

LEE COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

DISTRICT PROGRAM

Revised - 1965

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LEE COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

DISTRICT PROGRAM

Revised - 1965

1. PURPOSE FOR ORGANIZATION OF DISTRICT

The Lee County Soil Conservation District was formed for the purpose of assisting land owners and operators in conserving the soil and water on their farms. Through cooperative efforts of farmers and farm organizations, the District was formed and officially organized on January 12, 1945.

The primary objective of the District is to inform farmers to use their land within its capabilities and also, how the land may be used according to its needs for protection and improvement.

The commissioners will prepare a work plan which gives more specifically the operating policies and methods to be used in carrying on the work of the District.

2. DESCRIPTION OF LEE COUNTY

Lee county is located in the extreme southeastern corner of Iowa. Its southern boundary coincides with the Missouri state line on the Des Moines river. Its eastern boundary extends to the Mississippi river. It is bounded on the north by Des Moines and Henry counties and on the west by Van Buren county.

The county is irregular in shape, extending about 30 miles from north to south and about 30 miles from east to west at the farthest point. The total land area is approximately 522 square miles, or 334,080 acres. It contains 15 civil townships.

a. Climate

The climate of Lee county is of the midcontinental type, characterized by wide variations and rapid changes in temperatures, scanty winter precipitation, and normally ample rainfall during the growing season.

The normal annual temperature is 51.3 degrees. The summer average is 74.3 and the winter--26.6 degrees. As a rule, a few days of 100 degree weather is common in summer, and about ten days of zero weather in winter mark the extremes. The highest temperature ever recorded was 113 degrees, and the lowest--27 degrees. January is normally the coldest month with an average temperature of 26.7 degrees, and July the warmest month with an average of 77.9 degrees.

The frost-free period averages 187 days in length. The average date of the last killing frost in spring--April 15, and the first in the fall--October 19. This gives a sufficiently long growing season to mature all crops common to the corn belt. Occasionally, crops are affected due to delayed spring planting and/or an early fall freeze.

Precipitation is abundant, normally 32-36 inches per year, most of which occurs during the growing season. This heavy rainfall, in connection with the warm nights, is the reason for the remarkable growth of corn in the county. Near-tropical conditions are obtained for short periods in the summer and are ideal for the growth of corn.

Winters are usually rather mild with infrequent heavy snows, although ice storms are rather common, with one or two destructive ones each year. Snowfall for the entire season averages 24.8 inches. Falls of an inch or more at a time number approximately 10 per year on the average.

The prevailing winds in Iowa are from a southerly direction for the six-month period of April through September. Wind comes from the southwest during October, and from the northwest during the five months of November through March. The average velocity is 8.57 miles per hour throughout the year.

b. Population

The total population of the county, as reported in the 1960 Federal Census, was 44,207, of which 7,033, or 15.9 percent, lived on farms. Average age of all farm operators is 30.9 years.

c. Land

The total number of farms is 1,586 and the average size is 185.7 acres.

The total land area of Lee county is 334,080 acres with 294,451 acres in farms, or 88 percent.

d. Income

Total value of all farm products sold (1959 Federal Census) was \$14,221,772. This amounted to an average of \$9,047 per farm.

Source of cash income was crops sold--\$3,538,331 and livestock and products sold--\$10,663,441.

e. Farm Tenure

Seventy-two (72) percent of Lee county farms are owned by operator and twenty-eight (28) percent are rented. (1963 Iowa farm census.)

f. Agriculture

The predominant type of agriculture in Lee county at the present time consists of a combination of growing corn, soybeans, wheat, oats, and other general farm crops, and raising and feeding of hogs and cattle. It is the modified type of livestock farming referred to as general farming. The only large variation from general farming is on the alluvial soils along the Mississippi river where cash corn, beans, and wheat farming is practiced. But on the average farm, the crops grown are utilized largely for feeding purposes on the farm and surplus grain occasionally is sold.

1. Crops

The general farm crops grown in Lee county in order of their importance are: Corn, soybeans, wheat, oats, alfalfa, clover and timothy. Rye, sorghums, and barley are crops of minor importance.

Corn is the most important crop in the county. In 1963 it was grown on 75,936 acres, or 24.5 percent of the total farm land. (1963 Iowa farm census.) The average yield for the county was 82.6 bushels per acre.

Soybeans is now the second most important crop both in value and acreage. In 1963 there were 24,284 acres planted to beans which produced an average yield of 30 bushels per acre.

Wheat is the most important small grain crop grown in Lee county. In 1963 Lee county was only exceeded by Harrison county in acreages harvested in the state of Iowa. That year 10,845 acres were harvested with an average of 37.2 bushels per acre. The wheat is used as a cash grain crop.

Oats is second most important small grain crop. In 1963 there were 11,247 acres harvested with an average of 40 bushels per acre. It is primarily used as a nurse crop for legumes and is harvested for grain.

Other small grains include sorghum, barley, and rye. The combined acreage in 1963 for these crops was 192 acres.

Alfalfa has become the most important hay crop in Lee county during the past decade. The 1963 acreage was 17,695 acres, generally distributed over the county except in areas of alluvial soils.

Clover and timothy follow alfalfa in importance as a hay crop. Prior to 1956 clover-timothy acreage surpassed that of alfalfa. In 1963 there were 7,253 acres grown.

Pasture land consisted of 122,454 acres in 1963. Decrease is due to pasture improvement and the reclaiming of pasture land for cultivation.

In 1963 there were 18,533 acres of cropland that were idle, fallow, or a failure. The government feed-grain program accounted for 15,113 acres of cropland not being harvested.

An area between Montrose and Fort Madison on the Mississippi river produces melons, grapes, and vegetables for commercial markets.

2. Livestock

The livestock industry is an important phase of the farm operations in Lee county. The large amount of rough, low-producing land particularly adapts the county to the raising of livestock. Practically every farmer raises some hogs, and raises and/or feeds beef cattle.

The raising of hogs is an important part of the livestock industry in Lee county. The raisers are distributed throughout the county with the largest numbers in the areas producing the most corn. In 1963, 7,872 sows farrowed in the fall. Sows bred to farrow in spring, 1964, totaled 8,311.

The raising and feeding of beef cattle is an important phase of the county livestock industry. In 1963 there were 8,583 beef cows and heifers over two years old reported on Lee county farms.

There were 13,427 grain-fed cattle marketed during 1963. The principal breeds are Hereford, Angus, and Shorthorns. Charolais and cross mixtures are gaining in importance.

Dairying is an important part of the livestock industry. However, the trend in the last few years is fewer cows and more

pounds of milk per cow through dairy herd improvement. In 1963 there were 4,560 milk cows reported.

Sheep are not particularly popular in Lee county, although many farms have a small flock of 25-30 ewes as a secondary livestock enterprise.

8. Topography

Lee county occupies a broad upland plain. The surface, for the most part, is slightly undulating to rolling. At the border of this plain, along the Des Moines, Mississippi, and Skunk rivers, numerous steep ravines and gorges occur. Along these areas there is a sudden drop of about 200 feet to the water level of the rivers bordering the county. This upland area slopes gradually to the southeast and is divided roughly into two wide areas by Big Sugar Creek and Sugar Creek. Bordered on the east and west by these two creeks and on the north and south by the Skunk and Des Moines rivers, respectively, is an area which is somewhat elevated above the surrounding area. However, this area is very irregular and is severely cut by many small streams. Low, alluvial plains border the small streams, but none of them are very extensive in area. Along the Mississippi there is a large area of bottomland lying between the mouth of the Skunk river and Fort Madison, including a large portion of Green Bay township. Between Fort Madison and Montrose there is bottomland, but higher in elevation, and some terraces are found. Near Sand Prairie there is an important area of terrace soil separated from the Des Moines river by a narrow strip of bottomland.

The drainage of the county is accomplished by three creeks. Sugar and Big Sugar creeks are large, while the third, Lost Creek, is much smaller. These creeks rise in the northwestern part of the county and flow in a southeasterly direction.

h. Soils

The first and only soil survey report of Lee county was published in 1918.

The most up-to-date and current information was compiled in March, 1964, in the County Conservation Needs Report. (Approximate areas--see attached sheet.)

LEE COUNTY SOILS
(including urban)

Approximate Area and Proportionate Extent

SOIL NO.	NAME	ACRES	PERCENT OF COUNTY TOTAL
11, 11c	Colo-Gravity-Olmitz complex	7,766	2.3
41	Hagener sand or loamy sand	11,618	3.2
65	Lindley loam	45,879	13.1
129, 129c	Chaseburg-Nodaway complex	5,414	1.5
130	Belinda silt loam	7,168	2.1
131	Pershing silt loam	18,449	5.3
T132			
132	Weller silt loam	45,445	12.9
177, 178	O'Neill group, loam, sand and/ or gravel from 24-30" & 36"+	2,526	0.8
192	Adair clay loam	45,102	12.8
208, 208c	Landes	11,401	3.2
211	Edina silt loam	3,331	1.0
220	Nodaway silt loam	6,879	2.0
249	Zwingle silt loam	2,324	0.7
T260			
260	Beckwith silt loam	11,806	3.4
273	Olmitz loam	3,023	0.9
283, 284			
285	Dickenson sandy loam, sand and/ or gravel at 30"+, 24-30", 15-18"	6,551	1.9
362	Haig silt loam and silty clay loam	26,644	7.6
364	Grundy silt loam	31,952	9.2
520	Unnamed, silt loam	4,165	1.2
587	Chequest silty clay loam	2,839	0.8
	*Miscellaneous soil types	16,795	5.0
	Railroad, Urban and Federal land	17,003	5.0
		<u>334,080</u>	

*All soil types with less than 2,000 acres

DESCRIPTION OF LAND CAPABILITY CLASSES

LAND THAT CAN BE CROPPED

- CLASS I - Soils with few limitations that restrict intensive use. They are nearly level, generally well drained, and need no special practices other than those used for good farming.
- CLASS II - Soils with moderate limitations. These soils can be farmed rather intensively if adequate precautions are adhered to. Erosion control and drainage are needed on some soils.
- CLASS III - Soils with moderately severe limitations that require conservation practices--terracing, strip cropping, or contouring with adequate rotations needed for erosion control.
- CLASS IV - Soils with severe limitations to cultivation; can be cropped occasionally with adequate conservation practices.

LAND NOT SUITED FOR CROPPING

- CLASS V - Land suited for pasture, woodland, or wildlife, usually wet, subject to overflow.
- CLASS VI - Soils unsuited to cultivation except for minimum required to establish pasture or trees. These soils are very steep and subject to severe soil loss.
- CLASS VII - Soils unsuited for cultivation, and, unless precautions are taken, are subject to serious limitations when used for pasture and woodland.

ACREAGE SUMMARY BY SLOPE CLASSES

% Slope	0-1	2-4	5-8	9-13	14-17	18-24	25+
Upland	60,717	78,085	54,970	29,676	9,984	9,275	29,228
Bottomland	6,619	38,074	448				

Soils of four (4) soil association areas are found in Lee county.

(See attached Lee county soils map.)

1. Area I - Weller-Lindley Soil Association

Approximately 48%, or 158,800 acres, belongs in this area and occurs generally over the southern half of the county.

Rolling to steep (9-30% slope), light colored, moderately deep, slowly permeable soils. Prominent features are smaller irregular fields, the high proportion of pasture and smaller farmsteads. County roads usually follow valleys or ridge crests. Pastures equal 40-65% of the land in farms. About 25% of this area is forested, thus much of the pasture land is partly forested.

The important conservation practices on these soils are: Contouring, terraces, waterways, ponds and erosion dams, pasture improvement, and woodland and wildlife management.

2. Area II - Grundy-Haig Soil Association

Approximately 10%, or 33,500 acres, belong in this area and extends across the northwest quarter of the country.

Nearly level to undulating (0-5% slope), dark colored, moderately deep soils derived from loess. The landscape of the area is one of uniformly rectangular fields with little permanent pasture. Country roads generally follow section line. Farmsteads are, in general, large, with big barns to support the livestock feeding operations due in part to the high productivity of the soils. Trees are mainly in groves around the farm buildings, but there are a few patches of forest and some scattered trees. These areas are usually along the major streams near the margin of the region where it joins the Weller-Lindley association. A distinct feature of the region

is the irregular, flat divides that form the highest part of the landscape.

Conservation practices: On the areas of Haig, tile, surface drains, and land grading is needed and used extensively. Tile lines do not work too well, sometimes, unless spaced not more than 50 feet apart. On the sloping Grundy soils, contouring, terraces, surface ditches, waterways, tile, and erosion control structures are used.

3. Area III - Transitional Soil Association

Approximately 28%, or 93,000 acres, of gently rolling to rolling (5-14% slope), light to dark colored mixed prairie-timber soils (Grundy-Pershing-Weller-Shelby-Lindley). These soils occur chiefly between the Grundy-Haig and Weller-Lindley soil association areas, and between these two areas and the Clinton-Lindley and Mahaska-Taintor areas that occur to the north in Henry county. Occasionally, small areas of the Clinton, Mahaska and Taintor soils are encountered in the northern part of Lee county.

Conservation practices: On soils in this area, contouring, terraces, diversion terraces, tile, waterways, ponds, erosion control structures, pasture improvement, and woodland management.

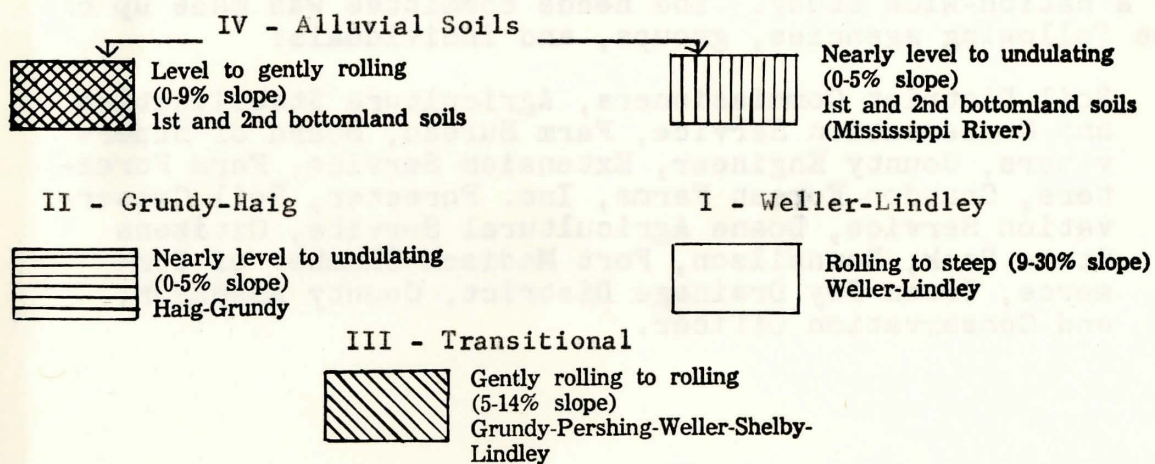
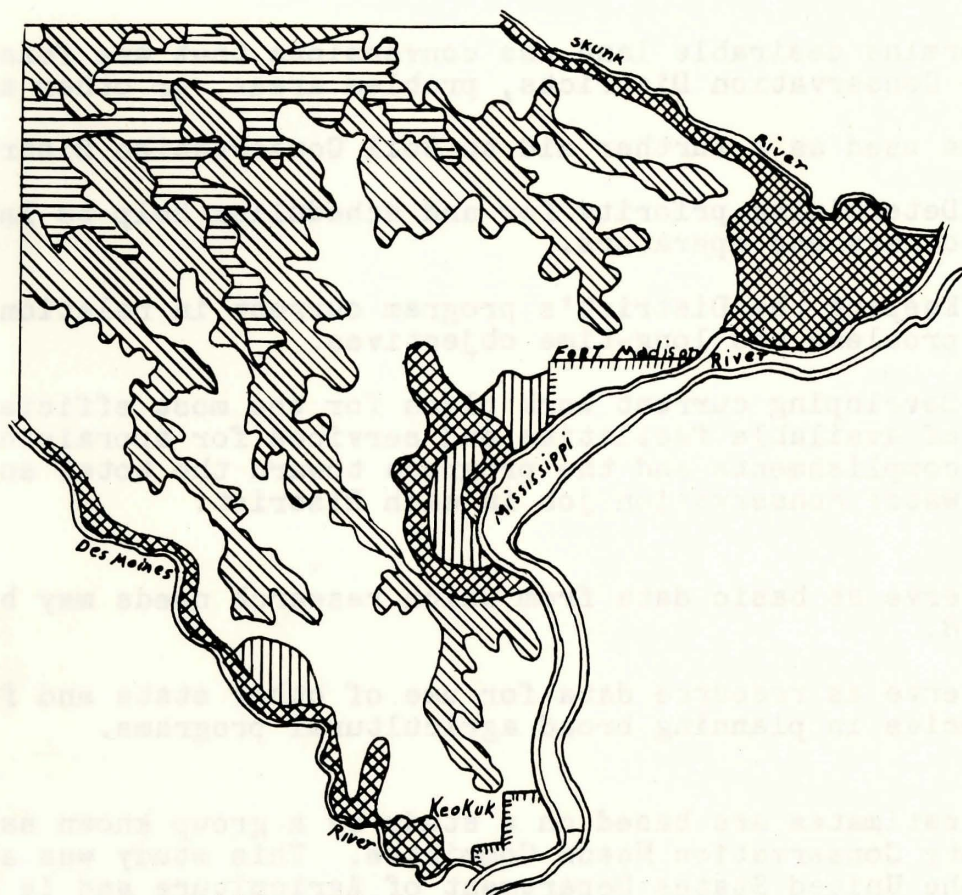
4. Area IV - Alluvial Soils

These soils are important to agriculture in Lee county, comprising 45,000 acres, or about 14% of the total area. Much of the acreage occurs along the Mississippi and to a lesser extent along the Des Moines river. Recent studies indicate that, besides Wabash and Sawmill series, there are present Bremer, Colo, Carlo, Chequest, Jackson, Bertrand, and Curran series. All are nearly level to undulating and thus are usually well suited to crop production.

Conservation practices: Drainage mains and laterals, surface ditches, tile (some soil types), land grading, wind erosion (sandy soils), and woodland management.

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Lee County, Iowa

SOILS



PURPOSE OF THE CONSERVATION NEEDS REPORT

- A. To determine essential conservation practices and soil treatments needed to achieve a practical soil and water conservation program for the Soil Conservation Districts for watersheds or other land units.
- B. Determine desirable land use conversions that are feasible by Soil Conservation Districts, problem areas, or other areas.
- C. To be used as a further aid to Soil Conservation Districts in:
 - 1. Determining priority for and scheduling help to land owners and operators.
 - 2. Keeping the District's program current in relation to problems and long-time objectives.
 - 3. Developing current work plans for the most efficient use of available facilities and services for appraising accomplishments and the progress toward the total soil and water conservation job in each District.
- D. To serve as basic data from which research needs may be determined.
- E. To serve as resource data for use of other state and federal agencies in planning broad agricultural programs.

The estimates are based on a study by a group known as Lee County Conservation Needs Committee. This study was authorized by the United States Department of Agriculture and is a part of a nation-wide study. The needs committee was made up of the following agencies, groups, and individuals:

Soil District Commissioners, Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service, Farm Bureau, Board of Supervisors, County Engineer, Extension Service, Farm Foresters, Crandon Forest Farms, Inc. Forester, Soil Conservation Service, Doane Agricultural Service, Citizens State Bank, Donnellson, Fort Madison Chamber of Commerce, Green Bay Drainage District, County Assessor, and Conservation Officer.

3. PROBLEMS OF THE DISTRICT

There are many soil and water conservation problems in Lee County Soil Conservation District due to the variety of soils and topography.

a. General

The present trend is for farms to be fewer in number and larger in size.

Many "part-time" farmers live on small farms adjacent to Keokuk and Fort Madison. They depend on industry for their main income but prefer rural living. These farmers are on shift work and it is difficult for them to devote time and work on conservation work.

b. Educational

Developing an awareness of the public to the seriousness of soil and water loss is of utmost importance. Many farmers are carrying on sound soil and water conservation practices. However, there are many who are uninformed and do not care. The problem in education is how to reach, inform, and help these farmers and urban people.

c. Erosion

Erosion has damaged much of Lee county in the short time it has been under cultivation. Sheet erosion, with its big brother, gully erosion, has taken a heavy toll. Additional companions of overcropping, overgrazing, and economic conditions have contributed to the erosion problem.

d. Land Use Problems

1. Cropland

The trend for continuous cropping is apparent by the following figures.

The following shows the change in land use with the past 24 years:

<u>Crop</u>	1963 <u>Acres</u>	1939 <u>Acres</u>
Corn	75,956	45,967
Soybeans	24,284	6,689
Oats	11,247	20,523
Wheat	10,845	11,219
Sorghums	14	281
Rye	158	3,072
Barley	20	69
Hay, all	25,884	21,198
Pasture, all	122,454	152,664
Cl-Tim & Grass mixture	8,189	21,141
Alfalfa & Alfalfa mixture	17,695	3,542

To use the soils within their capabilities, intensive cropping must be kept on more level, highly productive soils.

To protect the more sloping ground, mechanical practices of contouring, parallel terraces, cut and fill terraces, and storage terraces with tile outlets will lessen soil losses.

2. Woodland

Timberland until recent years has been poorly managed. The sale of timber for barrel staves has resulted in wholesale cutting of even-aged stands.

The installation of a paper mill utilizing hardwood pulp has introduced an economic boost to local woodlands. Many woodland

owners have become "tree farmers" where good management, replanting, and sound harvesting practices are carried on. About 18% of the county is in woodland. With a market for pulp, woodlands have begun to be considered an economic asset.

3. Pasture Improvement

With 20% of the county in pasture land, the improvement and management is of utmost importance. The ordinary bluegrass pasture did not have a very long season of sustained high production. Coupled with overgrazing, pastures were not always helping carry the economic load.

With lime and fertilizer, forage yields increased considerably. The introduction of alfalfa-bromegrass or orchard grass mixture spread and lengthened the pasture capacity. The introduction of birdsfoot trefoil helped strengthen the pasture season.

Pastures are an important part of the farm economy in this county.

4. Drainage

The use of drainage, both closed and open, is needed on many Lee county soils. The Grundy, Maig, Edina, Belinda, and bottomland soil types all need tile or open drains.

The level to flat prairie soils benefit by field tile and waterway tile. On tighter soils, only surface ditches will work properly.

On many areas of the Greenbay drainage district, deep mains and laterals have proved effective. Also, some bottomland soils have been tiled successfully.

Drainage on prairie and bottomland soils has been of high importance to the economy of Lee county.

5. Highways and County Roads

In this district, the US, State, and County highway systems present a roadside erosion problem. The establishment and maintenance of vegetative cover on roadsides is oft times difficult. The proper installation of culverts and their maintenance presents many problems to farmers and highway engineers.

e. Watersheds

The land of Lee county drains into three rivers. Watersheds draining into the Skunk river are four, Des Moines river--six, and directly into the Mississippi--twelve, or a total of twenty-two watersheds.

These watersheds vary considerably in size. Gully erosion is prevalent in upper reaches and siltation and flooding on lower reaches. The watersheds that flood bottomland all the time are Sugar Creek, Big Sugar, Devil's Creek, and Lost Creek.

f. Recreation

The Soil District commissioners are aware of the increased need for recreational areas and facilities.

Lee county lies within the boundaries of three rivers, contains a State Forest, and considerable woodland. Two cities totaling almost 35,000 people places an ever increasing demand for boating, fishing, hunting, and general outdoor recreation in this area.

g. Conservation Needs

A Lee county conservation needs analysis was published in March, 1964. This report followed a study by a Conservation Needs Committee composed of members of USDA agencies and of local conservation orientated groups. This report included land classes, estimated land use changes from 1958 to 1975, acreage summary of soil types by slope classes. Also conservation practice needs (see attached table). Widespread distribution to all agencies and interested individuals was made of this report.

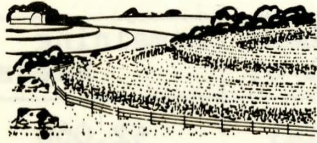
LEE COUNTY CONSERVATION PRACTICE NEEDS

Progress to Date and Amounts Needed

Practice	Unit	Total Needs Practical	On Land 12/31/63	Remaining Needs
Contouring	Acres	70,503	18,443	52,060
Diversions	Miles	92	40	52
Drainage, Field Ditch Mains and Laterals	Miles	349	75	274
Drainage, Land Grading	Acres	3,961	853	3,108
Farm Ponds	No.	1,521	661	860
Fish Pond Stocking	No.	758	277	481
Grade Stabilization Structures	No.	518	171	347
Grassed Waterways	Acres	2,591	508	2,083
Pasture Renovation	Acres	5,479	3,234	2,245
Pasture Planting	Acres	6,696	2,525	4,171
Strip Cropping, Contour	Acres	2,734	512	2,222
Strip Cropping, Field	Acres	483	127	356
Terraces, Graded and Parallel	Miles	317	95	222
Tile Drains	Miles	1,092	425	667
Tree Planting	Acres	5,337	592	4,745
Wildlife Habitat Development	Acres	1,521	719	802
Woodland Improvement	Acres	41,168	1,944	39,224
District Cooperators	No.	1,586	669	717
	Acres	294,451	121,653	132,798
Basic Farm Plans	No.	1,586	533	1,053
	Acres	294,451	98,553	195,898

ESTIMATED AMOUNTS OF CONSERVATION PRACTICES NEEDED

ON CROPLAND



Contouring & Strip
Cropping
54,638 acres



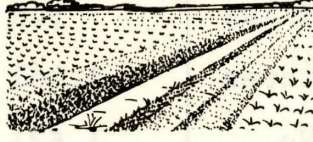
Grassed waterways
2,083 acres



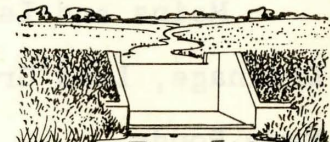
Terraces & diversions
222 miles - Terrace
52 miles -Diversion



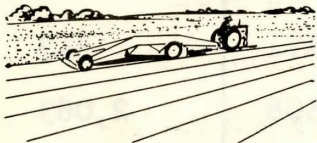
Tile drains
667 miles



Drainage field ditch
Mains & laterals
274 miles



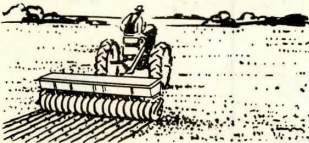
Grade stabilization
structures
347 structures



Drainage Land grading
3,108 acres

KIND OF JOBS NEEDED
Contouring
Contour Strip Cropping
Terraces & Diversions
Grassed Waterways
Tile

Drainage land grad-
ing
Drainage field ditches
Grade stabilization
structures
Vegetative & cultural
practices
Lime, fertilizer &
rotations



Pasture planting &
renovation
6,416 acres

ON GRASSLAND



Farm ponds - 860
Fish stocking - 481

KIND OF JOBS NEEDED
Ponds
Pasture planting &
renovation
Controlled grazing

ON WOODLAND



Tree planting
4,745 acres



Woodland improvement
39,224 acres

KIND OF JOBS NEEDED
Tree planting
Woodland improvement
Protection from
grazing

ON OTHER LAND

KIND OF JOBS NEEDED
Planting trees & shrubs
Wildlife food & shelter plantings
seedings



Wildlife Habitat development

4. LONG-TIME OBJECTIVES OF THE DISTRICT

The District hopes to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To obtain the adoption of sound farming methods through soil and water conservation practices necessary to prevent erosion and to develop the natural beauty of rural land.
2. To encourage and inform farmers to use their soils according to their capabilities. By use of soil surveys with farm conservation plans developed with the farmer that are practical and feasible for him to apply.
3. To increase and maintain the productiveness of cropland by good land use and adequate rotations, proper soil treatments and soil management practices. To increase carrying capacity of permanent pastures by use of limestone, fertilizer and legume and grass seedings. To protect and use woodland and wildlife areas for multiple use such as pulpwood, Christmas trees, logs, and recreation.
4. Encourage and help form group enterprises and/or watersheds for solution of drainage, soil erosion, floodwater, and sedimentation control.

The District commissioners believe that these long-time objectives will result in an increased farm income, elimination of serious soil and water losses, and the building of soil fertility, all of which will contribute to a profitable and stable agriculture.

The District commissioners will take part in the planning phase and use of various programs which will contribute to above objectives. These include ACP cost-sharing, watersheds (Public Law 566), Rural Area Development, and Resource Conservation and Development Program.

5. ASSISTANCE FROM VARIOUS SOURCES

Assistance in furthering the program of the Soil Conservation District is supplied by the following: State Soil Conservation Committee, Soil Conservation Service, Extension Service, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, State Conservation Commission, Farm Bureau and other farm organizations, Crandon Forest Farms, Inc., County Conservation Board, county newspapers and radio stations, Chambers of Commerce (Fort Madison and Keokuk), implement companies, banks, County Mutual Insurance Companies, County Board of Supervisors and Engineer.

REVISIONS

The preceding program may be revised and amended at any time the Soil District commissioners may choose.

The program will be reviewed annually.

Lee County Soil Conservation District

Date 12-15-65

by: Raymond Hohl
Chairman

A resolution authorizing the adoption of this revised program was passed by the district governing body on 12-15-65 at Donnellson, Iowa.

by: Marjorie M. Stamps
Secretary