

WEST POTT SOILS DISTRICT INFORMATION
Early Days by Cliff Johnson

KEEP!

In December 1942 a soils district program was set up with the assistance of Carl Smith, Extension Soil Conservationist from Ames. An Extension Soils Committee had been named including Guy Moss, W. H. Grote, Ray Barnett, Leo Moran. Gilbert Hadley from S.C.S. and Reuben Berquist, County Extension Director met with the committee. The committee reviewed plans and requirements to form a district. One hundred twenty-five committeemen were appointed to carry petitions to contact farmers for sign up. Meetings were held in Co. Bluffs, Treynor, Neola and Honey Creek to explain the district and sign up. Extremely bad roads and weather slowed up everything. One hundred fifty farmers had signed by April. It was required to have 400 signatures or 20% of the farmers to form a soils district.

The 1943 Extension Soils Committee was Glen Croft, Guy Moss, John Jensen, Ernest Harms, Herbert Vorthmann and Donald Anderson. This committee proceeded to form a soils district and got another 150 signatures. This was the year of the large flood in the Missouri River, covering 52 sections of land with water in April. So the district sign up was again delayed.

On January 28th, 1944, a total of 463 farmers had signed petitions to form a soils district. The petitions were submitted to the State Soils Conservation Committee and a public hearing was held February 17th. One hundred farmers were present for the hearing. A soils district referendum was held in March with 134 voters favoring the district and 8 opposed.

Soils District Commissioners were then elected as follows:

Ernest Harms	6 year term
Glen Croft	4 year term
Don Anderson	2 year term

They submitted a request to the Secretary of State to form a soils district in West Pottawattamie County. The request was granted, effective April 28th, 1944.

A meeting of the Commissioners was held in April and Harms was elected Chairman and Clifford Johnson was elected Secretary. Walter Weiss of S.C.S. met with the commissioners.

One of the items of business was to list soils and water conservation problems and needs for the county. Memorandums of Understanding and Cooperation were approved with the U.S.D.A. and Iowa Agricultural Extension Service.

Some 1944 activities included purchase of Fischer brand Brome Grass to distribute in the county. Also 16 small plots of Reeds Canary grass were started. Contouring and terracing were stressed. Developing of conservation group by special drainage areas was started.

By November 1944 the following watershed groups had been set up.

1. Underwood
2. Silver Creek - Eastside
3. Frohardt Area
4. Keg Creek near Quick
5. Keg Creek East side
6. Silver Creek, West side

These were followed by No. 7 Crescent township and No. 8 Neola townships.

An essay contest and program on soils was started for rural schools and high schools.

Richard Bullard was named Soil Conservationist for the district in September 1944.

The West Pottawattamie Soils District placed 1st place in Iowa in the Goodyear Conservation contest in 1948 and won a trip to Litchfield park in Arizona . Those awarded the trip were Ernest Harms, Don Anderson, W. C. Strohbehn, Fred Hopp, Louie Fahrenkrog, Harvey Hansen and Clifford Johnson.

Some early programs and contests sponsored by the district were contour corn yield contest, 4-H soil conservation programs, Jr. Cattle Feeders, pasture-grain contests and schools essay contests.