SUGGESTED PROCEDURES FOR DISTRICTS

Soil Conservation Surveys and Farm Planning.

It has been recognized by the Extension Service and the Soil Conservation Service that a physical inventory of the land is necessary as a basis for the development of a practical and an effective soil conservation plan. The inventory of the land should include soil type, slope, degree of erosion, and present land use.

In the formation of soil conservation districts the question arises as to how the making of soil conservation surveys can be correlated with the development of farm planning and the achievement of soil conservation. It is also recognized that good use can be made of the soil conservation surveys in the educational program if they are available.

With the districts now organized and the areas where interest is being manifest it appears that an average of not more than two survey men, and possibly only one, will be available per district. In making a soil conservation survey of an area three different plans may be followed.

1. Start at one point and survey the entire area as you go. Under average conditions it is estimated that one man can survey about 15 square miles per month, following this plan.
2. Survey minimum block areas of 6 square miles each. It is estimated that one man can survey about 10 square miles per month, following this plan.
3. Survey individual scattered farms. It is estimated that one man can survey about 6 square miles per month under this plan.

From these estimates based on SCS survey progress reports, it is obvious that the amount of area surveyed per man will be influenced considerably by the plan that is followed. These figures are to show relative differences and may vary widely in different areas.

Under present procedures and plans, it is not possible to start the conservation surveys until after the organization of the district is completed. Therefore,

the matter of correlating the conservation surveys with the development of farm planning should be given careful consideration.

Because of the technical and administrative problems involved, the Agronomy Department of Iowa State College and the Soil Conservation Service have reviewed this matter and are suggesting the following points:

1. It is desirable to have a soil conservation survey to use as a basis for farm planning.
2. It will not be possible to prepare soil conservation surveys ahead of individual farm planning if the survey party starts at one point and maps entire area as they go because, for example, farmer-interest seldom develops in this same manner.
3. From a practical and economical standpoint the smallest area to be mapped in any one location should not be less than 6 square miles.
4. It is not economical to map scattered individual farms because of the extra cost and time required in travel and in mapping.
5. Surveys of block areas representative of each problem area in the district should be helpful in developing the educational, as well as other phases of the program in the district.

In view of the foregoing points, it is suggested that the district supervisors and leaders in the district consider the adoption of the (6 square mile block) mapping procedure in order that the conservation surveys of the district might be most useful.

With this procedure, the blocks to be surveyed should be so located that they will be representative of each problem area within the district.

A. In locating the block areas consideration should be given to: the physical characteristics of the soil; economic factors; accessibility to community centers and good roads; and the interest of the farmers in the program.

1. Determine areas in the district that represent different physical characteristics of soil type, slope, degree of erosion, etc., and

locate, in general, the boundaries of these areas on a map of the district.

2. Determine areas in the district that represent different economic conditions (type of farming, tax debt, size of farm, nationalities, amount of terracing, etc.) and locate the boundaries of these areas on a district map.

3. Consider: the accessibility of the block areas to community centers and good roads; and whether or not they are representative of the problem area, as well as well distributed in the district.

4. Determine the interest of the farmers in the block areas in establishing a soil conservation program on their farms. Interest may be measured by practices already adopted on their farms such as acres limed, waterways protected, acres contoured, and good crop rotations being followed.

In some districts, one or more of these factors have already been taken care of through the cooperation and assistance of the county planning committee, the Soil Improvement Association, the extension specialist, SCS technicians, and others.

If this is not the case, the above-mentioned groups and as many farmers as is practical should participate in the consideration and development of these points.

B. Set up a tentative priority of the blocks to be surveyed, taking into account the factors listed under "A." These, and future priorities, should be reviewed by the district supervisors from time to time with the county agent and district conservationist before final approval.

Observation and experience shows that the success of a soil conservation program depends upon the development of local leaders who assume responsibility in their community. In view of the need for the development of local leaders, consideration should be given to the advantages and disadvantages of group meetings

and group planning in block areas where interest has been indicated by most of the farmers. Another question that might be considered is "How much use should be made of a community leader in informing and interesting neighbors in the erosion problems, in methods of control, and in planning for group action?"

In view of these questions, the following points relative to the advantages and disadvantages of developing soil conservation farm plans on a community or small watershed basis are listed:

Advantages:

1. Preliminary educational work to study soil conservation problems and methods of control can be conducted in group meetings.
2. Group study by the farmers in a community or watershed provides for: (a) interchange of ideas; (b) a better knowledge of the other man's problems; and (c) a first-hand evaluation of practices that have been observed or used by neighbors.
3. Develops realization or recognition that erosion control is a community problem and that cooperative action is more effective than individual effort.
4. Group action (a) overcomes reluctance to initiate new practices; (b) reduces neighborhood criticisms; and (c) develops a pride in community achievements.
5. Responsibility for developing community interest and initiative in planning and executing the district program is placed on local leadership.
6. Reduces the cost of surveys and farm planning, thus making it possible for the district supervisors to reach more farmers with the same amount of help.
7. The county agent, together with the extension specialists and others assisting him, may make a greater contribution than through individual farm contacts.
8. The concentration of practices on a block of farms impresses farmers in the district with the practicability of the program.

9. Gives the district supervisors and their assistants closer and more frequent contacts with cooperators, thus providing necessary assistance to assure proper applications of the program.

10. Follow-up work can be carried on more effectively and economically by group meetings and group contacts than is practical with individual scattered farms.

11. District supervisors will develop more interest in the district program by requiring individual farmers to secure the cooperation of their neighbors before approving the area for surveys, or securing help in developing farm plans. This should encourage the development of local leadership.

12. A farmer will take a more active part in developing a plan for his farm - technicians will plan <u>with</u> the farmer rather than plan for him.

13. Makes it possible to better correlate the soil conservation program with the existing agricultural situations in the community.

<u>Disadvantages</u>:

1. May temporarily exclude individual farmers who would make excellent cooperators.

2. May include individual farmers who are not interested and who will refuse to cooperate.

3. In the early stages of the district it does not permit as wide a distribution of cooperators as is possible on an individual-farm basis.

4. Individual farmers who are interested may become discouraged because of their inability to develop interest of others in the community.

5. Many farmers do not like to discuss personal matters in a group meeting.