



Including the SWCD districts of Crawford, Shelby, East Pottawattamie, Harrison and West Pottawattamie

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Biologist helps farmers sort program options

by Joyce Bohner

A few years back, the Soil Conservation Service offices became the Natural Resources Conservation Service offices. The name change also meant a change in focus for the government offices.

Instead of concentrating solely on conserving the soil, the service was also to consider the needs of wildlife and other natural resources.

All kinds of new programs were designed to help with this transition and give private landowners options that would keep the land profitable and still preserve the native plants and animals. A whole alphabet soup of CP21, CP22, CP4D, CP15 and a lot more programs emerged.

The problem arose in keeping the programs straight and having the expertise to know what would work best in a given situation.

The NRCS staff was already busy trying to keep up with terracing, farm plans and compliance. Many field offices had no staff with any direct expertise in the area of wildlife.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) had some expertise in the area, but because of increased demands from public lands, the staff time devoted to private landowners had decreased to only 10 percent in recent years.

The solution: a new partnership between NRCS, DNR and non-government organizations with an interest in wildlife habitat such as Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited and the National Wildlife Turkey Federation.

The result: Angi Hanson a private lands biologist who will serve a 20 county area assisting private landowners and advising them of their program options.

Hanson is one of two biologists hired in the experimental program. The other one is Chris LaRue headquartered in Fort Dodge.

Hanson is located in Atlantic, but most of her time is spent visiting other counties, looking over private lands and giving a farmer options. If the program is successful, three more wildlife biologists will be hired, one for each area office and 20 private

land wildlife technicians, four for each region will be hired.

Hanson is enthusiastic about the partnership and is hopeful she and her colleagues will be able to provide a valuable service. She especially enjoys the partnership aspect of the program, with many groups working together toward a common goal.

She said, "Our main goal is to provide more wildlife habitat on private lands. We have to pool our resources to do that effectively."

Hanson is a native of Red Oak, Iowa. She graduated from the University of Dubuque with a degree in environmental science and a minor in biology.

She served as a naturalist in

Mills and Pottawattamie County and was working in Fremont County when a friend told her about the new position becoming available.

Hanson started the post in February. It means a lot of driving for her. She and her husband farm south of Stanton, but she calls it a "nice country drive to Atlantic." Since her work keeps her on the road anyway, she doesn't mind the commute.

Hanson's enjoyment of her position is evident when watching her work. As she meets with East Pottawattamie County farmer Cletis Gress, her face and expression becomes animated.

As she views what looks to most like an overgrown waste-

land, one can almost see her mind transforming it into a shallow pond where ducks and geese can swim and other animals can come for a drink.

Almost immediately she sees a possibility for a CP9 (shallow water area). Under this program, Gress would get paid for land under the Conservation Reserve Program, plus get cost-share for the work involved in installing and maintaining the practice.

If all is approved, in the end the farmer will get a reasonable return on land that was a problem area anyway and wildlife in the area get a new habitat.

Everyone would be happy and that's what Hanson likes to see.

"The more incentives we can provide for landowners, the better," she said.

Hanson said the partnership hopes to provide increased cost-share, free or low price use of equipment such as no-till drills and free or reduced prices on seeds such as native prairie grasses.

The continuous sign-up programs for buffer and filter strips provide excellent opportunities for farmers to provide wildlife habitat and still get a good return, Hanson believes.

She wants to make sure, not only that the options are there, but that everyone knows what the options are and has access to everything needed to install those options on their private lands.



Cooperative program provides assistance

Angi Hanson is the new private lands biologist for a 20 county area in western Iowa. The program is designed to help farmers sort out their program options when considering setting-aside land as a wildlife habitat. In photo above, Hanson talks with Cletis Gress about the possibility of a CRP wetland on a patch of his land in Pottawattamie County. In photo at left, she discusses a similar program with Greg Mertz for his land. Hanson makes field visits to determine what program the land might be suited for. She tries to offer the farmer several options if she can.

New soil pit offers teaching tool

by Joyce Bohnker

Is good black soil really better for growing crops? How deep do corn and soybean roots really go? How do earthworms help aerate the soil? These are all questions children and teenagers who are studying botany have.

We can all tell them the answers, but any teacher can tell you the best way for students to learn is if you can show them.

Vocational agriculture teachers try to demonstrate many of these answers through the use of soil pits. These trenches, dug deep into the earth, can allow students to see the different layers of soil and see a few of the root systems of plants growing next to the pit.

The problem with most soil pits, however, is that within hours of exposing the deep underground to air and sunlight, the roots die, the earthworms burrow elsewhere and most of the teaching capacity of the pit is lost.

The Wallace Research Farm on the eastern edge of Pottawattamie County has solved that problem with a permanent soil pit.

Bernie Havlovic, superintendent of the farm got together with Shaun Shouse, a field specialist in ag engineering from the Area Extension Office and Brian Buzzel, a field lab technician at the farm, to design and implement a soil pit that could be a permanent teaching tool to visitors at the farm.

The materials for the pit were provided by a Community Education Grant put together by the East Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District. The grant money covered the materials and extra labor needed for the project.

The challenge was to allow visitors and students to see the soil and root systems without destroying them. Shouse designed a plexiglass system against the walls of the pit. The air tight glass allows people to view the earthworm tunnels and root systems without exposing the soil to air.

Of course a certain amount of light is required to allow visitors to see anything. To minimize the amount of damaging sunlight, the pit is kept covered. The cover is removed only when visitors are actually using the soil pit.

Havlovic said, "We hoped we'd see some earthworms working the soil. Actually one of the first indications of wildlife we saw was a striped gopher burrow."

Indeed the little tunnel runs right next to the plexiglass. Although not the animals they'd hoped for, the burrow does give visitors a rare peak at the inside of one of these creature's remarkable tunnel systems.

Havlovic is busy planning how to make the best use of his permanent pit. He is planning on planting a variety of plants around the edge.

In addition to showing students the depth and structure of corn and soybean roots, he may also plant some native grasses to show the extensive root system these grasses develop. This may better illustrate to students and adults alike why these grasses hold the soil and help filter out impurities.

"Our intent is to show soil as a living thing," Havlovic said. "There is definitely life underground. We also hope to show a little about moisture, where it is

and how it filters down into the subsoil."

He said students who have used the pit so far have often expressed surprise at the depth roots can reach.

The pit was finished last July and has been a popular addition to the farm ever since. It's about five feet deep, five feet wide and ten feet long. It has been utilized for an agriculture careers day and other student visits to the farm. Adult visitors, too have enjoyed looking at the earthworm's view of the soil.

Anyone wishing to tour the farm and see the soil pit, should first call to make sure someone will be available to open the pit for them.

Intensive cropping requires alternatives

by Greg Mathis,

East Pottawattamie District Conservationist

How did this intensive cropping system of corn one year and soybeans the next get started here in the Midwest?

We know that it didn't happen overnight. Corn, hay and pasture gradually relinquished its hold on the land as cattle and hogs left the open pastures and feedlots. The need for crops that could be sold for cash became the norm.

Corn could still meet that need, but hay and pasture would not. Someone or some company came up with the soybean plant that could provide multitudes of by-products.

Perhaps more importantly, what effects has this intensive cropping had on the land itself? Fertilizer needs increased in order to maintain high yields. Additional weed pressure has increased the need for herbicide. Fewer pieces of equipment are required for growing two crops where livestock is not required. But the biggest affect that corn/soybean rotation has had on the land is that more of that life-giving brown soil is left susceptible to the eroding force of raindrops for longer periods of time.

A new need for something to cover the ground should be apparent. Crop residue will help save your valuable topsoil from raindrop erosion and rill erosion. Intensive cropping requires some intensive tillage management as well.

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The new soil pit at the Wallace Research farm will be a valuable teaching tool. The top photo shows the entrance to the pit. In lower photo, Bernie Havlovic points out the root structures visible through the plexiglass walls.

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Essay contest winner announced

"When the well's dry, we know the worth of water." Benjamin Franklin

The East Pottawattamie Soil & Water Conservation District held its essay contest which promotes soil and water conservation to high school students.

This year's theme is "Community Waters." The theme focuses on the need to join together in community efforts to keep our waters clean and healthy. To accomplish this task, attention must be given to show how each community cares for its land. Keeping community waters clean and plentiful requires everyone to make an effort. This includes individuals from rural communities to those living in the suburbs to the dwellers of the big cities. The most important concept is the need for all people, no matter where they live, to practice good soil and water stewardship. Water is a shared resource.

Fifty percent of the judging criteria consisted of the effectiveness of the message as it pertains to the theme. Twenty-five percent consideration is given to originality. The other twenty-five percent is based on content. This year the participants were high school students from AvoHa-Shelby-Tenat.

The prize money and certificates are made possible through donated funds. First place receives \$25, second place receives \$15, and third place receives \$10. The winners were: first place: Renae Kroll; second place: Tiffany Nielsen and third place: Kurt Boettger. Congratulations to the winners and thank you to all who participated.

The District looks forward to holding the essay contest again next year.

The following is the winning essay by Renae Kroll of Shelby. She is the daughter of Ron and Sheila Kroll and is a senior at A-H-S-T High School. Her teacher is Mr. Hardisty:

"Everyday millions of people go to their sinks and turn on their chrome faucets. Water automatically begins streaming steadily out. Yet, do any of these

people stop to think about where this water is coming from?

Viewed from space, the Earth appears to be a blue and white sphere - blue from water and white from water vapor. Water makes up approximately 70 percent of Earth. However, less than 2 percent is fresh, usable water. This small amount keeps all the world's agricultural, manufacturing, community and personal household needs operating.

Water conservation needs to be stressed if we want to continue having a steady stream of water running from our faucets.

Every living organism needs water to survive. The earliest civilizations thrived where there was a constant water supply. Many of them built their homes near large lakes or rivers. When their water supply was depleted, overused, or became scarce, they often suffered greatly or came close to extinction. In the near future, there is the possibility that we will see water rationing or even limitations to when water can be used. However, we should also understand that water is abundant; it just isn't in the right places at the right times. The greatest majority of our water is frozen in glaciers or full of salt in our world's oceans. Of the remaining water, most exists as water vapor; this leaves very little for human use and consumption.

When we turn on our faucets, we generally don't think twice about where water comes from. Most people don't realize the long path that the water takes prior to entering our homes.

Before fresh water enters our homes, it endures a lengthy sanitation, filtering, and treatment process. Then, the water travels through miles and miles of pipes and tunnels.

Upon entering our homes, much of this water winds up flowing down sink drains unused.

Wasting precious fresh water is becoming a significant problem in many homes across the world. Honestly, think about how many times you turn on a hot water faucet and wait for the water to

get hot before using it. The initial blast of cold water rushes out of the faucet, and most of the time you just watch it flow down the drain. Now, think about how much water is being wasted by doing this. The largest percent of our freshwater is wasted even before being put to use.

Each of us can take simple household chores and turn them into water conservation projects. For instance, when brushing your teeth turn off the water faucet until you are ready to use it. One can save one half gallon of water per time brushing, if he or she turns off the water. Also, wait to turn on a dishwasher until there is a full load of dirty dishes. Instead of using a high-powered sprayer to get stuck-on food off of dishes, scrape the dishes with a scrub brush before putting them in the dishwasher. Likewise, most dishwashers have a water saving cycle. Using this cycle each time you run your dishwasher can save gallons of water.

Another simple conservation technique that can be used in the kitchen is not to run water continuously when washing dishes by hand. To rinse dishes, simply fill the empty side of the sink half full and use that water to rinse all of your dishes. These elementary procedures can insure that you are doing your part to conserve water. From the beginning of time, water has been important to human survival. We use water for food, cleaning, personal care, and manufacturing. Without an adequate water supply, none of these would exist. Humans would have to search for new water sources or find new techniques for purifying water.

Both of these would be very costly. Each and every one of us can do a part to insure that water will be plentiful for generations to come. Water conservation is the key to keeping a healthy and plentiful supply of water."



It's the season. For native grass seedings that is. A truck delivers a stack of native grass seed to the East Pottawattamie NRCS office in Oakland. The mixture was claimed by area farmers to plant in some of their CRP acres or other ground



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Pottawattamie County Supervisor candidates respond to questions

On Tuesday June 6, voters will go to the polls in Iowa's primary elections. Pottawattamie County voters will have the opportunity to select their candidates for County Supervisor.

A field of nine men have declared their candidacy for the two open positions on the board. There are eight Republicans seeking to be on the fall ballot and one Democrat who is running unopposed for his party's nomination.

The Quad County Conservation News asked all nine candidates to fill out a questionnaire and submit a photo. The following candidates responded to our request:

Richard N. Baber



Name: Richard N. Baber, Council Bluffs.

Education: Lamoni, Iowa Public School, graduated Graceland College in Lamoni, Iowa.

Family: married to wife, Betty, since 1958; two grown children and six grandchildren.

Party affiliation: Republican.

Organizations and activities: Past president Missouri Valley

Professional Society. Member Council Bluffs Chamber of Commerce.

Why are you running for Supervisor? To introduce some new ideas to county government, to make it more efficient and responsive to the county taxpayer. We need better communication throughout the departments.

What role do you feel the county should play in encouraging soil and water conservation and wildlife habitat? We need to ensure the conservation practices should continue. We need to improve rural water development to attract economic development and maintain the habitat for wildlife. I think there should be a study made to explore establishing a Southwest Iowa Reservoir somewhere along the West Nishnabotna River to keep waters from flooding.

What issues do you believe will be most important to Pottawattamie County voters in the next four years? Property tax relief for the smaller communities in the county and establishing new, smaller businesses for manufacturing and warehousing. We also need to maintain infrastructure such as the county road system. We also need to help communities with their own infrastructure such as water systems and storm sewers.

Stan Grote

Name: Stanley H. Grote, Council Bluffs.

Education: Iowa State University. B.S. with a minor in agronomy.

Family: Wife, Donna. Married 48 years with four children and

nine grandchildren.

Party affiliation: Republican



Organizations and activities:

United States Army Reserve (retired after 30 years.) Rotary Club, Pottawattamie County Empowerment Board (chairman), Council Bluffs Health Care Clinic board.

Why are you running for Supervisor? I am currently a member of the board and will be completing my eighth year this year. I enjoy the challenges. We have a lot of activity in this county and I would like to see our current plans accomplished.

What role do you feel the county should play in encouraging soil and water conservation and wildlife habitat? We have a very active role in these areas. 15 percent of our optional sales tax revenue goes to these activities. We are a very active member in the Hungry Canyons Alliance. Our county was instrumental in the creation of this alliance and we, and I, went to Washington, D.C. on several occasions to secure Federal funding. Our Hitchcock Nature Area is of great pride to us and the citizens of the county. Our naturalist is very active in the school and other interested groups. We created a wildlife fishing area near Carson. This was a cooperative activity with the Conservation Commission and the County Road Department. We look forward to working with the Loess Hills Alliance to preserve selected

and unique areas of the Loess Hills.

What issues do you believe will be important to the county in next four years? Managing our growth will be an issue, how to continue to grow and still maintain our quality of life. Managing the continuing urbanization of the county and still recognize the rural heritage. Educating and involving urban dwellers as to the necessity and enjoyment of our outdoor and wildlife activities.

Melvyn Houser

Name: Melvyn Houser, Carson.

Education: Carson-Macedonia High School, three years at Iowa State University, class of 1968.

Family: Married to wife, LaRue, for 26 years. Three sons, Adam, Jake and Michael. Farms with father and two brothers on a fourth generation farm in Grove Township.

Party affiliation: Republican.

Organizations and activities: Nine years of the Carson-Macedonia Board of Education, Carson United Methodist Church Finance Committee, administrative council and currently serving as director of the Bell Choir.

Why are you running for Supervisor? Past experiences on boards proved fulfilling. Now expanding that role. I also enjoy working with and for people.

What role do you feel the county should play in encouraging soil and water conservation and wildlife habitat? Work closely with the NRCS and DNR to set an example with Roadside Management and plant native grasses and forbs. Always be aware of any environmental impact of any development whether it be public lands or private. "Even though a farmer owns the land, he does not own the dirt or the water or the air. It is everyone's responsibility to be good stewards."

What issues do you believe will be most important to county voters in the next four years? Tax abatements, property taxes, mental health funding, rural zoning (urban sprawl, hog confinements, etc.) and economic development.

Delbert King



Name: Delbert King, Hancock School

Education: 12 years Hancock School

Family: Wife, Dorothy. Three sons and nine grandchildren. Foster parents for the past 16 years.

Party affiliation: Republican party.

Organization and activities: Chairman of the administrative Board of Hancock United Methodist Church; Navy veteran, Adjutant Hancock Legion Post 720; Treasurer Hancock Alumni; Past president of the East Pottawattamie Farm Bureau; member of the Knights of Pythias Lodge.

Why are you running for Supervisor?

1. To encourage economic development.
2. Accountability on how all tax dollars are spent.
3. Communication between the county supervisors and departments.
4. Equal and fair treatment of all residents of the county.

What role do you feel the county should play in encouraging soil and water conservation and wildlife habitat? The county should work to be an advocate for the protector of natural resources and wildlife and to keep funding conservation and wildlife projects.

What issues do you believe will be most important to the county in the next four years?

1. Urban Expansion
2. Economic development
3. Water quality.

Ken Ledvina

Name: Ken Ledvina, Avoca

Education: BS in ag education and BS in dairy science from Iowa State University.

Family: Married to wife, Marcia, for 16 years no children.

Party affiliation: Republican

Organizations and activities: County Republican party activist for the last eight years. Worked

(Continued on next page)



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Supervisor candidates answer questions, continued

(Continued from previous page)

for Congressman Ganske's campaign for the past three elections; getting sign locations, helping organize local activities, also helped with all local and national candidates by finding sign locations for them. Member of Grace Baptist Church in Harlan and a member of the Church Trustee Board, I am currently working full time as an auto-diesel mechanic Shelby.



Why are you running for Supervisor? I believe that it is important to have representation from all areas and have individuals who are responsive to the people that elect them.

What role do you feel the county should play in encouraging soil and water conservation and wildlife habitat? The county board needs to have a plan in place that will protect environmentally sensitive areas while being careful to protect the rights of property owners, as well as being sure that tax dollars that are collected for conservation resources are spent on those resources.

What issues do you believe will be most important to county voters in the next four years? Two items come to mind immediately: How the board will work to preserve the Loess Hills area and how the board will deal with the use of gaming funds to give true property tax relief.

Dan Newby

Name: Dan Newby, Council Bluffs.

Education: Bachelor of Arts in Education from the University of Northern Iowa.

Family: Single, immediate family lives out of state.

Party affiliation: Republican

Organizations and activities: Dare instructor, Police Benevolent Association, Police Newsletter Cartoonist, Police Mobile Video Instructor, Adopt-a-Highway trash pick-up volunteer, Jaycee Underprivileged children's Christmas spree volunteer, Chanticleer Theater volunteer usher.

Why are you running for Supervisor? My goal as Supervisor would be bring back "Fiscal Responsibility" to the

county's daily operations. This would also include restoring honesty and integrity back into county government. Another goal is to involve more residents in county government by implementing some night meetings, thus allowing people who work during the day to be able to attend without having to take time off from work.

What role do you feel the county should play in encouraging soil and water conservation and wildlife habitat? Coordination of natural resource programs needs to occur between Pottawattamie County, the state of Iowa and cities within our county. The Board of Supervisors should undertake the role of integrating these programs across the governmental units, so that the most benefit can be gained by all involved. These resources have to be protected now in order to avoid ecological problems in the future that may never be corrected. For example once corporate hog lot waste reaches a certain point, that area's land and water can never be restored to the original pristine condition. Most individual landowners will show pride in their land, whereas some corporate hog farms will let bottom-line profits outweigh environmental concerns. The board must be involved in what citizens are doing, and not doing, to protect resources that may affect surrounding areas and individuals.

What issues do you believe will be most important to county voters in the next four years? Tax dollar utilization will still remain the largest concern. This takes the form of how the revenues are being raised, spent and what the county is doing to generate other sources of income. Voters want to be able to see that they

are getting a favorable return on their investment of tax dollars. The Board of Supervisors should explore grant options from the State and Federal programs to further supplement these tax revenues. Finally, Pottawattamie County needs to aggressively market its location and service to potential investors and businesses in order to continue economic expansion.

Abe Parkins

Name: Abe Parkins, Council Bluffs.

Family: wife and daughter, age 2.

Party affiliation: Republican.

Organizations: Church

Why are you running for Supervisor? To correct many problems at the courthouse over taxation and etc. Spending too much money.

What role do you feel the county should play in encouraging soil and water conservation and wildlife habitat? The Feds are doing fine.

What issues will be important in the next four years? Taxes are too high. Taylor County costs \$7.85 per acre for farm taxes. Pott is \$20.

Pat McGlade



Name: Pat McGlade, Council Bluffs.

Education: 1978 grad of ALHS, classes at IWCC in philosophy, psyc, GM College

of Business Management.

Family: Married, three children.

Party affiliation: Republican.

Organizations and activities: Youth coach for 22 years.

Why are you running for Supervisor? To help the county in enticing business to move to our county. This will help create good-paying jobs and help lessen residential tax burden.

What role do you feel the county should play in encouraging soil and water conservation and wildlife habitat? It should be one of the front-runners in this area because of the adverse effect it will have on everything else that we do.

What issues do you believe will be most important to county voters in the next four years? Expanding our tax base would be my number one priority, then improvement of county roads and drainage ditches would be number two.

Steven Gorman

Name: Steven Frances Gorman, Council Bluffs.

Education: Currently attending the undergraduate program at IWCC. 1981 graduate of Saint Alberts High School in Council Bluffs.

Family: My wife, Chris Gorman, is a teacher in the Council Bluffs school system. She is working on a Masters Program at UNO. We have two children, Jonathan is none years old and in third grade. Our daughter, Shea, is four years old.

Organizations and activities: Licensed electrical journeyman, retired Council Bluffs fire fighter, licensed EMT and volunteer fire fighter for the Shelby community for three years. Member of the Iowa

Association of Fire Fighters, member of the local 15, International Fire Fighters Union; YMCA volunteer coach of youth sports and Democrat precinct captain for Garner Twp.

Why are you running for Supervisor? I am running for the Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors because I truly enjoy public service. I have been retired, due to an injury, from the Council Bluffs Fire Department. I feel that I have a lot to offer our county and the ability to give full time to the board.

What role do you feel the county should play in encouraging soil and water conservation and wildlife habitat? I feel that conservation is the number one priority. This is where we live, work and play. It is our responsibility as citizens to preserve and protect our county for our children and their children. I support shelter belts, run off, set aside and no-till. I hope to be a leader who will generate revenue to support and help farmers with these programs.

What issues do you believe will be important to county voters in the next four years? First and foremost will wages. The wages of Pottawattamie lag behind most counties within the state. This can only be accomplished with new and diverse industry. The epidemic problems surrounding methamphetamines. Our county roads and bridges need constant attention. The millions of dollars of new construction in the county is not being properly inspected. Currently only wells and septic systems are being inspected. I believe we need to look into adopting state building codes as a minimum to protect and better serve the consumers of our county.



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Enjoys time on SWCD board

Williams learns from experiences as bottom ground farmer, commissioner

by Joyce Bohnker

As riders on the famous bike ride across Iowa soon find out, western Iowa is generally pretty hilly. It doesn't take long to skim across the flat Missouri River bottom ground, but pretty soon your climbing some pretty steep hills.

That is the ground most farmers in the Quad-County area know, the hills requiring terraces, buffer strips, no-till and lots of visits to the NRCS office for advice and cost-share. But there are a few farmers in eastern Pottawattamie and eastern Harrison County that farm only the flat bottom ground.

Randy Williams used to be such a farmer. Although he now farms some land in the hills too, when he first started farming he knew only his father's bottom-land ground. So it seems strange that this stranger to terraces became a Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner.

"When I first started on the board six years ago, I wasn't really familiar with a lot of the programs," he said.

Williams spent a few years as a trucker before taking over the operation of his father's farm in 1982.

"I always wanted to farm," he said. "I loved it growing up, but I wasn't old enough when my Dad first retired in 1977. I was only 16."

By 1982 he was ready for the challenge of farming, and of

course during the early '80s, farming was about as challenging as it gets.

He was fortunate enough to pick up some good used equipment from farmers going out of business and he was then able to pick up some rented ground and expand his operation.

When then District Conservationist Lyle Petersen asked him if he would consider running for a term as SWCD Commissioner in 1994, Williams decided to give it a try.

Now half of the land Williams farms is in the hills and he has had terraces, waterways and contour buffer strips installed. But in 1994 he felt pretty green. "I hadn't utilized the service prior to being a commissioner. I've learned a lot being on the board and I've enjoyed it," he said.

However, he is not planning to seek another term on the board. "I still do some trucking with my younger brother and with farming and trucking, it's just too much," he said.

Williams believes the work of the SWCD and the Natural Resources Conservation Service is important. He has also watched it expand into the bottom ground in recent years with programs such as the filter strips along the creeks and rivers and wetland protection areas.

He has seen the value of being able to provide more cost-share funds to farmers through the

SWCD's share of the Pottawattamie County Local Option Sales Tax (LOST).

"It has been quite a change. At first, we had only x number of dollars available for terraces. Now LOST gives us so much more money. We have been able to do a lot of conservation projects with that money," he said.

He saw his main responsibility as a commissioner was to oversee the allocation of that money. "We want to see it go for the best projects we could. Of course, most of it went to terraces, but we also put in a few structures (dams), but they are more difficult to get through," he said.

Another big area of concern in West Pottawattamie County is the encroachment of the city on to what was once farmland. Council Bluffs has been expanding and land developers have been buying up whole farms to turn into housing tracts and businesses.

"The developers come to us and want to take out all the terraces. We make them have a full soil control plan in place and make them pay back the entire amount of cost-share if the 20-year maintenance agreement is still in place," he said.

Williams said the commissioners understand that terraces may not fit into a housing developers plan, but erosion control is as important in urban areas as in rural areas. It was for this reason they decided not to prorate the cost-share money owed by looking at how many years were left of the 20 year contract.

He said being on the board has given him a new appreciation for the wheels and cogs of government work. "I can see all the channels a project has to go through. It's not just a matter of wanting to do something. It has

to go through the proper procedure."

Williams will not be on the November ballot, but he hopes someone will step up to take his place.

He said, "I'm glad I had the opportunity to do it. I understand how the SWCD and NRCS work and all the good they're doing for the county. I would encourage someone to run for the position."



Randy Williams on his home farm near the Missouri River.

Vorthmann is West Pott SWCD scholarship recipient for 2000

Mitchell Vorthmann of rural Council Bluffs was selected by the West Pottawattamie SWCD Commissioners as their scholarship recipient. Mitchell will graduate from Treynor High School this May and plans to attend Iowa State University this fall. "Because I love animals dearly, I have decided that I want to become a veterinarian," states Mitchell.

Mitchell has been involved in numerous activities throughout his high school years. He was in band, jazz band, wrestling, and golf. He was a member of Fellowship of Christian Athletes, National Honor Society, and an American Legion Boys Stater. Mitchell's hobbies include hunting, fishing, and playing with animals.

Mitchell's career goals are to finish college with high marks and then practice veterinary medicine. He would like to open a clinic near his hometown in order to be near his family. Mitchell states, "I have wanted

to be a veterinarian for as long as I can remember. I have always loved animals and have wanted to help them since I was in elementary school." In addition to this career, Mitchell would also like to go into politics and try to help the country with the issues it faces.

"Lately I decided I also wanted to go into politics because many politicians are corrupt. The country needs a 'regular guy' with good morals to make an impact on life," says Mitchell. Mitchell is the son of Stanley Vorthmann and the late Virginia Vorthmann. Mitchell has one brother and three sisters.

Mitchell will receive a \$100 check from the District to be used for college.

His scholarship application will be submitted to the Conservation Districts of Iowa Regional Director. The Regional Director will choose one application from approximately 20.

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Jensen learns about FSA from the "inside"

by Joyce Bohnker

For most of her adult life Marian Jensen has been a full-time farmer's wife. Before that, she was a farmer's daughter.

As a true partner in her husband's farming operation, she was very familiar with the Farm Service Agency. "I would walk in, sign my LDP (Loan Deficiency Payment) and ask 'where's my money?'" she remembers.

Then just about a year ago, Jensen, who farms near Underwood, got to see a whole other side to the FSA office- the inside.

She became a temporary part-time employee at the FSA office. "I decided to apply for the position because it was part-time and temporary. We liked the idea of some extra money coming in, but we didn't know if I could be gone from the farm," she said.

Jensen and her husband, Robert M. Jensen, have a farming operation north of Underwood. They plant the traditional row crops of corn and soybeans, plus they plant hay, keep a cow/calf herd and run a hog farrowing operation.

Before they were married, she

had worked at an abstract office in Council Bluffs. But it wasn't too long after her marriage, that she became a full-time farmer's wife and an active partner in the farming activities.

"I took over the hog farrowing operation," she said. "And over the years, I've incorporated chemicals and done a lot of things on the farm"

As the Jensen farm operation began switching to no-till, it became a little less labor intensive. But she still kept things moving from farm to farm, delivering supplies, running errands and keeping up with the hog farrowing.

Even after the birth of their son, 16 years ago, Jensen remained active in the farming operation. "He's a real farm type kid," she said. "We put the car seat in the combine and went to the field."

But now that their son is 16, he is able to help his dad on the farm, freeing Mom to go to town to work.

Jensen has found it a far different experience to be on the other side of the counter. "I had no idea of all the checking, the re-checking, the reports and the paperwork involved," she said.

She added, "Working at the FSA has really given me a whole new appreciation of government office workers, we work with the NRCS, the district office, the state office, the whole structure."

As a part-time worker, Jensen has a variety of duties at the FSA. She says she does "whatever they ask me to do." It generally involves a lot of checking on the LDPs, mailing, filing, helping people at the counter and answering phones.

One day Jensen saw a flyer seeking entries for an FSA photo contest. She thought it would be fun to enter. "I take pictures all the time, but I never do anything with them," she said.

She went through her albums at home and then brought a few of her photos to work. Office workers helped her choose a couple of photos to enter in the different categories.

To her great surprise, she won three second place awards and one first place award. Her first place award was in the farming operations category. It was entitled "First Day of Harvest" and showed her husband and son harvesting corn on a fall

morning.

Winning the photo contest was a unique bonus to working at the FSA, but Jensen has found other rewards as well.

She enjoys the camaraderie between the FSA staff and NRCS staff who actually have to share office space in the West Pottawattamie office in Council Bluffs.

"We answer each other's phones when necessary. Go to the counter and help each other. From what I've heard, I believe we're unique in that. It's not like any other office I've heard of and since we've doubled the staff at the FSA, the NRCS has had to be very compromising."

Working with the conservation staff has been made easier by Jensen's own familiarity with conservation practices. She and

her husband have long been practicing conservationists, terracing their farm, doing no-till and whatever else was necessary to conserve the soil.

Her husband has served as an assistant Soil and Water District Commissioner.

Jensen also believes her experience on the farm helps her with her work and dealing with the FSA customers.

"I was really surprised by how many of them I knew already," she said. "I think some of the farmers appreciated that I knew their side."

Jensen doesn't know how long her position will last, but she says she will always appreciate how much she has learned about the government programs during her tenure.



Marian Jensen

West Pottawattamie SWCD financial report, 1998

1-M Operating Budget FY98

	(7-1-97 to 6-30-98)
Allocation (7/97)	\$2,500
Supplemental Allocations	\$2,200.00
Commissioners' Travel	\$1,183.53
Office Supplies, Expenses, Dues	\$2,124.88
Recalled by DSC	\$1,391.59
Balance Unobligated 6/30/98	\$0.00

3-M Cost-Share Budgets FY98

	(7-1-97 to 6-30-98)
97-98 Vol. IFIP	
Allocation (7/97)	\$41,035.00
Supplemental Allocation	\$52,988.00
Obligated/Completed Projects	\$92,641.25
Recalled by DSC	\$0.00
Balance Unobligated 6/30/98	\$1,381.75

96-97 Vol. IFIP (7-1-96 to 6-30-98)

Allocation (7/96)	\$41,035.00
Supplemental Allocation	\$97,463.00
Obligated/Completed Projects	\$55.41
Recalled by DSC	\$18,319.52
Balance Unobligated 6/30/98	\$4,023.07

95-96 Vol. IFIP (7-1-95 to 6-30-98)

Allocation (7/95)	\$40,760.00
Supplemental Allocations	\$64,770.00
Obligated/Completed Projects	\$100,762.38
Recalled by DSC	\$2,664.87
Balance Unobligated 6/30/98	\$2,102.75

94-95 Vol. IFIP (7-1-94 to 6-30-98)

Allocation (7/94)	\$37,585.00
Supplemental Allocation	\$69,937.00
Obligated/Completed Projects	\$100,055.00
Recalled by DSC	\$7,467.00
Balance Unobligated 6/30/98	\$0.00

REAP Cost-Share Budgets FY 98

Practices	(7-1-97 to 6-30-98)
Allocation (7/97)	\$8,015.00
Completed Terrace Projects	\$6,188.50
Comp. Tree Plantings/Windbreaks	\$700.00
Recalled by DSC	\$1,126.50
Balance Unobligated 6/30/98	\$0.00

Forestry/Native Grasses (7-1-97 to 6-30-98)

Allocation (7/97)	\$1,808.50
Completed Tree Plantings (612)	\$1,315.32
Completed Windbreaks (380)	\$0.00
Recalled by DSC	\$493.18
Balance Unobligated 6/30/98	\$0.00

Other State Cost-Share Budgets

No-Interest Loan Program	(1-1-98 to 12-31-98)
Allocation (5/98)	\$5,500.00
Obligated/Completed Projects	\$0.00
Balance Unobligated 12/31/98	\$9,309.80

County Cost-Share Budgets

Pottawattamie County Local Option

Sales Tax (L.O.S.T.) Fund (1-1-98 to 12-31-98)

Balance 1/1/98	\$109,412.50
Allocations	\$101,324.59
General	\$19,800.50
Summer Terraces	\$20,532.00
Terrace Repair	\$20,529.39
Structure(s)	\$-19,480.50
Office Equipment	\$0.00
Balance Unobligated 12/31/98	\$169,355.70

Summary of 1998 Projects

Projects (1/1/98 to 12/31/98)	Number	Amount	Unit
No-Till	--	\$2,000	acres
State Cost-Share Terraces	--	\$187,516	Feet
State No-Interest Loans	--	\$10,375	Feet
County Cost-Share Terraces	--	\$42,325	Feet
County Cost-Share Repairs	527	--	Breaks
County Cost-Share Structures	1	\$4,850	\$
County Structure Maintenance	1	\$130	\$
Federal Cost-Share Terraces	--	\$6,170	Feet
Non Cost-Share Terraces	--	\$0	Feet
State Basins	0	--	--
Structures Designed	--	--	--
Windbreaks	5	\$5.0	Acres
CRP Contracts Accepted	6	\$212	Acres
CRP Continuous Sign-up	4	\$30	Acres

1998 Personnel

District Commissioners

Randy Williams, Crescent Township	Chairman
Mark Schnepel, Silver Creek Township	Vice Chairman
John M. Dea, Minden Township	Treasurer
Dan McGinn, Garner Township	Treasurer
Robert F. Young, Lewis Township	Commissioner
Robert M. Jensen, Neola Township	Ass't. Comm.
Clint Goos, Keg Creek Township	Ass't. Comm.

NRCS

Linda Pomeroy	District Conservationist
Tom Bottoms	Soil Conservationist Tech
Cindy Jones	Soil Conservationist Tech.

County

Julia Gubbels	Resource Planner
State	
Tracy Bruun	District Secretary

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West Pott announces new cost-share policies

The following is the policy for West Pottawattamie County cost-share:

Applications will be approved no later than the end of June for spring construction, the end of August for summer construction and the end of October for fall construction.

Applications will be approved based on need and availability of funds. For spring the application deadline is June 15, the project must be started by July 1 and completed by July 15.

The summer application deadline is Aug. 15. Work must begin by Sept. 1 and be completed by Sept. 15.

The fall application deadline is Nov. 9. Work must be started by Dec. 31. The deadline can be amended or extended if requested.

The following cost-share limits apply:

- 1) Yardage based on 15 ft minimum up to 25 ft front slopes as requested by landowner or required by specifications on GBS and BB. Narrow based (NB) as required by specifications.
- 2) Cost-share on intakes and up to 200 ft of tile below each terrace.
- 3) Fifty percent of actual cost, not to exceed \$200 of cost-share per intake/tile.
- 4) Earthwork cost based on \$.50 per cubic yard.
- 5) Annual cost-share limited to

\$3000.00. Applicants can receive county or state funds, but not both in any one calendar year. Landowners can make application for extraordinary terracing projects. The commissioners will review these on a case by case basis and may approve more than the \$3000.00. Example, landowners wanting to completely terrace a farm in one year.

6) No cost-share on seeding or fertilizer.

7) Cost-share on topsoiling at \$.10/ft. Required on ALL jobs. Pasture is not eligible for cost-share.

Sodbusting: Use of State funds is 25 percent cost-share; Local Option Sales Tax funds is 50 percent cost-share rate.

Terrace specifications (i.e. backslopes and low blocks) are not within the jurisdiction of the commissioners. This is set at the Federal level.

To be eligible for cost-share funds, State policy is that the practice meets Federal guidelines and NRCS has certified that it does. Note NRCS staff can not work on projects outside of Federal specifications.

The SWCD will not cost-share on projects outside of Federal specifications due to the potential liability to the District should the structure fail.

West Pott SWCD report, 1999

1-M Operating Budget FY99

(7-1-98 to 6-30-99)	
Allocation (7/98)	\$3,000.00
Supplemental Allocations	\$1,345.00
Commissioners' Travel	\$1,382.36
Office Supplies, Expenses, Dues	\$2,396.15
Recalled by DSC ()	\$566.49
Balance Unobligated 6/30/99	\$0.00

3-M Cost-Share Budgets FY99

98-99 Vol. IFIP	(7-1-98 to 6-30-99)
Balance 7/1/98	\$0.00
Allocations	\$41,282.00
Obligated/Completed Terraces	\$40,476.00
Recalled by DSC (12/31/97)	\$0.00
Balance Unobligated 6/30/97	\$806.00

97-98 Vol. IFIP	(7-1-97 to 6-30-99)
Balance 7/1/98	\$1,381.75
Allocations	\$18,400.00
Obligated/Completed Terraces	\$19,358.93
Recalled by DSC	\$408.45
Balance Unobligated 6/30/99	\$14.37

96-97 Vol. IFIP	(7-1-96 to 6-30-99)
Balance 7/1/98	\$4,023.07
Allocations	\$22.50
Obligated/Completed Terraces	\$3605.00
Recalled by DSC	\$440.57
Balance Unobligated 6/30/99	\$0.00

95-96 Vol. IFIP	(7-1-95 to 6-30-99)
Balance 7/1/98	\$2,102.75
Allocations	\$12.00
Obligated/Completed Terraces	\$2114.00
Recalled by DSC	\$.75
Balance Unobligated 6/30/99	\$0.00

REAP Cost-Share Budgets FY 99

Practices (7-1-98 to 6-30-99)	
Balance 7/1/98	\$0.00
Allocations	\$7,026.00
Trf'd from FY98	\$0.00
Completed Terrace Projects	\$2,489.00
Comp. Tree Plant/Windbreaks	\$0.00
Trf'd to FY00	\$2,500.00
Recalled by DSC	\$2,037.00
Balance Unobligated 6/30/99	\$0.00

Forestry/Native Grasses (7-1-98 to 6-30-99)	
Balance 7/1/98	\$0.00
Trf'd from FY98	\$0.00
Allocations	\$1,811.00
Tree Plantings (612)	\$0.00
Windbreak Plantings (380)	\$629.99
Trf'd to FY00	\$1,162.38
Recalled by DSC	\$18.63
Balance Unobligated 6/30/99	\$0.00

Other State Cost-Share Budgets

No-Interest Loan Program (1-1-99 to 12-31-99)	
Balance (1/1/99)	\$9,309.80
Allocations	\$0.00
Obligated/Completed Terraces	\$0.00
Balance Unobligated 12/31/99	\$9,309.80

County Cost-Share Budgets Pottawattamie County Local Option

Sales Tax (L.O.S.T.) Fund (1-1-99 to 12-31-99)	
Balance Unobligated 1/1/99	\$169,355.70
Allocations	\$104,080.60
General - Terraces	\$24,398.60
Summer - Terraces	\$18,490.00
Repairs - Terraces	\$72,675.85
Structure(s) Ag	\$2,155.39
Structure(s) Non-Ag	\$0.00
CRP	\$4,379.50
Well Closures	\$0.00
Ed. Grant	\$0.00
Office Equipment	\$0.00
Balance Unobligated 12/31/99	\$151,336.96

Summary of 1999 Projects

Projects (1/1/99 to 12/31/99)	Number	Amount	Unit
No-Till	---	73,500	acres
State Cost-Share Terraces	---	127,635	Feet
State No-Interest Loans	---	0	Feet
County Cost-Share Terraces	---	45,595	Feet
County Cost-Share Repairs	---	2,710	Breaks
Federal Cost-Share Terraces	---	0	Feet
Non Cost-Share Terraces	---	0	Feet
State Basins	0	---	---
Structures Designed	1	---	---
Windbreaks	4	2.7	Acres
CRP Contracts Accepted	0	0.0	Acres
CRP Continuous Sign-up	2	19.0	Acres

1999 Personnel

District Commissioners	
Mark Schnepel, Silver Creek Township	Chairman
Robert F. Young, East Lewis Township	Vice-Chairman
John M. Dea, Minden Township	Treasurer
Bill McGinn, West Lewis Township	Commissioner
Randy Williams, Crescent Township	Commissioner
Robert M. Jensen, Neola Township	Ass't. Comm.

NRCS

Linda Pomerleau	District Conservationist
Tom Bottoms	Soil Conservationist Tech.
Cindy Jones	Soil Conservationist Tech.

County

Julia Gubbels	Resource Planner
State	
Tracy Bruun	District Secretary

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Dunhams learn lumber business

by Joyce Bohnker

Nestled in the little corner where Harrison, Crawford and Monona Counties meet, is a successful hardwood company called Dunham Hardwoods. It's a true family business run by its founder Ken L. Dunham and his sons, Ken T., better known as Bud, and Zachary.

The story of how Ken L. evolved from farmer/teacher to sawmill operator to a wood distributor, back to the sawmill and incidentally becoming involved in tree planting along the way is one that takes many twists and turns along the way.

Dunham started out thinking he would be a farmer like his father and grandfather. He taught school for a while and worked around the same Dunlap area where he grew up.

In various projects, he kept discovering a need for wood and he kept remembering seeing his grandfather running an old sawmill on the farm. He got the sawmill going again in the 1970s.

"I started the sawmill as a small sideline. It grew because people would stop by and ask if I could do some sawing for them," he said.

He also found people were stopping by and looking for good lumber. It started him thinking. "We were turning some really nice lumber into wood pallets," he said. "And there was a demand for good lumber in the area."

Dunham did some research and then attended kiln operators school at the University of Minnesota. He started a kiln in his same Dunlap farm in 1983. The pallet wood demand was dwindling and in 1986 he sold the sawmill.

"We then became a distribution yard," he said. "We bought semi-loads of good hardwood from wherever it was grown—birch from Quebec, cherry from Pennsylvania and a lot of varieties from the Appalachia area."

He now purchases two semi-loads a week year-round. He is both a retail and wholesale outlet for his lumber.

The father and sons make regular deliveries on a wholesale basis to stores in Des Moines, Lincoln, Sioux City and Omaha.

"On the retail side, people come from a wide area. Our niche is quality," Dunham said proudly. "People want a product that is reasonably priced, but their paramount concern is quality."

He said it is only natural that people going to the work of making a product from wood instead of buying something already finished, would want the best.

The Dunhams carefully

consider which mills to do business with and select only those which they feel produce wood of a suitably high quality.

All the Dunhams have learned a lot about wood along the way. "It's a lot more technical than you think it is at first," Ken L. admits.

What a customer is looking for in wood depends a lot on what he is going to use it for. For example someone looking for real wood panelling for a den, might like a wood with interesting holes and knots. But that same wood would be completely unsuitable for a chair.

The Dunhams try to supply a variety of wood to suit every customer's needs. They have also ventured into the electronic market and now have a website where they can take and ship out orders to individual customers.

As their business grew and the Dunhams received personal satisfaction as well as economic benefits from serving their customers well, they found another need in the area. People wanted custom work done.

Somewhat to his surprise Ken decided to open up another sawmill. "It's not a top priority of the business, but it's available for those who want it. It runs on an on-again, off-again basis as demand determines."

The sawmill helps provide a market for area farmers with wood available. "We have native cottonwood, walnut and basswood in this area. If someone wants their own logs cut, we'll do it. If they want it dried, we'll do that, too," he said.

He said some bring in their own wood and come back to use it themselves. They will also buy from the farmers and sell it back out.

Having made his living off the fruits of the land, if only more indirectly than he originally planned, Dunham decided he wanted to make it possible for future generations to enjoy

wood too.

Early in the 1990s the family became involved in reforestation efforts.

He planted 1,000 trees in 1990, the same kind of trees whose lumber he had been selling for several years.

The project has grown. He now estimates he has planted between 6,000 to 7,000 trees and reforested about 200 acres of land.

"The first and second years, we did it all on our own. But then we got the district forester and the Department of Natural Resources involved," he said.

The DNR and the forester helped with the planting and have also helped him with some timber stand improvement projects.

The trees are doing well," he said. "But there is a lot of labor involved. You can't just walk off and leave them. The deer and the rabbits just raise havoc with them."

Just as he learned about the hardwood business through research and application, Dunham is going about tree planting the same way. "I learned a lot about what you do and don't do and how to pick the sites for certain varieties of trees."

He said it's a good hobby, but it's one you should learn about before starting. His first year, he lost about 500 of the 1,000 trees he planted. He soon learned to invest in tubes to protect the tiny trees from nibbling animals.

"Once you start on it, though, it gets in your blood, and you can't quit," he said.

Dunham is glad the government provides some incentives such as tax relief and cost-share for the planting and technical help to encourage landowners to get involved in tree planting.

"You have to be an optimist," he said. "I'll not live long enough to see these trees harvested but someone has to plant them or the next generations will look back and wonder why no one did."



A pile of logs awaits the new sawmill at the Dunham Hardwoods company



The Dunhams, Bud, Zachary and Ken L., in front of their family lumber business. In the foreground are a few trees out of the many acres they have devoted to reforestation.



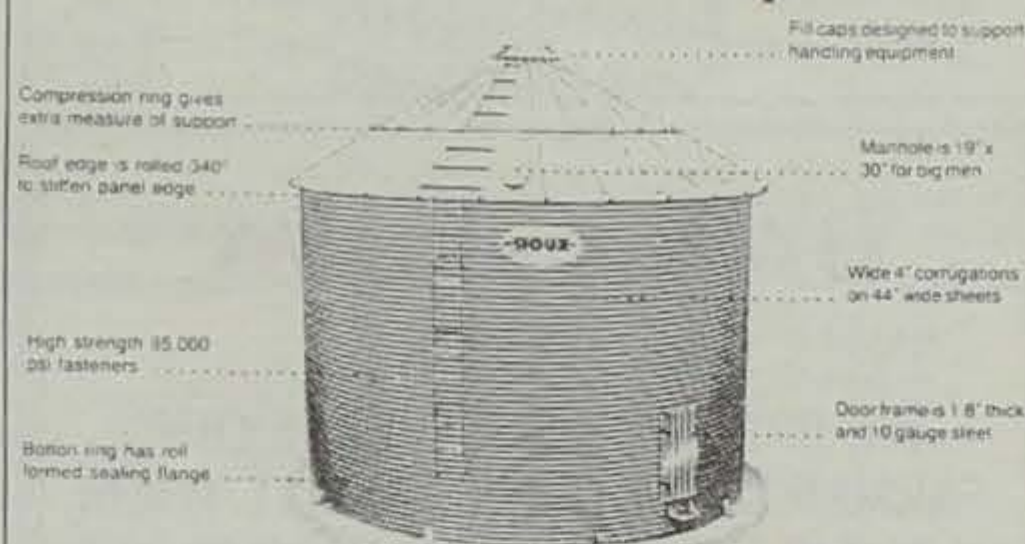
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Harrison NRCS/SWCD

Willow Watershed project is underway

by Joyce Bohnker

This spring farmers are anxiously looking at the skies, praying for rain. It may seem that the heavy rains and floods of the 90s are but a distant memory.

Yet as every older farmer can tell you, there may be drought now, but floods will return again as the endless cycle of Mother Nature continues.

When the torrential rains come again, whether it be this summer, next year or the next, the devastation in Harrison County may not be as great as in previous years. This will be due in no small part to the efforts of the Willow Creek Watershed Board.

The Willow Creek Watershed project is well underway with three water control structures built, four more planned and thousands of feet in terraces in place.

The Willow Creek Watershed project began after the most recent devastating flood hit the area in 1996.

After more than 10 inches of rain inundated the upstream areas in Crawford County, Willow Creek was out of its banks, washing away acres of good black soil, hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of growing corn and soybeans and causing damage to bridges, roads and other property and flooding the town of Missouri Valley.

There were two floods that year, less than three weeks apart. A group of farmers got together to do something about it.

It was Whitey Mensching who first got it into his head that they didn't just have to sit back and take nature's hits year after year. It was time to do something.

He called his friends Leonard Johnson and George Winther and soon after that the Willow Creek Watershed project was born. With help from Harrison County District Conservationist Russ Kurth, the group received information through the Iowa

Watershed program and the funding through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Funding was approved in early 1998. Surveys were sent out to farmers in the area to see what the interest was for the funds. It was decided to approve 60 percent cost-share for terraces and 70 percent for sediment control structures or small dams.

One of the first to apply and be approved was John Benedickt. His new 1.8 acre pond is now filling up and he is immensely pleased with it.

"I have had the water flow right through my yard," he said. "I think this will help a lot to prevent that. In addition it will provide water for my livestock and a good recreation spot once I get it stocked with fish."

His structure was built last fall and was seeded with grasses this spring. The structure's total cost was \$12,000 and he received 70 percent of that

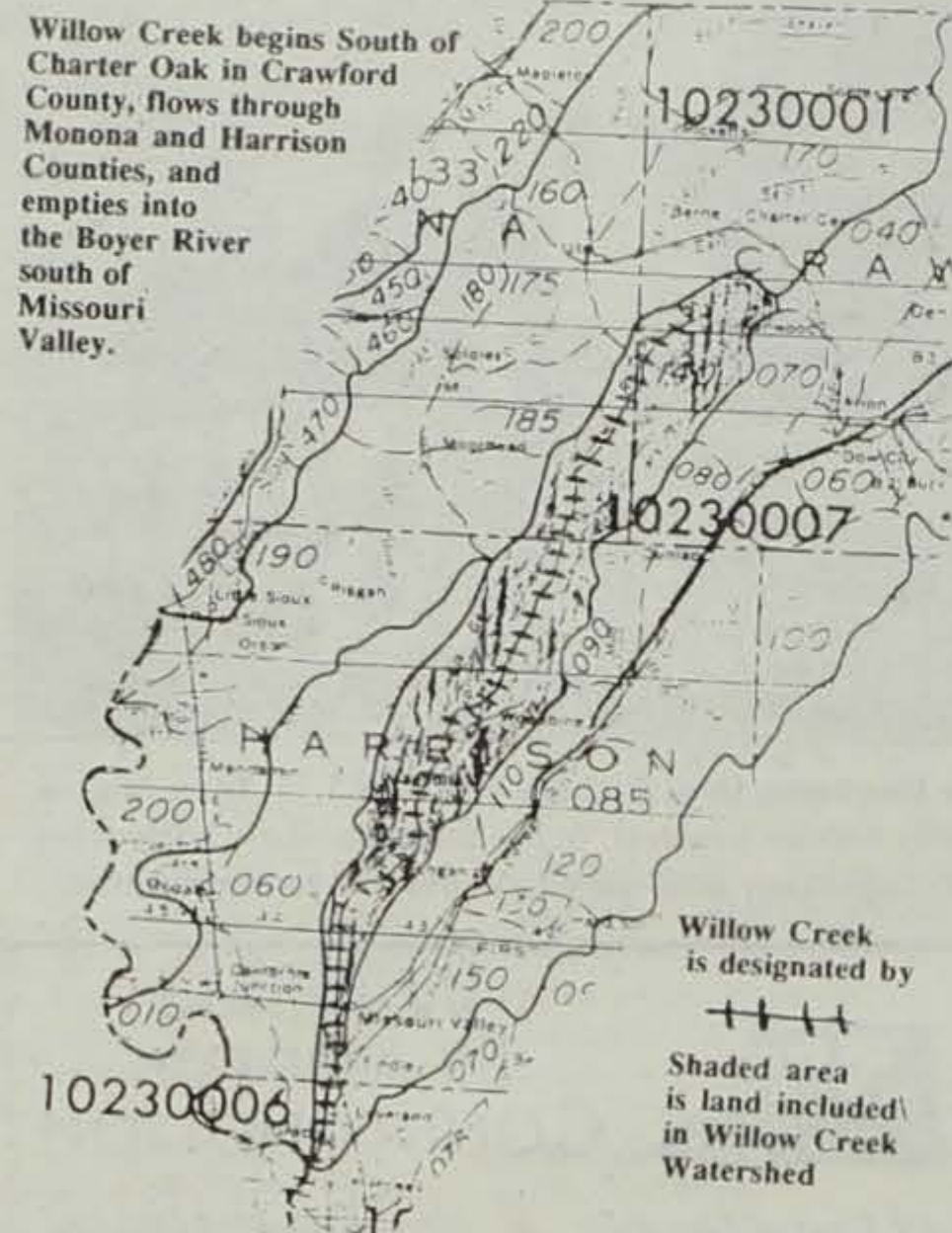
through cost-share money. "You really can't miss with that," he said. "I'm very glad I jumped on it when I had the chance."

To date, the Willow Creek Watershed Project has funded 16 contracts which include 10 small structures and 15 water and sediment control structures.

The committee has \$92,000 worth of funds to allocate this year. Anyone in the Willow Creek Watershed, including Crawford and Monona County farms, as well as Harrison, can apply for the EQIP funds at their county NRCS or FSA office.

The project was planned as a three year one. It is now half way finished and Kurth hopes to see all the funds allocated and spent in this worthwhile project.

"Willow Creek has really devastated the Missouri Valley area many times over the years. The watershed board members are all from that area and our goal is to reduce the damage in the future," Kurth said.



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George Winther, Leonard Johnson, Whitey Mensching, Russ Kurth, Aaron Perkins and John Benedickt gather at the new dam on the Benedickt farm built with funds from the Willow Creek Watershed project

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Modale farmer enjoys planting trees, making syrup

by Joyce Bohnker

Jim Olinger doesn't need to worry about a lot of traditional western Iowa conservation techniques. His Missouri River bottom ground farm hardly requires terraces or buffer strips, but the Modale area farmer has a great interest in nature and wants to preserve trees and wildlife for the next generation.

Olinger is involved in wetland restoration and tree planting on his western Iowa farm. Preserving trees, especially, is a natural for him since his favorite hobby depends on the tall deciduous plants that nature has provided with a sweet sap.

Olinger enjoys making maple syrup and in a good year has produced gallons of the sweet pancake topper. Unfortunately this was not a good year.

"A few years ago my Dad read an article in a magazine about tapping maple trees. I tried it out one February and it turned out really tasty. Every year since then, it's kind of grown," Olinger said.

In a grove of silver maple trees on his farm, he has found several suitable trees. The trees have to be at least 10 inches in diameter to support a tap. For every six inches after that, they can take another hole. It doesn't harm the trees.

The hobby has expanded and now includes several friends who have begun tapping their own trees. A shed on Olinger's farm has been converted to a sugar shack where burners underneath huge vats can keep the sap boiling until it reaches the magical number, seven degrees above the boiling temperature of water.

"There's a 40 to one ratio," Olinger explains. "It takes 40 gallons of sap to make one

gallon of syrup." The boiling days have become a sort of male bonding experience, although the farmers themselves would never describe it that way.

It is a good time to sit back in chairs in the 'sugar shack' and wait for the sap to become syrup. Then the sweet by-product is bottled and ready for pancakes.

Last year Olinger made gallons of the syrup, but he has never considered turning it into a profit center.

"I've yet to sell any," he said. "Everyone wants to try it because it's a unique thing to this area. I just like to give it away."

For this year, it is as well that he wasn't counting on any income from his hobby. The warm, dry winter apparently wasn't conducive to swiftly flowing sap because his taps were unproductive. He went from gallons the previous year to only eight pints this year.

A walk through Olinger's grove confirms this. The big plastic buckets are tied to the tall silver maple trees. A cleverly designed hose system, using a hose mender, a small hole in the tree and a closed bucket to prevent dust and debris from getting into the sap stand at the ready. But inside the buckets on this pleasant March morning, are only a few cups of saps. At a 40 to one ratio, it is apparent there won't be a lot of syrup to be made.

Olinger is proud of his tapping system, which he says used "a little farmer innovation," but is resigned to having a lot less syrup to bestow on family and friends this year.

Walking through a grove of trees on a crisp winter morning looking for syrup then spending hours in a shack standing over

boiling sap may not be everyone's idea of a great hobby. But Olinger likes having something to keep him busy before planting time and his enjoyment of trees and woodlands is something that he learned as a boy.

"My Dad planted trees every spring. It was the most unselfish act I've ever witnessed," he said. Olinger has many fond memories of playing in the woods as a boy and he hopes his own grandchildren can have that same experience.

So when he recently bought some pasture ground with trees still dotting the landscape, he looked around for ideas of what could be done with it. "I didn't want to go the conventional farmer approach and tear up the trees to try to raise more corn at \$1.70 a bushel. We've got too much corn already," he said.

The Harrison County Natural Resources Conservation Service helped Olinger find the right program for his new ground. "For years I've said there's not enough trees left in the bottom (the Missouri River bottom), the wind howls," he said.

He decided to put it into the pasture riparian Conservation Reserve Program and do a direct seeding (using seeds instead of small plants) into some of the acres this fall. The rest will be planted with the traditional saplings in the spring.

"I'm going to end up with about 30 acres of trees," Olinger said. Because the area doesn't have a cropping history, the amount of money he receives will not really cost out against the expense of putting in the trees in the first place, a fact that doesn't seem to bother the conservation-minded farmer much at all.

He said, "There's no profit in it

at all. But in the end there will be 30 acres of lumber here, there are worse legacies a man could leave for his grandchildren."

Olinger has another CRP project underway that will also help to restore some habitat to the birds and other animals native to western Iowa.

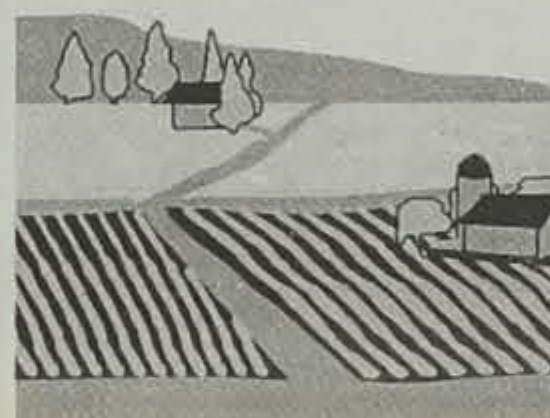
For years he struggled to plant and harvest a small hollow on his farm that, especially in the 90s, kept filling with water. "It was an old lake bed. It was farmed, but I fought it every year," he said. "I finally decided if you want to be a duck pond than that's what you'll be."

Again encouraged by a CRP program to help with the costs, Olinger converted the land into a

shallow water area. Some dirt work was necessary, but the pond should fill naturally this spring, unless as Olinger comments wryly, he is responsible for the "worst drought of the century."

Although not a hunter himself, Olinger enjoys wildlife and again believes he is leaving an important legacy for those who will come after him.

The Modale farmer is modest about his efforts. He believes he is following in his father's footsteps, making a living from the land, but also taking steps to ensure that the plants and animals here before will still be around for generations to come.



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Jim Olinger of Modale strolls by his maple trees on a warm winter morning to see if the sap is running.



Joe and Cherith Thelen are taking good care of their windbreak hoping it will provide good shelter for their farm home in a few years.

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Thelen is conservation farmer

Conservation comes naturally to Joe Thelen. It's an ethic he learned first from his own father, and then as he began farming on his own, he learned from his father-in-law as well.

The Crawford County farmer learned well. District Conservationist Jay Ford cites Thelen as one of the best conservationists in the county.

For Thelen, good conservation just makes good sense. "I've been no-tilling everything since 1992. Before that I was no-tilling corn into bean stubble," he said. "It has worked out really well for me. I work alone, and it's a real time saver when all you have to do is spray and plant."

The benefits this year are even more obvious. "With fuel costs as high as they are I'm glad not to be making extra trips across the field. Plus as dry as it is, it doesn't make sense to turn over any more soil than you have to."

Thelen was not born on a farm. His Dad lived in Carroll until he purchased a farm near Westside and moved there with his family when Joe was about 7. Nowadays it doesn't seem possible but Norman Thelen, Joe's dad, started farming from scratch. He purchased the land and the equipment and managed to raise a family on his small farm.

Norman imparted a conservation message to his family. "I grew up with the idea you had to take care of the land," Joe said. "You should improve the land while you're farming it and leave it in better shape than when you started."

Joe married Cherith Hutchinson and began farming his father-in-law's farm. Her dad, Kenneth Hutchinson, had

also believed in conservation. The land was already terraced when it came under Joe's care and he has been careful to continue the stewardship tradition.

When his early experiments with no-till proved successful, he invested in a no-till drill. "I used the no-till drill exclusively for seven years. I always had really good luck with the drill," he said.

But a couple of years ago, he had to reconsider his options, his no-till drill was wearing out and in need of extensive repair.

Instead of investing more money in his drill, Thelen opted for a Kinze planter. The planter has a coulter system that makes a sort of zone tillage. But it only tills a very small area, right where the seeds are planted, leaving the rest of the ground undisturbed. He began planting with that in 1998 and has been satisfied with the results. "I actually consider it be the same as no-till," he said. "The beans are planted in standing corn stalks. I was satisfied with the drill, but I think I may get a little better seed placement with the planter."

The no-till makes it easier to maintain the terraces and waterways already on his farm. "Of lot of terrace work can be avoided with no-till. They just don't fill in as fast," he said.

Part of Thelen's conservation work lies in his crop rotation. He keeps a cow/calf herd and maintains a pasture. He keeps hay as part of his rotation. However, just because a ground is pasture, doesn't necessarily make it easier to maintain. "It can be a challenge maintaining pasture ground," he said. "It's not fool-proof when it comes to conservation. The cattle try to

walk the same trail and they do damage to the terraces. Plus there are problems with the creek banks.

He is considering fencing off the banks so the cows can't cause them further damage.

Thelen and Cherith have four children: Christopher, 14; Andy, 12; Melissa, 10 and Danny, 9.

The six Thelens embarked on a family conservation project in 1997. They planted a windbreak. They planted 55 trees the first year, plus 40 more the next year.

The first year it was the kids' job to haul water to the new trees. The family project was a success with a good survival rate on the Colorado Blue Spruce, the Concolor firs and the Black Hills Spruce. Thelen says the kids are old enough now to be good help on the farm. "The older boys help with the chores quite a bit. Three of them are in 4-H now and my daughter wants to show a feeder calf at the fair."

With four children it is only natural that Thelen is looking at the future. Farming has had a lot of ups and downs the past few years. He would like to see it become more stable. He is optimistic about the new proposal to link farm payments with conservation levels. "I would be 100 percent in favor of any farm program that encouraged conservation work," he said.

Such a program might make it a little easier for the small farmer to stay in business. He hopes to see farming remain an option for his own children. "I want my children to get a college education, but it would be nice for them to be able to come back and farm," he said. "You have to wonder if there'll be opportunities for them."

Although Thelen can't make any guarantees to his children about the economics of farming in the future, he can ensure that the land will be there in as good or better shape as when he began.

"If you like what you're doing, it's a good feeling to be a good steward of the land. I want to be like my father and improve it then leave it to be passed on to the next generation."

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Construction begins on East Boyer Watershed dams

By Joyce Bohner

The East Boyer Watershed project is officially underway this spring. The project has been in the planning stages for several months. It is expected to take six to 10 years to complete.

The East Boyer Watershed is a huge project. The watershed begins just east of Denison and encompasses 84,000 acres. The majority of the watershed (83 percent) is in Crawford County the rest is in Carroll County.

Final approval for the watershed was given last September. Since then engineers and NRCS personnel have been scrambling to design structures. To date, nine structures have been designed and four have been let for bids. Construction on the dams has begun.

Paul Assman is a civil engineer and is coordinator for Project Impact, a group formed to help prevent future flooding disasters in Denison. Assman and Crawford County District Conservationist Jay Ford worked together to promote the idea of the East Boyer Watershed.

Assman said several projects have already been completed to control flooding along the river and prevent a recurrence of the floods, which cost Denison and Crawford County millions of dollars in the '90s. But he is especially pleased with the inclusion of the watershed project.

"I think, based on my own experience with watersheds, this project will have the best return for the investment in terms of benefits versus costs," Assman said.

Ford, too, is pleased to see the project underway. He had believed for years that a watershed would be a tremendous benefit for the area, but he had almost given up hope of seeing it come about.

"Paul (Assman) and I are both watershed veterans. We knew that was what should be done, but we were a little scared off by how big an area this is and because there was no longer any federal funding available for watersheds."

With the formation of the Iowa Watersheds and the possibility of state funding, new hope was seen for the East Boyer Watershed project. When approval was given last September, the City of Denison, Crawford County and the NRCS were all ready and willing to work together to get the project underway.

The first step was to identify landowners who were willing to put the water control structures on their land. The incentive of 90 percent cost for projects up to \$40,000 was a big help.

Ford said the eventual goal is to build 60 additional small to

medium size detention dams.

There are already 35 dams existing in the watershed area. "We're off to a good start this year. With the late start, extra effort was put forth to meet this year's goals and still be prepared to do fall construction in future years."

Two of the early landowners identified were Bill Crane and Clyde McCollough. The dam itself is located on McCollough's property, but almost all the water is on Crane's side. That dam is currently under construction and McCollough is looking forward to seeing it completed. He said for him the opportunity to do something about the continual flooding at a reasonable cost was too good to pass up.

"In that particular place the water comes down out of the field and time and time again, it goes over the road. I've got grandchildren who use that road," he said.

The landowners can also look forward to a nice five acre pond once the dam is completed and it rains enough to fill it up. "I definitely want to put some fish in it," McCollough said.

Ford said the start of construction on the four dams is increasing interest in the watershed and more owners are making inquiries.

Of course the dams are not the only aspect of the watershed project. Another goal is to see all the upland treatment done. A good terrace system helps preserve the life of the structure. With that in mind, the East Boyer Watershed is also providing 75 percent cost-share on terraces. Ford said the terrace money is an important part of the project. "It's nice to see the upland treatment get done before the dams even go in," he said.

Ford and Assman are both pleased with the level of cooperation they have encountered. Ford said, "The project has widespread local support. Both the Crawford County Supervisors and Denison City Council have budgeted cost-share dollars to supplement state program funds. A landowner survey was completed with 160 potential structure sites planned. The office received 60 responses with a 2:1 positive ratio involving 58 sites. In addition, 20 potential road sites have been identified and the county has committed to doing one site per year."

The Boyer River is a gentle meandering stream for most of the year. But heavy thunderstorms can bring six or more inches of rain in a short time. When this happens, the water can wash into the river from tributary

streams and gullies at a tremendous rate, causing it to overflow its banks.

This happened in 1990, 1991, 1993 and twice in 1996. The property damage caused by the floods has exceeded \$14 million. In addition, farmers have lost many acres of topsoil and chemicals, as well as crops. If the final goal of 60 additional detention dams are built in the watershed, it is estimated

that the peak discharge at Denison will be reduced by 27 percent. "This reduction will make a 500-year discharge effectively look like a 100-year discharge," Ford said.

The additional benefits of the dams include protection of county road structures such as bridges and culverts, more habitat for wildlife and recreation areas for humans. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$2,272,500.



Jordan Lanini and Scott Chapman of the Crawford County NRCS survey a site for a dam in the East Boyer Watershed.



Construction work has begun on the Clyde McCollough-Bill Crane dam near Vail.

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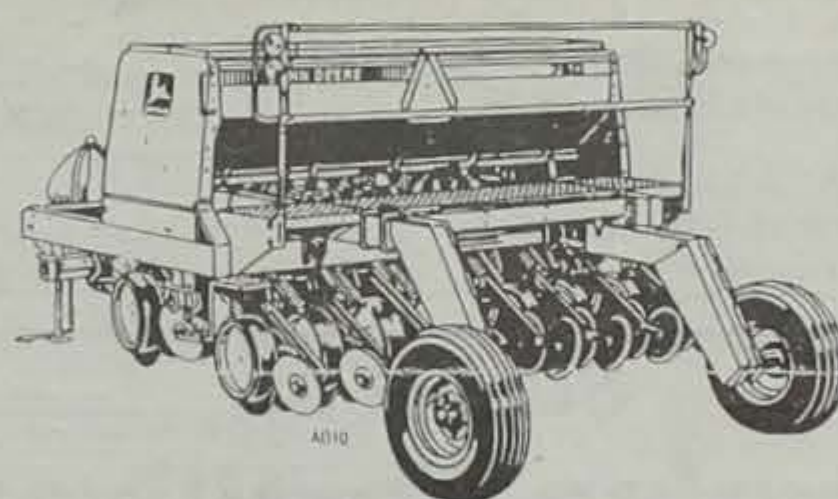


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Grants available to fund projects

Dam fire hydrants can save needed time

by Joyce Bohnker

A fire breaks out. If you live in a city or town, the fire trucks will be there in minutes and you have the comfort of knowing that a fire hydrant is never more than a few blocks away.

If you live in the rural areas, it can be a different story. With the many small town, volunteer fire departments in Iowa, it usually doesn't take more than minutes for the fire trucks to respond. But a place to get more water could be miles and miles away.

Minutes spent chasing down more water and refilling tanker trucks could make the difference between losing a barn or saving it, containing a fire or having it spread to a home, or in the worst case scenario, saving a life or losing it.

For the fire fighters it can be frustrating to run out of water in the tanker at a crucial time.

Often as they rush to the nearest hydrant, they pass five or more acres of water sitting in a dam, but there is no way to get that water on the trucks and to where it is most needed.

There is an alternative that can help. Hydrants can be put in the dams to make the water accessible to fire trucks. The hydrants cost about \$1,000 each and state grants are available. A few have already been installed in Crawford County and more are planned.

Denison Fire Chief Mike McKinnon said the dams can be a very valuable fire fighting

tool. "Our big tankers can hold 1,000 to 1,500 gallons of water. They can shoot it out at the rate of 100 gallons a minute. It doesn't take long to run out of water and then it can be an eight to 10 mile drive back to town to fill up," he said.

A nearby dam can cut the time. There are two types of hydrant systems put into dams. One is a wet system. It does not require a pump, but has to be put in lower than the dam. In most cases the wet system has to be installed when the dam is built. The second type is a dry hydrant. It requires a pump and is a little less convenient, but it can be installed at any time.

So far Crawford County has only one wet system, located between Deloit and Kiron at the Norelius dam site. McKinnon said the wet systems can be more efficient for the fire fighters, but since all the tanker trucks do have pumps, either will work.

Blake Deiber is a Denison volunteer fire fighter and a member of the Crawford County Firefighters Association, he and Duane Zenk have coordinated most of the grant applications for Crawford County. The Area Resource Conservation and Development Service (RC&D) help administer the grant program.

Deiber said the grant criteria requires that the hydrants be

accessible to at least two different fire departments.

The Norelius hydrant is accessible to Kiron and Deloit. A dry hydrant located between Denison and Deloit is accessible to those two departments. One that is currently being installed near Nelson Park will be accessible to Dow City, Dunlap and Charter Oak.

Deiber said supplies have already been purchased to install a hydrant along the Rocky Run Road between Denison and Vail that will be accessible to those departments.

They are hoping to receive funding to install one near Schleswig next year. Deiber said the rewards to nearby landowners can be more tangible than peace-of-mind. "In most cases landowners near a hydrant can see a reduction in their fire insurance. If you have a hydrant go in near your land, you should be sure to inform your insurance agent. Some companies decrease the fire protection premium by as much as 50 percent," he said.

There are two additional requirements (besides being accessible to two or more fire departments) for a dam to qualify for a hydrant. It has to be accessible by road so the fire trucks can reach it and it has to be a large enough pond to support a hydrant.

The responsibility for the landowner is to ensure that access is available to the fire hydrants, including keeping an area around the pipe mowed. McKinnon would like to see hydrants added to dams as they are built. "I wish every dam built would include one, you never know when you may need it."



Denison fire chief Mike McKinnon shows student fire fighter Nate Adams how to work the wet hydrant in Crawford County

Alternative Ag Expo planned

Area farmers will have an opportunity later this summer to learn about alternatives to conventional farming. The second annual Alternative Agriculture Exposition will be held at the Sioux City Convention Center on August 28 and 29.

Topics to be presented include farming alternatives, nutrition issues, economics of alternatives, transitioning from traditional agriculture to alternative methods, direct marketing, legalities of direct marketing and meat and poultry inspection.

Organizers say last year's exposition was a big success, so they decided to bring it back for Exposition 2000. A variety of presenters are planned and area businesses will also have the opportunity to set up booths in the exhibition hall.

The presenters include L.T. Bhrndat, the keynote speaker, who will discuss the healing power and economic benefits of locally grown foods and community supported agriculture farms (CSA's). Sally Fallon will speak about basic principles of nourishing, traditional diets, the facts about fats, how to change your diet for the better, how to keep the value added down on the farm where it belongs and Dr. Weston A. Price, his pioneering research and photographs.

Others who will be speaking at the sessions include representatives from Cleverly Farms on small farm managing and marketing; Doug Gunnink on developing a transition mindset and organic production methods; Neil Hamilton on the legalities of direct marketing; Alan and Cathy Hammer on commercial rabbit production; Stan Lammers on transitioning and identifying markets; Joseph Morris on aquaculture; L & P Ranch on pheasants and recreational land use; Dr. Ted Smith on meat and poultry inspection requirements;

Francis Thicke on soil, economics and organics; Paul Willis on pesticide, antibiotic and hormone free pork and Prairie Wolf Vegetables on hydroponics.

There will also be two round table discussions, one on the alternative types of pork production and one on rotational grazing.

Organizers of the expo say there will be something for everyone. "Producers will see the potential direct demand for their product and have the courage to begin producing what consumers are telling them they want. People attending will hear many economically viable alternatives to the general cycle of corn and soybean production," said Tom Gould of the USDA, one of the expo organizers.

He added non producers might find the expo interesting as well. "Consumers will learn about nutrition and become aware of the effort to supply the locally grown foods they could use every day in their homes."

The cost for the session will be \$10 for the evening session on Aug. 28 and \$40 for the full day session including a noon meal. The registration deadline is Aug. 25.

Sponsors of the Alternative Agriculture 2000 Expo include the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, University of Nebraska Center for Sustainable Agricultural Systems, Iowa Department of Economic Development, USDA-Rural Development, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Iowa State University Extension Service, Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service, Center for Rural Affairs (Nebraska), Sioux Rivers RC&D, Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D, Northeast Nebraska RC&D, Lower James RC&D (South Dakota) and several area farmers.

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Rules announced for farm loads

In the past agricultural loads have been exempt from weight restrictions on the roads.

This has led manufactures to build large manure tank wagons that have been responsible for some road damage.

A general rule is that 1,000 gallons will weigh about 10,000 lb. for the liquid and the tank combined. Using this approximation a 6,000-gallon tank would weigh 60,000 lb. A 15,000-gallon manure tank weighs approximately 150,000 lb. without the tractor.

A recently passed bill in the Iowa Legislature (House File 651) affects weight limits of all agricultural vehicles on embargoed bridges and culverts. In addition the bill specifies future axle and vehicle weight limits for manure tank wagons, grain carts, and fence-line feed wagons.

Weight restrictions for agricultural implements on bridges and culverts

Effective July 1, 1999, all agricultural vehicles (e.g. tractors, combines, implements, chemical applicators) are required to comply with weight embargoes imposed by local authorities or the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) on a bridge or culvert within their jurisdiction (in the past, weight limits did not apply to many agricultural vehicles).

Restrictions on weight loads for bridges and culverts are in effect when signs are posted. The authority imposing the weight restriction (local or IDOT) must issue a special, short-term (eight week) permit if an agricultural hardship exists. This permit may allow a producer to overload a bridge, but if the bridge breaks the producer is totally responsible for all of the repairs.

Implements loaded on hauling units are exempted from weight restrictions if being transported for repair.

Weight restrictions for grain carts, tank wagons, and feed wagons on public roadways

Agricultural implements applying organic plant food materials (e.g. manure), grain carts with a non-steerable single or tandem axle, and equipment mixing and dispensing feed to feedlot (beef or dairy) cattle will be required to comply with legal axle weight restrictions when operated on public roadways in the future. (Note: common axle weight limits in Iowa are 20,000 lb./single axle and 34,000 lb./tandem axle.) Weight of any one axle, group of axles, or gross vehicle weight may exceed minimum weight restrictions by 20 percent and still be in compliance, however for agricultural vehicles.

Grain carts, tank wagons, and feeder wagons manufactured on or after July 1, 2001 are to

comply with weight requirements. All other grain carts, tank wagons, and feeder wagons (i.e. manufactured before July 1, 2001) are to be in compliance by July 1, 2005 in order to travel public roadways.

House File 651 reaffirms an existing requirement that implements applying inorganic or commercial plant food materials, agricultural chemicals, or limestone are currently required to comply with legal axle weight restrictions when operated on public roadways.

A slow-moving vehicle emblem (SMV) is to be displayed on all agricultural vehicles at speeds of 35 mph or less. Because information on road damage by vehicles using large flotation tires and rubber tracks is not currently well documented, the IDOT in consultation with interested farm groups is working to determine the extent of the damage caused by this equipment. A report with findings and recommendations is to be submitted to the Legislature in January 2000.

(Prepared by Kris Kohl, ISU Extension field agricultural and biosystems engineer, and Jeff Lorimer and Mark Hanna, ISU Extension agricultural and biosystems engineers.)

Terraces by the township in Shelby County in 1999

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Shelby NRCS/SWCD

Bednarek begins work on Shelby County soil survey

by Joyce Bohnker

Most little boys love to play in the dirt. But not too many dream they can make a living at it. Rick Bednarek, however proves it can be done.

Of course there's a lot more to being a soil scientist than playing in the dirt and the results of his studies can have important consequences for farmers. Nevertheless, Bednarek enjoys his work as soil scientist in the 24 county Soil Conservation District, headquartered in Atlantic.

The Wisconsin native spent several years working at a similar post in northern Minnesota before moving to Iowa with his family last June. Along with other duties, his first task is to oversee the new Shelby County Soil Survey. Even using records from the previous survey, the job will take about four years. He will then move on to other counties in the area, making the position a permanent one.

"One of the attractions of this position was the permanency. With Iowa's restructured soil program, everything is in place to be permanent," Bednarek said.

He also admitted, "My wife likes the weather here a lot better."

Working in the outdoors is a longtime dream for the Wisconsin native who first considered a career in forestry.

"I didn't really want to get my Ph.D., which is almost needed for forestry, then someone mentioned soil and here I am. This job is great. When it's nice, I'm outside. When it's rainy, I'm inside doing the photos and lab work."

Anyone who has ever looked at the soil map of a township can

see the immense detail and work that must go into it. The different soil types are classified within a matter of feet.

Of course Bednarek and his future crew have something the soil scientists of 50 years ago didn't have- the previous maps to go on.

Still the work is intensive. "We have to verify those maps with documentation. We also have to re-map all the bottomlands where the soil structure is most prone to change. We also have some new soil identifications to work with," he said.

The work will be done on a bigger scale for more accuracy. The smaller scales were not able to delineate all the soil types. The new maps will be accurate to within 80 inches.

Bednarek said the line work on the uplands in Shelby County is still accurate, but more work is needed on the bottomlands.

He also has to carefully delineate the slope breaks to be more accurate. When finished the soil maps should be easily lined up with all the bordering counties. The soil types should flow seamlessly from Crawford to Shelby and from Shelby to East Pottawattamie.

Bednarek and his crew will be helped in their study by another important tool, not available to their earlier comrades-Global Positioning. The use of GPS makes accuracy much easier than before.

"We can be at a spot and know our exact location in latitude and longitude and then we can go back to the same spot. It's a little more accurate than 47 paces from the third telephone pole," he said.

Another big change in the new maps will be the inclusion of the

towns. The previous scientists just drew a line around the settled communities. This time their soil types will also be included in the soil surveys.

Bednarek is setting up a lab in the high school in Anita. He said it's a great opportunity for him and for the students at the school. He gets lab space and some equipment and the students get an education in soils. "It's a great way for the kids to learn about this and they're doing us a big favor, too," he said.

The southwest Iowa district has more counties in need of soil updates than any other. With each survey taking four years to complete, the job will probably be keeping soil scientists busy even after Bednarek is enjoying retirement.

But some might question the importance of soil mapping. Does it really make a difference what type of soil is located here or there?

The answer is yes it does, even in the non-farming communities. "Things are very soil-related now," he said. "We have to see if the soil is suitable for housing, basements, soil septic systems. The soil surveys are used for all these things."

In the farming community soil surveys are often checked out before land is purchased. Also all of the Conservation Reserve Programs are now based on soil types.

In fact Bednarek believes soil types will only become more important in the future as environmentalists look at water quality and how water moves through different soil types.

Although the soil surveys alone are enough to keep Bednarek busy for many years to come, he has some other duties in his position as soil scientist.

He provides technical soil services when needed and helps

makes wetland determinations on soil. He helps with the Envirothon contest and soil judging contests. He often talks to groups of students as part of his educational outreach.

If individual districts are having soil-related problems he is available as a consultant.

All in all, his job is varied and interesting. Bednarek said he and his family haven't regretted their move.

He and his wife have two children ages 12 and 10 who have become involved in the school and activities available in the area.

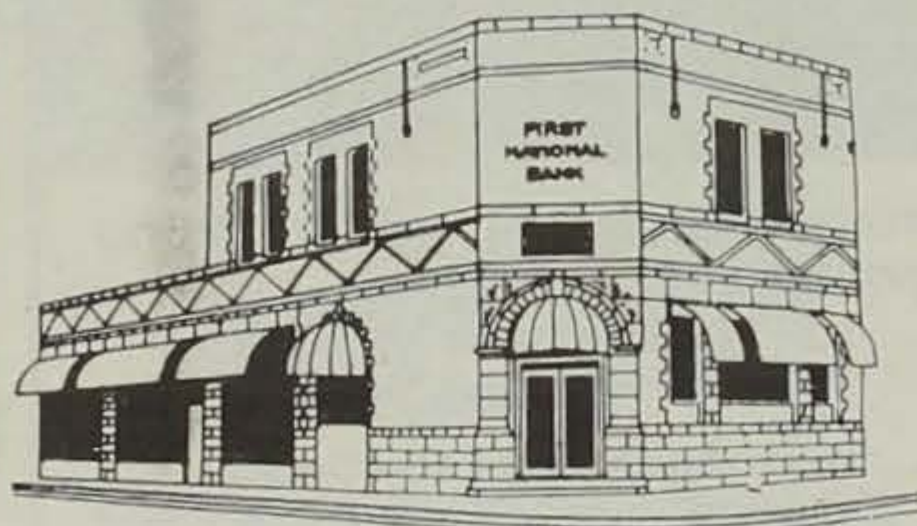
"We like the area," he said. "We like the landscape. The people have been very nice and it's closer to home for our extended family to visit. Plus it's a little warmer than north-west Minnesota."



In top photo Rick Bednarek gets ready to go out in the field to work on his Shelby County soil survey. In lower photo Bednarek helps with an outdoor education event in Harrison County last September, explaining global positioning to students.

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Shelby SWCD is honored by Goodyear Co.

Scottsdale, Ariz., December 15, 1999 — Shelby Soil and Water Conservation District was honored as a Grand Award District during the 52nd Annual Conservation Awards Program for its efforts to protect and conserve soil, water, forests, wildlife and other natural resources.

Fifty-three districts out of nearly 3,000 nationwide were recognized as Grand Award Districts by the program which is sponsored by The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company and the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD).

Hans Nielsen represented the Shelby Soil & Water Conservation District and joined representatives from other districts for the annual awards program in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Goodyear and NACD developed the Conservation Awards Program in 1947, as the United States came to terms with the staggering environmental damage that occurred during the Dust Bowl period.

"Shelby Soil and Water Conservation District members have demonstrated their dedication to preserving our nation's natural resources," said Jim Bamer, product manager for Goodyear's farm and terra tires.

"This program was born more than 50 years ago out of Goodyear's commitment to protect the environment and its desire to encourage others to do the same. These award winners are setting an excellent example for others, and we are pleased to recognize their accomplishments."



Hans Nielsen, representing the Shelby Soil and Water Conservation District attended the awards ceremony in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Conservation Protects Our Good Earth



From left are Hans Nielsen, Commissioner, Shelby Co, SWCD, Craig Smith, Doug and Wanda Smith and Wayne Krohn, Commissioner for the SWCD. The commissioners present the Smiths with a conservation award.



Hans Nielsen, far left, and Wayne Krohn, far right present Rog and Peg Ahrenholtz with a conservation farm award.



Hans Nielsen, far left, and Wayne Krohn, far right present H. Jay and Susan Nielsen with a conservation farm award.



Hans Nielsen, far left and Wayne Krohn, far right, present Carl Petersen and Wayne Petersen with conservation farm awards.

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Shelby County NRCS, SWCD personnel

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Donald Bladt, Shelby Township, Chairperson
Wayne Krohn, Fairview Township
Richard Wooster, Jefferson Township
Hans Nielsen, Westphalia Township
Edward Lapke, Grove Township

Assistant Commissioners

Barry Deuel
Michael T Leinen
Cyrus Monson
Wayne Hansen
Joe Reischl

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Staff

Jim Sharp, District Conservationist
Joni Schwery, Soil Conservation Technician
William J Hammitt, part-time WAE
Marolyn Monson, part-time WAE

State Personnel

Joann Schulte, Secretary
Jeff Darling, Soil Conservation Technician



Shelby County Soil and Water District Commissioners include front from left, Don Bladt and Hans Nielsen, and in back, Richard Wooster, Wayne Krohn and Ed Lapke.

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A group of farmers and NRCS personnel examine the experimental Hungry Canyons structure on the Dennis Gaul farm in Shelby County. The structure was put together with hog slats, rock and cable.



Ron Petesen of the Natural Resources Conservation Service examines a Hungry Canyons structure he designed on the Ed Reinig farm in Shelby County. The structure was made of cattle panels, telephone poles, cable and rock.

Shelby County farmers invest in Hungry Canyons structures

by Joyce Bohnker

They're called Hungry Canyons and it seems to fit. Each year the streams and rivers seem to 'eat' hundreds of acres of good black soil.

For the county and state this can mean millions of dollars in repair to bridges and culverts. For the small farmer it means watching his fields get smaller and smaller as the stream banks get wider and deeper.

The states and counties can spend hundreds of thousands of dollars building weirs and other structures to help prevent the erosion. The small farmers don't have that option.

But sometimes a little ingenuity can help. Farmers who are willing to risk some money on experiments just might find some help from the Hungry Canyons Alliance.

The Hungry Canyons Alliance includes 22 counties in western Iowa. It receives grant money each year to use on big river bank stabilization projects for local government.

The alliance decided to use the interest on that money to provide cost-share to farmers trying to come up with smaller, more economical ways to protect their land.

The idea is catching on. Two farmers in Shelby County have invested their money in project to prevent further erosion of their soil.

Dennis Gaul put in some weir-like structures on his farm made of hog slats, cable and rock. Ed Reinig's structure was put together using cattle panels, telephone poles, cables and rock.

These farmers applied for and received the grants through the Hungry Canyons Small Structure Demonstration Project. Pam Rosmann helps administer the grants.

Shelby County District Conservationist Jim Sharp said interest in the grants have been increasing, but he has a word of caution.

"We need farmers who understand this is experimental and who are willing to take a chance," Sharp said.

The grant money will provide up to 80 percent cost share, but the maximum amount of any grant is \$8,500. The grants are available per landowner and not per structure. The most a landowner can receive for help on his property is \$8,500.

Ron Petersen of the Natural Resources Conservation Service designed the two structures for Shelby County.

The total cost for each of the structures was approximately

\$13,000. It was a significant investment for the landowners.

Sharp said the cost of the materials for the projects are usually not too bad, much of the time it is done with leftovers the farmer already has on hand. The rock can be expensive to import, but the main expense is in the labor.

"These projects are very labor intensive," Sharp said. "It is not always easy to find a contractor willing to do them."

Larry Malone Construction did both of the Hungry Canyons structures in Shelby County.

Rosmann said there are conditions to be met before farmers can receive consideration for a grant.

Some of the conditions include:

1. At least 75 percent of the landowner's property upland of the proposed structure must in NRCS approved conservation treatment.

2. The site must be available for demonstration and education tours.

3. The landowner will be responsible for all maintenance and repair.

4. The local Soil and Water Conservation District commission must review and provide comments as necessary on the application.

5. The landowner must secure a minimum of 20 percent of the cost of the project.

Once the landowner completes the grant application, the Hungry Canyons Executive Committee will review it. Points are awarded to each application according to a system.

Only a limited number of projects can be funded each year. It is hoped that a variety of ideas will be put to work so that landowners can get a better idea of what will work.

The projects might include grade control structures such as sheet-pile weirs, h-pile crib structures, rock sills, on-road structures, gabions and flumes. Non-structure ideas such as vegetative or soil bio-engineering techniques will also be considered.

For Dennis Gaul the program was an opportunity to do something about a problem that had been eroding his fields for years.

He has approached the NRCS office in Harlan three years ago looking for ideas. He said he was willing to take a risk to solve the problem and he is optimistic that his structures will help him cut back on the erosion.

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No-till plot planned

by Bill Hammitt

Soil Conservation Technician Van Diest Supply Company of Harlan is cooperating with a four-county no-till steering committee to sponsor herbicide comparison plot near their warehouse in Harlan.

In order to help promote more no-till acres in Shelby, Harrison and Pottawattamie counties the plots will help producers analyze and compare various new weed control products for no-till corn and soybean production.

Both conservation tillage and no-till applications of weed control products will be used to give producers a comparison of the two systems.

A summer tour is planned as well as a winter meeting for producers.

Shelby County SWCD activities for 1999

The Shelby County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners held 12 regular monthly meetings and 1 special meeting during 1999.

Meeting announcements are made through the media. Regular meetings are held the fourth Thursday of every month at the district office. Throughout the year the Commissioners made approvals and administered State Cost-Share funds.

January – Officers of the board elected: Donald Bladt, Chairperson; Wayne Krohn, Vice-Chairperson; and Joann Schulte, Secretary/Treasurer. Appointed Cyrus Monson, Wayne Hansen, Michael Leinen, Barry Deuel and Joe Reischl as assistant commissioners. A meeting for contractors held.

February – Annual Plan of Work approved by board. Annual Report published. Annual meeting of Quad District Newsletter attended. Upper Mosquito Watershed meeting held. Paid National and State dues.

March – Donated \$50 to the Iowa Envirothon. Entered into an agreement with Pheasants Forever. NRCS/Shelby SWCD moved into new facility at 2519 Southwest Ave. Regional meeting held at Armstrong Research farm and attended by Bladt, Krohn, Wooster, Nielsen and Sharp. Received \$18,400 for spring construction of conservation practices.

April – District was notified as winner of the Goodyear/NACD Conservation Awards Program. Annual poster contest held for 3rd-5th graders in the county.

May – Outdoor classroom held for sixth graders in the county at Prairie Rose Lake.

Seventeen windbreaks planted and funded through the REAP Program. District participated in the Carbon survey.

June – Awards tour held: Wayne and Lori Petersen, Carl Petersen, Doug and Wanda Smith, Rog and Peg Ahrenholtz, H. Jay and Susan Nielsen were selected as district conservation award winners. Watershed report reviewed.

July – Received \$3,000 for 1M budget. Received \$67,480 in the IFIP cost share funds for terrace construction.

August – Received \$1,200 for 1M budget. State Soil Conservation Committee tour held in county. Received \$7,455 in the

REAP Practice Fund and \$1,892 in the REAP Forestry/Native Grasses Fund.

September – Annual Conference in Des Moines attended by Bladt, Krohn and Sharp. Received \$24,960 for fall terrace construction. Reviewed Memorandum of Understandings and reviewed Civil Rights and EEO Statements.

October – Richard & Vivian

Wooster were honored as Century Conservation Farm Family representing Shelby County at the Farm Progress Show.

November – Recognition Program held honoring award winning cooperators.

December – Regional Meeting held in Walnut with Wooster, Bladt, Krohn and Sharp in attendance.

Harrison County no-till demonstration plot planned

by Jim Sharp,
District Conservationist

In order to promote more no-till acres in Shelby, Pottawattamie and Harrison County, a no-till nitrogen demonstration plot is planned in Harrison County.

It is hoped the plot will help producers make decisions concerning the best economic application and placement of nitrogen for no-till corn.

The plot located on the Bill Hammitt farm along Highway 44, 5 and one-half miles west of Portsmouth will demonstrate fall and spring applied ammonia, spring applied liquid 28% nitrogen, N-serve and Agrotain as nitrogen stabilizes and spring tillage as well as no-till with each form of nitrogen. A summer plot tour is planned and data gathered will be publicized at a 4-county winter meeting next year.

Commissioners notes....

Friends of Soil Conservation.....

This report is prepared annually by the Shelby Soil and Water Conservation District to provide information concerning our local soil conservation program to the people of Shelby County.

As your soil and water conservation district commissioner, we are especially proud of the past year of the progress made in Shelby County on soil and water conservation work.

We urge your continued

cooperation and effort to help us do the jobs that are necessary to keep our vital resources in a highly productive condition. Our District is always ready to assist you with any conservation problem.

We would like to say THANK YOU to all the individuals, organizations, agencies, contractors, and news media for their continuing interest in furthering the conservation program.

District
Commissioners

Shelby County lists accomplishments

1999 District Accomplishments

ITEM

New cooperator	25 owners
Landowners contacted	686 contacts
Terraces	178,925 feet
Contouring	2,500 acres
Contour Buffer Strips	360 acres
Headland/Field Borders	16,700 acres
Windbreaks	17 acres
Water & Sediment Control basins	3 no.
Grassed waterways	10,075 feet

State Funds provided by the Iowa General Assembly are allocated to soil and water conservation districts by the Iowa Division of Soil and Water Conservation.

Shelby SWCD financial report

State Funds provided by the Iowa General Assembly are allocated to soil and water conservation districts by the Iowa Division of Soil and Water Conservation.

July, 1998 to June 30, 1999

Financial Statement of State Funds

1M Funds—used for commissioner's expense & office operating expenses:

Allocation	\$ 3,300.00
Reimbursements:	
Commissioners Expenses	\$ 1,688.91
Office supplies & expenses	\$ 1,611.09
Balance June 30, 1999	\$ 0.00

3M Budget July 1, 1997-98 Cost Sharing – Funds to Date

Allocation	\$129,308.49
Total obligated funds	\$129,308.49
Balance December 31, 1999	\$ 0.00

3M Budget July 1, 1998-99 Cost Sharing – Funds to Date

Allocation	\$ 93,574.26
Total obligated funds	\$ 93,277.02
Recalled December 31, 1999	\$ 297.24

3M Budget July 1, 1999-00 Cost Sharing – Funds to Date

Allocation	\$ 92,440.00
Total obligated funds	\$ 77,518.79
Balance December 31, 1999	\$ 14,921.21

REAP Practice Fund 1999

Allocation	\$ 7,026.00
Total obligated funds	\$ 4,848.44
Recalled June 30, 1999	\$ 2,177.56
Balance unobligated funds	\$ 0.00

REAP Practice Fund 2000 – funds to date

Allocation	\$ 7,455.00
Total obligated funds	\$ 4,176.75
Balance unobligated funds	\$ 3,278.25

REAP Forestry/Native Grasses 1999

Allocation	\$ 3,317.00
Total obligated funds	\$ 1,937.80
Recalled June 30, 1999	\$ 1,379.20
Balance unobligated funds	\$ 0.00

REAP Forestry/Native Grasses 2000 – funds to date

Allocation	\$ 1,892.00
Total obligated funds	\$ 1,430.25
Balance unobligated funds	\$ 461.75



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New incentives offered for continuous CRP

The United States Department of Agriculture is offering up to \$350 million in new incentives to landowners to install conservation buffers along streams, wetlands and other environmentally sensitive areas. The new financial incentives include signing bonuses and more money for installing and maintaining conservation practices.

The incentives are enhancements in the USDA's new sign-up period 22 for the continuous sign-up of the Conservation Reserve Program. Designed to protect more environmentally sensitive land, the incentives include:

1) An up-front signing bonus incentive of \$10 per acre for every full year the contract covers. This amounts to \$100 to \$150 per acre at the start of the contract to help defray up-front installation costs for filter strips, riparian buffers, grassed waterways, field windbreaks, shelter

belts and living snow fences.

2) A payment incentive equal to 40 percent of the practice installation cost of all continuous CRP practices, including contour buffer strips and shallow water areas for wildlife. This is in addition to the 50 percent cost-share paid by USDA for establishing certain approved practices.

3) Increases in maintenance rate incentives for certain practices involving tree planting, fencing or water development. Marginal pastureland rental rates nationwide were updated to better reflect the market value of these lands. In most cases rental rates in Iowa increased slightly with the update.

4) An increase of 20 percent on the average widths of filter strips and riparian buffers to allow farmers to square off field and buffer boundaries for more efficient farming.

"We're pleased to have more

incentives to attract more farmers to the program," says Leroy Brown, state conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service. "Iowa farmers lead the country in acres of buffers and number of contracts in the continuous sign-up of CRP, but we have thousands of miles of streams that can be improved with buffers and at the same time offer very fair incentives to farmers," Brown says.

More than 25,000 Iowa landowners have entered more than 195,000 acres into the program, Brown says he also welcomes new funding for buffers from the state of Iowa as part of the state's \$11.2 million water quality initiative passed by the Iowa Legislature.

Sign-up 22 began April 6 and will continue through Sept. 30. Up to \$100 million will be provided in signing and practices bonuses in the current sign-up, with \$125 million each in fiscal years 2001 and 2002, says

Bob Soukup, State Executive Director for the USDA Farm Service Agency in Iowa. The FSA makes conservation buffer payments to landowners.

"Unlike the regular CRP program, the continuous sign-up program allows producers to enroll eligible highly environmentally sensitive land at any time, without waiting for a sign-up period or competing against other offers," says Soukup, "and we're encouraging landowners to consider buffers as part of their conservation system."

Conservation buffers protect streams and rivers by keeping sediment and nutrients from entering the water, providing cleaner drinking water, enhancing recreation and improving wildlife habitats.

Landowners with questions and interest should contact their local NRCS or FSA office at their local USDA service center. More details on the new buffer rules are available on the Internet at <http://fb-net.org/ccrp/>



Terrace removal policies are set

The following regulations are the West Pottawattamie SWCD rules for removing terraces:

1) Applications to remove terraces need to be in writing with the legal description, plat, aerial photo locating terraces, estimate of footage to be removed, explanation of why the terraces are being removed, and what will be done during construction as well as in the end product to control soil erosion in a manner equal to or greater than that provided by the terraces.

2) To prevent delays, applicant may wish to attend the commissioners meeting to present request for terrace removal and address any questions the commissioners may have.

3) The commissioners will try to have an answer for the applicant within 40 days of application being made. (Commissioners meet the second to the last Wednesday of each month.) The applicant will be notified of the commissioners' decision in writing. The 40 days may be extended if more information is needed.

4) 100% of all cost-share received will be paid before any terraces are removed and regardless of what the final product is. In special circumstances, the commissioners may approve removal of a small portion of a terrace prior to cost-share payback.

5) If any portion of a terrace is removed, cost-share will be paid back on the entire terrace.

6) In situations where there may be many future owners (i.e. housing developments) all cost-share on all terraces will be repaid, even if they are not removed at the current time.

7) Erosion has to be controlled during construction as described under Land Treatment Policy: Soil Loss Limits.

8) The final product will provide equal or better protection to the soil than the terraces.

9) Disturbed ground will not be left bare for longer than 21 days. Seeding should be completed immediately after final grading. If building delays prevent final grading activities, a cover crop such as oats or rye grass should be established.

The commissioners have the right at any time to deny the request to remove terraces.

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**WE SUPPORT YOUR SOIL
CONSERVATION EFFORTS!**

CHARTING A COURSE TOWARD OPTIMUM YIELD



Grid mapping is one of modern farming's most important new technologies. And no one knows how to make it pay off for your farming operation better than your local FS Crop Specialist. Using the FS GREEN PLAN®, he'll help you to analyze vital cropping data -- from soil sampling to yield monitoring -- in order to provide you with accurate, site-specific recommendations. Give your FS Crop Specialist a call today, and start charting your course toward optimum yield and maximum profits.

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