



DICKINSON SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

SPIRIT LAKE, IOWA 51360 712-336-3782, EXT. 3

FEBRUARY 2001

Riparian Tree Buffers and Filterstrip CRP Practices and the Benefits to the Producer

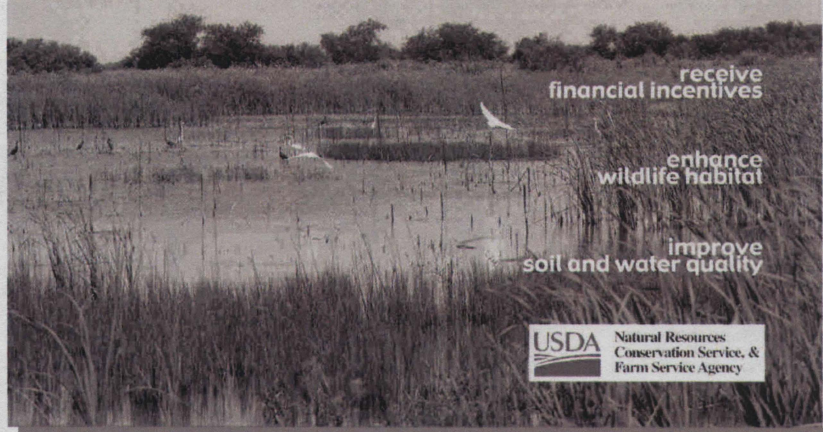
By: Tim Moran
Conservation Aide

The Riparian Tree Buffer practice (CP22) and the grass filterstrip practice (CP21) are continuous sign up CRP practices available to producers in Dickinson County.

- Continuous CRP practices allow the landowner to sign up anytime during the year.
- There is no bidding process. After NRCS/FSA staff determine that the land fits the practice specifications and meets the criteria, the offer can be made.
- Rental rates are based on soil type for all practices. (Riparian Tree Buffers in marginal pasture land is a maximum of \$86 per acre.)
- The offer is applied to specific conservation practices to address erosion concerns and improve wildlife habitat.
- A cost share of up to 50% towards cost of installation

Read about the new CRP Wetland Pilot Program and Maury Muhm, new Private Lands Coordinator on pages 4 and 5

New Wetland Option: Pilot Program in CRP Contact your local USDA Service Center for details



(additional new incentives are also available for most continuous CRP practices.)

The Riparian Tree Buffer practice consists of planting rows of trees and shrubs next to eligible bodies of water such as streams and lakes.

- A 20 foot wide strip of native grasses is added to the out-

side edge of the practice area.

- The land offered may be in either crop ground or marginal pasture land.
- The maximum average width of the buffer is 180 feet on either side of the eligible water area.
- The conservation benefits of the practice are to catch sediment, fertilizers, pesti-

District Commissioners

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District Mission Statement

The Dickinson SWCD will serve its customers and the needs of the District's natural resources through education, promotion, and demonstration.

Contact us by e-mail at: swcd@rconnect.com

Visit the following web sites for information on Dickinson County SWCD and other area offices:
www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/county/dickinson.html or www.theconservationstation.org

cides and other pollutants, both surface and sub-surface before they reach the water body. Fish and wildlife habitat is also enhanced.

- Technical assistance is provided by NRCS staff and FSA staff to determine eligibility.

Please note that the Riparian practice is a tree/shrub practice and maintenance after planting (mowing, watering, mulching) is vital to the establishment of the buffer.

The economic benefits to the landowner include:

- Rental payments on ten to fifteen year contracts.
- Rental rates on land with row crop history are based on soil types. A 20% incentive is added to the cropland rate. Marginal pastureland rental rates are up to a maximum of \$86 per acre.
- A 50% cost share on eligible installation costs.
- In addition, a practice incentive payment equal to 40% of your eligible installation costs.
- A sign up incentive payment of \$100 to \$150 per acre (depending on length of contract) is paid up front.
- Permanent fencing (to exclude livestock) can be an eligible cost share component.

At present there are 23 Riparian contracts on 476 acres in Dickinson County.

Grassed filterstrips next to streams and other eligible water bodies are being put on Dickinson County cropland at an ever increasing rate. This too, is a continuous CRP practice with the same financial benefits to Dickinson County producers.

- Rental rate is based on soil types plus 20% incentive.
- 50% cost share.
- Additional practice incentive payments up to 40% of eligible costs.
- Signup incentive payment of \$100 to \$150 per acres paid up front.
- Permanent fence to exclude livestock is an eligible cost-share component.

Native grass mixtures (Big Bluestem, Switchgrass, Indiangrass) are the preferred choice of seeding with advantages such as:

- When established, the grasses have deep root systems (up to 10 feet deep) which filter sediments, fertilizer, pesticides and other pollutants before they can reach the stream.
- The grasses also help reduce surface water

runoff (such as occurs after a heavy quick accumulating rainfall).

- The stiff strong quality of the grass stems help provide valuable winter cover vital to pheasants and other wildlife. (Snow doesn't tend to drift as much protecting wildlife from snow suffocation.)
- Grass areas are less prone to major snow drifting problems. The grasses tend to break up the concentrated wind blown snow which helps keep roads and lanes clear of snow deposits.

These economic and ecological benefits combine to make this practice of special interest to many Dickinson County landowners. **To date, there are 32 filter-strip contracts on 286 acres in our county with more in the signup process every day.** We expect this trend will continue in the future and feel that many more contracts will be on the land soon.

An example of a filterstrip contract including financial aspects would be as follows:

The producer wishes to enroll an area of eligible cropland 1000 feet long on either side of a creek. He would like the width to be 120 feet wide on both sides. This adds up to 5.5 acres.

- The rental rate of the soil type of the area is valued at \$120 per acre.
- A 20% incentive is added to the base rate which calculates to a total of \$144 per acre.
- A maintenance rate payment of \$5 is added to reach a rental rate of \$149 per acre.
- An up-front (one time) sign up incentive based on 5.5 acres on a 15 year contract equals \$825.00 allotted at the beginning of the contract to the landowner.
- Up to 50% cost share to establish the practice. For example, a seeding mixture of 4 lbs. of Big Bluestem, 2 lbs. of Indiangrass and 2 lbs. of switchgrass per acre would cost approximately \$120.50 per acre. FSA will cost share 50% of the amount or \$60.25 per acre, leaving a cost of \$60.25 per acre.
- The additional 40% practice incentive payment on the \$60.25 per acre eligible costs, would equal \$48.20 per acre, leaving an approximate cost to the producer of \$12.05 per acre.
- The cost of seed on 5.5 acres to the landowner would be \$66.28.

Native grass seed mixtures are best applied with a no-till native grass drill. This expense is also cost shared by FSA.

- This expense is approximately \$26 per acre.
- Cost share would be 50% or \$13 per acre, leaving a cost of \$13 per acre.
- The additional 40% practice incentive payment would equal \$5.20 per acre, leaving an approximate cost to the landowner of \$7.80 per acre.
- The cost to have the seeding done by a no-till native grass drill for 5.5 acres is \$42.90.

In effect, the rental payment of one acre for the first year of the contract will pay for the seed and seeding expenses on all 5.5 acres.

Mowing using a stalk chopper or rotary type mower several times during the first 2 to 3 years is the preferred method to establish native grass filterstrips. A prescribed controlled fire burn occasionally during the contract period will invigorate the stand and help reduce weed encroachment.

When expenses and financial incentives are compared, the filter strip practice begins to look both economically and environmentally inviting to many landowners.

Stop at the FSA office to begin the sign-up process on Riparian Buffers and Filterstrips, as well as these other continuous CRP practices:

Grassed Waterways, Field Wind-breaks, Contour Grass Strips, Contour Grass Strips on Terraces, Living Snowfence, Shelterbelts, Shallow Water Areas and the new Wetland Pilot Program.

WRP is here to stay

by: Tim Terrill
Environmental Specialist

It seems that no matter where you go there is always someone offering you a deal. Whether you live in Milford or Spirit Lake, a better deal is always just a season away. When I talk with landowners about easements in general, many have no idea what an easement is, much less how it can benefit them.

With that in mind, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is announcing that the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) is an excellent tool to help the landowner. It still pays 100% agriculture value of land and restores the wetlands on a tract of land with 100% cost share. Each application is then ranked and placed on a competitive list with other WRP application around

"In effect, the rental payment for one acre for the first year of the contract will pay for the seed and seeding expenses on all 5.5 acres."

the State of Iowa. Knowing that land in Dickinson County is valued from \$1,500 to \$2,500 per acre, it is not uncommon for a farmer on a 100 acre tract of land to receive a payment of \$230,000. This large amount of money can be paid all at once or spread out over a number of years.

Once the easement is signed by the landowner, the restoration process begins. All the potential wetlands that can be restored on the land are done so, and a beautiful wildlife area is restored. The other benefit of WRP is that after you receive your payment for the land, **YOU STILL OWN THE LAND!!** Our easement only protects the water quality rights of the land, not the land itself. You still can hunt and enjoy the quiet use of your land while you enjoy the benefit of reduced taxes on it. Another benefit is what I say; "You get to sell your land twice." We hold the easement but you still own it. Later on in life you may decide to sell your landowner rights, which is perfectly legal. With all the benefits of the WRP program, it's no wonder that it is very popular in this area.

How can a CWP Easement Benefit Me?

By: Tim Terrill
Environmental Specialist

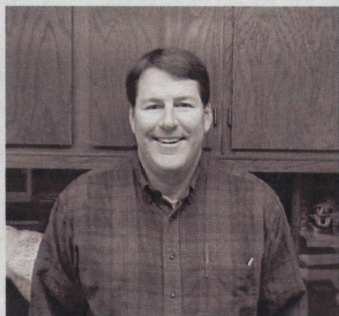
The next topic I am going to discuss is a Clean Water Project easement (CWP). CWP easements are only offered in the watershed of the Iowa Great Lakes, and help protect water quality by establishing native grasses and wetlands.

Unlike Wetland Reserve Program easements (WRP), a CWP easement has a limited amount of capitol and is used for taking small tracts of land or wetlands out of production. It also can be used on agricultural or urban land areas. The CWP easement is not selected based on a point system, but rather by the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Commissioners determining whether or not the area is a good place to benefit the lakes. The commissioners use discretion by asking questions like: Is the easement close to the lake and does it affect a wide area of drainage? By working with the SWCD commissioners, many areas have been protected that otherwise wouldn't have been under a point system. In short, the commissioners are looking out for the watersheds best interest, not the federal or state interest.

The CWP easement is permanent and offers the landowner 100 percent agricultural value of their land with 75 percent cost share for restoration. But many times through partnering with environmental organizations, the 25 percent paid by the landowner is reduced. The Iowa Great Lakes has enjoyed the economic benefit of water quality and a permanent easement is one tool that helps us to accomplish that goal.

To Dickinson County Landowners:

My name is Maury Muhm. I have recently been hired as Private Lands Wildlife Specialist for Clay, Dickinson and Osceola Counties.



This is a new position created to:

1. Promote and explain Federal and State Conservation Farm Programs to landowners including **Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), Clean Water Project (CWP), and a new pilot program called Wetlands in CRP.**
2. Assist landowners with the planning and implementation of practices within these programs.

There has never been a better variety of Conservation Program Practices available to landowners or greater financial incentives offered for implementing these practices. The practices offered could fulfill almost any need the landowner might have while providing financial incentives to reduce soil loss, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat.

The USDA has introduced a new program called Wetlands in CRP. This program will allow landowners to enroll small wetland areas and adjacent buffers in the continuous sign-up of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). **(Final rules and regulations for this new program should be available soon.)**

To be eligible, the areas must have been cropped in at least 3 of the last 10 years, wetland area must be 5 acres or less, and must be defined as wetlands by USDA. Wetlands in the floodplain of perennial streams will not be eligible. Wetland restoration must not impede upstream drainage.

Adjacent buffer may not exceed three times the area of the farmable wetland (15 acres). The maximum enrollment of wetland and adjacent buffer is 40 acres per tract.

Contract lengths will likely be 10-15 years in length. Rental rates are based on soil type and are the same as those available for filter strips and riparian buffers. A 20% incentive is added to the rental rate. A Signing Incentive Payment of \$10.00 per acre per year of contract is paid one time up front. Restoration costs are 50% cost shared with an additional 40% of eligible installation costs paid as a Practice Incentive Payment, which results in 90% total cost share.

Example:

Landowner wants 15 year contract on a drained/tiled wetland that has been cropped in all but wet years.

Plan: Tile can be broken without affecting upstream drainage. Seed buffer to Switch grass, Big Bluestem and Indian Grass.

Wetland area of 3.0 acres + buffer area of 5.0 acres = 8.0 acres total

<u>Acres</u>	<u>Soil Type</u>	<u>Soil Rental Rate per Acre</u>	
4.0	Okoboji	\$ 99.00	= \$ 396.00
2.0	Webster	\$129.00	= \$ 258.00
2.0	Nicollet Loam	\$136.00	= \$ 272.00
			\$ 926.00
divided by 8 acres = \$115.75 per acre			

\$ 115.75 soil rental rate per acre
+ \$ 23.15 20% incentive added to the base rate
+ \$ 5.00 maintenance fee
\$ 143.90 payment per acre per year

Signup Incentive payment = 8 acres x \$10.00 x 15 years = \$1200.00 one time up front payment

Cost Share of Restoration
50% paid for by USDA + 40% of eligible installation costs Practice Incentive Payment = 90% total cost share.

For more information about any of these programs, please stop at the USDA Service Center in Spirit Lake at 712-336-3782, or contact myself at:

Maury Muhm
2248 125th Street
Spirit Lake, Iowa 51360

cell phone number – 712-330-2562
e-mail: mdmuhm@rconnect.com

Stop in at the FSA office to begin the sign-up process for any CRP program.

Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife (CP9)

By: Willard Punt
Conservation Technician

The purpose of this practice is to develop or restore shallow water areas to an average depth of 6 to 18 inches for wildlife. These areas are vital to enhancing wildlife habitat. The shallow water area must provide a source of water for wildlife for a minimum of 4 months of the year. This practice may be constructed on suitable hydric and nonhydric soils. This is not a pond development or wetland restoration practice. In that this practice often is adaptable to areas of the field where the crop is hurt by excessive moisture it is a good way to increase the total return for many farm units.

This practice must be applied to eligible cropland and contain an adequate buffer area of perennial vegetation to protect the water quality and provide wildlife habitat. The width of the buffer is determined by the soil types, slope and conservation practices applied on the field. However, the buffer width shall not be less than 20 feet wide or exceed an average width of 120 feet. Eligibility of cropland for this practice will be determined by Farm Service Agency personnel. Because this is one of the continuous CRP practices, there is no bid process involved, and eligible cropland enrolled in this practice will give the producer a rental rate based on rates determined by soil types.

The recent new incentives for continuous practices apply to the enrolling of shallow water areas as well. This means the Cost Share for development would likely be approximately 90%. Also there is an additional signing incentive available from the Iowa Division of Soil Conservation through the Buffer Initiative Program by making an application at the local Natural Resources Conservation office. The incentive for this program would amount to \$100.00 per acre, however, this may not be available after June 30, 2001. The combination of a rental rate in excess of \$100.00 per acre in many cases, an enhancement to our environment, and the available incentives, makes this an economically and environmentally friendly practice.

If you as a land owner or a tenant think you have an area on your farm that this practice would fit please stop at the FSA office to begin the sign-up process.

Wildlife Incentives Program

By: Carroll Oskvig
District Conservationist

Dickinson County landowners are eligible for a very important wildlife habitat practice within the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP). The Natural

Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will provide 75% cost-sharing for Riparian Corridors. WHIP applications will be ranked to assist in making contract selections.

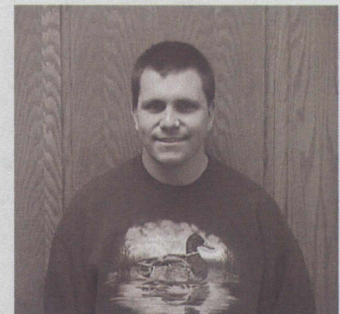
Riparian Corridors are available through WHIP in Dickinson County, but an emphasis is being placed on accepting applications from the cold water stream area of north-east Iowa. Riparian Corridors can address in-stream fishery habitat restoration or construction. Riparian Corridors also protect water quality by filtering nutrients, pesticides and sediment from entering wetlands and other bodies. Alternative watering facilities for landowners with cattle can also be included as a component within the Riparian Corridor practice. These systems allow cattle to access for watering, but not allow degradation of water bodies. Warm season grasses, forbs, trees, shrubs, cattle crossings, streambank stabilization, in-stream fish habitat structures, grass filter strips and forest riparian buffers are other components within the Riparian Corridor practice. Improving corridor habitat for other species such as white tail deer, turkey, raccoon, bald eagles, river otter, wood duck are also encouraged within WHIP contract areas. More points will be given to applications that incorporate an educational component in the WHIP contract for use by students, farmers and other members of the community.

For more information on WHIP, please call the USDA Service Center in Spirit Lake at 712-336-3782.

Silver Lake Watershed Development Grant

By: Steve Anderson
Silver Lake Watershed Coordinator

My name is Steve Anderson and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Dickinson and Osceola counties have hired me, to write a Clean Water Project Application (CWA) for the Silver Lake Watershed.



The Silver Lake Watershed consists of about 15,500 acres in parts of Dickinson and Osceola in Iowa and Jackson county Minnesota. The CWA is to receive funds from the Federal and State Governments to use to clean up a watershed. The plan will be similar to the Iowa Great Lakes Clean Water Project that has been on going for about 10 years. The money will be used to address current concerns to the lake and also work to prevent future problems.

Silver Lake is found in the northwest corner of Dickinson

County with the City of Lake Park growing along the eastern shoreline. Besides the city and state parks located on the lake, many people use Silver Lake to fish for walleyes. Silver Lake is also known for the fen that is located on the southwest shoreline of the lake.

The present concerns with the watershed can be seen from a few visits to Silver Lake. First of all, the water is not very clear. The lack of water clarity is due to soil or sediment coming into the lake through rural and urban runoff. Another concern is excessive amounts of algae in the lake. The algae populations on Silver Lake are a direct reflection of the nutrients that enter the lake from rural and urban communities. From talking to a few people within the watershed, it seems that many people would like to see the lake dredged.

Well, the CWPA will be addressing the concerns of sediment and nutrients entering the lake along with future concerns that could effect water quality. The step that will be accomplished with the CWPA can be looked at as the first steps moving towards dredging. In other words, by using conservation programs to hold the sediments in the watershed and filtering out the nutrients by cleaning runoff water before it reaches the lake, this will drastically slow down the lake from filling in. With the siltation of the lake slowed down, then dredging should have a longer lasting effect to the lake depth and water quality. While the CWPA focus is not dredging, its focus is on enhancing water quality with in the watershed with results that will be measured through the lake.

If you have any questions, please contact Steve Anderson at the USDA Service Center in Spirit Lake at (712) 336-3782, Ext.3.

Living Snow Fence and Field Windbreak

By: Tim Moran
Conservation Aide

Unlike the last few mild winters we have had lately, it looks like Dickinson county is in for the cold and snow we have come to expect over the years. Many residents have more drifted snow in the yard then what they know what to do with. Another major problem with so much wind and snow, as we all know, is drifting on highways, gravel roads and farm lanes, not to mention reduced visibilities from blowing snow when we try to get around.

The Living Snow Fence and Field Windbreak practices are two conservation measures which can help with these problems in the future. Both practices are available to Dickinson county landowners through the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

The Living Snow Fence (CP-17A), as its name implies, consists of :

- A row or rows of trees and shrubs planted in eligible

row crop fields.

- Planted in a way designed to protect buildings, roads and property by blocking snow and causing it to form drifts in the area before it reaches your lane or a county road or highway.
- The rows of trees and shrubs also are used to reduce wind erosion throughout the growing season.
- In addition wildlife habitat is enhanced by using preferred species.

The Field Windbreak (CP-5A) is similar in concept to the Living Snow Fence. The practice is part of the Continuous CRP package available to landowners wishing to enroll eligible row crop land. Producers with pasture lands can establish Field Windbreaks (with cost-share for permanent fencing to exclude livestock, if needed) through the REAP program of the Iowa Department of Land Stewardship (IDALS).

Field Windbreaks consist of a row or rows of trees or shrubs used to reduce wind erosion, protect young crops and control blowing and drifting snow. They also provide excellent protection for wildlife and livestock. The practice can be located on field borders or within the field in the CRP program. Pasture land and non-cropland areas can be utilized using REAP funding through IDALS.

The CRP Living Snow Fence and Field Windbreak practices have 50% cost-share funding available plus other continuous CRP signup incentives including:

- Additional 40% practice incentive payments on eligible costs.
- A one time signup incentive of \$100 to \$150/acre based on the length of the contract (10 to 15 years).
- Rental rates based on the soil type of the offered area
- (20% incentive added to the base rate on Field Windbreak (CP-5A)

The Dickinson SWCD offers an additional incentive to landowners and producers interested in the Living Snow Fence (CP-17A) practice. A reimbursement of 50¢ per living shrub and \$1.00 per living tree, determined one year after planting, will be paid to landowners and producers who sign an agreement form. Stop in at the NRCS office for more details.

The REAP Field Windbreak practice:

- 75% cost-share is available to help purchase trees and shrubs up to a maximum of \$365/acre.
- A Fencing component may be added for permanent fencing to exclude livestock (up to \$45/acre).

As with any tree practice, maintenance after planting is vital to the required establishment of the Living Snow Fence and Field Windbreak practices. Landowners who wish to address snow drifting concerns and achieve many other conservation benefits in the future may consider these practices for long term effect.

Stop in at the FSA office to begin the sign-up process.

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Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

By: Carroll Oskvig
District Conservationist

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) offers cost-share or incentive payments for many conservation practices. The 2000 EQIP sign-up included practices such as **terraces, grassed waterways and integrated crop management**.

The sign-up dates and practices for the 2001 EQIP sign-up will be announced soon. EQIP offers up to 10 year contracts for technical and financial assistance to producers.

Producers in the Iowa Great Lakes Watershed, Silver Lake Watershed and those whose farms are located within one mile of the Little Sioux River and/or the West Fork of the Little Sioux River are in an EQIP priority area in Dickinson County.

Stop in at the FSA office to begin the sign-up process for EQIP.



DICKINSON SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
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