



A Quality Environment

DICKINSON SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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

AUGUST 2009

Grassed Waterway

The grassed waterway practice is an eligible practice for State Cost Share through the Iowa Financial Incentive Program (IFIP). Soil and Water Conservation District commissioners set local priorities for the use of these funds, and field office staff is available for conservation planning and practice design. Practices installed are subject to maintenance agreements to assure their long-term, successful performance. Cost-share funds are matched by landowners, spent locally to hire private construction contractors, and reinvested into the economies of local communities. In addition to soil conservation and water quality protection, local jobs and businesses benefit from these financial incentives.

A grassed waterway and vegetated filter consists of a natural or constructed vegetated channel that is shaped or graded and vegetated to carry surface water at a non-erosive velocity to a stable outlet that, in turn, spreads the flow of water before the water enters the vegetated filter.

Grassed waterways convey runoff from terraces, diversions, or other water concentrations without causing soil erosion or flooding. Vegetation in the waterway protects the soil from erosion caused by concentrated flows while carrying water down slope. The stable outlet is designed to slow and spread the flow of water before it enters a vegetated filter. Depending upon the selection of vegetation and management practices, grassed waterways can offer diversity and cover for wildlife.

A grassed waterway and vegetated filter are used in areas where added water conveyance capacity and vegetative protection are needed to control soil erosion resulting from concentrated runoff. Such areas commonly include draws and other low-lying areas or outlets for other conservation practices (e.g., diversions and terraces). The minimum capacity of a waterway conveys the peak runoff expected from a storm of 10-

year frequency, 24-hour duration. In some areas, a combination of high peak runoff and steep slopes may cause water velocities that preclude the use of a grassed waterway.

The grassed waterway and vegetated filter can also enhance wildlife objectives, depending on the vegetative species used and management practiced. Consider using native or adapted vegetative species that can provide food and cover for important wildlife. Delay mowing of the waterway and filter area until after the nesting season. Prescribed burning, or other disturbance practice, may be appropriate to enhance wildlife values, but burning must be conducted to avoid critical nesting seasons or to reduce winter cover.

Other practices eligible for State Cost Share / IFIP are: Terraces, Grade Stabilization Structures, Water and Sediment Control Basins, Pasture and Hayland Planting, Filter Strips, Field Borders, Windbreaks and Riparian Forest Buffers.

For more information about State cost-shared practices, please call the NRCS Office at 712-336-3782, Ext. 3.

Silver Lake Watershed Project

The Silver Lake Watershed Project and Coordinator Ryan Ransom have had a busy summer. Watershed sampling has been conducted twice per month since the beginning of May. Periods of consistent rainfall in the months of June and July have led to high levels of suspended solids and nutrient loading in many samples within the watershed, as well as isolated samples producing high bacteria counts. These sample results reflect the erosion and runoff resulting from recent rainfall events.

Silver Lake was chosen for one of six shoreline

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District Mission Statement

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

restoration sites in Dickinson County. This restoration involves using biodegradable, coconut fiber logs to stabilize aquatic vegetation just below the high water mark. 70 feet of shoreline was selected on Mitchell Point, just west of the island on Silver Lake, as a demonstration site for the project. The goal of the project is to establish aquatic vegetation in these areas, which will reduce erosive wave action to the adjacent bank, and filter incoming sediment and runoff. With the help of several volunteers, planting was completed on June 27th. Approximately 150 plugs of aquatic vegetation were installed in the logs, and two 6x10 foot mats of native upland vegetation were placed along the shoreline. Hundreds of small bulrush, burr reed, and water plantain seeds were also scattered in the shallows along the site.

The deadline for new project WRP applications came at the end of July. With the help of NRCS staff from Spirit Lake & Sibley field offices, Ransom was able to submit several applications for new WRP projects in the watershed. Although available funding for new projects in 2009 is very limited, Ransom has been working closely with several landowners on a couple key sites in the watershed which may rank high enough to have a chance of acceptance, and also be of great benefit to Silver Lake.

The Dickinson SWCD was recently notified that two of their applications for EPA 319/WSPF grants were accepted by a selection committee comprised of officials from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), as well as the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS). Grant applications for the Silver Lake and Iowa Great Lakes Watershed Projects were submitted in April, and were two of only six grant applications selected for funding by the committee.

Both grants will provide substantial funding for water quality protection and restoration, and will be geared toward providing producers and landowners incentive payments for a wide variety of conservation practices. Incentive payments will include agricultural practices such as grassed waterways, stream buffers, sediment basins, and conservation tillage; as well as urban practices such as rain gardens, impervious paving, and shoreline restoration. Ransom stated, "The funding made available through the 319 grant program will be a necessary compliment to the first phase of the Silver

Lake Watershed Project, which is focused on wetland restoration. We will now be able to offer producers and homeowners a wider variety of incentives for conservation practices on almost any type of land, and be able to work with producers on programs that might be able to better match the goals of their operation."

Fall is a good time to start planning for a windbreak establishment or restoration

Windbreaks provide many environmental benefits such as: reducing soil losses from wind erosion, protecting growing plants, managing snow distribution, providing shelter for livestock, providing wildlife habitat and improving aesthetics.

Species within the windbreak should be chosen according to soils in the field, climate and purpose of the windbreak. Diversity of species within the windbreak reduces insect or disease problems and improves aesthetics.

Windbreaks should be made up of at least two rows that can include one conifer or shrub row. This does not include field windbreaks.

The distance protected from wind erosion extends from the leeward side of the windbreak out to ten times the twenty-year average height of the tallest row of trees or shrubs.

Site preparation is critical to the success of establishing a windbreak. If the existing cover is sod, alfalfa or weedy crop cover the competing vegetation should be controlled by strip tilling with tillage equipment, chemical treatment of the planting strip or chemical spot treatments or mechanical spot treatments. If the existing cover is not weedy, the trees and shrubs can be planted directly. Fall site preparation is preferred over spring site preparation. A fall seeding of oats may be used after completing fall site preparation if the planting site is prone to soil erosion.

If you are interested in a new windbreak or a windbreak restoration, a number of cost-share programs are available. For more information, please contact the USDA Service Center at 2412 17th Street, Spirit Lake or call 712-336-3782, Ext. 3.

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