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Fayette SWCD Annual Report

Lauer is Izaak Walton League Windbreak winner

For West Union resident Leslie Lauer, a love of evergreens and a desire to control an undesirable odor propelled him to plant his first trees in 2000.

Since then, Lauer has planted over 1,400 trees in an 11-acre windbreak on property he and his wife, Frances, own located a mile and half west of West Union along Highway 18. Lauer has been named the 2007 Izaak Walton League Windbreak Award winner because of his devotion to maintaining his land.

"I never thought I'd get an award," said Lauer. "I never planned it. I just started planting trees - pine trees - because I like them."

Lauer and his wife purchased the 120-acre farm land back in the 1980s. They also own land in Eldorado as well as their home off Highway 150 in West Union. After a neighbor built chicken buildings near their property, the Lauers decided it would be a good opportunity to plant trees.

"If I put evergreens up, then that would keep the stink out," said Leslie. "I always liked evergreens, and this was a good opportunity to do it."

The windbreak is five acres on the west side and six on the north. The west windbreak was planted

seven years ago. It consists of four rows of dogwood lilac, honeysuckle, white spruce, Norway spruce and white pine trees. The next year Lauer planted eight rows of white spruce, dwarf willow, poplar, Norway spruce, black walnut and red pine trees on the north side.

Before Lauer created the windbreak, there were only a few trees around the building sites.

The first year the Lauers contracted to have 500-600 trees planted. The next year they planted 700-800. Leslie's continued to add trees but says he doesn't know how many make up the windbreak since some have died, but have been replaced. He said he plants trees every year on at least one of his three properties.

After the first planting, Lauer said they have been easy to maintain.

"I really haven't spent much time on them. The first year I watered them. I had them sprayed the first couple years but not much else," he said.

About the only upkeep the windbreak needs is to have dead trees replaced. He doesn't mow around them, and so far they haven't needed to be protected from insects or diseases.

While Lauer said the windbreak hasn't been a cure for the



Leslie and Frances Lauer were named the 2007 Izaak Walton League Windbreak award winners. Lauer planted the first trees on the property west of West Union in 2000 to help control unwanted odor from nearby chicken buildings.

problem, it has helped reduce the odor of chicken manure, he says.

In addition to controlling the odor, the windbreak also provides

wind and snow protection and is new habitat for wildlife. The Lau-

Continued to pg. 3

Pleggenkuhles are conservation owners of the year



Kim and Sue Pleggenkuhle of Clear Lake were named Fayette County Conservation owners of the year. The couple own Kim's father, Lloyd's farm west of Hawkeye and say they learned their conservation practices from him.

Kim and Sue Pleggenkuhle of Clear Lake started farming in 1985 when they purchased a farm near Clear Lake from his sister and her husband. The couple married in 1975 and are the parents of three children: two daughters, Erin and Breanne and a son, Cade, who died in a motorcycle accident three years ago. The couple currently manage a crop farming operation alternating corns, soybeans and alfalfa. This year for the first time, they planted wheat.

Kim credits his dad, Lloyd, and grandfather, August, for instilling his conservation ethics into him throughout his early life. His father donated land west of Hawkeye to Upper Iowa University to enhance conservation education and provide a "hands-on" approach for

students.

Kim is the son of Lloyd and Arlene Pleggenkuhle and was raised on the family farm five miles west of Hawkeye, which he now owns. He attended North High School in West Union and graduated from Missouri Military Academy. In 1971, Kim was the last person from Fayette County drafted into the U.S. Army near the last years of the Vietnam conflict, and served his country for three years. Kim attended Ellsworth Community College and Upper Iowa University where he got his degree in education. He helped his dad on the farm by doing chores, planting, harvesting and doing pretty much anything that needed to be done.

"I was like a hired hand," he

joked.

He became a great outdoorsman taking an interest in hunting. Pheasant hunting is what he takes the greatest interest in.

After his dad died in 1986, Kim purchased the family farm near Hawkeye. He now rents the land to a neighbor, Kevin Bergman, with whom he grew up as a child. Kim and Kevin have developed a good working relationship and Kim is confident Bergman is taking good care of the land implementing conservation practices where practical. Bergman started doing no-till conservation on corn ground to reduce soil erosion. They have also enrolled ground into the CRP program to reduce soil erosion, enhance wildlife, control gully ero-

Continued to pg. 15



Fayette County SWCD commissioners

The Fayette County Soil and Water District commissioners are pictured above. From left- William Bennett, Paul Hoeger, Richard Jensen (standing), Rod Marlatt, Assistant Commissioner, & Collin Jensen. Absent were: Commissioner: John Grafenberg and Assistant Commissioners: Deb Dessel and Dorothy Jensen.



West Union Field Office Employees

The West Union Field Office Employees are pictured above. Front row, from left- Carrie Davis, Jerry Muff, Ray Drewelow, Lori Kohlmeyer, Kindra Orbin, and LaVonne Koch. Back row, from left- Lucas Frobish, Eric Boehm, Joe Wingert

Fayette SWCD is looking for a few good people

The terms of three Fayette Soil & Water Conservation District Commissioners (SWCD) will expire at the end of this year. Would you like to make a difference in the lives of your family, friends and neighbors? Then consider running for Fayette SWCD commissioner at the November 2008 election.

You can help guide the conservation programs in the county, insure clean safe water, and keep our soil productive. You can also help keep our air clean and clear and add to the beauty of Fayette County. If you are interested, please contact the Fayette SWCD office in West Union at (563) 422-3868 Ext 3 for more details. Yes, you can make a difference.

SWCD tree sales

The Fayette Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) is sponsoring their annual tree sales program. Trees are hardy, bare root seedlings with healthy root systems. No guarantee is given for seedlings or transplants sold at these prices.

There are no stipulations as to who can purchase the trees and where they are to be planted. Orders will be accepted until February 29, 2008.

Trees available this year include: American arborvitae, black hills spruce, black walnut, blue spruce, American cranberry, hazelnut, lilac, Nanking cherry, Norway spruce, American plum, red osier dogwood, red oak, riverbank grape, rubrum maple, silver maple and white oak. These species are sold in bundles of 25 and range from \$35 - \$50. Also available are the one gallon containers of American arborvitae, black hills spruce, Colorado blue spruce, and Norway spruce. These are sold individually and sell for \$12 per tree.

If you are interested in placing an order, please contact the Fayette Soil & Water Conservation District at (563) 422-3868 Extension 3 for an order form.

Identification Statement

The Fayette Soil & Water Conservation District's Annual Report
Published by the Fayette SWCD,
Hwy. 150, 120 N. Industrial Pkwy. West Union, IA 52175 Issue No. 10

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Financial Statement

July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007

IM Budget Allocation	\$2,100.00
Commissioner Expenses	\$1,914.30
Office Expenses	\$2,194.40
STATE COST-SHARE FUNDS	
2006-2007 Allocation	\$28,459.00
Supplemental Allocation	\$32,880.00
Spent	\$39,710.70
Balance	\$21,628.30
2005-2006 Allocation	\$28,459.00
Allocated	\$1,057.50
Spent	\$27,130.42
Recalled	\$271.08
2004-2005 Allocation	\$28,459.00
Spent	\$25,585.10
Recalled	\$2,873.90
2003-2004 Allocation	\$28,459.00
Supplemental Allocation	\$17,991.50
Spent	\$39,203.98
Recalled	\$7,246.52
REAP Forestry/Native Grasses Allocation	\$6,431.43
Supplemental	\$3,746.25
Allocated	\$4,575.00
Spent	\$5,385.00
Recalled	\$217.68
REAP Practices Allocation	\$27,871.16
Supplemental	\$8,587.50
Allocated	\$12,829.50
Spent	\$21,061.93
Recalled	\$2,567.23
Mink Creek WPF Funds Allocation	\$750.00
Spent	\$56.00
Recalled	\$694.00
Mink Creek WSPF Funds Allocation	\$73,125.00
Spent	\$56,865.12
Recalled	\$16,259.88

Lauer is winner, cont. from front

ers often see ducks and pheasants as well as a few unwanted creatures like coyotes.

The ducks became a fixture on the property after Leslie built a pond on the east side of the property two years ago. He needed fill dirt for another project so he created a pond by removing 40-50 truck loads of dirt. Frances said she has enjoyed watching the baby ducks learn to swim every year.

Leslie said Richard Jensen asked to see the windbreak one day. Lauer warned him that some trees were missing and that he didn't know how many trees there were. However Jensen saw the area and returned later to tell the Lauers their work with creating the windbreak had won a local award.

"Then they sent it in to the state, and

holy tomatoes, we won that! It all just happened," said Leslie.

The week after Thanksgiving they traveled to Ames to receive their award and meet other award winners.

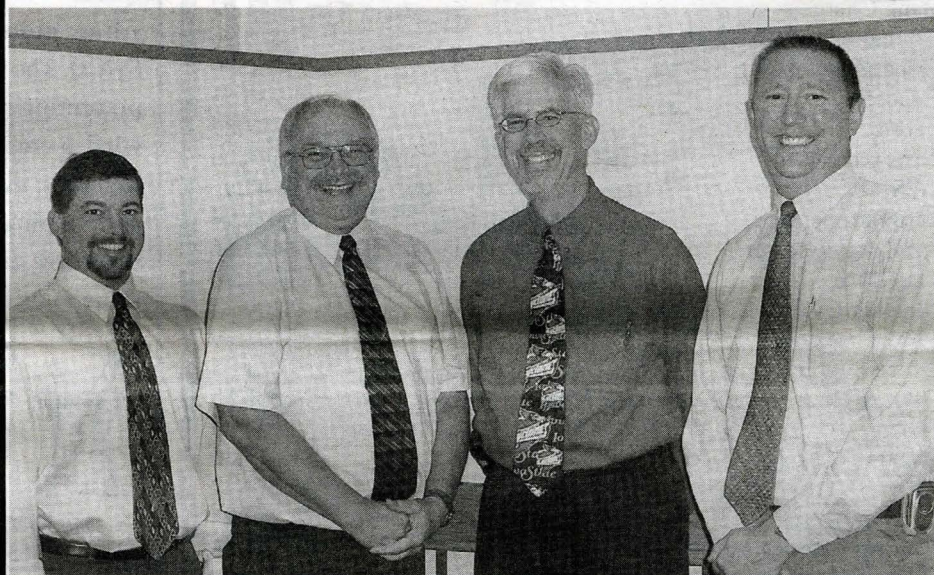
"I'd never won anything before in my life," he said.

Planting the trees has become a family affair. The couple's grandson, Christopher Lauer, who operates a tree moving service, built a tree planter so they could plant the trees themselves.

To keep the windbreak healthy, Lauer plans to periodically add new trees to replace dead ones.

Lauer said there isn't necessarily a master plan to go about creating a windbreak. He suggests people plant what they like.

It's All About Experience



Jon King

Richard Witt

Don Frazer

Kent Nelson

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Fayette SWCD Revolving Fund Financial Statement

July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007

District Revolving Fund

Beginning Balance \$1,003.55

Receipts

Contractor Meeting	\$50.00
Fabric Income	\$829.40
IM Commissioner Funds	\$2,136.40
Meeting Expense Reimbursement	\$200.00
Money Market Transfers	\$7,236.42
No-Till Income	\$300.00
Pop Can Refund	\$50.00
Soils Disk	\$5.35
Supporter Club	\$695.00
Tree Sales	\$3,371.29
Total Receipts	\$14,873.86
TOTAL	\$15,877.41

Expenses

ATV	\$414.63
Bank Charge	\$1.62
Computer	\$18.96
Donations	\$250.00
Education	\$1,236.53
Fabric	\$407.87
Gifts Given	\$100.00
GPS	\$ 42.97
Houg Property	\$1,011.74
IM Commissioner	\$2,683.56
IM Office	\$2,194.40
Meeting Expenses	\$100.34
Mink Creek	\$193.69
Office Supplies	\$281.25
Otter & Nutting Developmental Grant	\$860.58
Postage	\$453.29
Sales Tax	\$1,014.30
Trees	\$3,014.32
Total Expenses	\$14,280.05
Ending Balance 6/30/07	\$1,597.36

Nothing is more beautiful than the loveliness of the woods before sunrise.

- George Washington Carver

We are proud to support the SWCD. The work you do preventing soil loss due to wind & erosion; preserving wetlands; managing forests; and keeping our ground water free of pollution is value to us all. THANK YOU!



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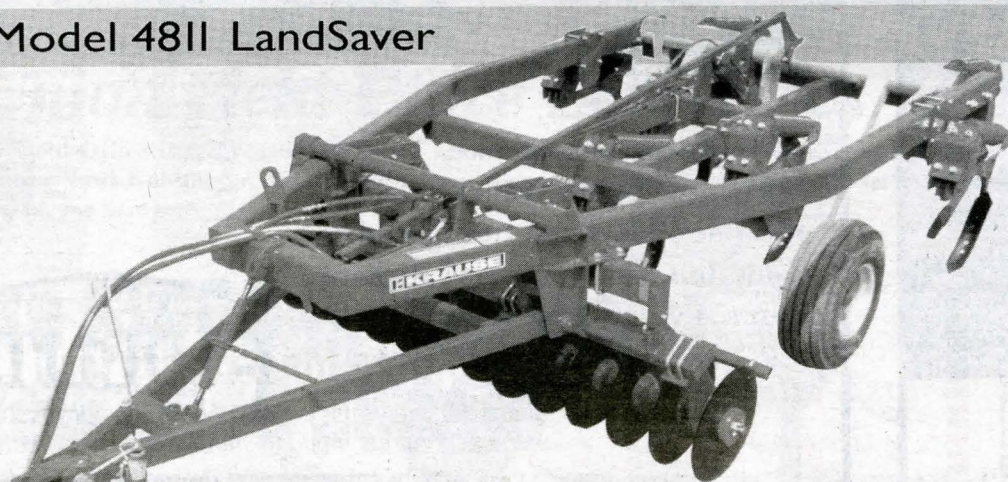
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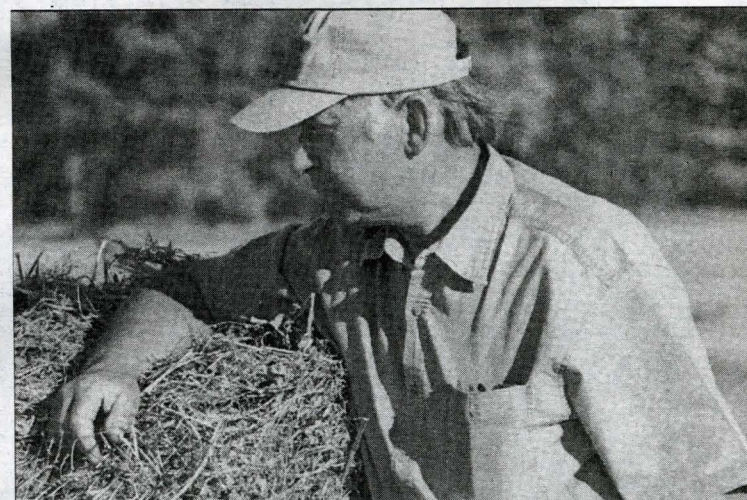


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Randy Helgersen
Bert Henderson
Suzanne Henn
Heraty Hudson Farm
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Kyle Jacobsen
Philip James
Violet James
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Dan Kuennen
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Leyh Farms Inc
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John Muench

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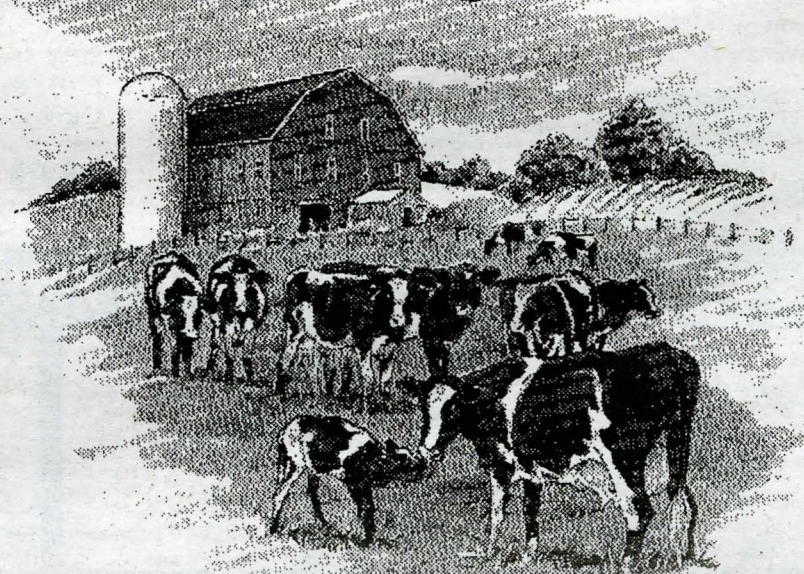
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Accomplishments for 2007

Practices	Amount
Contour Farming	78 ac
Contour Buffer Strips	56 ac
Contour Stripcropping	25.3 ac
Grade Stabilization Structures	4
Grassed Waterways	98 ac
Manure Storage Structures	6
No-Till	4052 ac
Terraces	15,901 ft
Water/Sediment Control Basin	6
CNMP	2

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

2007 CRP Continuous Grassed Waterways	57 ac
2007 CRP Continuous Contour Buffer Strips	2.5 ac
2007 CRP Continuous Filter Strips	23.7 ac
2007 CRP Continuous Habitat Buffers	67 ac
2007 CRP Continuous Riparian Buffer Strips	18.9 ac
2007 CRP Continuous Marginal Pasture Buffer	5.7 ac
2007 CRP Continuous Wetland Restoration	17.2
2007 CRP General	1790 ac
Total Contracts	114
Total Ac	1989



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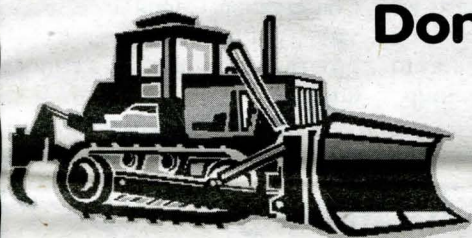
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Pheasants Forever reaches milestone

Rod Marlatt

President, Fayette County Pheasants Forever

Fayette County Pheasants Forever is extremely proud to announce that they have exceeded \$750,000.00 in habitat expenditures in Fayette County. The Fayette County Chapter received an award at the State Pheasants Forever Convention held January 12, 2008 honoring and recognizing this accomplishment.

The Fayette County Pheasants Forever Chapter, founded in 1985, was one of the earliest chapters nationwide. Pheasants Forever is unique in its program, as all of the dollars raised by the club are utilized for habitat development here in Fayette County.

Since its inception in 1985, Fayette County Pheasants Forever has implemented 1,883 projects encompassing 27,472.6 acres. These projects include tree plantings, shelterbelts, riparian buffers, native grass plantings (CRP, filter strips, quail buffers, wetlands, etc.), food plots, mid-contract enhancements and management, and land acquisitions.

Fayette County Pheasants Forever could not have done this alone and would like to thank our partners. These include the Fayette County Conservation Board, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Soil and Conservation District Commissioners, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and most of all the landowners who saw and continue to see the need for habitat establishment in Fayette County.

While we are proud of reaching this milestone, it only serves as a catalyst of enthusiasm for us to move forward and accomplish more. To do so requires dollars. Most of these dollars are raised through our Annual Banquet. This year's banquet will be held on March 15, 2008 at Echo Valley Speedway in West Union, Iowa. We ask that you consider attending, having a great time, and helping us move ahead toward more acres of habitat in Fayette County.

The truth about wetland determinations

By: Luke Frobish
Soil Conservationist

To often, talk of "wetlands" amongst the agricultural community is a sure-fire way to spark controversy and ignite debate. Unfortunately, avoidance is often the initial reaction of agricultural landowners and producers because the wetland conservation (Swampbuster) provisions of the National Food Security Act (The Farm Bill) are either misunderstood or misrepresented by third parties. Consider this your crash course in the basics of wetland conservation compliance.

Certified wetland determinations, as completed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, offer landowners the assurance of a final wetland determination for their land. This certified determination will not change as long as the site remains in agricultural use (provided no violations occur), nor will it change because of changes in land ownership or USDA program participant. Certified determinations are completed by NRCS staff upon request only, and are subject to change only if a landowner requests a review or

re-determination due to natural events or the occurrence of a violation. In short, agricultural producers and landowners need certified determinations in order to know what activities are allowable without risk of losing their USDA benefits.

To maintain eligibility for USDA program benefits, all USDA participants must self-certify that they have not produced crops on wetlands converted after December 23, 1985, and did not convert a wetland after November 28, 1990 to make agricultural production possible. How do you know whether or not the activities you have done in the past, or those activities you plan to do, are in violation of Swampbuster provisions? The answer is as simple as they come: Consult your local NRCS office!! If the land already has a certified wetland determination on file, we will be able to provide you an answer on the spot. If no certified determination exists, we will recommend that you request one from our office, because as we have already discussed, certified determinations are the only way to know what land clearing, draining,

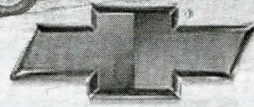
dredging, filling, or leveling activities are allowable without jeopardizing a person's USDA benefits.

Please keep in mind that the NRCS is not the only authority on wetlands, but that we are the determining authority when it comes to wetland conservation compliance with the Farm Bill. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has jurisdiction over the protection of fish and wildlife habitat, while the United States Corps of Engineers have jurisdiction over all navigable and other waters of the United States, which includes but is not limited to: tidal waters, lakes, rivers, streams, mud flats, and intermittent and perennial streams. Luckily, these agencies service all requests through a joint application packet, available at our office in addition to their own. Landowners should check for restrictions & regulations before conducting any construction, excavation, or filling activities in streams, lakes, wetlands, or floodplains. For more information on USDA Wetland Conservation Compliance, please visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/compliance/wetindex.html>.

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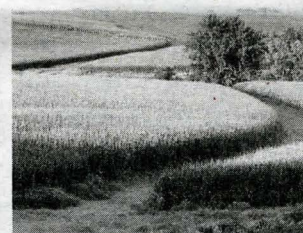


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It's Time to Diversify!

By Dan Burkhart

Fayette County Extension Education Director

It all started with a question so simple it was almost embarrassing to consider. "Why", asked the economist Ken Meter, "don't we grow our own food here in the American Heartland?" Most food items found in our grocery stores in Northeast Iowa travel an average of 1500 miles before they reach our plates.

In the spring of 2006, the Northeast Iowa Food and Farm coalition (NIFF) was formed. It brings together food consumers, business people, area and county extension staff, and farmers of all kinds. NIFF began to address the question by conducting a survey of all businesses and institutions in a 5 county area. The results showed that the majority would buy more locally raised food—if it was available.

As far as NE Iowa Corn and Soybean farmers go, a change to non-traditional crops would only take a small number of acres. An acre of vegetable or fruit crops has a potential return many times higher than corn or soybeans—even at current record prices. As far as locally grown livestock, changes in production and marketing strategies can be used to meet demand for locally grown livestock and livestock products.

NIFF has begun to implement their strategic plan designed to build a stronger local food and farm economy in NE Iowa. The coalition has identified the following goals. 1) Provide an opportunity for existing and new producers to diversify. 2) Explore the development of regional processing and storage facilities to add value to all agricultural products in the area. 3) Increase sales and consumption of locally grown food on a local, regional and national level.

An informational meeting will be held in late February 2008 for each of the NIFF counties. Counties included are Howard, Winneshiek, Allamakee, Clayton and Fayette.

If you are interested in finding out more about NIFF and locally grown food, contact Dan Burkhart at the Fayette County Extension Office, 563-425-3331.



CRP wetlands make a difference for Collin Jensen

Collin Jensen

Like most farmers, I am always looking for ways to make my operation more efficient and profitable. Straighter longer rows, push back the brush and trees along fence lines, straighten the creek, and tile the wet spots trying to get the most from the assets I have to work with. Through the years these decisions may have left our most precious asset, the land, vulnerable. Fewer waterways, faster

drainage, and heavy rain events cause severe soil and nutrient runoff.

Before fence row to fence row farming, Mother Nature had its own way of controlling runoff problems. Winding creeks and wet soil basins caught and filtered out a lot of the soil runoff before it got to the river system and eventually the gulf. Today, through the CRP wetland CP27 and wetland buffer CP28 practices catch, filter,

and store runoff. It also creates an environment for many plants and animals to flourish in. Mother Nature kind of takes care of itself from there on. The benefits are huge and with the new CRP rental rates, these areas can help your bottom line in more ways than one. The key thing to remember is we are all stewards of the soil. How we treat it will affect our environment for generations to come.

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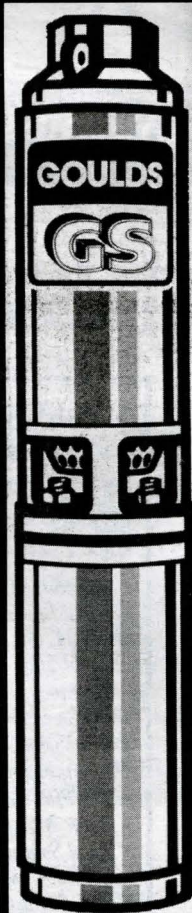


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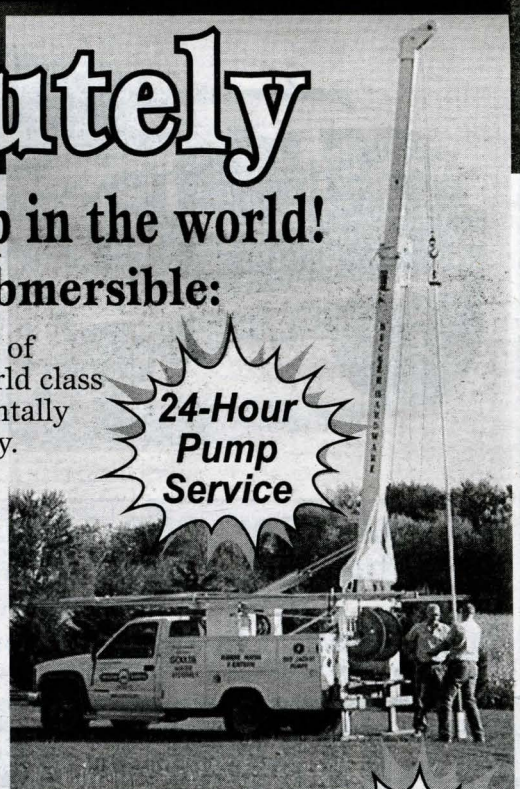
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Why does Fayette County keep having conservation winners?

By William Bennett

This year the Fayette Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) submitted three entries into competition for regional and state awards. All three won the regional contests of eleven SWCDs in northeast Iowa, and two won the statewide competition.

Kim and Sue Pleggenkuhle were selected as Fayette SWCD Conservation Farmer of the Year and Region 4 winner. Rick and Renee Matt were selected as District, Regional and State winner of the Outstanding Woodland Owner of the Year. Leslie and Frances Lauer were awarded the Windbreak of the Year in the District, Region and State.

This is not the first time that citizens of Fayette County have received awards for outstanding performance in conservation on a regional or state level. In addition to the people listed above, Kenneth and Doris Wagner and Mark and Denise Nelson have been named Iowa's Outstanding Conservation Farmers of the Year in recent years. Will Ogle was named Outstanding Woodland Owner of

the Year in the past. James and Sue Updegraff were cited for the Outstanding Windbreak of the Year. Harold and Irene Fisher, Louis and Cheryl Christen, and Judy and Bill Bennett have been Iowa Tree Farmers of the Year.

Why has Fayette County had a great number of conservation award winners? We have great cooperation among many groups including: the farmers of the county, the Soil & Water Conservation District, the Iowa Dept. of Ag & Land Stewardship, the USDA agencies (NRCS & FSA), District Foresters, the Fayette County Conservation Board, the Fayette County Extension Service, Fayette County Pheasants Forever, Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation & Development, and many other individuals and groups. We have a great number of people that think about how to make the future better and are willing to give of their time and resources. We have school systems that take their students out in the field to learn more about our environment and realize that all there is to learn does not take place in the classroom. We have a number of people that know

if our future generations are going to have a quality place to live with productive soils, clean water, and clean air, we all have to be doing our part right now. If we wait until another day, we may not be able to provide a livable environment. If we are able, it will be much more costly and harder to achieve. There is an old saying "the best time to plant a tree was yesterday, but today is better than tomorrow".

To keep our winning traditions going, we all need to do everything we can to protect and improve our environment. Among the many things you can do are build structures that protect the resources downstream from your farm or house, use minimum ground disturbing activities (such as no-till), improve our environment (such as tree planting, timber stand improvement, establishing buffer strips & wetlands). By working together we can win for ourselves, our neighbors and future generations no matter where they might live. We also want to thank everyone that helps keep our soil in place, our water clean, and our air safer to breathe.

Switchgrass may be better source of ethanol than corn

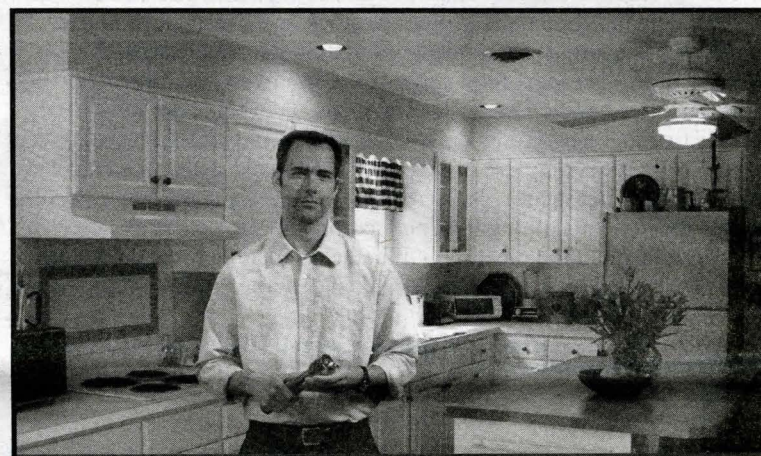
Printed from the Farm Bureau Spokesman

Switchgrass yields about five times more energy than it takes to grow it, making the plant a more efficient fuel source than corn, according to a study released last week.

The life cycle of the switchgrass ethanol - which includes growing the crop, making the fuel and burning it in vehicles - emits about 94 percent less carbon dioxide than the life cycle of gasoline, said the study, published last week in the National Academy of Sciences.

Switchgrass is expected to be a major main feedstock for cellulosic ethanol. New energy policy signed by President Bush last month mandates a five-fold increase in ethanol blending by 2022, and some of that fuel is required to come from cellulosic sources.

Cellulosic ethanol currently costs about twice as much as making the fuel from corn, the main U.S. ethanol feedstock. Venture capitalists and companies that are making small amounts of cellulosic ethanol say once the industry gets under way, biological advances used to produce the fuel will make the process cheaper.



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"Nature deficit disorder"

If future generations are to continue any conservation missions, they need to understand, become connected to, and care about the natural world. Unfortunately, this three-step learning process is not being completed by many of our children.

Youth, and adults too, may know about nature, but lacking direct experience they do not know nature on an intimate and personal basis, in a way that causes them to become connected to the natural world. In his book, *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv points out that many children do not link with nature because "No child can truly know or value the outdoors if the natural world remains under glass, seen only through lenses, screens, books or computer monitors."

Electronic media provides access to a world of information, but our dependence on computers and television is consuming so much of our time that we neglect oppor-

tunities to engage with our friends and family and to experience the awesome natural world. A recent study by the Kaiser Family Foundation reported that youth spend 390 minutes (that's 6.5 hours!) per day on electronic equipment during their free time. According to a study from the University of California, American adults, who have far less free time than adults in many countries, spend 170 minutes a day watching TV and movies. Disconnected and lacking natural outdoor experiences, young people will idealize or develop fear rather than joy, wonder, respect and caring for nature.

As individuals we can change this pattern and give our youth a healthier, more satisfying life in the process. If we want to link our children to the natural world, we should make sure they are enjoying experiences in the outdoors. As responsible adults we can provide our youth with repeated opportunities to encounter nature first

hand in a safe environment, with minimal guidance, to allow them the freedom to explore and marvel at what they discover. Leaders in conservation say that it is repeated, pleasurable adventures in the outdoors with an adult mentor that got them started on the road to caring enough about the environment. When researchers asked these leaders to identify significant life experiences that fostered their attitudes, they identified hunting and fishing as key to molding their relationship with nature.

Aldo Leopold, put it this way. "The objective is to teach the student to see the land, to understand what he sees, and enjoy what he understands."

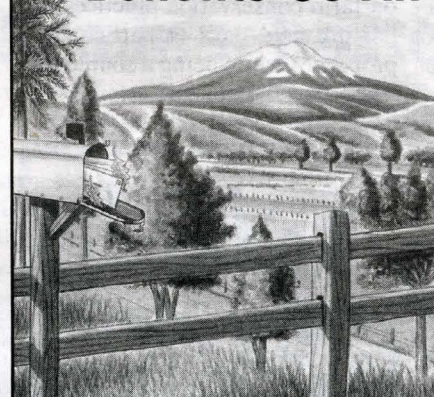
As individuals we can make a difference. We do not need to organize big events, and we do not need to be experts, we just need to be willing facilitators who make it possible to learn in a pleasant way. We and our youth can start a revolution by converting some of

our kilowatt consumption time to nature absorption time. Turn off the TV, get unplugged from the electronic media and go outdoors with a kid to explore the natural world. Recognize and appreciate that while knowledge about nature is vital, passion is the long-distant fuel for the struggle to save what is left for our natural heritage. Passion does not arrive on video or on

a CD, passion is personal. Passion is acquired from the earth itself through the hands of the young and it then travels along grass-stained sleeves right to the heart.

What's important is that children have an opportunity to bond with the natural world, to develop a love for it, before being asked to help heal its wounds.

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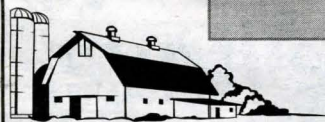


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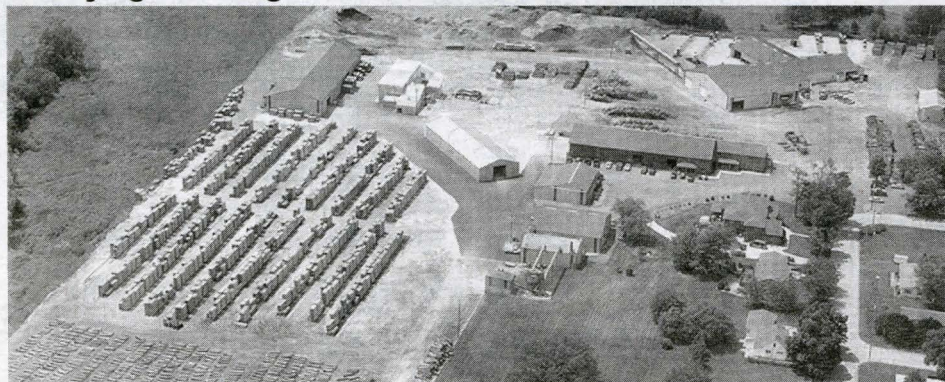


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Fayette Co. farmers participate in Working Watersheds: Buffers & Beyond Program

The Trees Forever Working Watersheds: Buffers & Beyond™ program serves Iowa and Illinois landowners to implement sound on-farm conservation practices. A highlight of these programs is the establishment and demonstration of streamside buffer plantings of trees, shrubs and grasses (which compose Riparian Management Systems). Vegetated buffers are proven practices that slow the rate of runoff, while filtering chemicals and sediment. These projects also showcase sustainable local efforts and potential economic benefits from marketing specialty forestry crops.

This year Gertrude Wunder's farm, which is operated by her son Bryan Wunder was selected to participate in the program. The Wunders have planted over 16 acres through the Continuous CRP. Technical assistance provided by DNR District Foresters, NRCS and FSA with administration of program. The Working Watersheds program is designed to provide additional technical assistance if needed to landowners, and help get the word out about sound on-farm conservation practices by hosting field days at participants properties while being a source for some extra cost-share monies in

order to make the project successful.

In 2007, Fayette County landowners Dick and Dorothy Jensen also participated in the Working Watersheds program. The Jensens used their cost-share funds to enhance some of their existing CRP and EQIP projects and hosted a number of groups at their property to see first hand what conservation practices on rural landscapes are all about.

Throughout Iowa and Illinois in the last 10 years of the program's partnership with Syngenta Crop Protection, Inc., the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, FS/GROW-MARK, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service has resulted in the following:

- 6,462 acres of buffers planted
- 136 miles of streams protected
- more than 1.5 million trees and shrubs planted
- 286 participating sites
- Over 7,300 volunteers and landowners involved

If you are interested in more information about the Trees Forever Working Watersheds: Buffers &



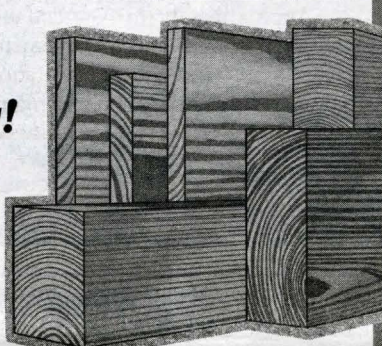
Pictured are Bryan and Linda Wunder who were selected to participate in the Trees Forever Working Watersheds: Buffers & Beyond program

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NRCS here to serve Fayette County

By: Al Ehley

NRCS Assistant State Conservationist

The staff of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is here to serve the farmers and landowners of Fayette County. That commitment to serve is highlighted in the conservation work found throughout Iowa and specifically in Fayette County. Terraces, grassed waterways, and a host of other conservation practices are clear reminders of the public and private partnerships that help conserve our soil and natural resources.

Your Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners and District Conservationist Jerry Muff, NRCS and State employees, district staff, and partners have worked hard on conservation projects this past fiscal year. This effort is illustrated in these accomplishments: conservation plans were written on 6,180 acres of county land; 9,524 acres had a new conservation practice applied that improves soil quality and 15,850 acres have a new conservation practice applied that improves water quality.

There is no doubt that helping to conserve resources on private lands serves the public good. Regardless of where they live, everyone across the country benefits

from productive soils, clean and abundant water, healthy plant and animal communities, clean air, an adequate energy supply, and working farms and ranch lands. Therefore, every acre and every landowner counts in our effort to effect change on the land.

There are challenges ahead. There is a new Farm Bill. High prices are encouraging farmers to plant more corn. There is the ongoing debate that compares no-till with other tillage systems. Common questions being asked in the countryside include: Do I really need to till the ground? What is the savings in equipment and diesel costs with no-till? Which system will give me the best yield? Which system will give me the best return?

We can help you answer those questions. Our staff and partners can help you come to informed decisions that are the best for you, your land and the environment. We will use Web-based tools where appropriate, but we also offer the on-site, hands-on planning and technical assistance we are known for.

At NRCS, our goal is to help landowners make decisions. You will get that from Iowa NRCS and the Fayette SWCD. We help people help the land.



Farm Pond Seminar hosted by SWCD

By: Carrie Davis
Project Coordinator

The Fayette SWCD and the Mink Creek Watershed Project hosted a Farm Pond Seminar this last year. Speakers included Bill Kalishek (pictured) with the Iowa

DNR, George Schaefer, NRCS Engineer, and Jerry Muff, District Conservationist.

Approximately thirty attendants learned about fisheries management, water quality and aquatic vegetation issues, pond construction and main-

tenance, and NRCS programs and cost-share availability.

Anyone interested in further information on any farm ponds or fisheries management please contact the NRCS Office at 563-422-3868 ext 3.

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Matt is Woodland Owner of the Year

For Rick Matt, taking care of his land isn't a chore. It's something in which he takes pride.

Matt has 299 acres of woodlands five miles northwest of Clermont that he farms with his father, Art Matt. This year he was awarded the Woodland Owner of the Year award.

Matt credits his parents for starting the project. They have been taking care of the land since the 1950s, and Rick began his role as a caretaker of the soil and vegetation, in 1990 after he graduated from Iowa State University and moved back to the area.

"They started it. I just progressed it the last few years," he said.

The woodland, mostly oaks, walnuts and soft woods, has been under a written management plan since 1997. Rick took over the timber management on the farm in 2000 and updated the management plan for the entire property in 2002. Since then, Matt has been dedicated to following his plans.

"Since 2002, Matt has worked to implement all the recommendations outlined in the plan," said Gary Beyer, district forester. "Seldom in my 30 year career have I seen anyone work through a large property in such a timely manner."

Matt said following the management plan has helped him accomplish his goals.

"I've always wanted to leave the land better than when I got it," he said.

To keep the trees on the property healthy, Matt has caged them to protect them from deer. He's also sprayed the trees for insects and waters them in drier times.

In 1991, Matt constructed a fence to protect 112 acres of land. He said they first started putting up fences 30 years ago and just finished about two years ago. The fences have kept the cattle from roaming the woodland, which has

resulted in a tremendous wildlife habitat.

While Matt says harvesting happens "few and far between," he has done three timber stand improvements. The latest occurred in 2007 when 21 acres of weed trees were removed. A total of 71 acres have been harvested of weed trees since 2003, with another 32 acres planned for 2008.

From 2002-07 he worked with consulting foresters to harvest mature and defective trees on 54 acres. The harvests promoted uneven age management and created even-aged stands for all merchantable trees.

Last summer Matt decided to use the harvested trees in a different way. After he cleaned up the elms, he cut the timber into logs and built a log cabin that his children and area hunters have used. The Matts have also created a picnic area for a "deer camp."

Taking care of the land is a family affair for the Matts. This last year they planted 300 trees, with Rick digging the holes, his wife Renee planting the trees and the children putting up the cages and watering the trees.

Although he admits it can be overwhelming at times, Matt takes pride in doing a lot of the work himself.

"It's really just about making the land better than it was when you started. There's really a self-benefit for being in the woods and seeing it all pay off," he said.

"Rick is dedicated to improving the woodland on the farm," said Beyer. "He is treating the timber like any other crop and is committed to making the woodland as good as it can be for future generations."

Matt advises other woodland owners to make sure they protect their trees from wildlife and name the trees. He suggests using all the resources available, such as the state forestry, for help.



Rick Matt, pictured with his wife Renee, was named the 2007 Woodland Owner of the Year. Matt has 299 acres of woodland that have been under a management plan since 1997.



Rick Matt puts cages around the trees in his woodland to protect them when they are young.

Even though it has been a lot of work, it has been a labor of love. "It makes me feel good that

all the hard work has paid off," he said.

Matt lives in rural Clermont with his wife and children.

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Pleggenkuhles, cont. from front

sion, and protect the streams and the pond built years ago by Lloyd Pleggenkuhle.

Bergman and Pleggenkuhle address nutrient and pest management by keeping records and by applying the recommended application to soil tests.

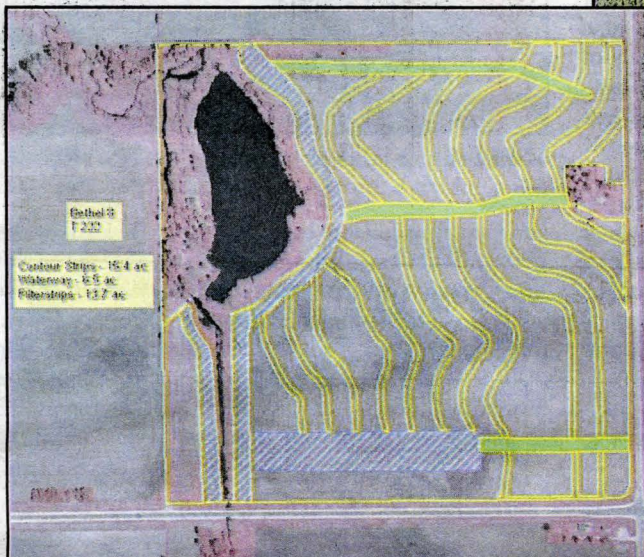
Kim and Sue have a well groomed yard and maintain good weed control in the fences. They have a cabin near a pond at one of their farms which is also well groomed. Around the pond, they put in 15 acres of contour strips designed by the NRCS. To return

the land to its former glory, they planted native wildflowers and grasses.

"We do just about everything they allow us to do," said Kim. "It's expensive but once they get started it gets so beautiful. The wildlife love it."

With Kim being an outdoorsman, this prompts him to look at alternatives and keep conservation as an ongoing work. Pleggenkuhle's goal in life is to keep the land in good shape for the next generation like his father left it for the future generations.

Aerial photo of the Pleggenkuhle farm north of Highway 18 highlighting the Buffer CRP practices. Vegetative filter strips are shown along stream and pond in hashed lines. Contour buffer strips are highlighted in yellow. Grassed waterways are shown in green.



2007 Region 4 Iowa Soil Conservation Farmer Kim and Sue Pleggenkuhle



The Pleggenkuhle farm south of Highway 18 is the outstanding conservation farm for Northeast Iowa (Region 4). Picture taken showing contoured rows with contour buffer strips.

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- Frank Lloyd Wright



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Schutte's host 2007 No-Till Advantage Field Day

By Dan Burkhardt
Fayette CEED

Approximately 140 people from 11 counties attended the third annual No-Till Advantage Field Day June 27th, 2007 on the Lloyd Schutte farm, near Postville. Mike Schutte, Lloyd's son and operator of the farm shared the many reasons why his no-till system is successful. In addition to reducing machinery cost because of less trips over the field, no-till systems reduce fuel used to less than 3/4ths gallon per acre and cut labor cost to approximately .6 hour per acre. Schutte has been no-tilling for ten years and is growing continuous corn without rotating to soybeans. He also injects liquid swine manure with special manure applicator injectors that do not disturb the crop residue. Schutte's valuable soil also stays where it belongs—in the field.

Brian Lang, ISU Extension Field Agronomist summarized long term research at the field day. Lang pointed out that even though no-till corn yields are on an average 5% less than a chisel plow system in some years, reduced costs



Pictured is Mike Schutte's no-till planter.

gives the no-till the advantage in higher profit per acre. Research shows that soybean yields show very little yield difference between tillage methods. As a result, no-till systems net profit is also higher in both corn and soybean production. Lang also commented on no-tills long term advantages related to soil savings and soil tilth.

Robert Tigner, ISU Farm Management Specialist, discussed the no-till advantages that improve the bottom line by approximately \$19/acre. These include lowering energy and labor cost per acre,

less machinery expense, and fewer trips over the field. Tigner also gave an overview of the effects of higher corn prices, ethanol production on cash rents, and changes taking place with rental contracts.

Mike Sucik State Resource Soil Scientist, NRCS, demonstrated the changes in soil tilth, water infiltration and compaction in long term no-till operations. Studies show that fields need to be in no-till 3-5 years before soil structure changes are complete. These benefits include, increased water infiltration, raising soil carbon levels,



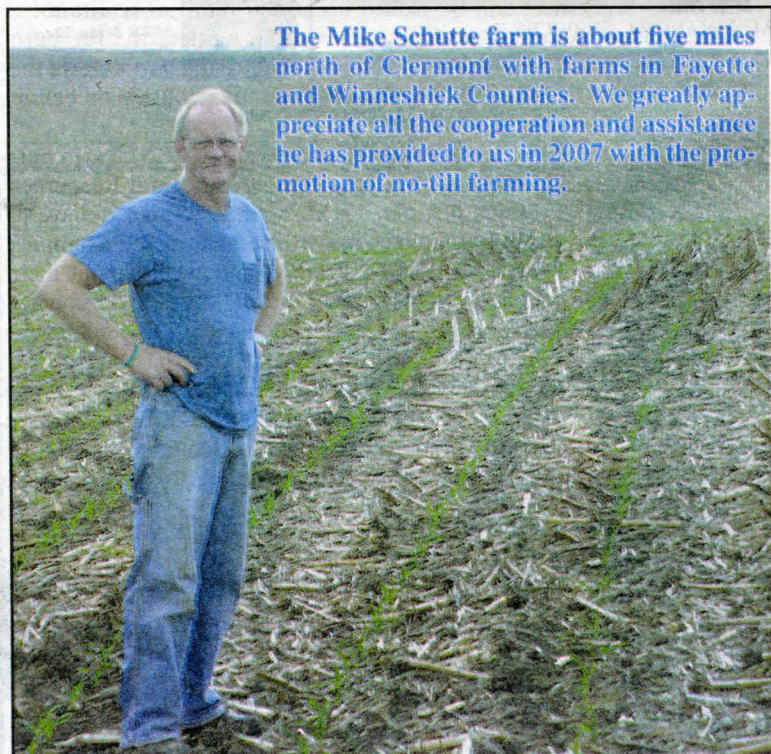
Mike Schutte talks to a group at the No-Till Advantage Field Day.

and lowering carbon loss. District Soil Conservationist, Jerry Muff, reviewed the reasons for revival in no-till systems and shared information on no-till cost-share payments and related government programs.

The field day was organized by

ISU Extension in Fayette County and the Fayette County Soil and Water Conservation District. County Extension offices and Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Winneshiek, Allamakee and Clayton assisted in publicity.

No-till continuous corn



The Mike Schutte farm is about five miles north of Clermont with farms in Fayette and Winneshiek Counties. We greatly appreciate all the cooperation and assistance he has provided to us in 2007 with the promotion of no-till farming.

Pictured is Mike Schutte standing in his no till field. It is corn no-tilled into corn. Mike has been no-till planting for over ten years. He plants corn into cornstalks, soybean stubble, alfalfa and even pasture. The management he employs has proven results. By NRCS

By Mike Schutte

I have been no-tilling for about 12 years in the rolling hills of northern Fayette and southern

Winneshiek counties. Last summer the NRCS, Soil and Water Conservation District and the Fayette County Extension, held a

no-till field day at my farm. This article will summarize that day, explain why I believe in what I do and how my no-till system has evolved.

I first started no-tilling primarily for soil conservation, as I was having erosion problems particularly with soybeans in the crop rotation. My first no-till experience was with a zone-tilling planter that tilled a 7 inch band in each row with 3 coulters and banded liquid nitrogen as well as starter fertilizer. The drawbacks of this system were that I still got some erosion in the band, especially on end rows. I also discovered that I was creating a root zone. Roots will grow where there is the least resistance and that appeared to be in the 7 inch zone.

The planter I use now has no coulters. I use a row cleaner followed by the seed disk, spaded closing wheels, and a drag chain to disturb as little soil as possible. I still band my nitrogen with the planter and use a seed safe starter applied in furrow.

This system works very well for corn on corn. I have dropped soybeans from my rotation and now focus on continuous corn.

So, what have I observed as

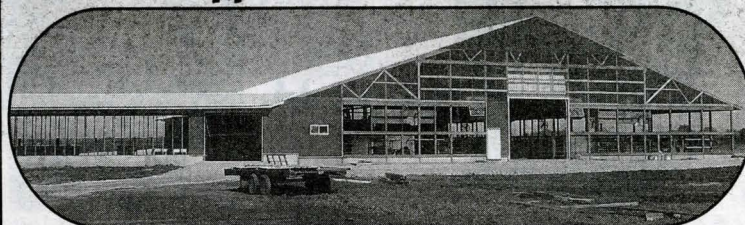
the advantages of no-till farming? The obvious things are a savings in soil, fuel, equipment investment, and time. Although these savings are real, I have come to realize that there are other advantages that may be more important than the obvious. What I have found is less hard pan and compaction, better water and air exchange, improved drainage, increased microbial life in the soil, and a huge increase in earth worm activity. These are the factors that I feel have led to a continual increase in yields.

I have recently become more interested in soil chemistry and the

effects of soil health as it relates to nutrient management. Higher fertilizer prices are probably going to be a permanent factor in our crop budget. By managing fertilizer placement and soil chemistry, less nutrients need to be applied, thus resulting in lower input cost.

I have made changes in my no-till system almost every year and continue to learn not only what to do, but why. If you are considering no-till, talk to farmers who are doing it. I believe in what I do and am willing to share my experiences. I can be reached at 563-423-5215.

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Keeping soil out of our ditches

By Jon Steege

Roadside Vegetation Manager,
Fayette County Conservation
Board

Soil is an organism that allows us to grow bountiful crops that provide food and fiber to the world. But in order to continue that yearly cycle, the soil must remain available and in good health to continually produce bumper crops. Soil eroding into our streams and ditches is lost for agricultural purposes, and indeed may become a pollutant, especially if it carries fertilizers and pesticides with it.

Since ditches are many times part of our drainage systems for excess runoff during rainfall events, erosion controls can protect farmable soils and help keep them in place. Sometimes just leaving

residue on the surface after planting does a good job of slowing down raindrops and holding silt in place. Good waterways can facilitate moving excess rainfall into ditches, rivers and streams, filtering soil particles by keeping water movement slower. A good sod waterway doesn't allow scouring of soil underneath. Where there are longer and steeper slopes, terraces and outlet stabilization structures may be needed to maintain the integrity of waterways.

In many cases, a good grass base on the back slope and 12-18 inches of the field border will prevent similar scouring of the ditch bank. Sometimes removal of border fences will encourage the farmer to slice off the back slope into the ditch and try to farm two

to three more rows of crop. They usually find that narrow strip of grass was a good erosion barrier. Each year Fayette County spends thousands of dollars removing unwanted silt deposits from our ditches. Keeping that soil in place would have the double benefits of less erosion and less tax money used to keep the ditches in good working order.

What we really are trying to implement is a system of practices that, working together, will control runoff and the resulting sedimentation that occurs if no checks are in place. NRCS staff can design a plan to work toward that goal. Caring for the soil is everyone's responsibility.

Keep habitat healthy with management

By Kindra Orbin

Many landowners with acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) may be wondering what is Mid-Contract Management (MCM)? Why should I do it? What are my options? And how does it benefit wildlife? Mid-Contract Management is a list of practices that are cost-shared by FSA that landowners can use to maintain the overall best habitat conditions for wildlife on their CRP. These management practices include prescribed burning, strip disking, and spraying, or any one of those options followed up with inter-seeding of legumes and forbs. MCM is required for all CRP contracts starting in 2003.

MCM increases diversity of both plant species and structure, by weakening the grass stand to encourage new growth of other plants such as wildflowers. The disturbance provided by MCM will invigorate native grasses by removing dead litter, and can be used to control woody vegetation. With more plant species and enhanced plant structure, properly managed CRP provides better food, cover, and nesting material for all varieties of wildlife.

MCM should not be done more than once every 3 years; doing it too frequently can cause monocultures of grass, and can completely kill off wild flowers. It can also make the environment less desirable for wildlife if it is being disturbed all the time. It is recommended that MCM should be completed in thirds to leave undisturbed habitat for wildlife, especially when doing fall MCM to leave winter cover for wildlife.

It is important to plan ahead for MCM, especially prescribed burning. Firebreaks should be mowed the fall prior to a spring burn, and MCM should not be done during the primary nesting season which is May 15-Aug. 1. Landowners that choose the prescribed fire option for their MCM need to have a burn plan approved by NRCS prior to the burn. The IDNR Private Lands staff will write burn plans free of charge for landowners that complete a Pre-Burn Worksheet. The Pre-burn Worksheet can be picked up at and returned to the local NRCS office. As there are many plans to be written, the Pre-burn worksheet should be completed 4 months prior to the burn to give the IDNR Private Lands staff enough time to write the burn plan before the planned burn date.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) will be hosting a field day on MCM this summer in Fayette County. At the field day landowners will be able to see examples of MCM practices first hand and ask other landowners about their experiences and their results of completing MCM. Please contact Kindra Orbin at kindra.orbin@dnr.iowa.gov or 563-422-3868 ext. 3 with questions on MCM or prescribed burning.

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First National Bank's Ag Specialists, from left: Dianne Schneberger, Brent Tapper, Mark Moser, Brian Reichter and Carolyn Breuer.

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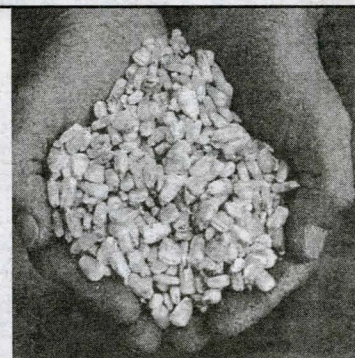
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Keep clean water clean by managing

By LaVonne Koch

Soil Conservation Technician

Roof runoff is a very important practice for a livestock producer. It is one of the easiest, least expensive, and most effective ways to divert water away from contaminated areas or structures. For every 10 foot by 10 foot (100 square feet) of roof surface, one inch of rain produces 62 gallons of water. That means that a 30 foot by 30 foot (900 square feet) barn roof produces 558 gallons of roof runoff for each inch of rain. If this roof runoff flows through livestock areas, manure, equipment storage areas, or bare soil, it can transport sediment, oil, herbicides and pesticides, bacteria, and excess nitrogen and phosphorous to streams or lakes. Installing and/or maintaining properly functioning gutters, downspouts and outlets or a French drain, where animals are not present, is a simple way to manage roof runoff.

All livestock facilities in which animals are housed in open lots or manure is stored in the open, must deal with runoff. Clean runoff or water from land surrounding livestock facilities should be diverted from barns, open animal concentration areas and waste storage or treatment facilities. Runoff from feedlots should be channeled into waste storage facilities. Runoff shall also be diverted away from structure foundations to avoid wetness and hydraulic loading on the foundation.

The criteria in designing roof runoff is based on capacity of gutters and downspouts, runoff frequency, kind of materials used for roof gutters and downspouts, strength of gutter supports, outlet for the gutters and downspouts

and the protection of the structures from livestock and equipment. Additional criteria is to increase infiltration in a way that replenishes soil moisture without adversely affecting plant species, protect structures from wetness, and to increase water quantity for collection and storage of water from roofs for purpose such as irrigation or human consumption.

A landowner's biggest concern is the maintenance of gutters, eaves, and downspouts with snow, ice and debris build up. This can be maintained with proper installation and correct capacity of gutters and downspouts along with regular inspection and regular repair work as needed. In place of gutters, a properly designed French drain may be installed that intercepts and transports runoff if animals are not present which eliminates gutter maintenance.

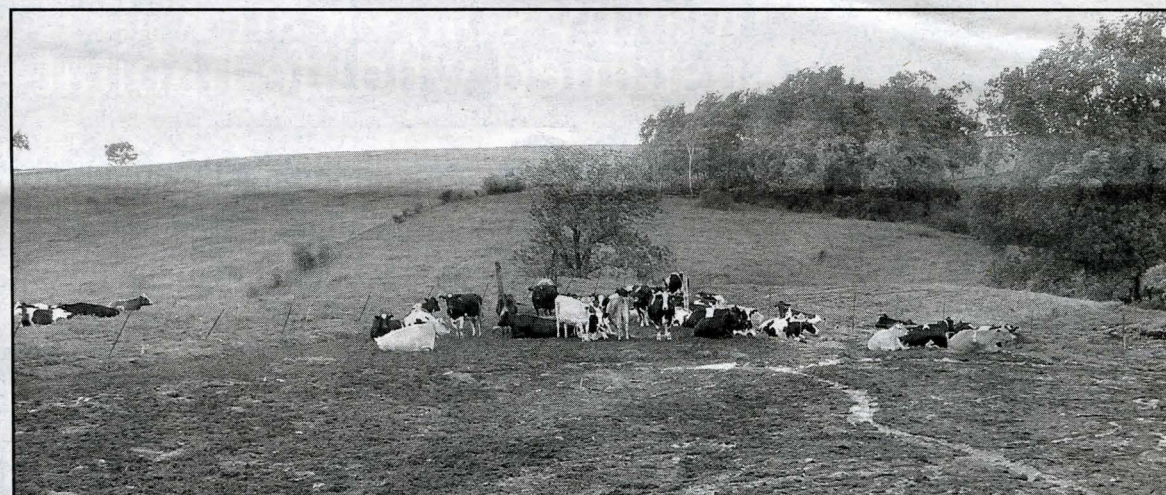
Good roof gutters downspouts and diversions exclude clean water from areas of waste, reducing the volume of waste material that needs management.

The Baumler's state that adding the settling basin and stacking area to their operation has been a time saver. It is nice to scrape the manure into the pit after it rains instead of trying to haul it. The stacking area will be nice in the summer to store manure until the fall. They also added rain gutters to their sheds to direct the water to the drainage area. This keeps their cow yard cleaner and cuts down on mud around the farm.

It's important for us living on the land wanting to keep clean water clean! Check with NRCS for roof runoff management funding through EQIP.



Mike Baumler standing in his cow yard before construction of settling basin and controlling roof runoff.



Cattle lot at Mike Baumler's before implementing a roof runoff management plan.

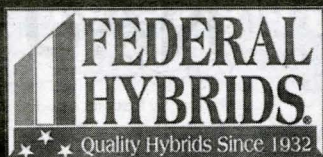


A grassed filter strip constructed at Mike Baumler's during construction of the cattle lot. This grass filter strip filters runoff from the settling basin water and the milk house water runoff.



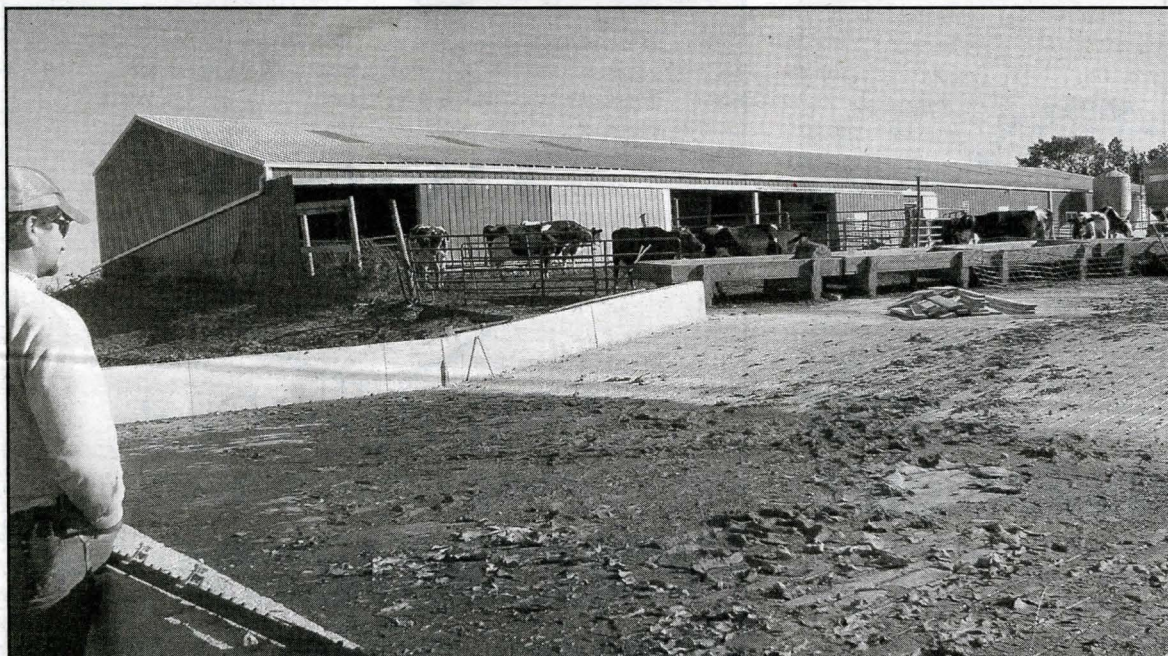
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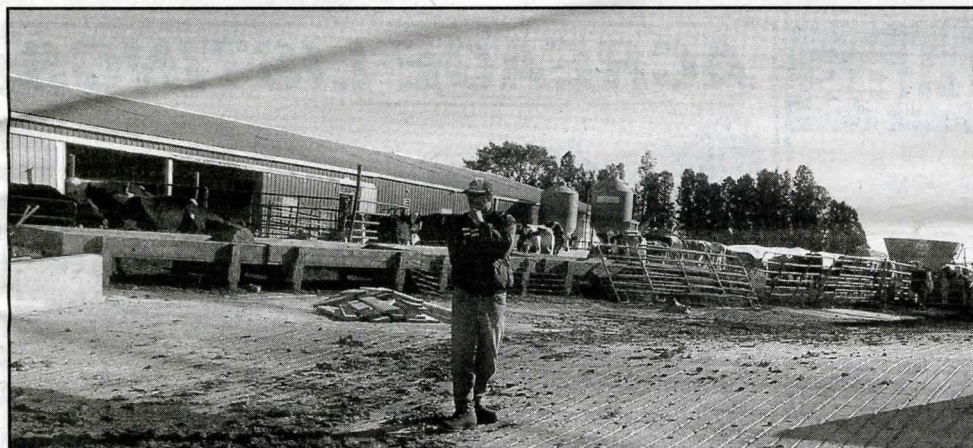


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roof runoff



Barn runoff completed at Mike Baumler's. He installed 311 feet of box gutter eaves and 3 downspouts, controlling 3627 gallons of water per one inch of rain.



Randy Tope, Area Civil Engineer Technician, engineering Mike Baumler's settling basin, stacking facility and roof run off.



Mike Baumler's newly constructed settling basin and stacking facility. Mike has controlled 4370 gallons of water per one inch of roof run off with gutters and a diversion above the lot. This has made a tremendous amount of difference in the quantity of water running through his feed lot. Manure is captured in the basin and liquids are filtered in a grass channel. Livestock manure can be applied to cropland and utilized for their nutrients. This will cut Mike's fertilizer bill when he can take credit for the manure applied.

Food plots for next year

By Greg Schmitt, DNR Private Lands Biologist

Winters like the one we are currently experiencing are outstanding reminders of the importance of food plots for wildlife. Not just as a food source, but also as winter habitat if they are designed properly. Now is the time to plan for next year's blizzard.

Providing food sources adjacent to adequate winter cover, like switchgrass or evergreens, will enhance survival of wildlife such as the Ring-necked Pheasant. According to Todd Bogenschutz, the Iowa DNR's Upland Wildlife Biologist, "There have been few documented cases of pheasants actually starving to death in Iowa. Virtually all of Iowa's winter mortality is attributed to severe winter storms with the birds freezing to death."

Food plots close to native grass stands or shelterbelts allow pheasants to obtain a meal quickly thereby limiting their exposure to predators and maximizing their energy reserves. "If hens have good fat supplies coming out of the winter, they are more likely to nest successfully," said Bogenschutz.

Food plots also provide habitat and food for many other species like deer, turkey, partridge, squirrels, and songbirds. A green browse food plot of legumes (clover or alfalfa) provides a source of food for deer almost year round and will be utilized by turkey and pheasants in the spring and summer months. A common mix of legumes for green browse plots is 2 pounds each of Alfalfa, Red Clover, and Ladino Clover per acre. Mowing the legumes once every three weeks or so helps keep the browse new and tender.

Bogenschutz offers the follow-

ing suggestions for planning food plots for pheasants:

1. Corn and sorghum grains provide the most reliable food source throughout the winter as they resist lodging in heavy snows. Pheasants prefer corn to sorghum, although sorghum provides better winter habitat. Sorghum is also less attractive to deer, if deer are a problem.
2. Place food plots away from tall deciduous trees (that provide raptors with a place sit and watch food plots) and next to wetlands, CRP fields, and multi-row shrub-conifer shelterbelts that provide good winter habitat.
3. Size of food plots depends upon where they are placed. If the plot is next to good winter cover the smaller (2-ac. minimum) the plot can be. If winter cover is marginal (i.e., ditch) then plots must be larger (5-10 ac.) to provide cover as well as food.
4. Depending on the amount of use some food plots can be left for 2 years. The weedy growth that follows in the second year provides excellent nesting, brood rearing, and winter habitat for pheasants and other upland wildlife. Food plots that have heavy deer use generally need to be replanted every year.

More information on food plots is available on the NRCS website at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov. The Publications link is the place to start.

Free grain food plot seed is available from Fayette County Pheasants Forever. People can contact Greg Schmitt, Private Lands Biologist, 563-422-6201, for information on how to establish and design food plots that benefit wildlife.

Weather Rules

Weather Rules

Rule#1 - Weather always wins.

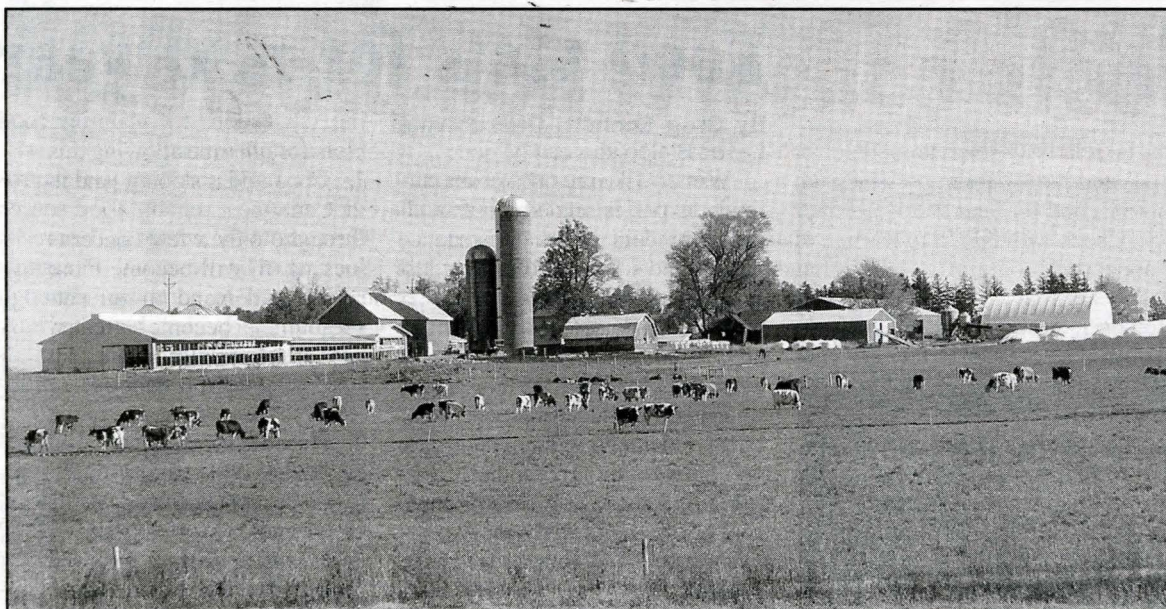
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Grazing makes sense for Wedemeier

Scott Wedemeier is pleased with the results he's seen in his dairy herd, after implementing a prescribed grazing system through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP has helped him make progress toward realizing his goal of reducing feeding costs and improving overall herd health. Wedemeier says this of his experience: "Getting my cows out of the barn and onto the grass has really made a difference. I've been able to retain more replacement heifers because they seem to adjust better to the pasture than to the barn. I've also lowered my cull rate, reduced manure handling/hauling costs as well as feed costs, and am improving the health of my herd and my land." He is taking a year to review his overall system, but has plans in the making to double pastured acres.

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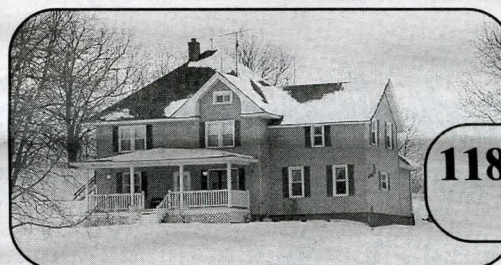
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Rising land prices affects conservation progress

By Jerry Muff
District Conservationist

It is not "breaking news" that land prices have spiraled in recent years. According to the "Iowa Farmer Today", the 20.7 percent land value jump over the past year is the largest figure since the Iowa Farm & Land Chapter No. 2 Realtors Land Institute began its surveys 30 years ago. Up until last fall, two dollar corn has been a phrase I've heard thousands of times by disgruntled farmers who've weathered stagnant commodity prices for decades.

Recently, corn prices have reached as high as five dollars. This rapid change affects most of us in varying ways. In general for most farmers, it is exciting economic times. It has become obvious to most everyone that the effects of these changes increase the demand, and consequently, the pressure on our land and water resources (ie- biofuel plants popping up all over). In light of this, I would like to point out some related thoughts, considerations, and concerns from a conservationist's point of view.

I have heard countless stories of how fierce the competition for rented land has become. Because these farms tend to have the least amount of oversight from the landowners regarding the conservation of their land, this is one of my biggest concerns. Short term renters aren't generally as concerned about the long term effects of their farming practices. Landowners are

encouraged to be aware of what is going on with the operation of their farm and place restrictions to ensure that the land will be operated in a conservation-minded manner. Landowners also have the right to require that a conservation plan be followed by the renter. Conservation plans are completed or revised by our office at no cost.

Attempting to farm marginal land is one of the biggest abuses of our land that we see. Clearing timber and conversion of pasture to cropland can become a major problem for the environment and the producer if proper steps are not taken. Producers are reminded to follow the Conservation Compliance and Wetland Conservation guidelines when any type of drainage or non-cropland conversion to cropland is being planned. Also, it is critical that the analysis by NRCS be completed PRIOR to the conversion or drainage. All farm program benefits are at stake for producers who "sodbust" or drain wetlands without going through the proper channels.

Continuous CRP (A.K.A. the buffer strip program) is still a viable program that offers an annual rental payment for establishment of permanent cover. CRP rental payments have recently been increased to levels that are fairly competitive with current farm rental rates. Rental rates are set according to the soil type. While interest in all CRP has declined recently, this program should still be considered because

it takes up relatively small amounts of land and does an impressive amount of good for land and water quality. Check with NRCS to learn more about this program.

It appears that no-till farming has not been growing and maybe has retreated somewhat in the past few years, despite fuel prices having climbed to record highs. The feeling I get from farmers is that with the high commodity prices, more emphasis is placed on maximizing yields rather than bottom-line economics. By implementing no-till and removing unnecessary tillage practices, an operator can cover more acres by saving time, reduce input expenses with less equipment, lower fuel usage, and can greatly reduce soil erosion rates by improving soil structure, infiltration capacity, and biological activity. It is possible to receive a total of \$30/ac through EQIP cost share incentive funds to switch to no-till for three consecutive years. I always recommend that potential no-tillers talk to one of our local successful farmers who've no-tilled for years. Collin Jensen, member of the SWCD board, is willing to share his management tips with others. Mike Schutte, who has an article on no-till planting in this issue, is also willing to share his experiences.

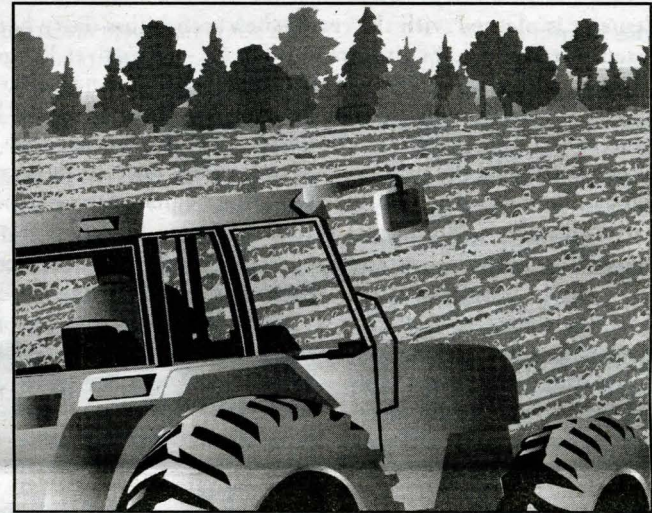
It is also evident that more stalks are being baled for bedding or feed. Sometimes the field is left almost bare of all crop residue, especially when all rows are being

baled. These activities can be done in a conservative manner if a cover crop, such as rye, is seeded immediately in the fall then harvested and/or no-tilled into the following spring. Another option would be to leave the residue of at least two out of four rows during the baling process. Too often, baling is followed with an intensive tillage implement which leaves the field vulnerable to erosion. Conservation compliance

will have a tough time allowing this on most of our HEL sloping land in Fayette County.

These are only a few concerns or issues which will become more critical as the demand on our natural resources become greater. Common sense would dictate that land users become more motivated to protect the soil as the value of the land increased. I hope this is the case.

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Secretary Northey encourages farmers to use new online option to manage conservation practices

Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey encourages farmers to take advantage of the new FARMS (Financial and Reports Management System) website, which allows them to sign-up for and manage their participation in conservation programs offered by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.

"This new web program is designed to make it easier for farmers to register and get conservation practices on the ground," Northey said. "There remains a great demand for filter strips, grass-waterways, and other projects that reduce runoff and improve water quality. This website will help farmers make sure those projects

happen."

Farmers interested in learning more can visit <https://idals.iowa.gov/FARMS/>. There they can learn more about the programs offered and even apply for assistance. Those that have previously received assistance will also be able to monitor the status of their project.

In addition to making it more convenient to make inquiries and apply for assistance, the new program is designed to increase the responsiveness to requests for cost-share assistance and, as a result, speed up the processing of payments for landowners.

"As they are out in the combine and running grain carts, farmers are getting a good look at their land and seeing any areas that could benefit from additional conservation practices," Northey said. "This new program will allow them to quickly apply when it's convenient to address problem areas."

The Division of Soil Conservation is responsible for state leadership in the protection and management of soil, water and mineral resources, assisting soil and water conservation districts and private landowners to meet their agricultural and environmental protection needs.

Northey, a corn and soybean farmer from Spirit Lake is serving his first term as Secretary of Agriculture. His priorities as Secretary of Agriculture are the opportunities in renewable energy, conservation and stewardship, and telling the story of Iowa agriculture.

Northeast Iowa group has forestry as main concern

By Jodie Kerns

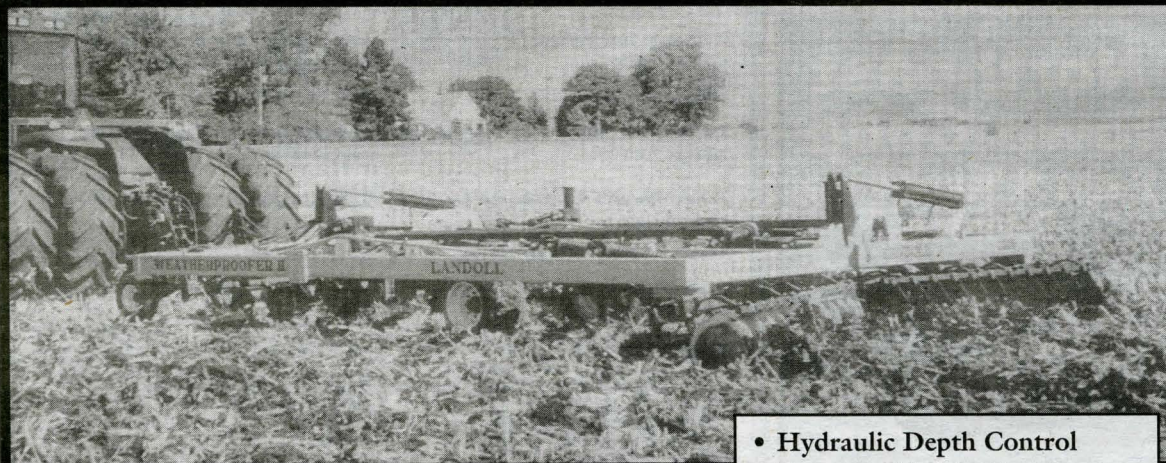
Northeast Iowa Forestry Advisory Committee (NEIFAC) is a group of woodland landowners that meet throughout the year. The group is committed to protecting our woodlands, and providing forestry contractors and foresters with suggestions on the needs and struggles facing woodland owners. NEIFAC also responds and supports legislation that protect our woodlands as the need arises. This informal and unique group meets various times throughout the year,

with some members attending 1 or 2 times a year, and others attending all meetings. There are no dues (although occasionally a volunteer collection has been taken up to assist with the cost of postage.) Members enjoy various activities such as tours of wood industry plants, education presentations, cabin tours, and touring member's woodlands to view projects or features on their property. NEIFAC provides an opportunity to place both landowners and woodland professionals together in the same

setting where we learn together and from each other, along with enjoying the woodlands we all cherish. NEIFAC is open to anyone who is interested in protecting woodlands and would like to enjoy the opportunities that we have to offer. If you are interested in attending NEIFAC meetings, please feel free to contact Jim Kerns at 563-928-6814 or 563-928-7226 or Jerry Muff at the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office at 563-422-3868 X3



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Protecting Mink Creek Watershed

Carrie Davis

Project Coordinator

The Mink Creek Watershed, located in eastern Fayette and western Clayton counties, has been the subject of a water quality project the past year. Encompassing over 12,000 acres, 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."

The Fayette SWCD was awarded a grant to for the Mink Creek

Watershed Project in 2004. The project has been sponsored in part by the Iowa DNR, US_EPA (Section 319) USDA-NRCS, and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.

The project was then initiated at part-time for the first eighteen months. The long term goal of the Mink Creek Watershed was to reduce sedimentation to Mink Creek and inform and educate landowners and operators in the watershed about the importance of protecting our natural resources, such as Mink Creek.

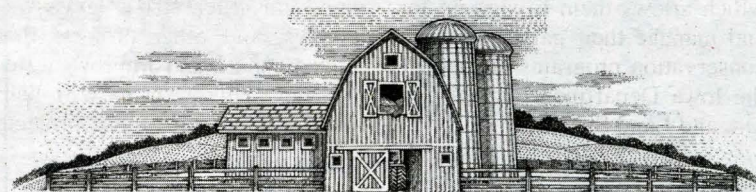
This final year of funding of the Mink Creek Watershed Project has been one of the busiest seasons of the project. This fall over 11,000

feet of terraces have been built and another 3,440 feet are planned for this spring. About 15 water and sediment basins were built or are planned to be built in the watershed last fall and this spring. In addition, seven acres of waterway re-establishment, three animal waste systems, 15 acres of timber stand improvement, and 992 feet of streambank stabilization are planned to be constructed this spring/summer.

Due to practices installed in the Mink Creek Watershed since the start of the project there has been over 1,630 tons/year reduction in sediment being delivered to Mink Creek. The projects completed this fall and next summer are expected

to reduce sediment delivery by an additional 1,900 tons/year, bringing the total for the four years of the project to over 3,500 tons/year!! This is an amazing accomplish-

ment and watershed participants should be proud of there part in this achievement. As land values continue to increase, protecting the land just makes sense.



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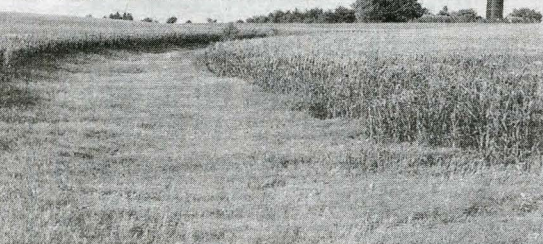


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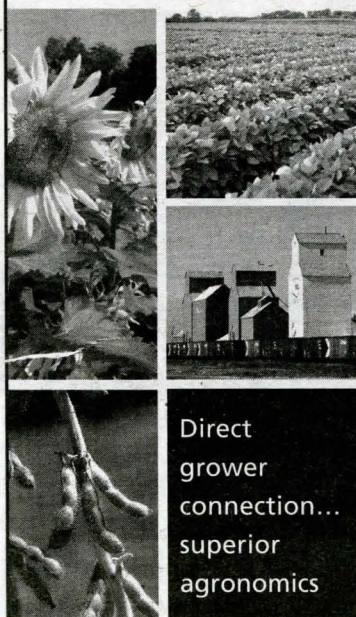
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SoilView- Digital soil survey

Robert J. Vobora
Area Resource Soil Scientist

Do you have a need for soil information and want it at the click of a button? Then SoilView may be the answer for you. SoilView is a computer program on CD that allows anyone with a computer to obtain soil information with the click of the computer mouse. The soil information for a county that normally was obtained from a published Soil Survey book for a county is now available on CD for 95 of Iowa's 99 counties.

Just what can SoilView do? Information can be obtained on the whole county or on just a field or small area. The information available includes yields for the commonly grown crops

in the area (corn, oats, soybeans, hay and pasture). Information on suitability for ponds, building sites, septic tank adsorption fields, properties of the soil and more is all included on the CD. All of this information is available for the whole county or for an individual area of interest.

Are you interested in buying or renting a new parcel of land? SoilView could help make some decisions for you. SoilView has tools included that will allow you to quickly and easily obtain the average Corn Suitability Rating (CSR) on an area or the crop yields for that area. The acres of each soil type and the CSR or yield is also shown.

Interested in purchasing a building site. SoilView can give you an idea of the depth to bedrock, high water table, sandy areas, where is the best place for a septic system and much more. These are some things that could increase the cost of building.

How do you get SoilView? Just stop in the Fayette County Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Office at 120 N. Industrial Parkway in West Union. The cost of a CD is \$5.35 to cover reproduction. The SoilView program will work on any computer that has a windows operating system. All instructions are included on the CD.

Fayette County Conservation Board receives Habitat Award

Rod Marlatt, Director,
Fayette County Conservation Board

The Fayette County Conservation Board was recently awarded

1st Place in the State of Iowa for counties over 20,000 in population for **Habitat Improvement**.

This award is presented annually by the Iowa Chapter of the Iasac Walton League of America. In 2007, the Fayette County Conservation Board planted 2,300 trees and shrubs, 1,229 acres of native grasses (CRP, continuous CRP, and quail buffers), burned 148 acres of native grasses for CRP mid-contract management, and implemented 61 acres of wildlife foodplots. These projects along with our nest-box program, timber stand improvement work, educational program, roadside management program, and fish habitat restoration efforts warranted the award.

The Fayette County Conservation Board has long been a leader

in wildlife habitat. We have finished in the top three places in 15 of the last 18 years, 11 of which in 1st place.

The Fayette County Conservation Board could not have done this alone and would like to thank our partners. These include the Fayette County Chapter of Pheasants Forever, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the Fayette County Board of Supervisors, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Soil Conservation District Commissioners, and most of all the landowners who provide the acres to do this work.

If you would like to implement a wildlife habitat project or program, please contact the Fayette County Conservation Board at (563) 422-5146 or (563) 425-3613.

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Natives – more than habitat

By Jon Steege

Roadside Vegetation Manager,
Fayette County Conservation
Board

We have long understood the role that native grasses and wildflowers play in providing much needed habitat for a variety of wildlife. But how often do we think about the other benefits we all derive from prairie type plantings?

The obvious benefit is the aesthetic value we receive just from enjoying the beauty of the prairie. All throughout the summer, new flowers and new colors rotate in the prairie. Not as many different species as the true tall grass prairie once contained, but certainly some of the showier plants can really add to the enjoyment of a prairie planting.

If we plant prairie as part of a conservation project, such as CRP, the benefits go way beyond just our personal enjoyments. Prairie species are deep rooted plants. They also use up the space both above and below ground. This means two things. One is that they are very effective in holding soil and

moisture where it belongs. The second is they also absorb nutrients that otherwise would run-off into streams or leach down through the soil profile. A good stand of prairie will have three or four times as many pounds of roots underground as a traditional hay type mix would have. More roots mean more absorbency.

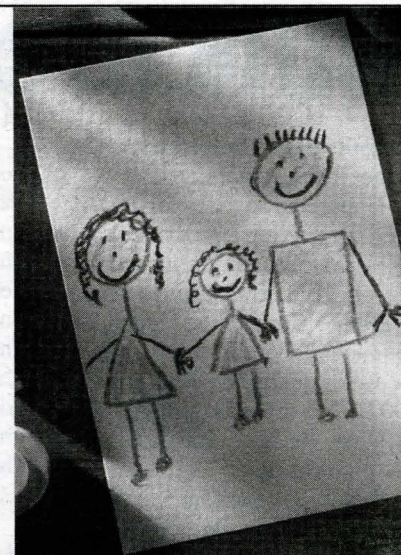
Few people consider the role of pollinators today. But the fact is many trees, flowers, and crops depend on insects to pollinate their flowers to produce seeds and reproduce. A prairie with its diverse plant community and changing blooms throughout the growing season provides a refuge and nectar source for many of the pollinators necessary to serve the role nature intended for them. Some pollinators are unique to prairies and couldn't exist without certain species.

Prairie plantings in roadside ditches also serve a valuable purpose. In addition to the above mentioned filtering of nutrients and water absorption, they are valuable for snow storage and winter road protection. Since prairie species

are dense at the bottom and not at the top, they trap snow low in the ditch and let the wind blow through the top. Anyone who drives the roads while it's snowing and the wind is blowing can observe this "nature's own windbreak." Having prairie in road ditches means less maintenance for weeds and brush, and is easily rejuvenated by a timely periodic burning. Remember the pollinators. Prairie plantings in road ditches serve as connectors between larger stands of prairie and traditional species and serve as a corridor for movement of those pollinators.

It seems that prairie plantings serve a number of beneficial purposes in the greater scheme of life and nature. Let's not forget the wildlife habitat benefit. A few years ago, I suggested having a t-shirt for the annual roadside Conference which stated, "Big Bluestem – It's Not Just for Breakfast Anymore." Natives formed the black soil prairie that has made Iowa farmland so productive. By putting prairie back in some of its traditional places, we can once again enjoy its many benefits.

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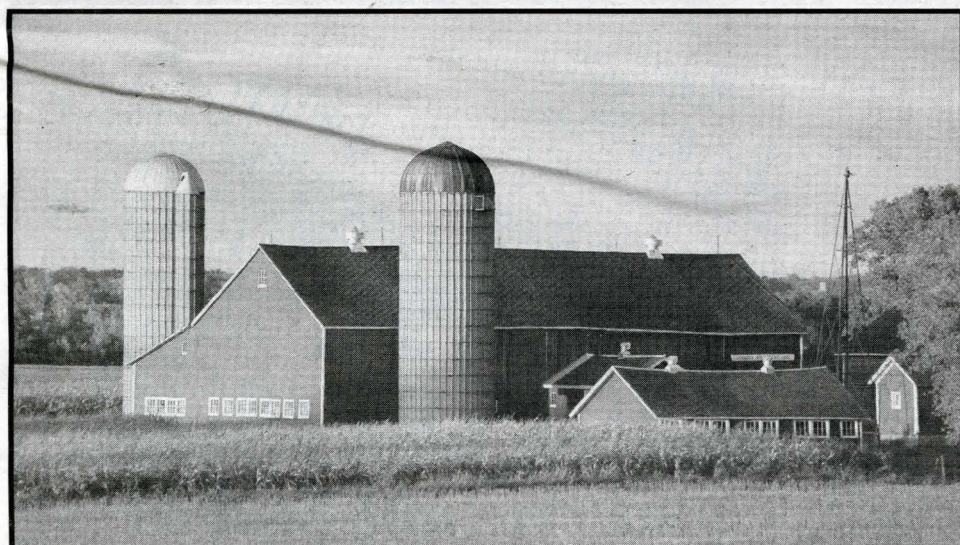
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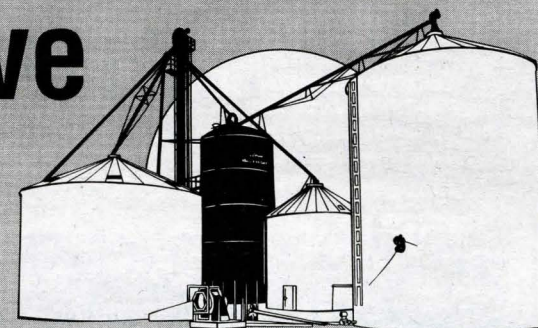
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Mink Creek water quality monitoring

Submitted by Rick Klann

Upper Iowa University

Upper Iowa University has been conducting a program of fairly intensive water quality monitoring on Mink Creek since August of 2005. Prior to this, Upper Iowa conducted a preliminary study of the water quality of Mink Creek in 2002. This report highlights some of what we have learned during this monitoring.

Water samples are collected monthly during March through November from three sites along the creek (only one site was sampled during the preliminary study in 2002). Additionally, samples are collected immediately following significant rain events (more than 0.6 inches of rain in a 24 hour period).

Each sample is analyzed for the following physical and chemical parameters of water quality: temperature, pH, conductivity, dissolved oxygen and turbidity are measured on site, while samples returned to the lab are analyzed for suspended solids, fecal coliform bacteria, ammonia, nitrate-nitrite, total nitrogen, soluble reactive phosphorus and total phosphorus.

Twice a year (May and September), each site is sampled for benthic macroinvertebrates (primarily aquatic insects and scuds that live on the bottom). Since different species of benthic macroinvertebrates vary with respect to their ability to tolerate pollution, they can be very useful as indicators of water quality. Specifically, they can indicate input of pollution that may be missed by a monthly sampling regime.

While UIU was monitoring the water quality from 2005 on, the Fayette Soil and Water Conservation District was implementing a project to improve the water quality by altering land use practices. The purpose of the water quality monitoring is to answer a key question. Are the improvements in land use practices leading to an improvement in water quality? While it would be nice to obtain a simple answer to that question, the water quality monitoring data paint a more complex picture. This isn't surprising since we are examining an entire watershed, and watersheds by their size and nature tend to be very complex.

First the good news. The ben-

thic macroinvertebrates living in the stream can be used to provide a rating for the stream based on levels of organic pollution (nitrogen and phosphorus). The rating scale ranges from very poor, up through poor, fairly poor, fair, good, very good to excellent. Early samples produced a rating of good. More recent samples have produced a rating of very good, indicating that more benthic macroinvertebrates that are less tolerant to organic pollution are beginning to thrive in Mink Creek.

Now for the not so good news. Mink Creek is still being impacted by runoff following heavy rains. If you were to visit Mink Creek after a week without rain, you would find what looks to be like a pristine stream. Light rains would not alter your perception. Light rains allow the water to percolate through the ground. This water is filtered before it returns to the surface at a spring or seep.

Heavy rainfalls, however, saturate the ground. Any rain that falls after the soil is saturated will not be able to percolate and be filtered. Instead, it flows directly to streams as runoff. Runoff from

bare ground strips topsoil (and the chemicals it contains) and carries it to the stream. Buffer strips and sedimentation ponds are so valuable because they can perform the function of filtration, limiting the amount of sediment carried by runoff. If you were to visit Mink Creek following a heavy rain, you would find it difficult to believe that you are viewing the same stream.

The heavy rains that fall each year lead to a tremendous amount of sediment introduced to Mink Creek by runoff. Many organic pollutants (nitrogen and phosphorus) and fecal coliform bacteria are washed in as well. Two dis-

turbing trends we see in the data are high levels of phosphorus and fecal coliform bacteria in the water. Both of these parameters are associated with manure. The data indicate that either more manure is being applied to land in the watershed, or else the timing and method of application is leading to more phosphorus and bacteria in runoff.

Land improvement practices are the key to improving the water quality of Mink Creek. Continued efforts are needed to reduce the sediment load carried by runoff and to make sure that runoff is filtered of organic pollutants.

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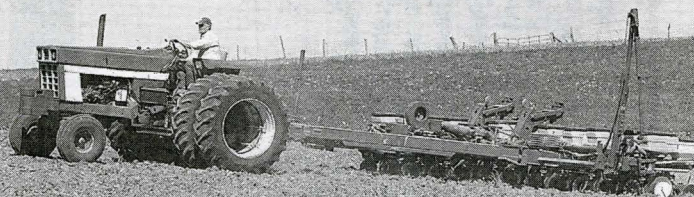
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- George Washington Carver



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Funding Awarded for the Nutting Creek Watershed Project

Carrie Davis

Project Coordinator

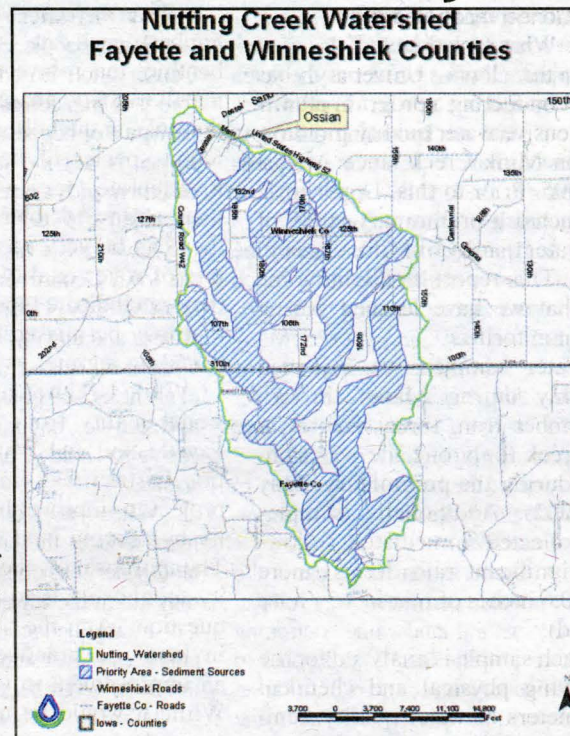
The Fayette SWCD has successfully applied for a watershed project grant for the Nutting Creek Watershed. Nutting Creek is a 17,246 acre watershed located in northern Fayette and southern Winneshiek counties. A watershed is the area of land that drains into a particular stream, lake, river, or ocean. This project is designed to be a three-year project intended to improve the water quality of Nutting Creek. Landowners and operators in this special watershed may be able to take advantage of increased cost share, up to 75%, and incentive programs to improve water quality by implementing certain conservation practices.

Nutting Creek has been listed on Iowa's 2004 303(d) list of Impaired Waters for aquatic life impairment. Recent studies conducted by the DNR TMDL staff indicate that aquatic life is not longer a limitation in the watershed; however E. coli levels have been documented as high as 730,000 colony forming units/100 ml of water after rain events. This is significantly higher



Nutting Creek as it flows toward the Turkey River in Fayette County.

The Nutting Creek Watershed encompasses all the land that drain toward the stream. Areas within a 1/4 mile, shown in blue, of running water have been deemed high priority areas.



than the EPA's recommendation for body contact.

The goal of the watershed project is to improve the water quality of the stream and reverse the negative impact that fecal coliform bacteria and sediment is having on the ecosystem. The SWCD believes these can be accomplished by promoting several cultural and structural best management practices (BMPs) that contain livestock runoff and reduce or trap sediment and manure from entering the stream.

Cultural BMPs include no-till

farming, rotational grazing and nutrient management while structural practices include animal waste structures, terraces, and grade stabilization structures. These practices can reduce bacteria and sediment loads by slowing down and filtering sediment and manure laden runoff from crop fields before it reaches streams.

The Nutting Creek Watershed Project is supported in part by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation, through fund-

ing from 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.

Individuals interested in the Nutting Creek Watershed Project can contact Carrie Davis at the Fayette County SWCD Office, 563-422-3868 ext 3.

5th Annual

OPEN HOUSE

Thursday, March 6



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Rod Marlatt

Conservation Director, Fayette County Conservation Board

What is my Legacy? It's a question that all of us ponder as the years roll by and age sets in. Landowners in our state are becoming older and decisions have to be made in regards to passing the land down, selling, it, or a multitude of other options. Much of this land has been well cared for by the landowner or has unique virtues such as conservation farming practices, timber, wetlands, and prairie. Many of these stewards of the land want to ensure that, regardless of the transfer of this land, the virtues that they have so carefully protected remain forever.

One of the best tools available to provide this protection is a Conservation Easement.

A Conservation Easement is the most popular, permanent way you can protect natural land while continuing to own it. The land is still yours to sell or pass onto your heirs, but you set aside certain rights. You determine that no future owner will do specific things on the property that would harm its conservation or natural features.

For example, you can set aside the development rights to ensure your land is always used for wildlife or farming. Conservation Easements can be used to restrict quarrying, building, timber harvest, or any combination of land rights.

The limitations set forth in Conservation Easements are tailored to suit your unique property as well as your personal preferences as a landowner.

When you write a Conservation Easement, you choose a conservation organization or agency that will ensure the easement terms are respected in the future. That the conservation partner shares your goals for the land and accepts the responsibility to monitor the land use regularly and enforce your restrictions if necessary.

The protection afforded by Conservation Easements is permanent; it legally binds all present and future owners of the land. Easements are re-

corded with the county recorder and are permanently attached to the title of the land thereafter.

Some people choose to place a Conservation Easement on land before it is transferred by sale, gift, inheritance or bequest. Even if the new owner is a good land steward, the easement adds a layer of protection for the land.

Iowa law (Chapter 457A) allows the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, any County Conservation Board, and any city in Iowa to hold a Conservation Easement. Many federal agencies, soil conservation districts, and private, nonprofit organizations can also hold Conservation Easements.

When a Conservation Easement reduces the property value, the landowner that donates the easement may claim the difference in value as a charitable deduction for income tax purposes. An easement may lower estate taxes and inheritance taxes, too.

If you've ever considered donating a Conservation Easement, new legislation provides a huge incentive to act sooner rather than later. The Pension Protection Act of 2006 significantly expands tax incentives for easements donated by December 31, 2007.

Specifically the new legislation:

Raises the charitable deduction landowners can take for donating Conservation Easements from 30% to 50% of their adjusted gross income in any year;

Increases that deduction limit to 100% of income if the donor is a farmer or rancher; and

Allows the donor to carry forward the charitable deduction for up to 15 years.

Again, if you're looking to preserve the land you have worked so hard to protect, and leave a legacy, you may want to consider a Conservation Easement.

For more information, you may contact the Fayette County Conservation Board or other legal easement recipients. Potential donors should also consult with their attorneys, financial advisors, family members and heirs.



SWCD District employee, Eric Boehm, informs a group of students about the differences of soil types.

Third grade Education Field Day at Jensen farm

Carrie Davis

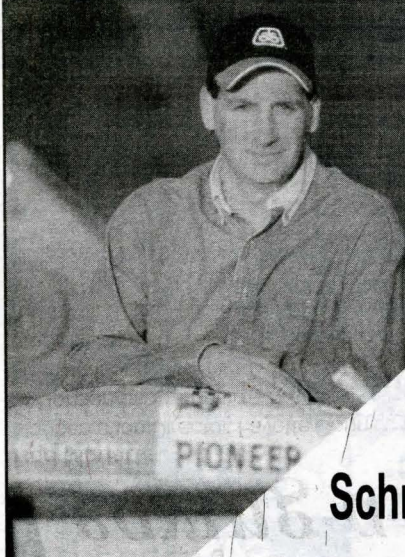
Project Coordinator

This past fall the Fayette SWCD hosted its 14th annual Education Field Day for area third-graders at the Richard and Dorothy Jensen Farm. Three hundred and eighty children attended from nine area school districts.

Students and teachers spent the day learning about a wide range of conservation topics, everything from erosion and soils to beekeeping and ponds. The children were able to touch a catfish, look into a beehive and become soil particles as they're eroded away. The District and its volunteers are proud to be involved in introducing our children to the importance of conserving our natural resources.



Students were able to see the inside of a bee hive and learned about the importance of bees.



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