

Soil and Water Conservation

Tama County Soil and Water Conservation District report

Congratulations to all the winners! The students' artwork sharing the message of forests appeared on renewable paper grocery sacks at the following stores: Terry's Food Center in Dysart, Traer Supermar-



Left to right: Jody Kasal, Vice Chair; Dean McKenna, Commissioner; Jan Wobeter, Commissioner; Jeff Bruene, Commissioner; Chad Mussig, Assistant Commissioner; Mike Snider, Chair

come from? What is food's connection to the soil we walk on each day? Investigation of this theme helps us gain a better understanding of the process food takes from production to your plate.

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Soil and Water Conservation Annual Report

2011 Conservation Awards presented

The Tama County Nature Center at Otter Creek Park provided the venue for the Tama Soil & Water Conservation District's annual banquet on November 16, celebrating Tama Countians who demonstrate outstanding dedication to our natural resources.

The district's 2011 choice for its Owner-Operator Award was the Mitchell family from Geneseo Township. The family has farmed in Tama County for over 125 years. The current operation is owned by Philip Mitchell, Dennis & Marlys Mitchell, Wade & Cynthia Mitchell, and Clay and Palyn Mitchell.

Kipp and Nancy Larsen of rural Gladbrook were the 2011 recipients of the Conservation Tillage Award. The Larsens live on the farm that Kipp grew up on. Kipp was quoted, "Thank you for selecting me as this award recipient. I have tried various methods in no-till and found ways to make it work better."

Steve and Deb Kupka, recipients of the Mature Windbreak Award, planted their extensive windbreak when they built their house south of Clutier in 1994. They incorporated evergreens, shrubs, and deciduous trees to protect their home and out-buildings.

Winners of the New Windbreak Award were John and Bonnie Kopriva of rural Traer. The family has a grain and livestock operation and works in seed sales and is active in both the Tama County Pork Producers and Cattle-men's Association.

Tama SWCD's 2011 Rural Backyard Conservation Award was presented to Galen and Jeanne Delis. When they

bought their home north of Dysart 17 years ago, the couple moved over 350 trees and shrubs with them from their previous home. Of their six acres, three acres are in garden.

The year's Urban Backyard Conservation Award went to Tom and Phyllis Holven of Toledo.

The Holvens have lived at their home on West State Street since 1989. They try to adhere to a natural approach to gardening.

The recipients of the 2011 Buffer Initiative Award were Craig and Kelli McCreary, rural Toledo. Craig is a full-time certified organic farmer and has a small Angus cow-calf operation. The McCrearys have lived on the family's Century Farm for ten years. Being organic, the operation uses cover crops and a crop rotation which includes alfalfa and clover.

The 2011 Wildlife Award was presented to Randy and Debbie Mullenbach of rural Garwin. The Mullenbachs were both raised on dairy farms, and they purchased their current farm in 1991. About 60 acres of the property are under cultivation with the balance in trees and wildlife habitat.

Judie Krebsbach of rural Traer was awarded the district's Friend of Conservation Award. For countless years, Judie has taken vacation each spring from her job with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship to teach water quality at the Tama

SWCD's 5th Grade Outdoor Classroom. Judie's job with the IDALS Mines and Minerals Bureau involves the



Left to right: Craig, Kelli, and Campbell McCreary



Judie Krebsbach

department's abandoned coal mine reclamation program and coal mining regulation.

The annual banquet also provided the opportunity to recognize several Tama County youth for their dedication to agriculture and natural resources.

4H projects from the 2011 Tama County Fair were recognized and these 4H-ers given cash awards: Logan Koester of Gladbrook for his project in crop production; Allen Heise, Gladbrook, and Emma Knoop, Clutier, for projects in agriculture and natural resources; and Erin Filloon, Hunter Filloon and Tyler Martens of Toledo and Rachel Scarf, Angela Wraga, and Tyler Wraga of Gladbrook for their projects in the environment and sustainability.

Jamie Lynn Hlas of rural Toledo, recipient of the district's 2011 scholarship, was also recognized. Jamie, the

daughter of James and Susan Hlas, is a graduate of Green Mountain-Garwin High School. She is currently a student at Iowa State University majoring in Agricultural Studies.

The winner of the district's annual grocery sack contest, Megan Carthy of Dysart, was also recognized. Megan is the daughter of Kory and Julie Carthy and was a fourth grader last spring at Dysart-Geneseo Elementary School. In addition to her monetary prize, Megan was treated to an airplane ride over Tama County in August. Her pilot was Garry Brandenburg, retired Marshall County Conservation Board Director. Sister Allie and Mom joined in the flight. Allie was Dysart-Geneseo's third grade winner in the district's 2010 contest.



Left to right: John, Rachel, and Bonnie Kopriva



Left to right: Randy and Debbie Mullenbach

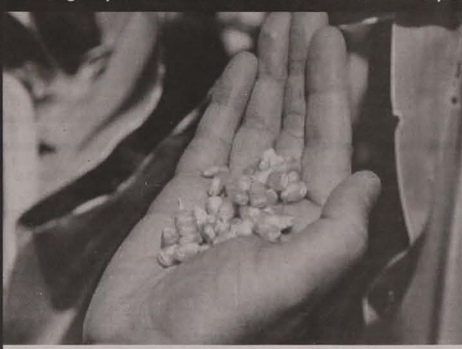


Left to right: Deb and Steve Kupka



Left to right: Wade, Cynthia, Clay, Palyn, and Philip Mitchell

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Soil and Water Conservation Annual Report

Tama SWCD Celebrated Earth Day and Arbor Day

In celebration of Earth Day on April 22 and Arbor Day, April 29, the Tama Soil & Water Conservation District presented white pine seedlings to 324 sixth grade students in six school districts in and around Tama County: South Tama, Meskwaki Settlement, Green Mountain-Garwin, Gladbrook-Reinbeck, North Tama, and Union (Dysart). The District plans this annual event in order to help make young students more aware of their environment.

In addition to seedlings given to the sixth graders, the District also presented 100 white pine seedlings to the Tama County Conservation Board. These seedlings were planted in county parks throughout Tama County.



Left to right: Galen and Jeanne Dells, Phyllis and Tom Holven

Protect Program Eligibility Before Working Wet Areas of Farm

According to USDA, net farm income in 2011 is forecasted to be the highest recorded (adjusted for inflation) since 1974. Fueled by several years of higher grain prices, farmers have been reinvesting some of this increased income into their operations.

As seen in fields this fall,

many producers are choosing to spend this money on installing tile drainage systems. Higher land prices have also caused many landowners to squeeze more production out of the acres they currently farm by removing fence rows, filling low areas and clearing trees.

Conservationists with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) warn producers to be cautious about wetland provisions when installing tile, clearing trees or completing other land altering measures.



Front row Left to right: Rachel Scarf, Hunter Fillon. Back row: Allen Heise, Logan Koester, Emma Knoop, Erin Fillon. Not pictured: Angela Wrage, Tyler Wrage, Tyler Martens

"Farmers and land managers need to protect their farm program benefits by first checking with their local office for a wetland determination prior to working in wet portions of their farms", said Richard Sims, state conservationist for Iowa NRCS.

To maintain eligibility, USDA participants must certify that they have not produced crops on wetlands converted after December

23, 1985, and that they did not convert a wetland to make agricultural production possible after November 28, 1990.

Any activity that alters natural wetlands, making the production of an agricultural commodity or forage crop more possible is prohibited. These conversion activities may include:

- Filling
- Draining (surface ditching or subsurface tiling)

- Land leveling
- Clearing woody vegetation where stumps are removed
- Diverting run-off water from a wetland (i.e. building a diversion)

If found in violation, farmers would lose eligibility for USDA programs, Sims said. For more information or to request a wetland determination, please visit your local USDA Service Center.

What motivates landowners to keep CRP when crop prices rise?

Karen Grimes, IDNR Clean Water Starts With Us newsletter

Terry Carpenter, who runs a cow-calf herd in Lucas County in addition to working 50-60 hours per week off the farm, put about 100 of his 600 acres into CRP to save time and to provide hay for his cattle. Offered what he calls "very attractive rates," Carpenter put in land that was highly erodible and had been in CRP in the past. He mows one-third of it every year for hay. "It reduces the payment for me, but I can always use the hay ground," he says. "I seed it down, save the soil and put up hay."

Mary Haleen has one goal for her land — erosion control. Her family farm in Boone County has several waterways that flow into a tributary of Beaver Creek, and they needed rebuilding. She had land in CRP before, but when it came out, she extended the contract and added more acres to it. "It seemed like a good way to control erosion, build the land up and protect it," she says. She had about 20 acres seeded to a mix of grasses.

Ron Main has mixed motivations. He's a small-scale Wayne County farmer who works full-time and says the cost of machinery is one reason he doesn't farm more ground. He owns

about 300 acres and four years ago enrolled about 100 acres in CRP. "I'm an avid hunter and fisherman," he said. His CRP pulls in a few deer and turkey, plus it guarantees that he has a place to hunt as hunting becomes more restricted on other ground. Changes in land and corn prices have driven local rental rates up, making his current CRP rental rate less competitive. When his contract expires in 2017, he says it will be tempting to go to crops and cash rent, but a renter can't guarantee the same payment for 10 years. Either way, if you own the land, "you have to make it pay for itself," he says.

Carl Joy farms two farms near the Lucas-Wayne county line. "I like hunting birds," he says. "I'm just trying to get a few birds in the neighborhood." Joy recently put 12 acres in CRP and planted it to a high quality mix which includes taller prairie grasses, forbs, flowers and legumes. "It's...better wildlife habitat. It produces more insects for the young birds and it's not so thick so the young birds can't get around in it." On another farm, he'd like to replace the hard-to-farm small point rows on less productive soils with grasses that are easier to work with and might yield some birds, too.

Tama Soil & Water Conservation District Financial Report

Iowa Financial Incentive Program (IFIP) - Cost Share

Original Allocation from the Division of Soil Conservation 7/1/11	\$41,486.18
Spent or obligated for Practices to date	\$9391.81
Balance unspent as of 2/1/12	\$32,094.37

Resource Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP)

REAP Practices	
Original Allocation from Division of Soil Conservation 7/1/11	\$7429.14
Spent or obligated for Practices to date	\$7357.89
Balance unspent as of 2/1/12	\$71.25

REAP Forestry/Native Grasses

Original Allocation from Division of Soil Conservation 7/1/11	\$9905.52
Spent or obligated for Practices to date	
Balance unspent as of 2/1/12	\$0.00

Administrative Funds allocated from Division of Soil Conservation 7/1/11

	\$2000.00
Postage	\$149.09
Commissioner Expenses	\$387.66
Office Expenses	\$169.12
Conservation Districts of Iowa Dues	\$850.00
Balance unspent as of 2/1/12	\$444.13

Conservation Practices Applied to the Land

Brush Management	2 acres
Conservation Cover	932 acres
Contour Buffer Strips	61 acres
Filter Strips	60 acres
Grade Stabilization Structures	4 each
Grassed Waterways	72 acres
Terraces	745 feet
Tree and Shrub Establishment	44 acres
Water & Sediment Control Basins	5 each

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