

2006

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Fayette SWCD Annual Report

Boehm is 2005 Woodland Owner of the Year

When you pause to take a look around at thickets of timber falling down the mountainous hills surrounding Eric Boehm's farmhouse a couple miles south of Wadena, it's hard to believe you're still in Iowa.

It looks more like a snapshot taken in Alaska or Wyoming, and Boehm wants to be sure his six year old daughter, Allison, gets to see the same images when she grows old one day.

"We've lived here for 30 years, and it never loses its newness," says Boehm as he and Allison hop in the pickup for an escape out to the tree farm just on the other side of Brush Creek from his house.

Boehm has 271 acres of woodland that has been under a written management plan since 1993. He took over the family farm in the late 1980s. In 2005, Boehm was recognized as Woodland Owner of the Year by the Fayette County Soil and Water Conservation District for his leadership in forest conservation and management.

Aside from operating a bulldozer and truck for a construction company in northeast Iowa, Boehm is chairman of the Fayette County Conservation Board. He's been active in forest management throughout the county, and on his own land, leading the way by example and encouraging others to practice

good forest management.

In 1993, he completed a select harvest on 40 acres (27 MBF), and made sales of mature walnut in 2004. He direct seeded five acres in 2000, and four and a half acres of Riparian Buffer in 2004. Last spring, over five acres were planted to bottom-land hardwoods.

In the fall of 2004, he protected five acres of direct seeded oak with wire cages.

Since 2000, Boehm and forest-er consultant Mark Webb, Decorah, have completed 106 acres of weed tree removal thanks to a timber stand removal program.

Developing a healthy, diverse forest is just one aspect of Boehm's passion for his land. Brush Creek is the beating heart of his farm, and improving water quality for the smallmouth bass in the creek is one of Boehm's main interests.

"People are surprised when they see so many smallmouth bass in Brush Creek," says Boehm, "because the Volga River is so well known for its bass. This creek has bass too."

He's completed numerous rip rap projects following major flooding in 1999, when the creek disappeared from its original banks within his farm and relocated to a nearby northerly location.

Boehm recently entered into



Eric Boehm and his daughter, Allison, take a look at one of 125 caged oaks Boehm planted three years ago. Boehm was recognized as Woodland Owner of the Year by the Fayette County Soil and Water Conservation District in 2005 for his leadership in forest conservation and management.

an agreement with the National Fish and Wildlife Service to place a conservation easement on an alluvial slope located on the farm.

The conservationist has also planted over 30 acres of native prairie grasses and wildflowers in his farm. Managed under a multiple use concept, deer hunting

and mushroom hunting as well as hiking is practiced within the tree farm.

Boehm credits other area woodland owners, such as Dick Jensen of rural West Union, for the progress the county has made in conservation. He sees his Woodland Owner of the Year Award not

as a glorified sense of accomplishment, but as a way of providing an example for other woodland owners to practice good forest management. His farm south of Wadena has become a model conservation farm, and he not only promotes conservation verbally, but with his accomplishments.

Fayette SWCD Applies for Development Grant on Otter and Nutting Creeks

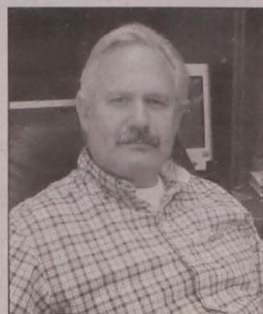
By: Carrie Davis

The Fayette Soil and Water Conservation District has recently applied for a Watershed Protection Fund Development Grant for Otter and Nutting Creeks in Fayette County. Nutting Creek is listed on EPA's 303d List of Impaired Waters while Otter Creek is classified as a coldwater, high quality stream. This means that Otter Creek is a stream in which recreational or other habitat characteristics are suitable for the maintenance of a wide variety of cold water species, including non-reproductive

populations of trout and associated aquatic communities.

The purpose of these grants are to assist Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the development of effective water quality projects designed to improve/protect our State's water resources. If funded, the District plans to use the funding to complete watershed assessments, gather background information, and conduct stakeholder surveys on both Nutting and Otter Creeks to determine the feasibility of a watershed project on one or both these streams.

NRCS welcomes new Area Conservationist, Al Ehley



Al Ehley, pictured above, is a new Area Conservationist with NRCS in West Union.

As a new comer to north east Iowa, I am pleased to have the opportunity to work with Soil and Water Conservation Districts and NRCS Field Offices in their efforts

to control soil erosion and improve water quality. North east Iowa has a long and well known reputation to use a wide variety of conservation practices to control erosion and maintain a quality environment. As I drive the highways and back roads of this area, I can see the application of past conservation practices and how they have been matched with the natural rolling landscape.

One way the NRCS is recognizing farmers for their past efforts to control soil erosion are with the Conservation Security Program, commonly called CSP. Different watersheds across the nation are being selected for enrollment into CSP. Farmers within those watersheds can develop a contract with NRCS and receive annual pay-

ments to maintain good conservation on their land. I like the motto used with CSP, "Rewards the Best, Motivates the Rest". That says it all.

NRCS continues to support traditional conservation programs such as EQIP, CRP, and WRP. I encourage you to visit your local NRCS and SWCD Office for more information on these and other conservation programs.

**Check out the
Dean's Honda
ad on the
back cover!**

Brad and Lynn Struve are District and Regional Conservation Owner Award Winners

If you take care of the land, the land will take care of you is a philosophy Brad Struve believes in. "Conservation is the key in preserving the land for future generation," states Struve. He uses many strategies in practicing conservation on his family farm. Struve moved to the 160 acres farm outside of Maynard 49 years ago. As a boy, he helped his father, Orland, with farming and milking chores. In 1973, after graduating from high school at Maynard, he started renting land from neighbors to farm. In 1977, he took over the responsibilities of the family farm. Today, he shares these same duties with his son Shane. This year they rented an additional 100 acres from neighbor, Dale Rueber. Dale knew that Share wanted to farm and Dale was willing to give him a start in farming. Struve adds that he has been blessed with great neighbors and friends.

The Struve's farmstead is very well kept. They have a five and one



The Struve family pictured above (left-right). Front row: Kylie and Lynn. Back row Shane and Brad.

half acre wildlife plot in the north-west corner of the farm in which they planted 6,700 trees. These trees stand twenty foot high and have good ground cover for wildlife. In 2003, the Struve's planted trees on the west side of the house to provide a windbreak to reduce

wind and snow drifting.

In 1984, Brad installed 10,550 feet of narrow base terraces that have a good stand of bromegrass and are free of weeds and trees. Brad's main reason for terracing is to control soil erosion. In 2001, Brad put in 6.4 acres of buffer strips along the creek. The reason he installed these strips were to fil-



Shane (left) and Brad (right) Struve stand in front of contour strips in their field.

ter the runoff and also for wildlife. In 2004, Brad installed more filter strips and added contour buffer strips to reduce soil erosion on the acres that were not terraced.

Brad and his wife, Lynn have two children, Kylie and Shane. Lynn is a nurse for the Covenant Clinic in Oelwein. Kylie is a grad-

uate of UNI and is a fifth grade teacher at Sacred Heart Elementary School in Monticello. Shane attends NICC for Agriculture Technology, works part time for Nabholz Farm and part time farming at home. The Struve family enjoys spending time with friends and working outside.

Identification Statement

The Fayette Soil & Water Conservation District's Annual Report

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Aylsworth is Izaak Walton League Windbreak winner in 2006

After growing up in Wadena, having spent many days as a kid playing in the Volga River and hunting in the woods that surround the town, Ron Aylsworth couldn't have been happier when he bought a 12-1/2 acre farmstead on the south side of town in 1996.

He and his wife, Beth, found a house in Manchester, and moved it to a new foundation on Mill Street just south of the river. For a man who moves houses for a living, it hardly seemed like a difficult task for Ron. Aylsworth has the same motivation for establishing new habitat and wind protection for area wildlife, the land he lives on, and his family.

Since 1997, Aylsworth has planted around 2,800 trees on the property, including a 400' x 60' windbreak that runs along the highway south coming out of Wadena, and east along the Volga River. This year, he's been rewarded for his hard work and commitment



Ron Aylsworth's farm has about 2,800 trees planted as windbreaks five to eight years ago. The windbreak consists of Amur Maple, Highbush Cranberry, White Cedar, Blue Spruce and Norway Spruce.



by being named the Izaak Walton League Windbreak Award winner for 2005.

"There wasn't a tree on the place when I bought it," says Ayl-

worth. Today, his house is nearly hidden from the highway by a 1-1/2 acre windbreak, thick with one row each of Amur Maple and Highbush Cranberry, and two rows each of White Cedar and Blue and Norway Spruce, all now between five and eight years of age.

The windbreak runs along the road 50 feet from the front side of the Aylsworth house, which faces west, and 50 feet from the north side of the house, running along the river.

He's also built a large pond that sits on the east side of his house, stocked with catfish, bass

and bluegill, and he's even stocked his nearby neighbor's meadow with pheasant and quail. While living just inside of city limits keeps the Aylsworth family from hunting near their home, they also own a 250-acre farm a few miles south east of town, where his 14 year old daughter, Ashley, recently shot her first buck.

Back at the homestead, Ron has seen a more than steady population of wildlife make use of the new habitat along the highway and the river south of town. Aside from his windbreak, his planted a mixed bag of walnut, oak, ash,

pine, lilac and spruce.

"We just keep building as we go," he says, "adding a few more here and there."

Aylsworth credits the trees for not only providing habitat for wildlife, but for cleaning out the river basin near his home and stopping erosion along its banks. He's planted numerous Swamp Oak near the water's edge.

"You have to plant the trees where they'll grow the best," he says. Much of his time in the woods is spent "chopping out the bad trees," providing proper space for growth of the younger additions. There's also spraying, mowing and mulching to be done around new plants. Some are eaten by deer, some die, but the Aylsworth family golden lab seems to keep most predators away.

Ron says he's fortunate enough to have a friend who works for the FSA, who's helped him find his trees, and he's gotten some help from Pheasants Forever. Although he's never set a specific goal for his windbreak or woodlands, you can pretty much count on the fact that Aylsworth isn't done planting trees.

"I do it for privacy, and I do it for the land," he says. "It's just something I enjoy doing." He's passed his love for nature on to his kids, and that tradition is a big reason he enjoys life on the south edge Wadena, and in northeast Iowa.

"I think Fayette County has done a great job maintaining and preserving our woods, and with prairie restoration," Aylsworth says. "It's great to see people looking towards the future."

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ISU Extension and the Fayette SWCD sponsor No-Till Advantage Field Day held at the Collin Jensen farm

Farmers from as far away as Holy Cross, Nashua, and Allison joined between 75-100 people attending the No-Till Advantage Field Day held June 28 on the Jensen Farm near West Union. Host Collin Jensen explained how his no-till operation uses less than a gallon of diesel fuel per acre from planting to harvest and cuts labor cost to .6 hour per acre. In addition machinery cost savings from eliminating tillage passes adds up to over \$14.50 per acre. In addition, Jensen's system leaves nearly all crop residue attached to the soil and, as a result, does not float off the field and fill county road culverts and ditches after heavy rainfall. Valuable top soil also stays where it belongs -- in the field.

Brian Lang, ISU Crop Field Specialist summarized long term ISU research that shows that even though corn yields are on an average 5% less than in a chisel plow system, reduction in costs gives no-till the advantage in higher profit per acre. Because research shows that soybean yields are essentially the same in all tillage



Jensen's no-till system leaves corn residue attached to the soil. Attached residue stays where it belongs -- in the field and not in county ditches and culverts.

systems, no-till soybean profit is also higher.

Mark Licht, ISU Agronomist reported that long term use of no-till systems has shown increased soil organic matter and improves soil tilth, texture and internal drainage. Mark also gave an update on the sale of carbon credits and how it varies around the world.

Jerry Muff, Fayette District

Conservationist encouraged farmers to take advantage of the cost-share payment for trying no-till. Muff also encouraged farmers to switch to no-till because of the advantages related to qualifying for the Conservation Security Program

Chad Ingels, ISU Nutrient



Dick Jensen, Chair of the Fayette Soil & Water Conservation District, is shown inspecting Collin Jensen's 24-row, 20" row spacing No-Till planter that was on display at the No-Till Advantage Field Day.

Management Specialist explained how late spring nitrate and fall stalk testing fine tune nitrogen application rates and can reduce nitrogen over application. Actual soil tests for the field day site showed adequate nitrogen amounts.

The field day was sponsored by ISU Extension and the Fayette

County Soil & Water Conservation District. Persons unable to attend the meeting may receive a copy of the information handed out by contacting Dan Burkhardt, Fayette County Extension Education Director, at 201 East Clark in Fayette or by calling 563-425-3331.



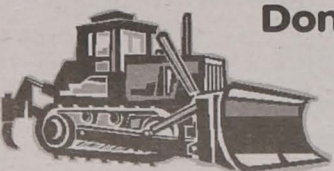
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Contour buffers control erosion and create wildlife on the Hughes farm

The year 2004 was a year of extensive soil erosion due to numerous hard rains during the early part of the growing season when there was little crop canopy cover. Howard Hughes of rural Hawkeye installed contour buffer strips and grassed waterways in the spring of 2005 to reduce the erosive damage from these intense rains. Hughes stated that these practices should do a good job of protecting the land. These practices haven't been put to the test yet because 2005 wasn't a year of severe rainstorms.

Contour buffer strips are narrow strips of grass alternating with wider crop strips on the contour which is a line of level. These reduce erosion by slowing the runoff from the fields. The contour grass strips can be enrolled in CRP or hayed. Hughes uses a 12 row planter in planting the crop strips.

Hughes stated that creating the wildlife habitat was his second reason for installing contour buffer strips. Switchgrass was planted in some areas and brome and red clover in others to create more diverse cover.

Grassed waterways were also

installed on the Hughes farm. They will reduce gully erosion where water concentrates in fields. A shaped crossable channel is constructed and seeded to a sod forming grass such as brome. Hughes said the seeding on the waterways has been established. Having a good thick grass establishment on waterways is essential for them to work right. Maintain your waterways by: mowing them periodically, repair minor damage promptly, and don't plant crops parallel to them as water may not reach the waterway.

New contour buffer strips and grassed waterways are eligible for cost-sharing through the continuous CRP (CCRP) and other programs. Practices enrolled in CRP may receive up to 90% to install the practices and will receive an annual CRP rental payment based on the top three soil types in the eligible area (\$77-\$206). The CRP contracts are 10-15 year contracts. If you are interested in the continuous CRP program, contact the NRCS Field Office at (563) 422-3868 X3.

No-till systems save more than soil

Dan Burkhart, Fayette County Extension Education Director

Robert Tigner, ISU Extension Field Specialist/Farm Management handed out a fact sheet at the No-till Advantage Field Day in June of 2005. It was called "No-till Economics". I have updated the information in that fact sheet to reflect the large fuel price increases we have had since that time. As you will see below, it does make a big difference.

Several factors are involved in switching to no-till crop production. These factors are agronomic, machinery selection, yield performance and economic. We will concentrate on the economic impacts related to labor, machinery and fuel.

A major economic factor that will change when shifting to no-till is the labor requirement. Man-

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February 2006

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agement and harvest labor needs will not change, but tillage labor will. Tillage passes will cease. ISU Extension crop budget publication FM-1712 shows that the tillage labor reduction could be up to 0.60 hours/acre for corn and 0.9 hours per acre for soybeans. A \$10/hour labor rate would mean a labor cost reduction of \$6-9/acre.

The second change will be in machinery costs. Corn production machinery costs, according to FM-1712, are likely to drop by up to \$12-14/acre. Soybean machinery costs may drop by \$10-12/acre. FM-1712 already factors in fuel costs into total machinery costs. The fuel cost used in the calculation is \$2.60/gallon of diesel fuel. Planting, weed control (spraying), and harvest uses about 2-2.5 gallons of diesel fuel/acre. Primary and secondary tillage uses another

2-2.5 gallons/acre. Fuel savings are \$6.50/acre (2.5 gallons @ \$2.60/gallon) by keeping the tillage machinery in the shed.

If a crop producer was using a 50/50 corn-soybean rotation, and using two tillage passes, the crop production costs would drop by \$19/acre. A farmer raising 1000 acres of corn and soybeans would drop production costs by \$19,000. Tillage passes are expensive, not only from the machinery and fuel costs, but from the labor as well.

Most studies looking at farms in the high profit segment find one consistency. Those farms are being managed by someone who does many things well: cost control, yield, marketing, capital utilization, tax minimization, and enterprise selection. No-till farming systems can fit very well into the management of high profit farms.

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JULY 1, 2004 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2005

IM BUDGET

Allocation	\$2,500.00
Commissioner Expenses	\$2,070.98
Office Supplies & Expenses	\$2,385.73

3M BUDGET COST-SHARE PROGRAM

2004-2005 Allocation	\$28,459.00
Spent	\$14,855.07
Balance	\$13,603.93

2003-2004 Allocation	\$28,459.00
Supplemental Allocation	\$11,915.50
Total Allocation	\$40,374.50
Allocated	\$6,020.00
Spent	\$26,558.33
Recalled	\$.87
Balance	\$7,795.30

2002-2003 Allocation	\$16,979.00
Supplemental Allocation	\$34,576.00
Total Allocation	\$51,555.00
Spent	\$44,872.16
Recalled	\$6,682.84

2005 REAP Practice Re-Allocation	\$9,800.34
Allocation	\$7,940.00
Total Allocation	\$17,740.34
Spent	\$13,966.00
Recalled	\$324.34
Reallocated under 2006 funds	\$3,450.00

2005 REAP Forestry Re-Allocation	\$6,412.50
Allocation	\$1,985.00
Supplemental Allocation	\$2,933.00
Spent	\$8,691.00
Recalled	\$7.00
Reallocated under 2006 Funds	\$2,632.50

2005 Volga Lake Allocation	\$16,176.00
Spent	\$10,313.51
Recalled	\$5,862.49

2006 Upper Maquoketa WPF Allocation	\$1,800.00
Spent	\$493.65
Recalled	\$1,306.35

2006 Upper Maquoketa WSPF Allocation	\$29,175.00
Spent	\$12,465.49
Recalled	\$16,709.51

Conservation program update for Fayette County 2006

By Jerry Muff

Conservation Security Program (CSP) – Ninety-five percent of Fayette County was included in two watersheds (Turkey and Wapsipinicon) that were approved for funding in 2005. One hundred twenty nine applications were approved for funding. The 2006 payments have been processed according to the original contracts. Modifications to increase enhancement payments or to bring in additional acres hasn't been allowed yet. There is hope for these modifications to be made for year 2007 payments.

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) – For the 2005 program, Fayette County had 10 applications approved for \$73,000 of cost-share at 50% level. Fayette County has been allocated \$197,000 for 2006. It appears at this time that most of the funding will be approved for various projects. As in 2005, projects will primarily be approved for no-till farming, manure storage and comprehensive nutrient management plans, and management intensive grazing. In 2006 we added grassed waterways and grade stabilization structures to the list of eligible practices.

Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) – One application was approved for WRP in Fayette County in 2005. This was a noncropped area which was Palms Muck soil type. This is a peaty soil that is

common for fens. Fens are high quality upland type wetlands which many times have rare wetland plants associated with them. The approved contract was for just over 40 acres in the Oelwein area.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) – Administered by FSA. There has been no General Signup in 2005. However, FSA has issued information regarding reenrollment for land scheduled to expire in upcoming years. Please see FSA for details. The Continuous CRP (CCRP) is going great and the signup is still continuous. A few of the most common practices are vegetative filter strips, several wetland practices, contour buffer strips, grassed waterways, riparian buffer strips and many more. This year a new practice has been offered to Fayette county landowners called the Bobwhite Quail Buffers Program. A strip of native prairie established around fields edges for upland and song birds.

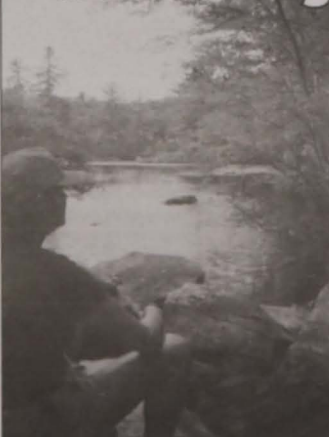
FSA has increased the rental rates for CRP. The State of Iowa complements the program by paying the signup incentive payments which are not paid by the federal program. Financial incentives are very attractive through this program. Up to 90% cost-share rate is available for most practices. Signup incentives vary from \$100 to \$150 per acre and the rental rates are competitive with cash rental rates.

Fayette County has one of the highest participation rates in the CCRP as any in the state and possibly nation. This is one of the best water quality and wildlife programs ever. **Iowa Financial Incentive Program (IFIP)** – This program provides between \$30,000 and \$60,000 to Fayette County landowners as 50% cost-share for the construction of permanent soil conservation practices. This includes, but not limited to terraces, waterways and grade stabilization structures. This program is administered through the local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD).

Resource Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP) – The Fayette SWCD has opted to utilize these 75% cost-share funds for the establishment and improvement of our woodlands. Because of prioritizing our woodlands, we can usually keep up with the demand.

As you can see there are a multitude of programs which are offered to land users. We do our best to provide technical assistance to you in a timely manner in carrying out these and other programs. Recently, our staff has been reduced by two full-time employees which will make it more of a challenge to meet our workload needs in 2006. We greatly appreciate all the patience our cooperators have shown in the past and ask for more in the upcoming year.

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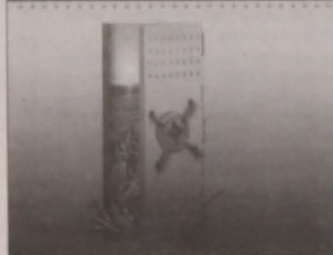
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- Complements other funding sources. If you have a grant or other funding, you can use a loan to provide your share of the project.



Fayette County Soil and Water District commissioners are pictured above. From left- Joyce Trotter, Bill Bennett, Will Ogle, Richard Jensen, Rod Marlatt, Deb Dessel, Paul Nuss and John Grafenberg.

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CRP Quail Buffer Now Available Statewide

By Lisa Bahe,
SWCD Conservation Specialist

The Bobwhite Quail Buffer through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has gone Statewide. Native Bobwhite Quail populations have declined in Iowa over the past few decades. To improve quail and other song bird populations' field borders may be enrolled into CRP.

Eligible buffers are planted along the field borders of existing crop fields, preferably adjacent to woody cover. Widths can range from 30-120 feet. Planting consists of native warm season grasses, legumes, wildflowers, forbs. Limited tree and shrub plantings are optional. The buffer can not be used as turn rows or for storage of equipment.

Native quail populations have declined in Iowa due to urbanization, loss of native grasslands, intensive agriculture, and converting grassy fields to forests. The purpose of the buffer is to provide wildlife food and nesting areas. As well as to reduce erosion, improve water quality and generate income by moving crops away

from woody field edges.

If interested sign-up soon at your local Farm Service Agency. Sign-up is limited to 20,000 acres in Iowa. The sign up will end when the 20,000 acres are enrolled on or December 31, 2007. This practice has a 50 percent cost-share with a 40 percent practice incentive payment for establishment costs. Also included is a sign-up bonus payment of \$100/acre for the first year.

Eligibility consists of land that was cropped four out of the six years from 1996 to 2001. Alfalfa in a rotation may be considered a crop. Buffers enrolled will receive an annual rental payment and a ten year contract. Mid-contract management is required, such as disking, herbicide application, or prescribed burning.

If you would like more information on this practice contact your local NRCS office. To learn more about the Bobwhite Quail's history, identification, hunting of quails and much more log onto the following website <http://www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/files/bobwhitequail.html>.



Employees, pictured from left: Jerry Muff, Lori Kohlmeyer, Carrie Davis, Lisa Bahe, Laverne Koch and Jim Wolfe. Not pictured, Alan Crowe and Tom Sperfslage.

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Success in 2006—Partnerships will be the key

By State Conservationist Richard Van Klaveren, Iowa NRCS

Each year brings new challenges and opportunities for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service and our customers. Through our partnerships with farmers, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, other conservation groups and government agencies, we worked together in 2005 to exceed expectations. Last year was a great example of what cooperation can accomplish. In fact, the conservation partnership helped Iowa NRCS exceed our goals—from applied comprehensive nutrient management plans to restored wetlands.

Here are a few examples of our 2005 accomplishments:

- 2 million tons of reduced soil erosion
- 176 comprehensive nutrient management plans written
- 1.2 million acres of cropland conservation plans written

These successes were realized while leading in the nation in CSP contracts and awarding more than \$20 million in EQIP contracts—for the second year in a row. Last year Iowa NRCS awarded 1,467 EQIP contracts worth \$21.6 million. We also wrote nearly 2,000 CSP contracts for 2005. Nationally, one in every six CSP contracts in 2005 was awarded to an Iowa landowner or producer.

This year will bring additional challenges, largely due to the budget pressures created by Hurricane Katrina. Even before Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, our Chief, Bruce Knight, indicated the NRCS budget would be very tight.

What does that mean to Iowa NRCS and our partners? Will we have money to do the cooperative and contribution agreements we did this past year? Will we add staff? Will we take on additional commitments?

Chances are we will not. But

we will continue to help people help the land.

No matter how the budget resolves itself, NRCS and our partners will still help landowners solve their resource and program related issues. These are issues we won't resolve today, next week or even perhaps next year. Rather, they are long term conservation challenges and opportunities.

The first of these is expiring CRP contracts and land use planning. Nearly 1.5 million acres of Iowa CRP contracts will expire by 2009, one-half of them in 2007 alone. Despite USDA plans to offer extensions and renewals for many of those acres, we believe much of that land will revert to crop production. The bottom line is many landowners will make more money renting their ground to farmers than to the government.

So our goal is to help these producers and landowners make the best land use decisions—show them ways to leave the most critical areas in permanent grass cover to maximize environmental benefits while balancing the need for profits. Hopefully this will also preserve their chances for qualifying for future Conservation Security Program signups.

And what is the future of CSP? In the immediate future, the CSP workload and challenges appear overwhelming. The tools used to implement CSP continue to change, making the process seem even more challenging. The budget will also have a major impact on the program this fiscal year. Our Chief recently stated there will not be enough funding to offer the program as widely as planned when the 2006 watersheds were announced. A signup is still expected this winter.

Despite the financial challenges, I believe CSP will continue to grow and evolve into our top conservation program, supported by the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

None of this will be accomplished without cooperation at every level—local, state and national. As the NRCS workload grows and evolves, partnerships become an even stronger cornerstone of our daily work. It would be impossible to reach our goals each year without the help of our partners and the conservation commitment of our customers. So here's to another successful year as Iowa NRCS works to help people help the land.

Fayette SWCD annual financial statement

District Revolving Fund	
Beginning Balance	\$1,192.89
Receipts	
Fabric Income	\$5,404.10
Grannis Creek Reimbursement	\$364.93
Houg Money Market Transfers	\$444.00
Mink Creek Reimbursement	\$220.00
Money Market Transfers	\$21,681.15
No-Till Field Day	\$360.00
Supporter Club	\$1,269.80
Tree Sales	\$2,473.70
Upper Maquoketa Reimbursement	\$493.65
Total Receipts	\$32,711.33
TOTAL	\$ 33,904.22
Expenses	
ATV	\$1,586.56
Donations	\$1,216.83
Education	\$1,221.07
Fabric	\$2,006.75
Gifts Given	\$84.00
Grain Drill	\$347.44
Grannis Creek	\$75.60
Houg Property	\$816.92
IM Commissioner	\$2,070.98
IM Office	\$2,385.73
Liability Insurance	\$212.00
Meeting Expenses	\$809.81
Memorials	\$25.00
Mink Creek	\$220.00
Office Supplies	\$489.25
Payroll	\$8,500.00
Postage	\$603.22
Reimburse Grannis Creek Acct	\$50.50
Sales Tax	\$630.88
Trees	\$6,067.09
Turkey River	\$2,500.00
Upper Maquoketa River	\$493.65
Total Expenses	\$32,413.28
Ending Balance 6/30/04	\$1,490.94
Checking Savings	
Beginning Balance	\$671.53
Interest Earned	.54
Ending Balance 6/30/04	\$672.07

This account was closed and funds were transferred to Money Market

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The Fayette SWCD would like to thank those who made contributions to the supporter club in 2005. The SWCD Commissioners and office staff work to educate and inform the public of program available to them. This is a list of names and businesses of Fayette County and beyond who have made our programs possible. Through continued conservation efforts, we can all make a difference.

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Accomplishments for 2006

Practices	Amount
Contour Farming	1,746 ac.
Contour Buffer Strips	1,647 ac.
Filter Strips, Wildlife Habitat Buffers, Wetland Buffers	336 ac.
Grade Stabilization Structures	1 structure
Grassed Waterways	143 ac.
Livestock Exclusion	1,786 ac.
Manure Storage Structures	4 structures
Prescribed Grazing	204 ac.
Riparian Forest Buffers	121 ac.
Stripcropping	217 ac.
Terraces	13,700 ft.
Timber Stand Improvement	206 ac.
Tree & Shrub Plantings	141 ac.
Upland & Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	1,656 ac.
Water & Sediment Control Basins	1 structure
Wetland Restoration	97 ac.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Total Contracts = 2,380

Total Acres = 27,700 acres

Grannis Creek watershed project wraps up

Fayette SWCD Report February 2006 Page 11



Improvements involving the Grannis Creek watershed have reduced erosion and and improved water quality.

By: Carrie Davis,
Project Coordinator

The Grannis Creek Watershed has been the focus of a watershed project for the last four years. Grannis Creek, a tributary of Volga River, is located in eastern Fayette County and is one of Northeast Iowa's 25 highest priority cold water streams. The goal of the watershed project was to protect the water quality of Grannis Creek, with sedimentation having the greatest negative impact in the water quality.

The 3,800 acre watershed has undergone significant changes in land use and conservation practices over the last four years. Watershed residents have enrolled over 400 acres into the general CRP program, or close to 16% of cropland acres in the watershed. Continuous CRP was also promoted through the watershed project. Sixty acres of contour buffer strip and 47.6 acres of filter strips have been installed in the watershed. Grass waterways are great way to reduce gully erosion; 4.7 acres of grassed waterways were re-established while another 4.3 acres were enrolled into CRP waterways. Almost 20 acres of pasture was enrolled into a pasture management program which entailed creating paddocks and installing water tanks and rotating cattle between them over the grazing season.

The project had a goal to complete 1,500 feet of stream bank stabilization; 2,230 feet of stream bank stabilization was actually achieved. This stream bank work included rip-rap and the installation of 'lunker hides' which are man-made in-stream trout habitat. One notable achievement of the watershed project was the installation of a handicap sidewalk along a portion of Grannis Creek. This

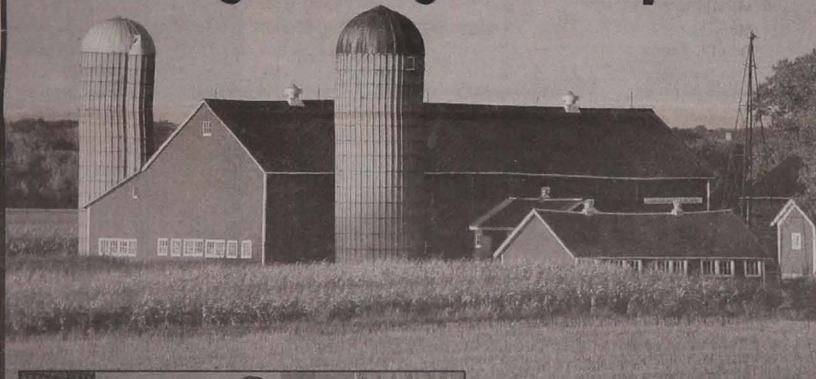
sidewalk has allowed people of all ages and physical capabilities to enjoy one of Northeast Iowa's natural treasures.

No-till and nutrient and pest management was promoted through the project. Three hundred ninety-six acres were enrolled into a 3 year no-till program and 328 acres were enrolled into a nutrient and pest management program. Manure storage structures were also popular in the watershed, with three structures constructed. Two producers installed almost 8,000 feet of terraces in the watershed and 18 water and sediment control basins were installed. Three grade stabilization structures were also constructed in the watershed.

The Fayette SWCD would like to thank all of the watershed producers and residents that have made the Grannis Creek Watershed Project a success. Without the support of the watershed producers and the local community watershed projects will never succeed.

The Grannis Creek Watershed Project is supported in part or in total by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land, Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation, through funds of the Watershed Protection Fund and by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Federal Non-Point Source Management Program (Section 319 of the Clean Water Act). Technical assistance is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. All programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.

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New financial incentives available for planting bottomland trees

Since the early 90's it seems that flooding has been an ever increasing problem throughout Iowa. This is especially true on some of the bottomland crop fields along our major and even some of our minor streams in north east Iowa. Each time these areas flood, there can be excessive sheet, rill and scour erosion which sends tons of Iowa top soil down stream to the Gulf of Mexico. The Bottomland Timber Establishment on Wetlands Initiative (CP-31) is a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) that is designed to provide an economically feasible practice to take some of these areas out of production.

The CP-31 program allows landowners to enroll all or part of bottomland crop fields into the continuous CRP by planting trees on the area. Planting these flood prone fields to trees is an excellent way to reduce sheet, rill and scour erosion. This practice also improves wildlife habitat, air quality, sequesters carbon and provides forest products for the future. Another advantage to this program is that it provides financial benefits over a 15 year period.

It was recently announced that there are new financial incentives for the CP-31 program. The Iowa Division of Soil Conservation (DSC) has announced they will provide an additional 25 percent cost share to landowners who utilize the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program's Bottomland Hardwood Tree Initiative to plant trees. DSC is setting aside \$250,000 for this incentive, which is available to landowners on a first come, first serve basis. This incentive is in addition to the \$100 sign-up incentive already being offered by DSC.

With the new incentives, a landowner out of pocket cost for planting an area to trees is \$50 per acre or less. There will still be maintenance cost over the next 5 years, but this burden has also been lessened. The Farm Service Agency has just announced that soil rental rates have changed and that most soil rental rates will be increasing. This means higher yearly payments for this practice.

To qualify for the Conservation Reserve Bottomland Hardwood Initiative, a landowner must own cropland that is within the 100-year flood plain of a river or stream. If the property qualifies for the program, landowners



Planting flood prone fields like this one with trees is an excellent way to reduce sheet, rill and scour erosion, in addition to providing a habitat for wildlife, forest products and financial benefits.

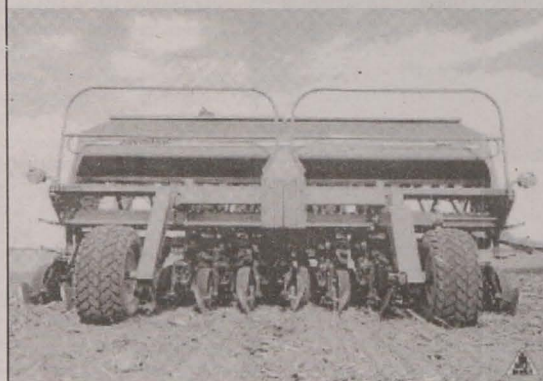
receive 50 percent cost-share for the establishment of trees plus an annual payment for 14 to 15 years from the Farm Service Agency and 25 percent cost share plus a \$100 per acre sign-up bonus from the Iowa Division of Soil Conser-

vation.

For more information on the Bottomland Hardwood Initiative please contact your local NRCS or FSA office. You can also contact your local District Forester.

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Emily Hanson awarded Soil Scholarship

Today's young farmers are more diverse than ever. Between balancing school, chores, FFA and 4-H, youth continue to look toward the future while promoting agriculture in more ways than one.



Emily Hanson of rural Clermont is a prime example. Growing up on a farm in Clayton County, she has shown leadership in her church, community and school, all while working towards a career in ag.

"Agriculture has always been a part of my life," says Hanson. "Growing up on a dairy farm influenced my first dream of becoming a veterinarian. I have always enjoyed working and caring for animals, but realized other influences have changed my mind for a career choice. The business aspects of agriculture have always captivated my interest and I look forward to pursue a career which will influence other people's knowledge about agriculture."

Today, Hanson is employed at the Valley Vet Clinic in Elgin, working part-time after school and on the weekends. At the clinic, she's had the opportunity to experience what it's like to be a veterinarian, helping the vet with small appointments, and preparing medication orders.

Hanson's involvement in school activities, FFA, 4-H and her job at the vet clinic hasn't gotten in the way of an interesting side project: custom raising pheasants on her family's farm the past three summers.

Hanson raises between 150-300 birds from hatch each summer. Once the pheasants are between 6-8 weeks old, they are taken to another farm and released into the wild to help repopulate the area.

Her work at the vet clinic and in improving the pheasant population has gone a long way in helping Hanson see the many spectrums of agriculture.

"Both of these experiences have influenced my desire to pass on the traditions of agriculture," says Hanson. "They have shown me diversity within the agriculture field and what it has to offer. I hope to pass on the traditions with a career which will signify the importance of ag."

Hanson has already been accepted to attend the College of Agriculture at Iowa State University in Ames.

As a senior at Valley High School, Hanson is involved in drama, speech, chorus and band, receiving "I" ratings at the district level contest for Jazz Band and solo/ensemble. She is a member of the National Honor Society and the Honor Roll. Hanson is also a varsity letter winner in track, and has been a manager for volleyball and boys' basketball.

Hanson is a member of the East Clermont Lutheran Church, and a member of the Valley Youth League. She participates in church choir and teaches Sunday School. Hanson is also the youth representative for her church's "Call committee," and attended the LYO conference in 2002.

Hanson is currently secretary of the Valley FFA chapter, participating in dairy cattle judging, dairy foods judging, crop and soil judging, and livestock judging. She has participated in Radio News Broadcasting and Conduct Meetings at the sub-district level.

In 2004 she received third place in the state proficiency area of "Custom Raising Pheasants" as a Supervised Agriculture Experience project in the project area of Wildlife Production & Management. She is currently pursuing for an award in the Specialty Animal Proficiency area.

She has earned the Greenhand degree and the Chapter degree, and is currently pursuing an Iowa degree.

Last year Hanson was chosen Clayton County Alternate Dairy Princess. "I use public relations to promote and serve dairy products at county business functions, and at the Iowa State Fair."

Hanson has been a member of the Marion Happy Hustlers 4-H club for eight years in Clayton County. She became the president of her club in 2004, and has completed many projects at the state and national level.

She received a Blue award for a Food & Nutrition, Arts and Veterinary Science project at the state level, and was on a dairy judging team that won 10th place at the national level in 2003.

Hanson is currently secretary of the Clayton County 4-H council.

"4-H has probably been the greatest influence for my interest in agriculture," Hanson says. "I have been a member since the fourth grade and have grown up with a background of knowing the roads where 4-H can take you. My career choice is yet to be determined when I get to college, but I am especially interested in the business aspects of agriculture. 4-H has helped me acknowledge the diversity of agriculture, and I want to pass on the great traditions of ag."

Valley Community Schools to work with Fayette SWCD

By Bill Bennett

The Valley Community Schools have agreed to help the Fayette Soil and Water Conservation District build an educational trail on the Ralph Houg Conservation Education Farm. The trail will travel along the various wetlands, past native grasses and forbs, over the dam at the pond, through many varieties of trees, by a sinkhole, a rock quarry and through an orchard. Plans include an outlook to look over the pond, wetlands and down the Otter Creek Valley. Earthen conservation structures are planned to be part of the trail and will give people an opportunity to see what different structures look like.

Bridges will be another feature of the trail.

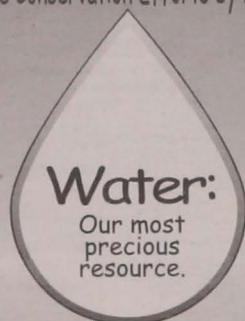
Valley staff and students have part of the design team and will be helping in the building and maintenance of the trail. With the Ralph Houg Conservation Education Farm adjoining the Dick Jensen Nature Trail the two trails will complement each other. In time the plan is to have the trail of the Houg Farm to go through the various forestry demonstration areas already established on the farm.

The Fayette SWCD has already built the pond and several wetlands along with a parking lot and planted native plants and trees.

The Valley Schools along with Boy Scouts and the Northeast Iowa Forestry Advisory Committee have helped to install several forestry demonstrations. The plans include placing signs along the trail to identify various items along the trail and that the trail will be used to educate people of all ages about our natural resources and how to work with nature. Ralph Houg donated his land to the Fayette SWCD, so that people could learn to work with and enjoy nature, now the Valley Community Schools have joined the Fayette SWCD in work to make Ralph's dream come true.

The work will progress as time and funds allow. A project like this only works when people join together and work hand in hand and is only of value if it can be used for everyone's benefit. The Fayette SWCD invites everyone to come see what we are doing together and invites you to assist us in any way you can. Ralph's and many others dreams can only come into being with your assistance.

We Salute the Conservation Efforts by Area Citizens.

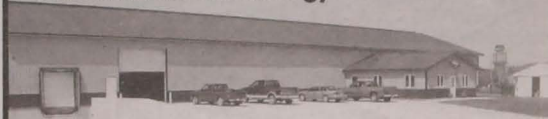


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Nutrient Trading Directory completed for Upper and South Fork of Maquoketa River watersheds

By Tom Sperfslage,
Environmental Specialist
Iowa Dept of Ag and Land
Stewardship - Division of Soil
Conservation

The Fayette, Buchanan, Clayton and Delaware Soil and Water Conservation Districts, working through a grant from the Iowa Pork Producers Association, have completed work on the Nutrient Trading Directory for the Upper and South Fork Maquoketa River watersheds.

Both watersheds are involved in special water quality improvement projects, attempting to reduce the amounts of sediment, nutrients and bacteria reaching the water. Ultimately, water from the rivers feeds Backbone Lake, which has been listed by the State as an impaired water body, due to excess bacteria. DNR research documents that bacteria loads enter the rivers with run-off producing rainfall events. Current research efforts are trying to better determine the sources of bacteria.

The Nutrient Trading Directory is unique for northeast Iowa and is an attempt to provide more information about our locally pro-

duced manure nutrients. Stockpiling or stacking manure in fields or "dumping" excess manure from storage facilities is troublesome for water quality. The intent of the Directory is to list or pair up those Maquoketa River watershed producers who may at times have extra manure and aren't able to make best use of it with those residents who may be able to use that extra manure in an agronomically and environmentally sound manner.

Topics in the Directory include discussions about (among others): localized Iowa State University Extension research documenting the value of manure to crop production, watershed characteristics, and the costs of manure application. Included in the Directory is a listing of watershed producers with extra manure and those willing to consider using extra manure if it were available.

The Soil and Water Conservation Districts acknowledge that the Directory is only part of the solution to reducing nutrient and bacteria loading - it will take the efforts of all watershed residents to apply manure nutrients properly, ideally

under the guidance of a manure management plan.

The South Fork Maquoketa River Water Quality Project is supported in part or in total by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation, through funds of the Water Protection Fund and Watershed Protection Fund, and by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Federal Nonpoint Source Management Program (Section 319 of the Clean Water Act). Technical assistance is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. All programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap. The publication of this document has been funded in part by the Division of Soil Conservation, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through a grant from the U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency under the Federal Nonpoint Source Management Program (Section 319 of the Clean Water Act).

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Mink Creek watershed project

By: Carrie Davis

The Mink Creek Watershed has been the subject of a water quality project. Mink Creek is a cold water trout stream classified as class B (HQ) by the Iowa DNR water resource classification system. This means that the stream has "exceptional recreational and ecological importance. Special protection is warranted to maintain the unusual, unique, or outstanding physical, chemical, or biological characteristics which these waters possess." 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 water quality of Mink Creek is being negatively impacted by massive amounts of sediment and excessive nutrient contributions from the watershed. Turbid-

ity measurement after significant rain events are noted as "spectacularly high" by Upper Iowa University Professor of Biology, Rick Klann. Temperature data suggests that Mink Creek is colder than once thought and could potentially support a resident trout population.

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 delivery 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 believes that voluntary efforts in improving conservation practices will delay or prevent environmental regulations from being passed.

The Mink Creek Watershed Project is supported in part or in total by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation, through funds of the Watershed Protection Fund and by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Federal Non-Point Source Management Program (Section 319 of the Clean Water Act). Technical assistance is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. All programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.

Third grade Conservation Field Day

By: Deb Dessel

Since 1993, the Fayette County Soil and Water Conservation District's Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, and support staff have sponsored an annual field day for the Third Grade students of Fayette County. The field day has been held at Dick and Dorothy Jensen's farm just east of West Union since 1993. Each year things seem to change, but it always seems to be better than the previous year.

The first year we had 70 students from North Fayette. Things went quite well, so the next year we decided to invite a few more third grade students from nearby schools. Since 1993, some of the stations the students visit have changed, but the basic concept has always remained--to provide the students a fun, educational day outdoors learning about the con-

servation of our land, water, and wildlife.

The reactions from the students and their teachers are always very positive. It is great to see the students' enthusiasm for the various stations that they visit.

The field day was held on three days this past September; and we hosted 355 students and 36 teachers and helpers. We also had the assistance of 15 presenters and support staff. Fayette County Pork Producers grilled BBQ pork sandwiches for our lunch.

At the end of the day as the hayracks transported the students from the field day site back to their waiting buses, their faces told the story.

We had reached our goal and we knew that all the hard work organizing and putting this field day together had been worth it and had been a success.

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Why conservation systems are the right choice this fall

By Mahdi Al-Kaisi, Department of Agronomy, and Mark Hanna, Department of Agriculture and Biosystems Engineering

Energy Use. This year, like any year, producers have to make a decision whether they till or not. This year is especially more challenging for producers to carefully consider their tillage decision because of high fuel prices. Generally, producers know what it takes to operate tillage implements and how much fuel it would take to finish the work. Conventional tillage in general would require approximately 4.1 gal of fuel per acre compared to 1 gal per acre for no-tillage. Field operators in general, consume about 15 percent of the crop production energy.

Soil Compaction. If fuel cost is not enough reason for farmers to consider no-tillage, several other benefits need to be considered when making a decision this fall whether to till or not to till. The risk of soil compaction and soil nutrient losses, whether through reduced soil tilth or potential soil erosion, is another loss that will add to the total cost of energy and farming input. These losses are real and well documented as reflected in yield, fertilizer energy costs, and environmental risks for soil and water quality.

The decision to till at any time (fall or spring) needs to be carefully planned. When soil conditions

are near field capacity, soil aggregates are "lubricated" by water and readily reposition themselves through the air spaces, especially when heavy tillage equipment is used. In addition, equipment operators need to remember that soil compaction can occur during the application of manure or anhydrous as well when soil moisture exceeds field capacity (maximum amount of moisture retained by the soil). Under wet conditions, the use of heavy equipment, such as tractors, grain carts, and combines, can significantly change the soil structure and cause soil compaction. Operating in wet conditions and especially doing extra tillage will increase fuel use per acre as well.

Compaction near the surface, within the top 3 to 6 inches of the soil, is generally associated with the amount of surface pressure. Compaction below that is primarily associated with axle weight. For example, if soil a feet below the surface is at field capacity and the tractor's axle load is 7 to 8 tons or greater, compaction can occur at this depth, despite lower surface pressures.

To mitigate the risk of compaction, use controlled traffic lanes for harvest and avoid driving loaded grain carts randomly through the field. Most damage occurs in the first pass of the implement. Grain tank extensions on combines also

add to the load on soil. Check tire size and pressure, since larger tires allow for better "floatation" and lower tire pressure reduces the load on the soil.

Residue Cover. To minimize over winter soil erosion, work on getting even distribution of crop residue while harvesting. Doing so is critical in preventing soil erosion throughout most of the coming fall, winter, spring, and well into 2006, until next year's crop establishes a canopy. Any residue down to the finest material - straw, chaff - can potentially reduce erosion by stopping rain splash, slowing and trapping runoff, and allowing for better water infiltration. But it has to be in place to be effective.

Large combine heads tend to concentrate material, especially fine material, in a narrow swath behind the machine. Concentrated residues are not only less effective in stopping erosion throughout the field, they also insulate the soil surface from the sun, reduce seed-to-soil contact, and make it tougher to plant in the spring, inhibiting crop growth. Furthermore, doing a good job of straw and chaff spreading this year could eliminate the need for tillage passes this fall or next spring.

Have combine operators set up and run equipment so that straw and chaff spreaders or choppers operate properly and the combine distributes residue evenly. Corn

residue is usually heavier and most corn heads do a good job of chewing up the stalks and dropping them back in place. But the chal-

lenge is greater in soybeans, where essentially the whole plant goes through the combine and residue

Cont. to pg. 22

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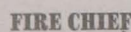
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My experiences with contour buffers and no-till farming

Editor's note: One of the most interesting parts of the SWCD Annual Report, is where we have successful conservation farmers tell their story of balancing production agriculture while taking good care of their natural resources, primarily soil and water. Vince Spain who farms some of the steeper land in Fayette County in the Clermont area, has done an outstanding job of doing just this. I've worked with Vince on some of the farms he rents and while he served as President of the Fayette County Farm Bureau. While my short interview does not do justice, I hope you'll find his story interesting.
-Jerry Muff



Vince Spain

which relates to less power requirement needed, - with reduced tillage passes, I get much less wear and tear on equipment, - major soil savings with no-till farming - time savings are also a major factor. There are other benefits, one which may soon become one of the major factors, is the cost savings in reduced fuel usage. The soil savings of no-till farming brings another benefit which is that with conservation programs. The conservation requirements are met for the HEL or compliance is met on these steeper slopes as does the higher rankings with Conservation Security Program.

Getting started with no-till, I experienced a definite learning curve.

In the beginning, yields were not one of the highlights, but as the soil improved and adjustments were made, productivity soon increased to levels on par with other tillage systems in the area.

Last year, I averaged 170 up to 220 bushels per acre of corn depend-

ing on the soils. However, I still don't aim for top yields, just the maximum return.

In 2005 I purchased a used 6100 White planter. It is equipped with a straight coulter with a knife angled backwards which injects liquid N and Thyzole. The knife is positioned 4-6" to the side of the row. It is also equipped with Yetter row cleaners followed with White double disk openers and finally Martin finger closing wheels with drag chains. The planter pulls easy, and disrupts less soil than planters with wavy coulters. The row cleaners are the only thing ahead of the double disk seed openers and they clear the residue out the way in a band about 4" wide. The band or row area with little residue is generally not a problem with erosion because all of my sloping land is either farmed on the contour or with contour buffer strips. One farm also has tile outlet terraces. Farming up and down the hill may experience washing over the row when the residue is cleared out in this fashion. I had previously used 2" wavy coulters, but they didn't work as well in our sticky clayey soils.

Another thing I've learned in dealing with high residue farming

is that it is real important to have a combine head that is aggressive in chewing up the cornstalks. I use an I-H corn head with 4 knives on each snapping roller and I try to run the corn head lower to the ground which allows the head to cut the corn stalks more. This head does a nice job of

cutting the corn stalks, which in turn helps the microbes break down the residue faster. On all of my steeper slopes I like to go with two years of corn and then a year of soybeans to give me the extra residue on the soil surface. The two years of no-till corn build organic matter faster than

Cont. to pg. 20

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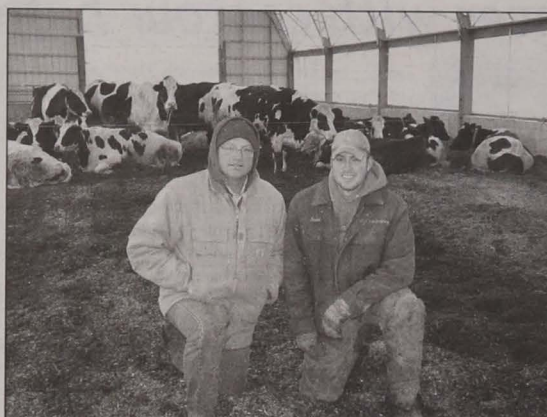


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Just another expense or a good investment?

By Richard Jensen

I guess if we could control the weather, fabric wouldn't make any sense at all. But a newly constructed waterway can be destroyed by just one rainstorm. We have all seen how bad a waterway looks with ditches down the center and a large delta of mud at the bottom. The seed is gone and the entire practice needs to be redone. Generally fabric is used the second time the project is done. Fabric laid at 50 or 100 foot intervals down through the bottom would have greatly reduced that damage. We encourage the use of erosion control fabric whenever major earth movement has occurred. This includes industrial sites, roadside excavation, landscaping and agland practices. Fabric installed properly makes good economical and environmental sense. Cost share is available for cooperators whether or office or a private contractor does it.

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Above: Matt and Jared Stewart kneel on the pack of sawdust bedding in their hoop building compost barn. The compost bedding had been aerated by Jared with a roto-tiller a short time earlier. A part of their operation since Jan. 1, Stewart's 50x140 compost barn holds about 70 head. For more information on manure composting, contact Dan Meyer at ISU Extension or Jerry Muff at the Fayette County SWCD.

Upper Left: Alden Arthur stands by his 'stirring machine' which he uses to aerate the sawdust bedding in his compost barn. The stirring machine is an old section of a field cultivator modified to fit on his skid loader. He aerates the compost pack twice a day at a depth of 10 to 12 inches. Two Fayette County farmers have implemented manure compost barns in their farm operations. The compost system uses sawdust bedding up to a depth of four feet deep, which ultimately improves cow comfort and alleviates leg and feet problems. Advocates say the system increases a dairy herd's milk production and lowers somatic cell count.



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**Water quality
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(Des Moines, IA) Today Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Patty Judge stated that the one year old Local Water Protection Program has met with success.

"As we hit the one year anniversary of the Local Water Protection Program, I am pleased to announce that this worthwhile water quality program has been a great success. Iowa's landowners have been approved for over 3.8 million dollars in loans for water quality practices designed to reduce the amount of sediment, nutrients, and pesticides impacting Iowa's lakes and streams," Iowa's Ag Leader stated.

The Local Water Protection Program provided low interest loans from \$5,000 to \$50,000 to Iowa's farmers for up to 100% of the project costs for projects such as: buffers; animal waste treatment; terraces; windbreaks, filter strips; pasture and hay land planting; grade stabilization structures; water and sediment control basins; grazing systems and many other water quality practices designed to protect Iowa's water.

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) partnered with the Iowa Finance Authority and over 125 lenders to bring the low-interest loans to Iowa's producers. To date, 50 counties have participated.

In announcing the success of the program, Secretary Judge also announced that five million dollars has been allocated for 2006. Applications for the Local Water Protection Program are available through local soil and water conservation districts. For more information, contact your local soil and water conservation district or call Tony Toigo at 515/281-6148, or e-mail Tony at tony.toigo@idals.state.ia.us.

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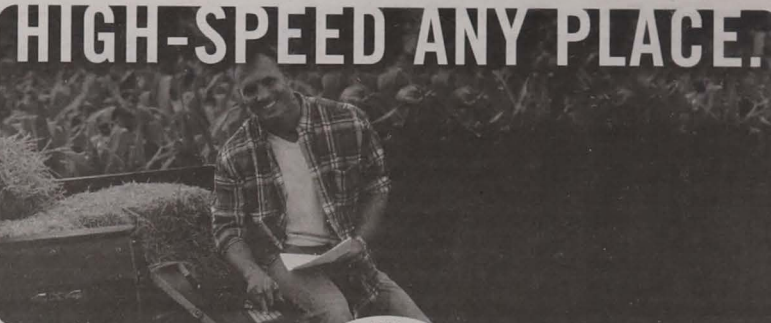
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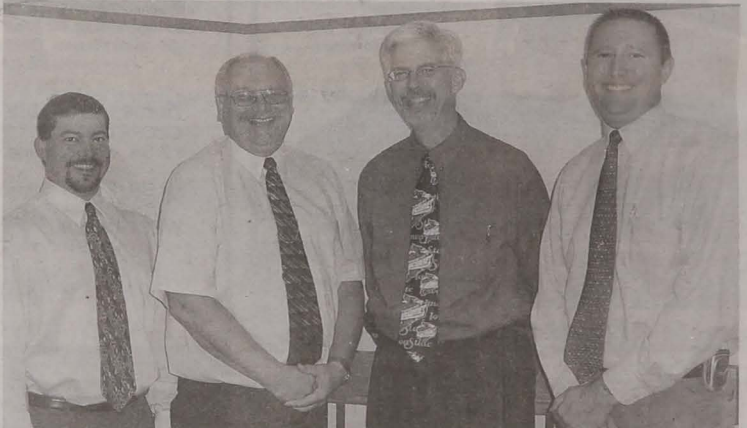
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From left: Jerry Burrack, Chris Rasmussen, Glenda Campbell, and C.J. Lensing

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My experiences, *cont. from pg. 17*

a corn bean rotation.

I have noticed an improvement with the soil after several years of no-tilling. It may also be due to the fact that I don't use anhydrous which increases earthworm activity, but the infiltration rate seems to be better.

I believe that these Fayette hills require some special attention with erosion control when we go to intensive row cropping. Since 1998 I have been 100 % no-till except for one year we applied liquid hog manure with tanks. In 2005, I farmed about 600 acres, which most of the sloping cropland had contour buffers. I rent one farm that has terraces and contour CRP buffers, two other farms have contour CRP buffers and one farm I rent has contour strips with

corn, soybeans and hay being rotated on these strips. CRP buffers were my primary practice on 350 of the 600 acres. They all work well with no-till farming. The contour buffers were definitely a challenge getting started. The first large project on the Mike Finnegan farm was difficult because they were laid out in the fall and we didn't get them marked with a disk. The following spring, I was on the planter having a rough time figuring the system out. With a little work, adjustment, and patience, the contour buffers are working very well. There are some odd areas on the farm I have to deal with but some of them were there before. Some people complain about the short odd areas, but forget about the nice long

strips that farm quite well.

As stated earlier, I have terraces and buffers. I like the buffers better because they are not permanent and can be adjusted to just the right location and they don't bust through after the big storms.

Again the cost factor of application leans in favor of the contour buffers versus terraces.

The contour buffer strips work well with no-till farming, but I also use other practices where they are needed. I farm with grassed waterways in the draws where needed. And along the Turkey River, we have installed vegetative filter strips. The conservation programs offer a lot of incentives to help farmers address soil erosion problems.

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till., could be divided.

Sec. 18 of Windsor Twp.,
147.78 acres, 134.9 till.,
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Conservation systems, *Cont. from pg. 16*

becomes fragile.

Combine operators also should pay attention to the height of the crop stubble left in the field. Crop stubble can protect the soil by limiting exposure to wind and water erosion and trapping snow through fall, winter, and early spring. Of course, soybeans need to be cut near the ground to avoid grain loss, but operating the corn head higher leaves more stubble and fewer stalks are run through the machine.

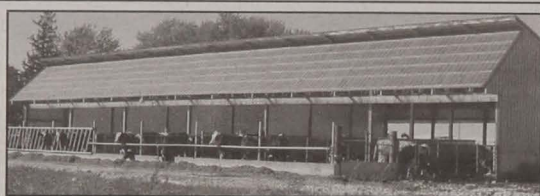
Producers who want to establish a goal of 30 percent residue at planting time next year should not go to the field this fall with a tillage implement, particularly into soybean residue. Soybean fields should be left in no-tillage. The amount of soybean residue is not significant enough to cause any change in soil conditions, especially for those who are concerned about soil wetness. If there is such a concern, then a good evaluation of the field conditions and assessment for tile drains needs to be considered rather than continuous tilling, which increases the potential for energy loss, soil loss, yield loss, etc.

Conclusion. As Iowa producers start to make decisions for the 2006 growing season, it is im-

portant to reflect and evaluate the outcomes of the previous season during the conservation planning process. Observations of yield performance, residue cover, and soil conditions should be guiding principals that minimize the potential of repeating any conditions that caused problems in the previous year.

Above all, conservation tillage and no-tillage are great systems and have a positive impact on

soil productivity and profitability, no matter what the weather does. These systems conserve energy, improve soil tilth and soil organic matter, and can reduce the capital costs associated with the tillage equipment used in conventional tillage. Conservation decisions made now can affect soil erosion over the next several years. Use the time after harvest to gather information and make sound decisions about conservation systems.



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Conservation minded producers have Fayette County shining

By Lisa Bahe

Fayette County does it again! In 2005 Fayette County had over 1100 acres enrolled into the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP). Not only did we have the most CCRP contracts in 2005 statewide we shined in almost every CCRP program offered.

Tree practices are very important for water quality. Fayette County was 8th in the state for tree practice acres enrolled into CCRP in 2005. Tree practices improve quality of surface water, decrease damage from windblown dust and provides habitat for wildlife.

Marginal pastureland owners/producers also saw benefits of enrolling acres into CCRP. Fayette County took seventh in the state for 2005 CCRP acres in marginal pastureland. Practices available for marginal pastureland are the riparian buffer, wildlife habitat buffer and wetland buffer. These practices are around wetlands and streams.

In 2005 Fayette County was in

the top 25% in acres for wetlands. Wetlands are important for water quality. Wetlands act as filters removing excess nutrients from reaching water supplies. Wetlands provide important fish and wildlife habitat. One of the newest things about wetlands is their sponge like characteristics which reduce flooding. Wetlands absorb runoff of melting snow and rain and in return releasing excess water slowly into rivers and lakes. One acre of wetland flooded in depth of one foot holds 325,851 gallons of water.

Fayette County producers and landowners can see the benefits of various CRP practices. Many CRP practices are very appealing. There are four different monetary incentive payments given to selective practices. The first is the additional incentive of 10-20% is given by the federal government. The incentive increases the annual CCRP payment. Another incentive available to some practices is the practice incentive payment. The practice incentive payment al-

lows the producer to receive a one-time payment of 40% of the eligible costs of practice installation. The final incentive is the signing incentive payment. Signing incentive payments given to selective practices of \$100/ac for a ten year contract and \$150/ac for a fifteen.

Interested in CCRP for your farm? Now is a great time to apply. Soil rental rates increased statewide in January increasing annual CCRP payments. Many appreciate the aesthetics of CRP practices. Many practices have a variety of grass and forbs species, some highlighting beautiful flowers. Others like to observe wildlife that lives in the various CRP practices. Enjoy the benefits of CCRP on your land by applying at the Farm Service Agency.

Planting and caring for your tree seedlings

By: Richard Jensen

Spring is in the air! It's time to plant some trees. The District's tree order forms are out and need to be returned. We have made it simple for anyone to purchase some good seedlings. By combining orders we are able to get quantity discounts on the best trees offered. We will go to the nursery and transport them back here for distribution. You will be able to pick them up in excellent condition the following day at the parking lot.

We have learned by experience that the sooner your seedlings are planted the better the survival rate. These bareroot seedlings need to be kept cool and damp at all times. On planting day make certain that those roots do not get dry. A well-planted tree needs root-growing room. Dig a hole

that will easily accommodate the root mass. A sharp, clean, bright spade makes this task easier. Pay close attention to the ground level mark on each seedling. Plant as deep or one inch deeper than the mark or ring. It is critical your seedlings have good root to soil contact. To achieve this, the soil should be as fine or crumbled as possible. I carefully fill the hole partially with fine dirt and then drown with water. This removes any air pockets and blends the soil with the roots. Finish filling hole with dirt and pack firmly. Drive a three foot stake by it to be used later for a tree protector wire ring. This is a must as deer will destroy many of your trees if not protected in some way. Grass and weed control is very important to the success of your newly planted trees. Herbicides, mulching, hand cutting or pulling are a few methods commonly used. This removes habitat for rodents. If you do not make at least a three year sincere management commitment to your planting it will not be successful.

I have learned the hard way often. I now plant the best rooted seedlings, be site specific, place in soil properly, water, protect from harm, and I still lose too many. Inquire at the NRCS Office for additional tree planting advice.

Good luck and thanks for being a steward for the land.

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