chairman; Frank Bro, vice chairman; Audrey Wheeler, secretary-treasurer; Ferd Kvidera and Harry Scurr appointed assistant commissioners.

--Commissioners attended the Annual Short Course in Ames.

--The Annual Awards Banquet was held in Tama.

--The quarterly newsletter was mailed.

--Iowa Soil 2,000 folders were presented to several landowners representing 18,777 acres of the Otter Creek Marsh Watershed.

--The regular monthly meeting was held to include monthly review of annual work plan.

February

--The commissioners agreed to participate in the Youth Leadership Conservation Program in conjunction with the Tama County Conservation Board.

--Welby Dixon was chosen as the cooperator to be entered in the Good Year Conservation Awards Program.

--The regular monthly meeting was held to include monthly review of annual work plan.

March

--Six ministers attended a breakfast held in Tama for the county's ministers to order Soil Stewardship Week material.

--The commissioners' Spring Regional meeting was held at Kirkwood Community College, Cedar Rapids.

--The board voted to donate funds for native prairie grass and forb seed for the outdoor classroom at South Tama County high school.

--The regular monthly meeting was held to include monthly review of annual work plan.

--Annual report published.

April

--The quarterly newsletter was mailed.

--Mark Bro was appointed District representative to the Tama County Land Use Commission.

--Tree seedlings were delivered to the county's sixth grade students in conjunction with Arbor Day.

--The regular monthly meeting was held to include

monthly review of annual work plan.

May

--The fifth grade Outdoor Classroom was held at Otter Creek Lake with around 250 students attending.

--The regular monthly meeting was held to include monthly review of annual work plan.

June

--Iowa Conservation Awards recipients were chosen: Virginia Elliott, teacher division; Irene and Helen Hansen, Larry Pieper, landlord-tenant division; Mark Bro, owner-operator division; Sienknecht Implement, Friend of Conservation.

--The Tama County Secondary Roads Construction Program was accepted.

--The Tama County Land Use Plan was approved.

--The board accepted the multiflora rose committee's recommendation to provide 31.6% cost-share for the eradication program participants.

--The regular monthly meeting was held to include monthly review of annual work plan.

July

--The quarterly newsletter was mailed.

--The Save Our Soil Conservation Tour was held in the northwest portion of the county with approximately 80 people attending.

--The regular monthly meeting was held to include monthly review of annual work plan.

--Department of Soil Conservation was reorganized into the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.

August

--The district's history was submitted to the Tama News-Herald for the paper's county history book.

--The regular monthly meeting was held to include monthly review of annual work plan.

September

--The Jerry and Leona Velky windbreak was chosen as the Izaak Walton League Windbreak Award winner.

--The commissioners' Fall Regional meeting was held at Iowa City. Dan Bruene was elected regional director for Area 7.

--Local newspapers distributed a soil conservation issue.

SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Fiscal Year 1986

District Cooperators	2 No	583 Ac.
Sediment and Water Control Basins.....	15 No.....	-
Terraces		43,305 Ft.
Grassed Waterways		23 Ac
Contour Farming		1,166AC
Farmstead & Feedlot Windbreaks		4 Ac.
Soil Survey		87,940Ac.
Plans and Alternatives		3,761 Ac.

Budgets

July 1, 1985 - June 30, 1986

1M

Commissioners Mileage, Meals, Hotel.	\$1414.85
Office Supplies & Expenses.....	1028.33
Printing.....	56.77

2M

Clerk and Engineering Aide Salary.....	\$30,409.00
--	-------------

3M

85-86 Allocation.....	\$87,972.00
40 Agreements Approved	
19 Agreements Completed	

--The regular monthly meeting was held to include monthly review of annual work plan.

October

--The quarterly newsletter was mailed.

--The regular monthly meeting was held to include monthly review of annual work plan.

November

--Equal Employment Opportunity and Memorandum of Understanding were reviewed.

--Dan Bruene and Franklin Bro were reelected to the Tama SCD board at the November 4 general election.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources filed a soil loss complaint against Union Grove Lake watershed land owners.

--The election of Iowa-Cedar Conservancy District delegates was held. Dan

Bruene was elected delegate with Frank Bro elected as alternate.

District Engineering Aide Melody Clayton was chosen Employee of the Month by the Iowa Department of Agriculture, Division of Soil Conservation.

--A special Tama SCD commissioners meeting was held to approve cost-share requests.

--The regular monthly meeting was held to include monthly review of annual work plan.

December

--The Iowa Association of Conservation District Commissioners held its Annual Conference. Dan Bruene was elected secretary of the Association board.

--The District's Long Range Planning meeting was held.

--The regular monthly meeting was held to include monthly review of annual work plan.

Arbor Day

When Arbor Day 1986 was observed last April, the Tama SCD joined the nationwide celebration by distributing Scotch pine seedlings to Tama County's nearly 300 sixth graders. The Scotch pine is a native of the Scottish Highlands and has become the most widely distributed pine in the world. Europeans use this pine for timber, but in the United States, the Scotch pine is most commonly grown for shelter belts, ornamentals, and Christmas trees.

The first formal observance of Arbor Day was in Nebraska on April 10, 1872. One million trees were

planted across Nebraska on that first Arbor Day.

What does he plant who plants a tree?
He plants the friend of sun and sky;
He plants the flag of breezes free;
The shaft of beauty, towering high;

He plants a home to heaven anigh
For song and mother-croon of bird
In hushed and happy twilight heard
The treble of heaven's harmony
These things he plants who plants a tree.

--Henry Cuyler Bunner

Conservation is Everyone's Job

Our hats are off to the
Tama County Soil Conservation District
for the fine job they are doing.

See us for all your farm needs.
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CONSERVE SOIL - STOP THIS EROSION!

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Commissioner's Comments



Tama County Soil Conservation District Commissioners include, from left to right sitting, Russell Lyon, Toledo; and Pat Kadrmars, rural Traer. Standing are Franklin Bro, rural Toledo; and Dan Bruene, rural Gladbrook. Missing are Rich Havran, rural Dysart; and assistant commissioner Harry Scurr, rural Gilman.

Soil conservation should be one of the top priorities of our government and our farmers. Everything we have that is good comes from the soil: our food, our water, our clothes, our homes and even the air we breathe. These are all affected by the soil.

If we keep spraying our land with toxic materials we will soon have everything polluted to the point where what we eat and drink and the air we breathe will be unfit to use.

A few weeks ago on the front page of the Des Moines Register an article told about farm chemicals being found in Des Moines' water. There were only small amounts, but we know it's going to get worse if we keep farming like we are.

I hate to see the government have to control us in these matters, but it looks like it will be coming unless we do something ourselves to control the situation.

Franklin Bro,
Commissioner

A good windbreak has many benefits here in the Midwest. A study in Nebraska compared fuel use of identical test houses which maintained a constant inside temperature of 70 degrees. The house protected by a windbreak used 23% less fuel. In North Dakota a study of two houses with electric heat showed a 34% saving for the house with a good windbreak for the whole winter. Windbreaks reduce the wind chill factor for the livestock on the farmstead and can control snow drifts if located in the right place. These benefits, plus the beauty it adds, make it a worthwhile project you can

still do this spring.

Consideration should be given to the soil type, slope of the land, drainage, and building arrangement when planting a windbreak. Careful planning of space is necessary. Planting too close can cause air stagnation in the summer and unwanted snow drifts in the winter. Planting too far away limits protection. Some types of trees are better than others. Here in Iowa, windbreaks should have at least three rows to be effective. At least two rows should be evergreens and the remaining row can be shrubs or small trees. Spacing depends on type of tree and mature growth.

The amount of protection a windbreak provides depends on the height, density and length of the windbreak. The height determines the distance that wind protection extends from the windbreak. The density of the windbreak influences wind velocity. The length of the windbreak should extend about 100 feet beyond the area to be protected.

To do a good job, you need to get expert advice. Your County Extension Office, SCS office or district forester can all give you help. See them now.

Pat Kadrmars,
Commissioner

The 1985 farm bill has a very good conservation provision -- even if it won't solve the over-production problem.

The world market will not absorb our current supply at any price. I doubt we can ever give it away. The cost of the program is too high for the politicians to allow the program to continue. Export-

ing ourselves out of the surplus situation is like borrowing our way out of debt.

Now to the conservation aspects of the law. The 10 year Conservation Reserve Program will help get cropland out of production, and the type of land idled should be taken out of production. Eligibility depends on the erosion of the soil. Land that qualifies is seeded to grasses to prevent erosion. The rental figures approved in past sign-up periods make it an attractive alternative to producing corn and beans on this marginal land. The one-time bonus of \$2.00 per bushel for the ASCS yield on the base acres included in the CRP area is a very good incentive. Those of us interested in soil conservation like this program.

The sodbuster provision of the 1985 law has considerable merit. It will keep non-cropland from being brought into crop production without conservation measures being applied. The law requires any farmer who brings either highly erodible land or wet land into production to apply adequate conservation measures, as recommended by SCS personnel, on the land brought into production in order for the producer to qualify for program payments. This must be done the same crop year the land is broken out. The law further requires all farms to have a conservation plan drawn up for the farm by 1990 to be eligible for program payments. The practices included in the plan must be installed by 1995. Remember the objective of a farm plan is to get erosion down to any acceptable level by installing conservation measures. The practices set out in the plan are selected by the farmer; they do not have to be expensive.

We do see the problem with this provision-how will the SCS personnel get these farm plans drawn up by 1990.

We hope Tama County farmers realize these laws are for our own benefit and for future generations. Remember, "soil conservation doesn't cost, it pays."

Bud Lyon,
Commissioner



One of the casualties of modern farming practices has been the fencerow, which has been torn out to

make room for large tillage machines, and is no longer needed by the many farmers who no longer have livestock in their farming operation.

For many years the woven wire fence served as the terrace system in that it slowed the water racing down the hill and stopped some of the soil from leaving the farm. The fencerow also served as a nursery for small birds and animals and as a sprouting ground for bushes, trees, and wild grapevines. These in turn supported more bird life, and we had an effective biological insect control system which didn't cost the farmer a dime.

As we have gone to the "clean" farming system, we have also cleaned out our supply of pheasants, rabbits, and songbirds, thus making us rely on chemicals for pest control. If enough chemicals leach into our groundwater sources, we may "clean out" our human population as well.

There are many facets to responsible conservation with our Number One priority right now being a sensible handling of our soil and wildlife resources.

Ferd Kvidera,
Assistant Commissioner

The amount of conservation that gets done every year in Tama County always seems to amaze me more every year. Your county



office has less help this year and more work with soil loss complaints, CRP, and Iowa Soil 2000, along with the normal workload.

This year under the CRP program plus an additional 15% set-aside there will be a lot more acres protected from soil erosion for future years. From a commissioner's point of view, the board is spending a lot more time handling soil loss complaints than I like to see.

This seems to be a sign of the times: going to court or filing a soil loss complaint. This is the time of year when you are asked to help finance the Tama County conservation programs. Your support and donations are needed and appreciated. I hope we will not lose any more help so we can continue to provide

the county with a viable and efficient organization.

Rich Havran
Commissioner

The farm programs available in 1987 offer the perfect opportunity to reduce soil losses in Tama County. ASCS set-aside acres may be placed in areas involving summer construction so that the contractor has ideal conditions to work under and can schedule earthmoving in a timely manner. Setaside also offers a means of seeding down highly erodible land. By seeding these critical areas, a landowner can reduce soil losses and remove the least profitable land from production. The Conservation Reserve Program is another way to utilize available farm programs to seed down critical areas. During the newly-completed fourth sign-up period, 171 landowners submitted CRP bids on over 14,000 acres of Tama County farmland. But whether these USDA programs are used or not, we all need to keep the 1985 Farm Bill in mind: by January 1, 1990, every landowner will need an active farm plan and then must have this conservation plan fully implemented by January 1, 1995. Save soil and begin conserving now.

Dan Bruene,
Chairman

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MEETING TODAY'S CHALLENGES

Tama County Conservation Board



Bob Etzel, native grass at Otter Creek Park, big blue stem.

by Robert Etzel

TAMA COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD...

What do you think of first when you hear the name? To many it is synonymous with Otter Creek Lake and Park (The County Lake). It is true that Otter Creek Park is the most visible and highly used of all Conservation Board facilities and programs.

What most folks don't realize is that the park is only 277 of 652 acres managed by the board. It is only one of 10 acres. There are also several programs and projects in which the Board participates outside normal facility management. One of these programs is the planting of native prairie species in the county.

Why the interest in warm season grasses? They are native to Iowa, are extremely adaptable, are hardy once established, provide excellent wildlife habitat and also show promise in agricultural applications.

Warm season or prairie grasses are the main reason we have good farming soils in Iowa. This soil formed while in the grasp of prairie grasses and became rich from its high organic debris. A large amount of Iowa's heritage lies in the prairie and its soil. Once composing 85% of Iowa's area the prairie grasses are relegated to isolated patches in road ditches, cemeteries, railroad rights-of-way, and odd crop corners.

Studies have indicated that by growing warm season grasses on 1/3 to 1/2 of a farmer's pasture, production can be increased as much as 40%. While cool season grasses drop in production after mid-June, the warm season grasses come on and can provide good production

from mid-June to September.

Prairie grasses can also benefit wildlife populations by providing excellent habitat for game and non-game wildlife. This is an area of keen interest to the Conservation Board.

The Tama County Conservation Board became involved with prairie grasses the summer of 1984 when most of the right-of-way along the county lake gravel was planted. Involvement in this project enabled the Conservation Board to purchase a Truax native grass drill. Species included in this 24-acre planting were Indian-grass, Big and Little Bluestem, Western Wheatgrass, Sideoats grama, and Switchgrass.

In 1986, introduction of the CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) provided the opportunity to provide substantial wildlife habitat while protecting the soil. As part of this program, the Conservation Board planted 112 acres to switchgrass or switchgrass /big bluestem. The plantings, on three different farms, were done in cooperation with the Soil Conservation Service.

The Conservation Board plans CRP involvement in '87 to far exceed last year's effort. It is hoped that over 250 acres can be planted to prairie grasses using the county's planter.

Other prairie planting projects which the Board participated in in '86 were the six-acre prairie planting at the Toledo Heights Park and the 1/2-acre prairie demonstration plot at the Dysart-Geneseo school grounds.

The prairie as a vast waving sea is gone forever

from Iowa but the re-establishment of prairie species to save soil, benefit wildlife, and provide aesthetic vistas is finally being realized. The Tama County Conservation Board is proud to contribute to this effort.

Multiflora Eradication Program

Multiflora rose is a moderate to serious problem in Tama County. It continues to spread and now poses a major threat to many of our pastures and woodland areas. In an effort to aid in the control of this pest, the Tama County Board of Supervisors proposed a method of reimbursement to help landowners purchase multiflora rose eradication chemicals.

In 1986, the supervisors provided 25% of the cost of this eradication program in Tama County, while the Iowa Legislature (House File 2520) provided another 25%. Fifty-one Tama County landowners signed up for this 1986 program with a total of \$2,582 of cost-share funding. Once pro-rated among these 51 landowners, the final cost-share payment rate came to 31.6% of the chemical costs.

The Tama County Board of Supervisors and Iowa Legislature are offering a similar multiflora rose eradication program again in 1987.

Program Guidelines

1. Any owner of agricultural land in Tama County is eligible.

2. Only one payment will be made per landowner unit. A landowner unit-defined as all land owned by a family, partnership, or corporation.

3. Eligible Chemicals: A-1 brush killers that included Multiflora Rose on the label. For chemical recommendations, stop in at the Extension or SCS office.

4. Sign up for cost share may be accomplished at the SCS, ASCS, or Extension offices and must be completed on or before May 31, 1987. Participants will have until May 31, 1987 to apply chemicals and turn bills into the SCS office. Invoices must include dealer's name, date,



Contour level terraces - Western Iowa.

1986 Conservation Tillage

The results of the 1986 county-wide tillage survey are in and show a general trend toward less residue remaining in cropped fields.

Three possibilities may explain this trend: less vegetation was produced during the 1985 crop year due to poor weather, government programs have interrupted crop rotations, and the use of less expensive, incorporated herbicides has increased.

As we move into the 1987 crop season, one factor may decide the year's residue levels: ECONOMICS - the economics of no-till and of government farm programs.

Undisturbed soybean residue offers the ideal opportunity to try no-till. Corn can be no-tilled into soybean stubble usually without a different herbicide program and few, if any, changes made to planting equipment. No-tiling saves time, fuel,

money, and soil.

The Conservation Reserve Program allows landowners to set aside and seed down highly erodible land for a 10-year period. If a landowner has interest in native grasses, the seedings may even be made up of prairie species such as switchgrass, big bluestem, and Indian-grass. These grasses require little maintenance once established. For more CRP information, see the Tama County ASCS office.

	no-till		ridge-till		strip-till		mulch-till	
	1985	1986	1985	1986	1985	1986	1985	1986
acres corn	8000	7000	2700	2700	1000	1000	66,000	64,000
acres soybeans	3500	1000	2700	2700	1000	500	60,000	57,000
acres total	11,500	8,000	5,400	5,400	2,000	1,500	126,000	121,000
acres difference		-3,500		0		-500		-5,000

herbicide name and cost. Chemicals purchased before June 1, 1986 are not eligible invoices.

5. Reimbursement will be based upon a pro-rated % of cost depending on interest shown and sign up. The actual payment % will not be determined until all chemical bills have been turned in May 31, 1987. Restricted use chemicals must show applicators permit number.

6. Soil District Commissioners will review all applications. All persons receiving funds will be subject to spot check to verify that the chemicals were actually applied, maximum reimbursement will be \$300 per landowner unit.



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1986 Booster Club

Planning for the long-term preservation of our soil, water, and other natural resources is not a simple task, but it is necessary for the orderly management, development, and utilization of these resources. Due to this need, in 1942 Tama County residents organized and voted the Tama Soil Conservation District (SCD) into existence.

But soil conservation districts have no taxing or bonding authority to raise funds for certain educational and promotional activities such as outdoor classrooms, film strips, computer programs, workbooks, and Arbor Day seedlings for school children as well as postage and awards.

To help raise funds for these and other educational and promotional programs, the District commissioners organize a fund-raising drive each year. Members of the Tama SCD 1986 Booster Club are listed below. A very warm "thank you" to these friends of conservation who have donated this year.

The 1986 Booster Club includes:

Robert and Janet Malin, Wilmer Meek, Emil and Louisa Hansen, Joy Ann Farm, Dennis Wieben Farm, Frank Zmolek, Blanche Zmolek, Vernon and Ruth Olsen, Jannette Neil Cold, Dorothy Sawyer, B.E.S.T. Farm, Rupert & Fern Brubaker, Mr. and Mrs. James Eaton, Donald and Delores Kroeger, Twin Cities Real Estate, Lee Judge, Eldo and Maxine Hagedorn, Elsie Duffus, Edward Holevoet Conservatorship, Sky Farms, Inc., Steve Podhajsky, Farmers Savings Bank, Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Ken-

neth Bruene, Holub Land Farms, Harold and Grace Young, Otto and Phyllis Hansen, Marvin and Mary Otto, Morris Bruene, Kenneth Kenner, Marjory Messer, Lynn and Clydene Kroeger, Elmer Mussig, Tama Co. Mutual Ins. Assoc., First Community Bank and Trust, (Traer), Hecht Farms, Inc., John Lawlor Farm Account, R. Farms, Inc., D&E Dahms, Inc., Ruth and Gilbert Sonksen, Ernest and Virginia Lau, W.R. Farms, Wm. & Mayme Podhajsky, Worthin and Maretta Grattan, Gethmann Foundation, Gethmann Equipment Co., Dennis and Ursula Haack, Mr. and Mrs. Loren Leuthje, Mildred L. Anderson, Dr. Willard F. Haldy, George and Patricia Kadmas, Security Savings Bank, Marshalltown; S.L. Baumeier Co., Ervin and Marion Heller, Catherine Van Dyke, Stanley Hanus, Duane and Linda Hosek, Mark and Nickala Kouba, Wilson McCahon Conservatorship, B.J.B. Terrace Acres, LTD, Gerald and Marlene Eernisse, G.F.W.C. Toledo Women's Club, Margaret Stoddard Farm, The Levine Co., Pritchard Bros., Merle McMillan, Raynard and Arlene Delfs, William and Ethel Pippert, Jim and Karen Bohnstengel, Calderwood Farms, Inc., Alice Hoppe, Craig and Sharon Earley, Louis and Helen Kacer, Charles Debbon, Lauterbach Farm Partnership, Ken and Carolyn Adolphs, Mrs. Janet Van Horne, Harold and Ferne Robertson, Margaret M. Young, Robert and Kerry Aiken, Mark B. Halverson, Roderick and Paul Mitchell, and Betty Benda.

Our Future

"Soil and Water - Key to our Future" is the topic for the 1987 Soil Conservation Essay Contest. This annual event is co-sponsored by the Ladies Auxiliary of the Iowa Association of Soil Conservation District Commissioners and Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company.

The Tama Soil Conservation District is sponsoring the contest at the local level. For entry information and contest deadline, contact the Tama SCD office.

Essay Contest Rules

1. This contest is open to all students who are residents of the state of Iowa.

a. Junior Division - grades 6, 7, 8; Senior Division - grades 9, 10, 11, 12.

b. Entrants must compete in the contest conducted by the soil conservation district in which they reside.

2. The essays will have a maximum of 500 words (minor conjunctions and prepositions will not be counted).

3. All manuscripts will be handwritten by the competing students.

4. The essays will be judged on originality, aptness of thought, and accuracy of information. Overall appearance and correctness of grammar and punctuation will be included in judging.

5. A title page will be provided by the soil conservation district for use by competing students. A list of reference material used for the essay must be attached to the manuscript.

6. The state winners will be asked to read their essays at the Annual Conference for Soil Conservation District



The Annual Tama County Soil Conservation Awards Banquet was conducted Monday, Jan. 26 at King Tower Cafe in Tama. Receiving awards were, from left to right, Mark Bro, Montour, Outstanding District Cooperator Award; Helen Hanssen (sitting) and Larry Pieper (standing), both of Gladbrook, Landlord-Tenant Operator Award; Leona and Jerry Velky (standing), Clutier, Windbreak Award and first runner-up in Izaak Walton State Windbreak Contest; and Ginny Elliott, Montour, Special Award recipient for efforts in outdoor education and creation of wildlife area. Missing is a representative from Siemknecht Implement, Clutier. Siemknecht Implement received the Friend of Conservation Award for providing no-till equipment to area farmers in recent years.

Commissioners on November 30, 1987, in Des Moines.

Contest Awards

Prizes for Regional Winners
Senior Division - \$40, First Place; \$30, Second Place.

Junior Division - \$40, First Place; \$30, Second Place.

Prizes for State Winners
Senior Division - \$100, First Place; \$75, Second Place; Junior Division, \$75, Second Place.

1986 District Award Winners

On Monday, Jan. 26, 1987, the Tama Soil Conservation District honored its 1986 award winners at the Tama SCD's Annual Soil Conservation Awards Banquet. The purpose of this banquet is to recognize Tama County residents who have demonstrated outstanding soil conservation efforts.

The 1986 winner in the owner-operator category was Mark Bro of Montour. He was chosen for this honor due to his excellent farm management including contouring, conservation tillage, crop rotation, pasture management, wildlife habitat, and grassed waterways.

Awards in the landlord-tenant division went to Irene Hansen, Lincoln, and Helen Hansen and Larry Pieper, both of Gladbrook. Mr. Pieper farms the Hansen property utilizing contouring, conservation tillage,

grassed headlands, and grassed waterways.

The Izaak Walton League windbreak award was presented to Jerry and Leona Velky, Clutier. The Velky windbreak has also won second place in the League's statewide contest. Their windbreak consists of autumn olive, honeysuckle, arbor vitae, Norway spruce, Black Hills spruce, Colorado blue spruce, concolor fir, and Douglas fir.

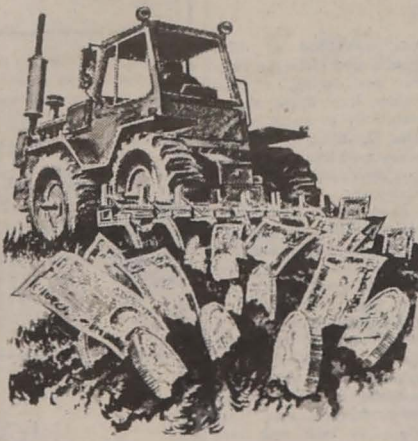
Siemknecht Implement of Clutier was honored with the District's Friend of Conservation Award for its record in Promoting no-till farm equipment.

Winner of the Conservation Teachers Awards Program was Ginny Elliott, Montour, for her unique approach to conservation/environmental education.

Congratulations to all the winners!

Congratulations

to our farm friends on their prudent soil conservation practices



Plowing a little back into the soil today, insures tomorrow's harvest.

Tama Livestock Auction

Sale Every Saturday at 10:00 A.M.
Fat Cattle Sale Every Wed. at 10:00 A.M.

Congratulations

To Our Area Farmers
For Using Good
Conservation Practices



Larry's Feed & Supply

1/2 Mile S. of Tama Livestock Auction
515-484-3815 Tama



Purple Cone flower - Otter Creek Park - Prairie plant.

1985 Food Security Act

by Craig Stange,
District Conservationist

If you don't think that farming has changed in the past two years, then you haven't participated in any of the USDA farm programs.

With the passage of the 1985 Food Security Act, Congress instituted the most sweeping change in USDA policy since the Dust Bowl days of the 30's. For the first time in U.S. history, USDA program benefits are tied to soil conservation.

In its very simplest form, the conservation provisions of the '85 farm bill state: If a farmer wants to continue to receive dollars from ASCS, FmHA or FCIC then he/she must start controlling the erosion on all of the land that they operate, beginning in 1990.

The process to get this erosion control on the land is somewhat obscured in government red tape, but generally the process is this:

1) Farmers sign a form at ASCS or FmHA stating that they did or did not "break sod" or drain swamps since December 23, 1985.

2) If they broke sod, SCS will determine if the land is highly erodible. If it is not, there is no problem and the process stops there.

If it is highly erodible:

a) SCS notifies the landowner.

b) SCS and the landowner develop a plan to control erosion, and

c) The farmer applies the needed conservation practices.

These sod buster provisions are in effect now and affect such things as deficiency payments, loans, etc.

Beginning in 1990, all cropland must have a conservation plan developed before any government benefits can be paid to any farmer. It may not be too bad of an idea to get your conservation plan as soon as possible. If everybody waits until December of 1989, I'm

afraid there will be some disappointed farmers.

The 1985 Food Security Act has greatly changed the look of American agriculture. Government money now has some strings attached. Conservation provisions of this act employ a carrot-and-stick incentive to conservation.

Sod buster, swamp buster, and conservation compliance are the "stick." In other words, control your erosion or you're not eligible for USDA dollars.

There is a "carrot" to the farm bill, an incentive to protect your soil. The Conservation Reserve Program rents qualified highly erodible land from farmers for 10 years and pays them annually. If the national CRP goal is met, then 45 million acres of our most erodible ground will be removed from production, our worst erosion will be controlled, and commodity surpluses will be reduced.

Generally, the '85 farm bill is being well-received by conservation officials, legislators, the public, and most farmers. It is not a perfect law. Considering the diversity of land, climate, and crops produced in the United States, the Food Security Act of 1985 does a pretty good job of addressing the issues of conservation and overproduction.

Invariably certain provisions of the law will work against certain individuals. The logistics of administering the act are mind-boggling. The lines at ASCS and SCS are long. The mountains of paper are almost insurmountable.

However the intent of the law is good -- Conserve our soil and reduce surplus. Generally speaking, the CRP portions of the law will actually, in practice, conserve a lot of soil and the sod buster portions will tend to discourage bringing more land into production. In most cases, the intent of the law as intended by Congress and the public is being met.

Named Employee Of The Month

"In the three years Melody has worked in the Toledo Field Office she has continuously been promoting quality conservation application," says Craig M. Stange, district conservationist in the Tama Soil Conservation District.

Melody Clayton Bro of rural Montour was named the November 1986 Employee of the Month by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation (DSC).

In her capacity as Engineering Aide II, Melody participated in what Stange refers to as the "heaviest construction season ever in Tama County." During one recent year, Melody worked with other staff to install 102,000 feet of terraces, create 60 acres of waterways and plan 2,000 acres of contoured or stripcropped land. These measures reduced soil losses by 16 tons per acre per year on a total of 7,900 acres.

Melody also assembled and distributed 6,000 acres of Iowa Soil 2,000 folders to an area of Tama County that had not had a high level of participation in soil conservation programs in the past. Additionally, she writes and edits a quarterly newsletter that serves to draw new cooperators to the soil conservation office.

Currently, although construction has slowed down, she has been busy gathering data and writing conservation plans. One project now underway involves Melody working with a volunteer to determine sediment delivery figures on a 7,000 acre watershed that is receiving special cost-sharing funds.

The DSC is happy to recognize the quality and diversity of skills Melody Clayton Bro brings to her work in soil conservation. Congratulations on a job well done!



Pictured in front, Craig Stange, SCS District Conservationist, in back, Melody Clayton Bro, state engineering aide; Audrey Wheeler, district clerk; Ray Drewelow, SCS soil conservation technician.

waterways and a concrete grade stabilization structure to control water on the farm. This combination of conservation practices has reduced Randy's soil losses from 21 tons/acre/year to three tons/acre/year.

The final stop on the SOS

Tour was hosted by Bud Bruene. Bud mulch-tills between his contour terraces and is very pleased with this mixture of tillage and terracing. Bean ground is field cultivated once before planting corn (bean residue measure 35% ground cover

after planting the 1986 corn crop). Bruene usually disks corn ground twice before planting soybeans in 20" split rows. This contouring, terracing, and mulch-tilling has reduced Bud's soil losses from 16 tons/acre/year to four tons/acre/year.

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Save Our Soil Conservation Tour

The Tama SCD Save Our Soil Conservation Tour held July 1, 1986, offered 80 Tama County residents the opportunity to closely examine several methods of soil conservation.

The tour included five stops: the use of native grasses, hosted by Bob Kurtz of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources; contour stripcropping at the Larry Pieper farm; slot-tilling by LeRoy Thomsen; Randy Beichley's combined conservation practices, featuring ridge-till and contour terraces; and contour terraces and mulch-till on the Bud Bruene farm.

A series of native prairie grass display plots has been established by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources at the north end of Union Grove Lake State Park. Host Bob Kurtz, DNR wildlife biologist, explained the various types of native grasses including switchgrass, big bluestem, and

Indian grass. There has been a marked increase in interest concerning native grasses in the past few years, mainly due to the Conservation Reserve Program and annual ASCS setaside acres. The public has also realized the value of prairie species as excellent wildlife habitat and is discovering the use of the native warm-season grasses in pasture rotation systems.

The second stop on the SOS Tour was at the Larry Pieper farm northeast of Union Grove Lake. Larry began contour stripcropping his farm about four years ago and is gradually adding to his stripcropping system. The strips, combined with mulch-tillage in the cropped areas, have reduced Pieper's soil losses from 14 tons/acre/year to 3 tons/acre/year.

The LeRoy Thomsen farm was the tour's third visit. LeRoy has slot-tilled a corn-soybean rotation for five years with excellent results. Thomsen's soybean residue

was measured at 40% ground cover (after planting) this past spring, a bean residue level found almost exclusively in no-till operations. Slot-tilling has reduced LeRoy's soil losses from nine tons/acre/year to four tons/acre/year.

Randy Beichley has found a combination of soil-conserving practices works best on his farm. Beichley has contour ridge-till for about five years; he plants a corn-soybean rotation with a John Deere 7100 fitted with Hinkler ridge-till/no-till attachments. Corn residue was measured at 80% ground cover after planting. The ridges are built with two summer cultivations. Randy also utilizes contour terraces to further reduce his soil losses; he and his father, Harold, began terracing the farm in 1972 and gradually added to their system over several years. The terrace system is now complete. Beichley also uses grassed

Soil Survey-Tama County

The soil survey in Tama County has completed its second year. The soil survey staff consists of three soil scientists who are temporarily part of the Soil Conservation District office in Toledo. The survey was started in August 1983 in Lincoln and Grant Townships in the northern part of the county and have progressed to the southern-most townships of Highland and Columbia. The soil surveyors plan to map Richland and Salt Creek Townships next and proceed north in the county until the survey is finished. Some of the surveying is completed in Richland and Otter Creek Townships, and some is yet to be completed in Columbia.

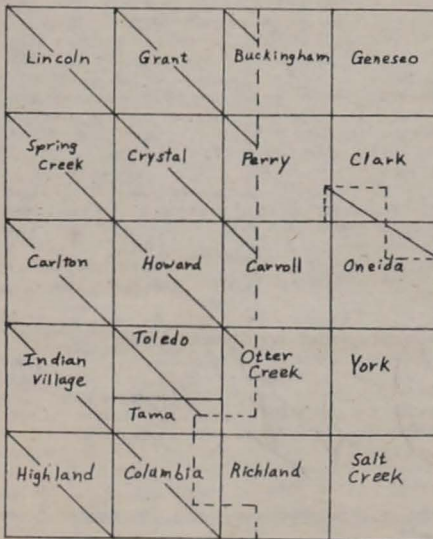
The soil survey presently being done is an updating of the 1935 soil survey. The reason for remapping Tama County is the knowledge of soils has increased since 1935, and the remapping is done on an aerial photograph which is on a larger scale. The larger scale map will provide a more intensive and detailed soil survey. This will provide more soils information and a more accurate soil survey.

The older survey had 20 soil types and 50 erosion and slope phases. The current soil surveyors have presently identified 51 soil types and are presently separating them into 157 erosion and slope phases. One reason for this rather large change is that many of the soils mapped in 1935 are now no longer mapped in Tama County. Many other soils are mapped in their places. Wabash soil is an example of this. In 1935, Wabash was mapped with a broad range of soil characteristics. Today it is mapped with a much narrower range of characteristics. The narrow range that each particular type of soil is defined with enables land users, assessors, and research scientists to put a more specific use or value on each parcel of land. Wabash was mapped over a large part of the bottomland or floodplains along the major creeks and the Iowa River. Among the soils replacing Wabash are Colo, Ackmore, Nodaway, Spillville, and Zook.

Wabash is a soil with clay texture and is very poorly drained. Colo and Ackmore soils have silt loam to silty clay loam texture and are poorly drained. Colo and Ackmore soils have textures with 35 to 45 percent less clay than a Wabash soil. Nodaway and Spillville soils have silt loam and loam textures and are moderately well to somewhat poorly drained. Zook soil has silty clay texture and is very poorly drained. Zook silty clay soil has about 25 percent less clay than the Wabash clay soil.

Soil Survey Progress

Tama County is comprised of 460,800 acres of farmland, towns and cities, lakes, and the Iowa River. When the



Tama County Progress Map-1987

Grant Area Mapped

soil survey for Tama County is completed the entire county will be mapped. The towns and cities, lakes, and Iowa River will be delineated out as well as the farmland. As of December, 1986, soil scientists have completed mapping 275,260 acres.

The three soil scientists that are mapping Tama County walk over each parcel of land, section by section. They carry an aerial photo, soil probe, color charts and a clinometer. The aerial photo shows the soil scientist how big an area each soil type and soil phase to be delineated is. The photo shows waterways

and different shades of gray and white that indicates soil type, erosion, or steepness of slope. The soil probe is used to bore two to four feet deep into the soil. The soil scientist gets a good indication of soil type by the color, texture and depth of material they bore with the soil probe. The color charts have painted chips that have various colors, from red to gray or bluish gray. Different shades of black, brown, and yellow are on the color charts as well. The clinometer gives the soil scientist the degree of slope in each delineation.

Soil And Water Stewardship

The Tama Soil Conservation District joined in the nationwide observance of Soil and Water Stewardship Week 1986 during the week of May 4 - 11: Conservation's New Frontiers. Materials specially designed to carry the 1986 theme were distributed by the Tama SCD through the county's clergy.

The purpose of Soil and Water Stewardship Week is to create a larger awareness of our responsibilities for stewardship of the natural resources that sustain us all. Soil and Water Stewardship Week 1987 will be celebrated May 24-31 and presents a special opportunity to reach out with the stewardship

message: Help, Hope, Healing. Materials will again be available county-wide through local clergy.

The 1987 observance will draw attention to the need for help, hope, and healing to bind the economic and resource wounds on America's farms and ranches. The survival and welfare of farmers and the land they till must be a matter of deep concern to all of us who eat food, wear clothes, and build homes. Caring for the soil and water resources of this nation is a responsibility none of us can ignore...now, or in the future.

Consider Help, Hope, Healing; Consider these well.



There's Money In Trees

by Bob Hibbs
Iowa Dept. of
Natural Resources
District Forester

How much did you pay for your Christmas tree in 1986? In most markets, \$20 was not out of line for a well-sheared 6-to-8 foot Scotch pine.

In Iowa, Scotch, red, and white pine can be planted at a 6-foot spacing to yield 1,200 trees per acre. If you conservatively estimate an eight-year growing cycle, 1,200 trees per acre divides out to 150 trees for sale on each acre, every year. At \$20 per tree, the gross return would be \$3,000 per acre per year!

But, you say, there is a lot of labor involved. And there is. It takes a day to machine plant an acre. Three to five mowings are needed each year. It might take a week each summer to shear 1,200 trees (shearing is needed every year after the third). Then the trees must be sold between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Plus, the need for weed-control chemical application or sprays for control of pine needle insects and diseases. It's easy to see that the gross potential can be

whittled down pretty quick.

Unlike rowcrop farming however, Christmas tree growing can be undertaken with minimal investment if you already own some land. The 1,200 trees needed for one acre can be purchased for less than \$100 from the State forest nursery. Shearing tools need not cost more than \$50. Tree planting machines can be borrowed from the County Conservation Board or district forester. Remember, it's your labor investment that makes Christmas trees monetarily attractive.

Tama County needs more trees and could certainly support the production of several commercial tree growers. And wildlife would appreciate both the nesting cover and winter protection offered by a 15-acre plantation of Christmas trees. Add two or three rows of border shrubs, and your plantation would be extremely high quality habitat.

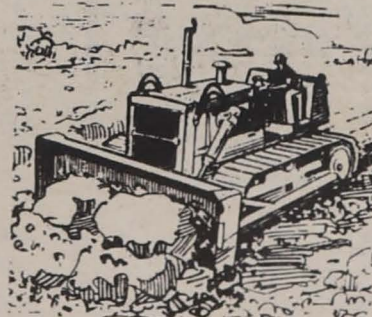
For more information about tree planting or forestry in general, contact your District Forester, Box 681, Marshalltown, 50158 -- (515) 752-3352.



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Get The Most Out Of CRP Acres

by Bob Kurtz,
Wildlife Biologist

The U.S.D.A.'s 10-year Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is intended to remove highly erodible land from crop production and protect it with permanent vegetative cover. The soil conservation benefits of this program are quite obvious. But secondary benefits, including wildlife habitat development and conservation, are also a very important part of the CRP.

A seeding of brome-grass and alfalfa can provide the highest-quality nesting cover for pheasants that money can buy. This mixture is allowed on CRP acres. The value of brome-alfalfa seedings is usually realized in the years following the establishment year. Hen pheasants particularly like the residual cover in these grass-legume fields to make their nest. Most important is to not disturb the cover during the peak nesting period in June. If mowing has to be done, it should be delayed until after July 15. Brome-alfalfa will provide quality nesting cover for anywhere from five to eight years, but after that the alfalfa will die out and the stand will become pretty much straight brome. In a

few situations the alfalfa could possibly last for the entire 10-year period. So while brome-alfalfa may give the highest-quality nesting cover for the first part of the contract, a disadvantage of it is that it will probably not last for the full 10 years.

Also highly recommended for CRP acres are the native, warm-season grasses such as switchgrass, big bluestem and Indiangrass. The big advantage of native grasses is that they will last indefinitely under proper management. Indeed, the native prairie grasses lasted for several thousand years before the pioneers broke the prairie sod. The native grasses will provide good quality nesting cover and will also stand up under heavy snow to provide winter cover. The biggest disadvantage of native grasses is that they can be difficult to establish. The most important aspect of seeding native grasses is seedbed preparation. The seedbed needs to be firm enough that a man can walk on it without leaving an imprint. The seed should be planted (drilled) only 1/4 inch deep. Once established, native grasses will last easily for the 10-year CRP contract period and beyond. Another

benefit of native grasses is that they will establish a root system that will penetrate six to 10 feet into the ground, making them drought-resistant.

Tree and shrub plantings are also eligible on CRP acres. Whether it be shrub plantings, hardwood plantings, or evergreen plantings, these permanent plantings will provide important food and cover for a variety of wildlife species. Contact the SCS office in Toledo for planting details.

Whether seeding brome-alfalfa or native grasses, or planting trees and shrubs, the ASC committee will provide cost-sharing for ground preparation and the actual planting itself. So take advantage of this 10-year program and make the most out of it for both soil and wildlife conservation.

Don't Delay - Farm The Conservation Way

Ever since its passage by Congress, the 1985 Food and Security Act (Farm Bill) has been hailed as being the most significant piece of Soil Conservation legislation in years - and maybe even ever. This may or may not be true.

However, one thing is for sure. The legislation means that from now on, no one will receive USDA benefits if they drain swamps, if they farm highly erodible land in an erosive manner, or if they bring grasslands into crop production and farm them in an erosive way.

This is a very real change in the way USDA farm programs have operated in the past. The legislation requires that anyone and everyone who is farming highly erodible land must have a plan for erosion control and begin implementing it by 1990. It requires

completion of plan implementation by 1995.

The law further states that anyone who broke up grass since December 23, 1985, must be farming it in a non-erosive manner next spring, or they cannot participate in many USDA Farm Programs.

Draining swamps is another matter. If you have drained a wetland since December 23, 1985 you forfeit nearly all USDA program eligibility unless you cease to crop this ground.

All of these are very serious items. They affect eligibility for FmHA loans, Federal Crop Insurance, and ASCS programs.

1995 is not far away, and 1990 is nearly here. If I farmed, I would not be waiting to see if I was farming land designated as

highly erodible - I would be checking it out - NOW.

If I was farming such land I would get my conservation plan developed NOW - would not want to be standing in line in 1990.

These actions of the 1985 Farm Bill are law now. Some take effect immediately, some in 1990; others in 1995. This is NOW a law; it will be a law unless Congress changes it. If, in fact, you anticipate needing Federal Crop Insurance, FmHA assistance, or enrolling ASCS commodity program, you will simply have to conform to the law.

These are major changes. Don't wait. Find out about them now and begin to take any required actions.

SOIL CONSERVATION

Pesticides In Reduced And No-Till

by David J. Quinlan
County Extension Director

Reduced tillage and no-till have become popular methods of controlling erosion in Tama County. These methods will become more widely used as operators bring erosion under control to stay in compliance with the soil erosion limitations of the present farm bill.

When we get more trash on the ground and rely more on insecticides for pest control there are some particular problems that become more of a concern.

Cutworms have a pattern of attacking fields that have more residue than fields that are cleanly tilled. This is because the residue provides more sites for the cutworm moth to lay its eggs and feed when the moth flies in on the warm southerly breezes in the spring. It is particularly critical to scout no-till fields in the spring on a regular basis after corn has emerged. Cutworms and armyworms (a close relative of the cutworm) can mow down a field in just a couple of days when the conditions are right. When we have heavy cutworm infestations, insecticides applied at plant-

ing provide very little control.

In the Spring of 1985 there were many fields in Tama County that were completely wiped out even though an insecticide had been applied at planting time. In other words if you are following soybeans with corn there is no need to apply an insecticide at planting for cutworm or rootworm control. It just isn't cost effective.

If you scout the fields and find several plants cut off and the cutworms active in the field, this is the time to check all your fields and spray where needed. Products such as Pounce, Pydrin, and Ambush have worked very effectively for cutworm control and remain active for seven to 10 days. The cost per acre is about half of a granular insecticide and much more effective.

If cutworm flights are small and your fields not infested you won't need to treat and you save the entire cost of insecticides. This method keeps your options open, is more cost effective and is better for the environment as a whole.



AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL? SOIL CONSERVATION OR UGLY POLLUTION

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