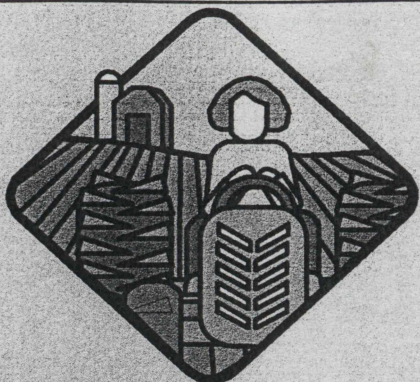




Soil & Water Conservation Update

Dickinson SWCD ~ Spirit Lake, IA ~ (712) 336-3782 Ext 3

January 1999

Conservation tillage saves soil, oil and toil.

Conservation tillage (no-till, ridge-plant, and mulch-till) is any tillage or planting system that maintains a residue cover on at least 30% of the soil surface after planting to reduce soil erosion by water.

Attitudes toward no-till have improved dramatically in recent years. Today's farmers recognize crop stubble and residue in the field as a sign of an efficient conservation and profit minded farmer. For many farmers, no-till is a practical and affordable way to comply with the conservation compliance provisions of the Food Security Act.

A common misconception is that no-till and other forms of conservation tillage require more chemicals than conventional tillage and potentially cause more water quality problems. The facts are, however, that fertilizer & and pesticide use is very similar regardless of the tillage system used. Label rates of most commonly used products do not increase because of no-till or increased residue.

Residue that stands over the winter provides increased snow storage and moisture conservation along with feed and shelter for many wildlife species. Lower rates of soil and water runoff into streams, lakes and rivers are also 'off-site' benefits of conservation tillage.

Savings in time, improved wildlife habitat and 'off-site' environmental benefits are important. But, the primary benefits of conservation tillage are that it combats soil erosion and provides economic advantages to farmers. The increased productivity and profitability makes conservation tillage a good investment in America's future.

One-time, conservation tillage financial incentives are available from the Dickinson SWCD on a first-come-first-served basis. This program offers \$10/acre on a maximum of 80 acres (\$800) per farmer.

Stop in today for additional information or to sign up for this incentive payment.

District Commissioners

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Bill Northey — Vice Chair
Keith Van Kleek — Secretary
Orville Berg — Treasurer
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District Mission Statement

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

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Trees add beauty and so much more.

In your backyard

Trees planted in your backyard can be home to many

different types of wildlife. Trees can also reduce your heating and cooling costs, help clean the air, add beauty and color, provide shelter from the wind and the sun, and add value to your home.

On the farm

Windbreaks and tree plantings slow the wind and provide shelter and food for wildlife.

Trees can shelter livestock and crops; they are used as barriers to slow winds that blow across large cropped fields and through farmsteads. Windbreaks can also be beneficial in reducing blowing and drifting snow along roadways.

Choosing a tree

Choosing a tree should be a well thought-out decision. Proper selection can provide you with years of enjoyment as well as a significant increase in the value of your property. Some questions to consider in selecting a tree include:

- 🌲 What purpose will this tree serve?
- 🌲 Does it have any disease problems?
- 🌲 How big will it get?

BACKYARD CONSERVATION

It'll grow on you.

Placement of trees

Proper placement of trees is critical for your enjoyment and their survival.

Before planting your trees, consider their

ultimate size, will they be too near to your house or other structures? Will they cause problems for buried or overhead utilities?

Planting a tree

A properly planted and maintained tree will grow faster and live longer than one that is incorrectly planted. In our area, planting prior to May 15 is best. Before digging, call your local utilities to identify the location of any underground utilities. Place tree in a hole deep enough to completely cover the roots, but to not set them in too deeply. As you add soil to fill in around the tree be sure to press soil in to collapse air pockets. Form a temporary basin to encourage water penetration and water tree thoroughly and then mulch around the tree. Continue to water trees as needed for the first 2 years.

If you would like additional information about Tree Planting stop in at the District office to pick up a tip sheet.

Nutrient Management Improves Water Quality

The following steps reduce the potential for nutrients going unused and washing/filtering into the water supplies:

- ◆ Choose the best application method - use broadcast starter, surface band, irrigation or injection
- ◆ Use a late spring nitrogen test, when corn plants are 6-12" tall
- ◆ Refrain from applying nitrogen in the fall except if the nitrogen is associated with potassium applications
- ◆ Avoid applying manure on frozen or snow-covered ground if possible
- ◆ Test soils once every 3 years



**1999
Tree Sale**

**Be sure to check out the flier
enclosed with this newsletter.**

Any questions???
Call Kim at 336-3616

Conservation Filter Strips

Grass filter strips help reduce levels of pesticides, sediment, crop nutrients and other chemicals from entering our surface waters. They also provide excellent wildlife habitat, and are a good food source for wildlife. Properly functioning filter strips also hold more carbon than annually cropped fields or cool-season narrow grass strips. The Continuous Conservation Reserve Program includes grass filter strips as a practice. These are 66' - 99' wide grass strips which are seeded along streams and water bodies. Native grasses provide the best filtering capacity and wildlife habitat.

During the past 50 or more years many of the natural riparian and prairie grass areas along our streams have been cleared and replaced by row crops, converted to heavily grazed pasture, or at best planted to narrow strips of cool-season grasses. Stewards of the soil, whether farm operators or land owners, are one group of people who have an above average affect on our surroundings. Many farmers are to be highly commended for their past efforts of preserving water quality while needing to intensify their operation in order to stay in the business. We would like to encourage you to consider the possible use of filter strips on your farm. For more information, contact the USDA Service Center at (712)336-3782 Ext. 3.

Keep your waterways working



When it comes to maintenance, waterways are one of the

conservation practices on your farm that will need some attention. The lay of the land and the amount of runoff determine how the water runs down a waterway. That means that there is a constant cut and fill process that will cause the grassed area to fill with sediment. This in turn causes gullies to cut down the edges. Gullies also form when water gets moving too fast and begins to gouge out the center of the waterway.

A waterway that operates correctly can reduce the amount of soil carried off the field and into road ditches and streams. A correctly shaped waterway has a parabolic or bowl shape. When you see gullies starting down the side of the grassed area

or a ditch etched out of the middle, it's time to do a little repair work.

Waterways cover about 100,000 acres in Iowa. Some are doing a great job of reducing erosion where gullies usually form during heavy rains, and other are merely patches of grass on the field — doing little to keep the topsoil on the field.

If you have a waterway that needs improvement and isn't currently under a maintenance agreement you may be eligible for cost-share or the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program. Stop in at the USDA Service Center to discuss this opportunity further.

USDA Environmental Quality Improvement Cost-share Sign-up Announced

The USDA has announced a sign-up period of January 25 thru February 5 for landowners who want to apply for cost-share funds from the Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP).

"The sign-up is for the program's statewide resource concerns," says Leroy Brown, State Conservation for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. "We also have 52 local EQIP priority areas that will have their own separate sign-ups and practices." Dickinson County has 3 of the local priority areas: Iowa Great Lakes, Silver Lake and the Little Sioux River watersheds.

The intent of EQIP is to get the maximum conservation protection for the funds expended. EQIP offers cost-share (generally 50%) for installing conservation practices, as well as incentive payments. Applications received during the sign-up will be in the first group to be considered for funding, and based on the fund demand in previous sign-ups there will likely be only one sign-up period in 1999. Funds will be available for the following resource concerns:

- * livestock manure management and grazing lands
- * soil erosion
- * priority lakes, municipal water supply impoundments and lakes, DNR priority cold water streams and agricultural drainage wells

Any land outside of the Dickinson County EQIP Priority Areas would be eligible for this 'statewide resource concerns' sign-up. If you are interested in applying conservation practices, please stop in at your local USDA Service Center for sign-up information.

US Department of Agriculture
Dickinson SWCD
2412 17th St
Spirit Lake IA 51360

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1999 Tree Sale
flier enclosed!

