

Fayette SWCD Fayette SWCD Report

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Flooding makes for a challenging year!



Photos show water damage in the upper reaches of the Volga River during the flood of 2008.

Fayette SWCD Annual Report



Fayette Co. Soil and Water District Commissioners

The Fayette County Soil and Water District Commissioners are pictured above. Front row- Richard Jensen, Assistant Commissioner- Rod Marlatt and John Grafenberg. Back row- William Bennett, Paul Hoeger and Collin Jensen. Absent from photo were- Assistant Commissioners- Judy Bennett, Deb Dessel, and Dorothy Jensen.



West Union Field Office Employees

The West Union Field Office Employees are pictured above. Front row- Ray Drewelow, Lori Kohlmeyer and LaVonne Koch. Back row- Jerry Muff, Carrie Davis and Lucas Frobish. Absent from photo was Eric Boehm

Identification Statement

The Fayette Soil & Water Conservation District's Annual Report
Published by the Fayette SWCD, Hwy. 150, 120 N. Industrial Pkwy. West Union, IA
52175. Issue No. 10

Leave your own mark

By: West Union NRCS staff



This past summer, Fayette County lost one of its native sons and longtime conservationists with the passing of Alan Crowe on July 13th, 2008. Alan John Crowe, "Al", was born and raised in West Union, graduated from North Fayette High School in 1965, then proceeded to the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point in pursuit of a degree. Those who knew Al remember his love of the great outdoors; to say he enjoyed camping or fishing may have been an understatement! Al spent part of his early adult life working in both the timber and fishing industries in Oregon and Alaska. Those early experiences certainly helped to further shape and mold Al's conservation ethic, which he ultimately put to good use right back here at home.

For over seventeen years, Al was a dedicated employee of the Iowa Department of Agriculture here in Fayette County. He got his start shortly after the enactment of the 1985 Farm Bill and spent many hours working with farmers and landowners to complete the initial round of Highly Erodible Land determinations. As a Soil Conservation Technician, Al was then the coordinator of one of the first modern watershed projects within the state: Glovers Creek. Al's passion and enthusiasm for conservation work was expressed in his 1994 final report on the Glovers Creek project. He wrote:

"I hope everyone in the community appreciates all the work that has been accomplished (within Glovers Creek). I know I do! Glovers Creek has always been special to me. I was born and raised with-

in the boundaries of this watershed and, as a child, I spent hundreds of hours fishing and playing in Glovers Creek. Back in the late 1950's it was not unusual to catch native trout 16 to 18 inches long - real beauties capable of busting 4 lb.-test fishing line! And the water was clear, cold, and deep... In 1965 I moved out of the state, not to return until 20 years later. One of the first things I did upon my return was to grab the old fishing rod and head out to the creek. What I saw truly shocked me! The stream has changed dramatically - it was not nearly as deep or as clear and the native trout were gone. I asked myself 'What happened? How could this have changed so quickly?'

Coworkers and Soil & Water Commissioners remember Al as being accurate, organized, and consistent in his work. For many years he was the primary grassed waterway technician in Fayette County. This is perhaps a bit ironic given that grassed waterways are credited with trapping 25% of the sediment load from agricultural runoff, thus significantly reducing sediment delivery to high quality, unique water bodies like Glovers Creek. Al's friendly demeanor, personal passion for and satisfaction of contributing to conservation implementation was, and remains to be, an invaluable asset to the people of Fayette County.

The great thing about conservation work is that the result of our collaborative efforts can be readily seen as lines on the landscape. Furthermore, it is said that each of us will "leave a mark" on this world in some way, shape, or form. Take a look across your farm, cast a line into Glovers Creek, or go for a drive through the hills and valleys of Fayette County... chances are, you'll see one of Al's.

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SWCD ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT

July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008

District Revolving Fund

Beginning Balance \$1,597.36

Receipts

Fabric Income	\$237.57
Money Market Transfers – IM Funds	\$2,124.81
Money Market Transfers	\$7,708.37
No-Till Income	\$50.00
Pop Can Refund	\$4.60
Regional Meeting Income	\$380.00
Soil Disk	\$42.80
Supporter Club	\$893.80
Tree Sales	\$7,272.80
Total Receipts	\$18,714.75
TOTAL	\$20,312.11

Expenses

ATV	\$775.10
Bank Charge	\$1.23
Checks Printed	\$11.50
Computer	\$144.88
Education	\$1,668.33
Fabric Machine	\$1,723.37
Gifts Given	\$150.00
GPS	\$24.26
Houq Property	\$851.04
IM Commissioner	\$1,887.18
IM Office	\$237.63
Meeting Expenses	\$910.63
Mink Creek	\$1,578.85
Office Supplies	\$2,812.16
Postage	\$712.37
Trees	\$4,746.79
Total Expenses	\$18,235.32
Ending Balance 6/30/08	\$2,076.79

FINANCIAL REPORT OF STATE FUNDS

July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008

IM Budget Allocation	\$2,124.81
Commissioner Expenses	\$1,887.18
Office Expenses	\$237.63
FY 2008 STATE COST-SHARE FUNDS	
Cost-Share Allocation	\$81,382.31
Obligated	\$57,044.83
Spent	\$18,839.10
Balance	\$5,498.38
REAP Forestry/Native Grasses Allocation	\$9,201.00
Obligated	\$6,150.00
Spent	\$2,580.00
Balance	\$471.00
REAP Practices Allocation	\$25,503.87
Obligated	\$14,411.25
Spent	\$11,092.62
Balance	\$0.00
Mink Creek WPF Funds Allocation	\$97,843.31
Obligated	\$33,691.55
Spent	\$50,644.69
Balance	\$13,507.07
Nutting Creek WSPF Funds Allocation	\$77,975.00
Obligated	\$8,121.75
Spent	\$0.00
Balance	\$69,853.25

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2008 Accomplishments

Practice No	Practice	Acres/Feet/Number
100	Conservation Nutrient Management Plan	1
313	Waste Storage Facility	5
329	Residue & Tillage Management No-Till	3203 ac
330	Contour Farming	582 ac
332	Contour Buffer strips	153 ac
338	Prescribed Burning	12 ac
380	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment	650 ft
382	Fencing	14,708 ft
391	Riparian Buffer	21.2 ac
393	Filter Strip	123.3 ac
410	Grade Stabilization Structure	5
412	Grassed Waterway	80 ac
511	Forage Harvest Management	434 ac
512	Pasture & Hay Planting	32 ac
516	Pipeline	2000 ft
528	Prescribed Grazing	236 ac
558	Roof Runoff Structure	2
590	Nutrient Management	1483 ac
600	Terraces	21,817 ft
612	Tree/Shrub Planting	49 ac
614	Watering Facility	7
638	Water & Sediment Control Basin	2
657	Wetland Restoration	26 ac
666	Timber Stand Improvement	186 ac
	CRP in SAFE Gaining Ground	797 ac
	CRP in SAFE Neotropical Migratory Birds	5 ac
	CRP in SAFE Hardwood Tree Planting	40 ac
	Total CRP Enrolled in 2008	980 ac

Challenges bring opportunities

By: James Gillespie
Bureau Chief

Well, what can we say about what happened this past year? Who would have guessed we would have had the weather we all experienced, the damage it caused and how it impacted both rural and urban areas?

We saw record snowfall in parts of northeast Iowa and heavy rainfalls across most of the state all summer. This was the fourth wettest year on record in 135 years of recordkeeping. All but one county was declared a disaster area by either the Governor of Iowa or the President of the United States.

Damages to conservation practices totaled over \$40 million dollars. 2,284,000 acres suffered erosion of 20 tons per acre or more, and there were 636,000 acres of bottomland scouring. Numerous sites suffered infrastructure damage and homes and businesses were flooded. A lot of these damages are still out there and are in need of financial and technical resources to help repair and restore.

As a community, rural and urban, we need to think about our actions and their consequences. The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and our conservation partners are committed to building a "Culture of Conservation" across the state. We all need to consider our "footprint" on the Iowa landscape. Evaluate the land use for current and future needs and wants. There is a reason a floodplain is called a floodplain; it is prone to flooding. We must all manage the land as consistently as possible to its natural capabilities. We cannot expect the land to produce more than it is reasonably able to nor should it be used in ways that do not maintain soil quality and provide conservation benefits. Consider your "hydrologic footprint"; what happens to the rainfall that lands on your property? We should try to absorb as much as possible to slow runoff to minimize flooding and improve water quality.

Contact your local soil and water conservation district to discuss these challenges and take advantage of opportunities to reduce these types of resource concerns in the future. Iowans have taken great pride in protecting the resources of this state. Let us continue to build a "Culture of Conservation" that will sustain us in the future. Thank you for what you do and what you can do!

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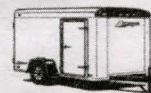


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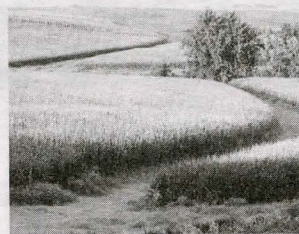


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Fun forestry facts!

By Greg Heidebrink
Assistant District Forester

Each year the District Foresters are asked if they would like to submit an article about forestry issues for their Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Annual Report. When we do submit an article, we try to cover a topic that is at the forefront of forestry for that year. This may include the loss of oak in Northeast Iowa, Gypsy moths, Emerald ash borers, oak wilt. This year, I thought I would try to cover some of the fun stuff!

How many trees do we have in the United States?

- The United States has approximately 8% of the world's forests (750 million acres). This makes the US, the 4 largest forest rich country in the world.
- 57% of the woodlands in the United States are privately owned. The other 43% is local, state or federally owned.
- 53% of the lumber harvested in the US goes to lumber, 32% goes to pulp, 7% to veneer/ply-

wood and 7% to fuel wood.

- 20% of the US forests are under some type of conservation program. The world's average is 11%.

What do trees do for us?

- Having shade trees around your house can decrease your air conditioning cost by 30%.
- A single tree can absorb up to 48 lbs of carbon dioxide CO2 per year. This same tree can produce enough Oxygen to support 2 humans per year.

Why do leaves change color?

Leaves are the trees kitchen. They turn water, carbon dioxide and sunlight in to food (glucose) through photosynthesis. Chlorophyll is a green substance that helps with this food production. Chlorophyll is what makes the leaves green in the summer. As the tree moves into fall and food production is slowed down and eventually stopped, the production of chlorophyll is stopped. The leaves then turn to their natural colors like yellow and orange.

What type of products can you produce from 1 cord of wood?

The dimension of a cord of wood is 4'x4'x8'.

- 12 dining room tables sets (seating 8)
- 30 rocking chairs
- 942 one pound books
- 1000 to 2000 pounds of paper
- 61,370 standard (#10) envelopes
- 460,000 personal checks
- 4,384,000 Postage stamps
- 7,500,000 toothpicks

It takes approximately 20 cords of wood to build an 1800 square foot home.

"Greg's favorites"!

- The oldest living tree in the United States is approximately 4867 years old. The tree is a bristlecone pine named Methuselah in Great Basin National Park, California.
- Depending on how you look at it, a Quaking aspen clone named Pando in Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah, may be the oldest living tree(s). The 47,000

trees growing from this 106 acre clone average 130 years old, but the root system that these trees are growing from is estimated to be over 80,000 years old.

- The oldest workable wood in the world is the Ancient Kauri trees from New Zealand. These trees have been buried in peat moss since the last ice age and are approximately 30,000 to 50,000 years old or older. Some of the trees are 40 feet in circumference. That's almost 13 feet in diameter! The tree with the biggest diameter is a Montezuma Cypress in Mexico. Its diameter is 37 feet 6 inches in diameter.

- The world's largest tree is a Redwood in California named "Hyperion". It is 379 feet 1.5 inches tall.

- The world's largest forest is in Russia (Siberia) and is 2.7 billion acres.

- In the US it takes approximately 57 million trees to produce the catalogs that are made.

- Bamboo is not a tree.

- The most recently discovered tree is the Wollemi Pine in Australia. This tree was discovered in 1994 in Wollemi National park.

- The name Ironwood is a slang name for the hardest wood in an area or region. There are over 80 species worldwide that are called Ironwood.

- Sugar pine has the largest pine cone. 12 to 24 inches long and 5 inches in diameter.

- Ginkgo is the world's oldest living tree species. It was around when the dinosaurs walked the earth 135 to 210 million years ago.

- And last but not least, trees DO NOT grow up out of the ground. So, the branch that you have to mow under now, will still be at that height in 10 years. If trees did grow up out of the ground, all of the pasture fences attached to trees would be 20 feet high!

Remember, a forest starts with one tree, plant yours today!

From Spring Planting



**Learn to do common things uncommonly well;
we must always keep in mind that anything that
helps fill the dinner pail...is valuable.**

- George Washington Carver



to Fall Harvest

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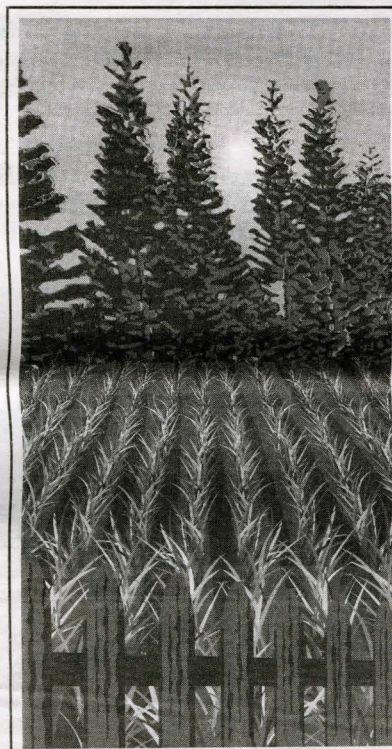
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New CRP program promotes habitat for ruffed grouse

By Greg Schmitt
DNR Biologist

Landowners in Northeast Iowa have a unique opportunity to reverse the downward population trend of Ruffed Grouse, Woodcock, and many types of migrating songbirds. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is offering a new Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) targeted at Early Successional Forest Species such as Ruffed Grouse.

The State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE), or Early Successional Habitat program, is meant to develop CRP habitat on marginal crop ground that will provide specific food, nesting and cover needs required by numerous bird species that are showing nationwide decline. Early successional forest habitat is a very young forest, or edge habitat, characterized by a dense growth of

saplings and shrubs. Periodic cutting is necessary to maintain this type of habitat. Aspen stands, for example, will die out if they aren't cut every 15 to 20 years.

Oak and Aspen are the preferred tree species for this practice. The oak will be left to grow to maturity to provide food for many species of wildlife, and the aspen will be cut to maintain dense, early successional growth for grouse and songbirds. Shrubs and a narrow grass buffer can also be implemented to maximize sunlight and nutrients next to existing crop ground.

Early Successional SAFE has many of the bonuses that other Continuous CRP programs offer, including a Signup Incentive Payment of \$100 an acre, up to 90% cost share to establish the desired habitat, and an annual rental payment for 10 or 15 years.

Greg Schmitt, DNR Private

Lands Biologist for northeast Iowa says, "If anyone wants to plant trees on their marginal cropland and get paid to do it, this program is perfect for them. With the sign-up incentive, the cost share rates, and annual payment on poorer crop ground, it pencils out very well for a landowner's bottom dollar."

There is no Highly Erodible Land index requirement or a maximum amount for acres offered in Early Successional SAFE.

Producers in Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette and Winneshiek counties in Iowa can submit offers to enroll cropland acres for 10 to 15 years. To be eligible for this sign-up, land must meet basic CRP eligibility requirements. CRP rental rates increased in October, 2008.

For more information, contact Greg Schmitt at 563-422-6201, your district forester, or your local FSA office.

What type of tater are you?

By: Dick Jensen

As spring is our next season and that inspires my thoughts of sunshine, rain and planting in the soil, I think of potatoes. Not many folks grow their own but nearly everyone did in past years. Can you even make a meal without some form of the lowly potato? It is the staple food for most of mankind and shares with bread as one of the basic food items on our tables.

The potato is often called "tater" and can be used in so many various ways. With a small serving of imagination they can even be used to nourish our conservation education efforts. What variety of the versatile tater do you serve?

1. Spec-taters are folks who sit by and watch their soil erode away but won't come to the NRCS office for assistance to prevent it.

2. Dick-taters are folks who wage an economic self interest system of land use owing no obligation or responsibility to anyone.

3. Hezzy-taters are folks who see the need of better land use and know of proven remedies but continue to sit and watch, hoping for the best weather.

4. Commen-taters are land us-

ers who are vocal and opinionated about environmental issues but lack the ethical obligation that proves they really care.

5. Medi-taters are folks who are well-educated and consider/contemplate the welfare of the land but do little that makes a difference.

6. Emma-taters are land users that every year they continue to measure the value of soil by the tonnage and poundage of crop that it produces.

7. Facili-taters are folks who work at your NRCS office wanting to assist you with any and all of your soil loss problems and offer cost-sharing programs as an incentive.

8. Adgie-taters are folks who find fault and ridicule others who display affection and respect for the natural world. They do not feel that human activities have adverse environmental impact.

9. Sweet-taters are the best variety grown anywhere. They are folks that understand and accept their ethical obligation to preserve and protect the landscape for the next generation. They choose to exist in harmony with nature knowing that life depends upon it.



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Iowa farmland values continue to increase

According to the recently released 2008 Iowa State University annual land survey, Iowa farmland values increased for the ninth consecutive year. Iowa farmland values rose 14 percent to an average of nearly \$4,500 an acre. This puts the total value of Iowa's farmland at nearly \$100 billion.



Rich Sims

and crop rotations help improve the quality of the soil. Other practices like contour farming, strip cropping, contour buffer strips and grassed waterways, help keep soil in place and prevent soil-quality damaging erosion.

Just like financial advisers and stock brokers, there is a team of natural resources conservation professionals which can advise Iowa landowners how to best protect their land investments. As the State Conservationist of the USDA-Natu-

ral Resources Conservation Service, I am just one member of that team. Local soil and water conservation districts are another valuable member of the team.

I look forward to another year of working together with you and other members of the Iowa Conservation Partnership, as we help Iowa landowners protect their investment by installing conservation practices that help improve soil quality and prevent soil erosion.

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Two ways to get more from your pasture

By: James Ranum

Are your pastures producing what they should? If not, what is limiting them? For most pastures it is weed competition or grazing utilization. For many pastures weed control can be the most economical way to improve your pasture. For every pound of non palatable weed growth you have lost the potential to produce a pound that livestock will consume. Unpalatable broadleaf weeds and brush make up most of the problem. Many, such as Canada thistle, spread by seed and rhizomes making dense patches where the

livestock cannot get to the desirable plants.

Open pastures that can be mowed or sprayed are the place to start. Whether you mow, spot spray, or treat the entire pasture will depend on the severity of the weed competition. Cost effective herbicides are available that are environmentally friendly, applied at low rates and can be purchased without an applicator's license. Many pastures could easily produce an extra half ton or more of high quality forage for less than \$30/acre. This can replace the need to purchase supplemental hay

which will cost more than twice the cost of treating.

The second way to get more from your pasture is to increase the utilization rate. In a large continuously grazed pasture livestock only consume 35 to 40 percent of the total forage grown. One of the main reasons for the lost utilization is caused by livestock traveling too far for water. When livestock have to travel greater than 1000 ft. from the farthest point in the pasture they over utilize the forage close to the water source and under utilize the farthest reaches. The back part of the pasture gets over mature and

when the livestock do get there they avoid the over grown grasses. A research study found that a 160 acre pasture only produced the equivalent of 130 acres of grazing when the livestock traveled over 1/4 mile to water. Providing water to within 800 feet of the farthest reaches would have increased pasture yield by almost 20 percent.

There are many ways to provide additional watering locations in a pasture. When possible the lowest

cost is to run a high density polyethylene water line from a well. A 1/4 mile of line will cost less than \$700. Other options are various types of pumps with holding tanks, ponds, spring developments or for isolated pastures, hauling water.

Technical assistance and potential cost share for pasture improvements is available from your local NRCS office. Contact them at (563) 568-2246 for further information.

Wetland laws and your farm

Submitted by: NRCS

Increasing corn and bean prices have stimulated producer's interest in tiling, clearing trees, and plowing up pastureland in hopes of farming more acres. Wetland laws of the 1985 Farm Bill have not changed significantly over the years. In order to maintain compliance for your USDA farm program payment you must contact the Farm Service Agency (FSA) prior to any new tile activities, clearing of trees, land leveling, and/or filling.

We recommend that anytime you are completing any of the

above activities that you contact FSA and fill out the appropriate paperwork, a 1026 Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification worksheet, frequently called a 1026 application.

The FSA will file your application and send the 1026 to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for review. The NRCS will look at historic aerial photos, soil maps, and conduct a field visit of the site in order to determine whether the area is in fact a wetland or if there are any wetland violations.

Placing tile near or through a wetland, removing stumps from a wetland, tiling a pasture wetland, and/or plowing pasture wetland could jeopardize all your USDA program payments and a person could be subject to fines from the Corps of Engineers.

In order to determine whether you have a certified wetland determination completed on your farm fields or you want a certified determination completed, please contact the Fayette County NRCS office at 563-422-3868 Ext 3 or stop in the office to review your file.

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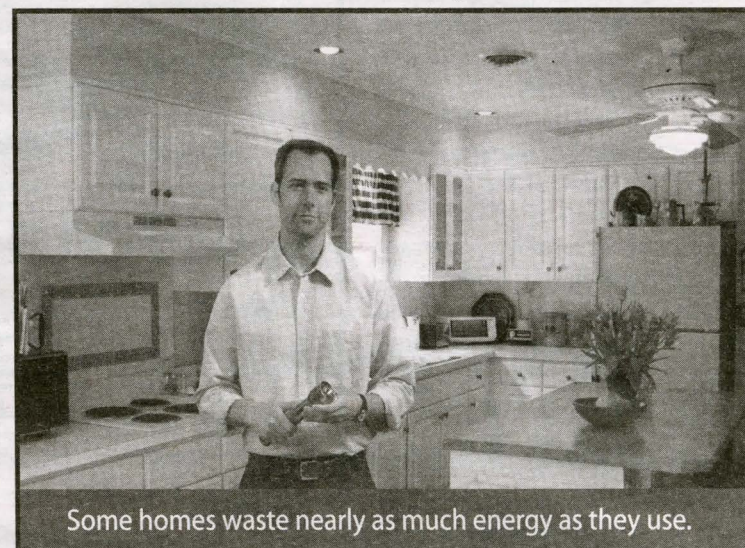
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Nutting Creek watershed project

Carrie Davis

Project Coordinator

The Fayette SWCD has successfully applied for a watershed project grant for the Nutting Creek Watershed. Nutting Creek is a 17,246 acre watershed located in northern Fayette and southern Winneshiek counties. A watershed is the area of land that drains into a particular stream, lake, river, or ocean. This project is designed to be a three-year project intended to improve the water quality of Nutting Creek. Landowners and operators in this special watershed may be able to take advantage of increased cost share, up to 75%, and incentive programs to improve water quality by implementing certain conservation practices.

Nutting Creek has been listed on Iowa's 2004 303(d) list of Impaired Waters for aquatic life impairment. Recent studies conducted by the DNR TMDL staff indicate that aquatic life is not longer a limitation in the watershed; however E. coli levels have been documented as high as 730,000 colony forming units/100 ml of water after rain events. This is significantly higher than the EPA's

recommendation for body contact.

The goal of the watershed project is to improve the water quality of the stream and reverse the negative impact that fecal coliform bacteria and sediment is having on the ecosystem. The District believes these can be accomplished by promoting several cultural and structural best management practices (BMPs) that contain livestock runoff and reduce or trap sediment and manure from entering the stream.

Cultural BMPs include no-till farming, rotational grazing and nutrient management while structural practices include animal waste structures, terraces, and grade stabilization structures. These practices can reduce bacteria and sediment loads by slowing down and filtering sediment and manure laden runoff from crop fields before it reaches streams.

The Nutting Creek Watershed Project is supported in part by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation, through funding from the Watershed Protection Fund and by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through a

grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Federal Non-Point Source Management Program (Section 319 of the Clean Water Act). Technical assistance is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Individuals interested in the Nutting Creek Watershed Project can contact Carrie Davis at the Fayette County NRCS Office, 563-422-3868 ext 3.

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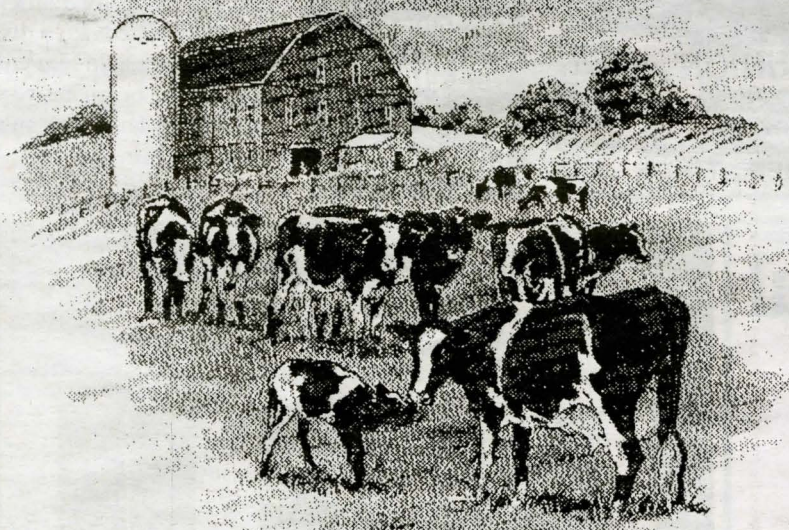
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What is a conservationist?

By Richard Jensen

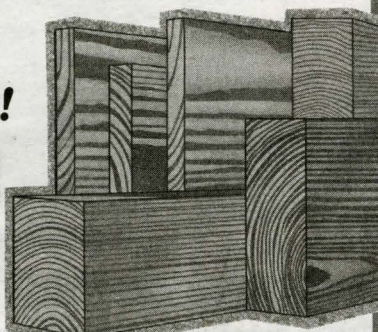
My dictionary says, "A person who wants to preserve and protect the soil, forest, water and all other natural resources." I feel that is a disservice and an injustice to those of us who are actively engaged in the protection of these natural resources. Any and all kids of wanting and wishing are not going to solve any of the environmental problems. Who wants to witness another disastrous flood that carried away tons of topsoil from unprotected fields? Who wants to watch our oak and hickory hardwood forests decline into invasive shade tolerant species and woody shrubs? Who would want our streams and rivers void of life and loaded with chemicals and garbage? There is ample evidence everywhere that good intentions and grand desires have failed to heal our wounded landscape. Apathy is nearly as beneficial as wanting and wishing.

We all need to be seriously alarmed and accept the fact that the plundering of the planet cannot continue. Man must recognize the necessity of cooperating with nature. He must temper his demands and use and conserve the natural living resources of this earth in a manner that alone can provide for the continuation of civilization. That is what a conservationist would do. The time for defiance is at an end. The NRCS office is where to get help that will enable you to be an active steward of the land that sustains our existence.

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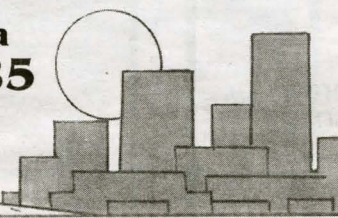
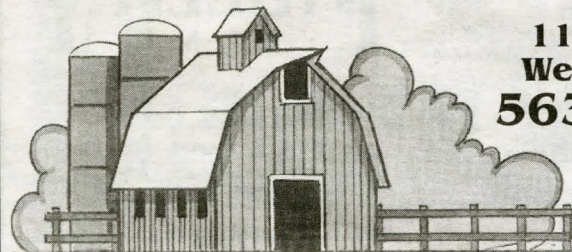
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Adams named conservation owners of the year

The Scott and Jeanie Adams family of Waucoma make time to be stewards of their land and conserve its natural beauty.

The family has been named Fayette County Conservation owners of the Year for the practices they have implemented since purchasing their farm in 1992.

"I've always had farming in my heart," he says.

When the family first moved to what would become their home, they planted several acres of trees to establish a windbreak. Now fully established, the trees shelter the farm yard from high winds and add a stunning view while driving up to the house.

Scott said his philosophy on conservation is simple.

"It took eons to form this type of soil and if you don't conserve it you'll lose everything."

The Adamses currently rotate their crops on about 750 acres. They grow 400 acres of corn, 180 of alfalfa, 150 in soybeans and the remainder is a balance of oats.

They also rent another 400 acres and raise both dairy and beef cows. Their dairy herd is now around 180 and consists mostly of Holsteins but they do have some Ayrshires, Jerseys and Swiss.

The couple had enrolled some of the more erodible land into the Conservation Reserve Program. Scott said some of the CRP acres' contracts expired and instead of re-enrolling them into the program they just converted that land to timber. The Adamses also believe strongly in no-till farming. Over 100 acres of the Adams' land is no-till.

"With no-till there's less fuel consumed which is so important these days," said Scott. "Plus it makes life so much easier for the farmer. For the land it's great because once that dirt is moved and is washed down creek then it just ends up in the Mississippi River."

For the hilly terrain, he has installed contour strips. Three years ago, the Adamses contoured all the land on the farm where his parents, Jake and Norma live, down the road. More than 200 acres of contour strips were created.

"It's not really hilly there but as much as we work those little hills we thought it was important to add the strips," said Scott.

Jerry Muff, District Conservationist with Natural Resource Conservation Services assisted the family in the project.

"They are an excellent couple," said Muff. "I've worked a lot with them over the years. They think things over. They plan, they budget. They're are very good business people."

Muff started working with the Adamses when Scott approached NRCS about receiving help controlling the manure from his dairy herd. Muff said over the years they were able to provide cost share assistance for the Adamses through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). EQIP helped provide technical assistance for the Comprehensive Nutrition Management Plan which helped turned the manure into fertilizer. NRCS also provided technical assistance for the survey and design of the manure storage facility constructed for the dairy operation.

In working with the Adamses on the CNMP, Muff began to discuss different conservation practices with Scott.

"In those discussions we talked about land use and we suggested taking advantage of the hay and forage and laying out the contour strips," said Muff.

"In that kind of topography, contouring is a very good farming practice," he said. Muff said that Adams ended up with longer rows of crops after the strips were established.

"It's amazing what they have done," said Muff. "It's a great example to others in that area of what can be done."

"These kinds of practices such as strip cropping, no till, and contour strips are very effective during these heavy rainstorms in reducing erosion. They allow over land flow and keep most of the



Scott and Jeanie Adams of Waucoma were named Fayette County Conservation Owners of the Year.

soil."

"In my opinion these storms are getting more severe and more common and we should plan as if that's going to continue," said Muff.

The Little Turkey River runs along the edge of the Adams property. Scott installed riparian buffer strips along 100 feet of the bank to help prevent erosion and seeded most of the area with the grass.

All of these efforts could not

protect the land from over flowing river waters such as the flooding that occurred this past summer. The Adams lost about 15 acres to the flooding that they could not salvage or replant. Other land was replanted with sorghum so the land would not go to waste after

the crops were washed away. He said he plans to use the sorghum as silage.

"I've never have to plant sorghum here before," said Scott. "We have lost acres to the river but it was usually too late in the season or early enough to just re-plant."

See more photos on page 25

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Scott and Jeannie Adams were presented with the conservation owners of the year at the annual Farm Bureau meeting.

Control ephemeral gullies with a grassed waterway

Grassed waterways are a good solution for controlling ephemeral gullies, which is required by conservation compliance provisions. Inspect grassed waterways annually or after unusually large storms. Promptly perform needed maintenance to prevent costly damage to the waterway.

Proper shaping, seeding and grass establishment are the keys to installing a successful grassed waterway. Seeding early enough to give the grass time to establish before heavy rains is key to establishing effective grassed waterways. To protect the new waterway from erosive rains during grass establishment, NRCS recommends using fabric checks. Without these, another ditch can form and wash out the grass seed during heavy rains.

Tips for Grassed Waterway Maintenance:

Lift equipment out of the ground before crossing the waterway. If possible, bring row crop patterns into the waterway nearly on the contour, or use it as the turn area. Don't plant end rows along the side of the waterway. When planting seed, use good quality seed and always fertilize NRCS recommendations. Inspect the area frequently for eroding areas and places that need reseeding. Repair minor rills or gullies by reshaping and reseeding. Maintain the width of the grass area when tilling and planting adjacent fields.

Avoid spraying herbicides in the waterway. Avoid driving up and down grassed waterways, especially during wet conditions. The ruts caused by tire tracks can lead to gullies. Maintain outlets to prevent gullies from forming. This may include reshaping and reseeding the outlet



The photo above was taken in the Westgate Flood in Banks Township.

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Another disaster year for rainstorms in NE Iowa

By: Jerry Muff
NRCS

A June storm took its toll again on our landscape. This time the Turkey River took the brunt of the storm's fury. While the pictures shown here gives the reader an idea of the damage, it is impossible to truly convey the actual damage which took place. I walked many of the farm fields within the Turkey River flood plain and was amazed at what had occurred. Huge sand and cobble deposits were sitting where corn or soybeans were planted. Scour holes fifteen feet deep were not uncommon. I was on one farm where we assisted the neighbor with a rip rap project approximately 10 years ago, to find a big

pile of rocks sitting practically in the middle of the river. The river bank we hoped to protect with the rip rap had all eroded away leaving a "monument" to our one time costly project. In many cases, the river had changed course and took a new path across the flood plain. Landowners had all kinds of interesting stories of what happened on their properties. The river had never been this high was a common remark. Another response was that with previous high water events, the current was never as strong and devastating as this one.

While it may seem simple to write the storm damage off as too much rain in a short period of

time, most folks in this field and related fields believe it is much more complicated. Yes, too much rain, but what is happening within the watershed (land which drains into the river)? This is probably the most significant factor because as we change the land treatment, runoff changes as well. Two hundred years ago, the watershed was in savannah or forest cover. The soil infiltration rate was many times greater than with current land use. I've heard experts say that a native prairie has virtually no runoff during the growing season. Current land use for much of the watershed under agricultural usage is managed as row crop and typically in corn and soybean

continued on page 22



The photo above was taken in the Westgate Flood in Fremont Township.



This field was devastated by the June flood. It is located on the Turkey River floodplain just north of Elgin.

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Steege's humbled to win Izaak Walton League Windbreak Award

WEST UNION – A passion for the outdoors and a desire to leave the land better than the way they'd found it propelled Ken and Susan Steege to begin planting trees and shrubs on their farm.

For five years, the Steeges have planted and maintained trees, shrubs, flowers and native grasses on three acres on the north side of their home.

This year, the Steeges' hard work was honored as they were named the 2008 Izaak Walton League Windbreak Award winners.

"It was a humbling award for something that we enjoy doing," said Ken, who owns Steege Pharmacy in West Union. "We enjoy going out there and seeing it grow, and hopefully it will be a benefit to the land."

The Steeges have lived in West Union for over 30 years and have been at their current home along Highway 56 for about 15 years.

They said the project was never intended to be a windbreak but rather a grove of trees and plants they could enjoy.

"We wanted to set aside some land for some bushes and trees for the animals and for us. We wanted to put out an area to protect the birds and wildlife and it just kind of turned into a wind break," said Susan. "Someone told us our windbreak looked nice and I said, 'What windbreak? You mean those trees and bushes?'"

The windbreak has been a work in progress for the Steeges. They started putting together a plan for the windbreak in 2002 and began the planting process in 2003. Susan said they had someone plant the initial trees and shrubs and then they've replaced and filled in as necessary.

"It really is a mixture of shrubs and trees. We did some research on the different trees," said Susan. "We really went with what would be good for the birds and animals."

The Steeges planted a variety of trees including white spruce, white oak, white pine, highbush cranberry and lilac on 1.5 acres and have another 1.5 acres of native grasses.

Because the Steeges enjoy working outside, they do all their own maintenance, including regularly mowing the windbreak and pulling the weeds by hand.

"It's very time consuming. It takes a lot of time because we don't do a lot of spraying. We pull all the weeds. It's a very physical activity," she said.

In addition to helping conserve energy and reducing wind erosion, the windbreak has provided a habitat for a variety of wildlife. Susan said they often see deer, turkeys, pheasants, birds and even a fox roaming their windbreak.

Ken said one of the most important reasons they started a windbreak was to leave the land in better condition than it was when they first bought it. They've always had flower beds surrounding the house but didn't have many trees on the land until they began planting the windbreak. Now they plant a tree each year to honor members of their family.

The Steeges said they were surprised to learn they had been named the windbreak award winners because they'd

continued on page 26

Ken and Susan Steege have 1.5 acres of trees and shrubs and another 1.5 acres of native prairie grass on their farmstead.



Ken and Susan Steege of rural West Union were named the 2008 Izaak Walton League Windbreak award winners. The Steeges planted the windbreak to benefit the land and the wildlife.



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Terry Szabo, President

Baumler earns conservation scholarship

North Fayette graduate Kristin Baumler was awarded the class of 2008 conservation scholarship.

A student at Iowa State University, Baumler is majoring in dairy science with a minor in food safety.

"My career goals are to become a successful and independent worker in the dairy industry," she said, "hopefully, working for the USDA someday."

Baumler, the daughter of Donald and Donna Baumler of West Union, said she chose her major because dairy science and food safety are compatible with working on a dairy farm.

"One of my passions is agriculture, for it is not only an occupation for me; it is a way of life. Without agriculture our towns and cities wouldn't flourish and grow."

Baumler's love for farming began at an early age. "When I was young I would love going



to my uncle's dairy farm to milk cows and feed baby calves. I don't have a farm out my back door, so I traveled miles to be surrounded by animals and nature. I found my passion for agriculture on the farm."

That passion as a young child soon turned into job opportunities as a young adult. Baumler has been employed in numerous jobs in the agriculture industry including working as a hired hand for Hei-Bri Jerseys in Alpha and Vagts Holsteins, West Union. She picked up rocks for farmers, assisted at Pro Earth Environmental reading weigh scales and has worked at her family's business, Baumler Implement.

Baumler said she will use the \$500 awarded from the conservation district towards her tuition at Iowa State.

"With today's modern technology and the world growing so fast around us, I feel it is an asset to pursue further education to gain an upper edge on my competitor. Education once obtained, is something you can never have enough of and it can never be taken away."

"I want to learn as much as I can in my field of study so I can make a difference in peoples' lives around me."

While in high school, Baumler was involved in art club, FFA, Spanish club, choral reading, band, volleyball, basketball, JOV volley-

ball and golf. During her junior year she was the North Fayette FFA chapter's treasurer and chairperson of the financial committee and ag skill development.

"This has been a rewarding experience," she said. Baumler was responsible for keeping all the financial records for her chapter including tracking the income from their annual fruit sale.

"Our chapter also has a vending machine that holds milk, fruit snacks, cookies and cheese products for students at school to purchase. My job was to purchase and stock this vending machine daily. It has proven to be a successful fundraiser for our chapter."

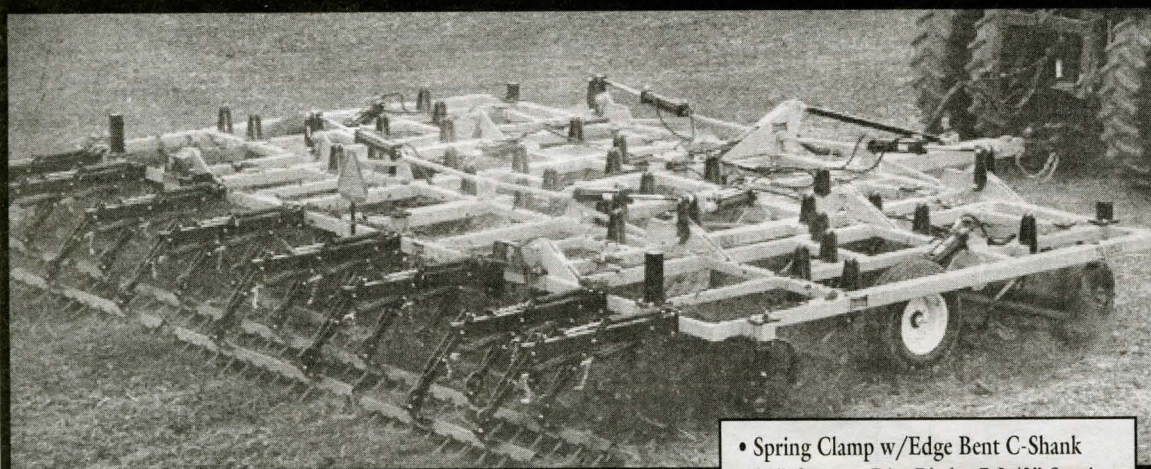
Her senior year, Baumler served as the chapter's sentinel and chairperson of the healthy lifestyle committee. In that role she helped plan a Christmas bowling party, fall camp fire, movie night, sand volleyball tournaments and a sledding party.

"I participated in FFA activities such as the Washington Leadership Convention, National Convention, state convention, Fayette County Fair, livestock judging and showing, dairy products judging, test plot, banquets and attended the Iowa Agriculture Youth Institute."

Baumler also earned the Iowa State Degree which is the second highest awarded in FFA.s



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West Union in beginning phases of "Greenscape", and what it's all about

By: Wayne Peterson
Urban Conservationist

West Union has an interest in a renovation of Vine Street. Their efforts to revitalize the downtown streetscape has led them on a quest to become a pilot project for demonstrating "green street" technology. The green street concept will incorporate sustainable water management practices that beautify the streetscape while protecting water quality in Otter Creek. Other sustainable energy concepts are also being looked into as part of the Vine Street revitalization project. The potential to make West Union a model of green streets and sustainability will hopefully demonstrate how economic development and ecological enhancement can be compatible goals that create a stronger community poised to thrive in the future.

Urban conservation is a new initiative at the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. Last year, Secretary Bill Northey created five urban conservationist positions to help SWCD's that have natural resource related concerns linked to urban and urbanizing landscapes.

Priorities that urban conservationists address include: erosion and sediment control on construction sites, adding water quality to storm water management strategies, promoting new environmentally sensitive design for new development, urban stream corridor stabilization, and helping develop

watershed projects that have urban concerns.

One of the unique aspects of urban conservation is the new approach to managing runoff from streets, parking lots, roofs, and other impervious urban surfaces. Urban conservationists are promoting practices that infiltrate of urban runoff. Historically, the native ecosystems of Iowa infiltrated almost all rainfall events and shed very little runoff. Streams and other surface waters were fed and maintained mostly by clean, cool groundwater discharge. The new storm water management strategy helps modern, urban landscapes mimic the way the historical landscapes of Iowa held and infiltrated rainfall.

Infiltration-based practices help remove pollutants that move in surface runoff and enter streams via storm sewer discharges. By infiltrating runoff, pollutants are prevented from enter storm sewers and being delivered directly to receiving streams. Infiltrating runoff also reduces the "flashiness" of stream flows – where water levels rapidly bounce up and drop back down with every runoff event. These flashy flows are a major contributor to stream corridor erosion, which can be a substantial contributor to sediment loading.

Some of the primary infiltration-based practices include permeable pavement, bio-retention (i.e. rain gardens) and soil quality restoration.

Permeable Pavement: There a number of permeable pavement alternatives (i.e. permeable paver blocks, porous asphalt, pervious concrete). Regardless of the type of pavement used, all systems will have a rock chamber and sub drain system placed below the pavement. Water percolates through the pavement and into the rock chamber, where pollutants are captured and broken down by microbes that live in a bio-film that develops on the aggregate. Water either moves down through surrounding soils and becomes groundwater flow or moves to the sub drain system and is released slowly, after being cleaned up and cooled off. In either case, the permeable pavement makes a modern landscape manage water through infiltration as if the native ecosystem were still in place.

Bioretention: Bioretention involves creation of shallow basins on the landscape located so runoff will move to them. Runoff is temporarily impounded in a bioretention cell and then infiltrated (typically within 12-24 hours). Bioretention cells involve an engineered sub grade to ensure adequate percolation rates and rapid drain down of impounded water. The surface area of the cell is determined by the size of the impervious area that is contributing runoff. Once the surface area is calculated, the area is excavated down to frost line (42" – 48"). A 12 inch deep rock chamber is placed, with a perforated drain tile embedded in the rock chamber. A sandy loam is placed over the rock cham-

ber. The sandy loam is typically a mixture of 60% washed concrete sand, 25% compost and 15% topsoil. The ponding depth is typically 6" to 9" deep. Vegetation is established to create a garden like appearance (use of adapted, deep rooted native plants is encouraged). Like permeable pavement, we want water to percolate down through the surrounding soils and become groundwater flow but if soils are compacted or altered, water will move to the tile and be slowly removed from the system. A tile outlet is essential for proper functioning of a bio-cell.

Where good, natural soils exit that have good percolation rates, you simply need to create a properly sized depressional area and perhaps amend the top six inches of soil. Where natural, well drain soils are available your bio-retention cell is technically a rain garden. Rain gardens are typically used in residential settings where roof water is managed. Bio-cells are typically installed in commercial settings with large expanses of parking lot or street runoff. Whether you use natural soils or an engineered system a rain garden or bioretention cell perform the same function – which is to infiltrate runoff for water quality and stabilization of stream flows.

Soil Quality Restoration: Soil quality restoration is recommended where landscapes have been disturbed and compacted by grading activity. When we lay sod on altered, compacted urban soils we create green space that generates runoff after a very small amount

of rainfall.

Soil quality restoration involves deep tillage to shatter compacted soils and amending soils with compost to increase organic matter content. Organic matter content is what gives the landscape the ability to absorb water. With higher organic matter content more rainfall will be absorbed before runoff starts. Absorbed rainfall needs pore space in the soil profile to move down into and through – hence the need to address compaction. Soil quality restoration will make lawns work for us and help restore a more stable hydrology in urban landscapes.

Managing runoff from small rains:

Historically, about 90% of rain has come as 1 inch rains or less. It is these small rains that transport most of the pollutants that accumulate on impervious urban surfaces. Therefore, infiltration based practices are designed to manage runoff from about a 1 inch rain. Traditionally, stormwater management has typically involved detention basins designed to provide flood control. Detention basins typically capture runoff from large rains (4 inches or more) and throttle down the rate that runoff is released. While detention basins may reduce downstream flooding, they typically provide little water quality protection and little control of stream flashiness. By adding infiltration-based storm water practices, we can add water quality protection and stabilize stream flows to traditional flood control strategies.

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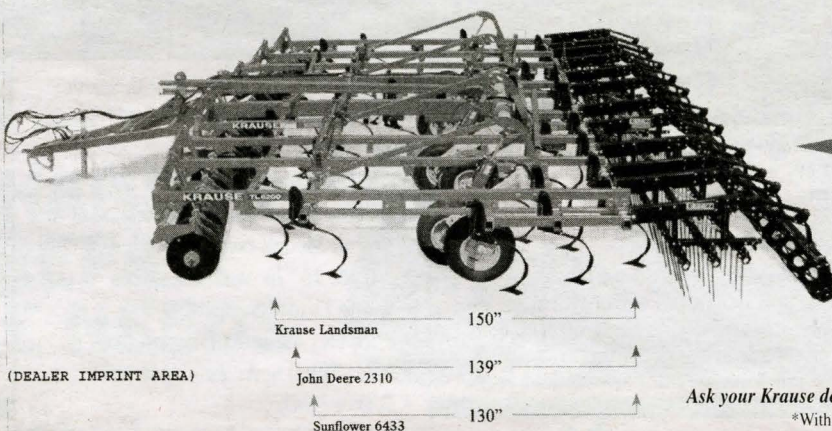
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HEL violations will cost you money

New provisions implemented with the passing of the Farm Bill Act of 2008 made significant changes to the level of penalties that are assessed against producers found with HEL (highly erodible land) violations!!

Prior to the implementation of these new farm bill changes, producers were allowed to receive a good faith determination from the FSA Committee, complete a revised conservation plan and no penalty was assessed unless it was a sodbuster violation.

The FSA Committee will no longer be able to determine Good Faith Relief for HEL violations without a \$\$\$\$ penalty being assessed. The new regulations mandate a minimum penalty of \$1000 be assessed; the maximum is

\$10,000. These penalties will be offset against any and all USDA payments (DCP, CRP, etc.) earned by the producer for the program year.

All USDA benefits are lost by the producer if the FSA Committee cannot determine good faith.

With the excess rainfall and flooding that occurred in the 2008 crop year, there are many fields with sheet and rill erosion, and/or ephemeral gullies present. Before applying ANY TILLAGE on these fields, review and discuss your options with the NRCS office. Once a HEL violation has been recorded by NRCS, it is too late to correct it for that program year!!!!

Questions regarding this notice shall be submitted to NRCS at 563-422-3868, ext. 3.

Paul and Therese Kaiser; landlord perspectives on stewardship of their land

Submitted by: Jerry Muff
District Conservationist

Paul and Therese Kaiser, West Union, own a gently rolling farm northeast of Hawkeye, IA. Although both currently enjoy retirement, Paul was formerly an administrator at NITI while Theresa was a nurse at our local hospital and clinic. Their work on the farm has evolved since they purchased it in 1974. They began by removing fences, picking up rocks, and by gradually improving drainage tile as funds allowed. With a growing family, including four children, in West Union and full-time jobs, finding the time and funds to complete projects were a challenge.

Because the Kaisers had no plans of farming themselves, they rented the farm locally.

Over the years they've been very observant and have taken a proactive approach to the management of

their farm. Paul can recall the heavy storms taking a toll on the land back when plowing or mulch tillage was being used. In the early 80's, the Kaiser's had the local NRCS lay out contour strips and grassed waterways on the farm. Grassed headlands were installed to accommodate the turning of equipment. No-till (actually strip tillage) has also been used on the farm since the early 80's. This conservation system has worked very well at reducing - practically eliminating - soil erosion from the farm. In years past, Paul will admit that they've noticed some damage to their land after the major storms swept across the country. But in comparison to other farms the Kaiser's land has fared very well. Paul acknowledges that grassed waterways do still need occasional maintenance. Paul recalls originally thinking the NRCS-designed waterway was way overdone, but can now appreciate the design having seen it flow full after big storms.

Paul and Therese are happy with their renter, Mark Jencks.

Mark works cooperatively with the Kaisers and follows through with their wishes. Nevertheless, Paul is emphatic regarding the importance of requiring conservation measures or practices in the lease agreement. He knows that the majority of agricultural land is rented and therefore the burden of protecting the land lies mostly on the owner's shoulders. Generally cropland tenants will have a short term lease, which makes it less likely that they will have long term interests in land stewardship.

Practices like no-till or strip till farming, contouring, and not allowing crop residue removal are all excellent management practices which can be addressed in landlord/tenant lease agreements. Paul finished the interview by saying that "whenever it begins to storm, we rest assured that we've done all we can practically do for the protection and conservation of our farm." What's more, since the Kaiser's have required no-till farming, they've been able to retire from picking up rocks.

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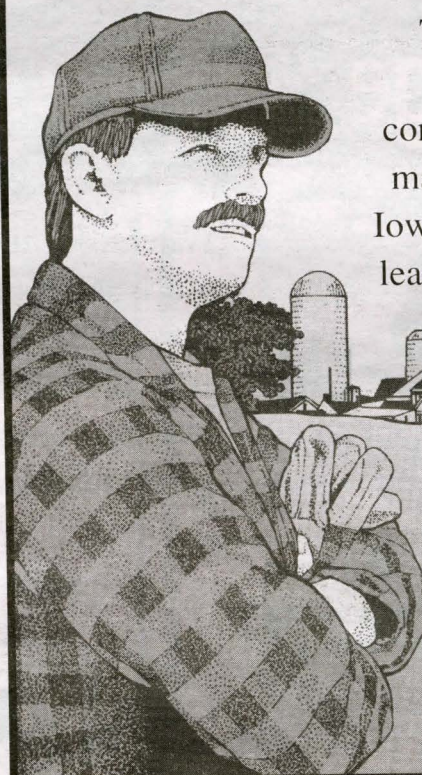
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Top soil- A nonrenewable resource

By: Dan Burkhardt
Fayette County Extension
Education Director

In case anyone has forgotten, the extraordinary rainstorms of 2008 caused catastrophic soil erosion along the floodplains of the Turkey River Basin. The damage is easy to see and was very dramatic. However, far more damage was done in a less dramatic fashion. The little rills and sheets of erosion on the uncovered uplands aren't very dramatic, but are at the very "root" of the problem.

Let's go back to the title of this article. Instead of "Topsoil, a Nonrenewable Resource", it probably should read, "When Its Gone, Its Gone Forever". Unlike oil, topsoil has no technological substitute. There is a joke that asks a farmer, "What would you do if you won a million dollars?" The farmer answers, "I will farm and farm until it's all gone." Unfortunately, some folks have the same attitude about their topsoil.

The latest "buzzword" in this country is green. Everyone wants to go green. It's a great thing to go green and be green. Recycling, shifting to fuel efficient vehicles, using less electricity, are all part

of the new "Going Green Revolution". So how do farm operators and owners go green and save topsoil at the same time? In my opinion the answer is obvious. The number one way to reduce farm energy usage and topsoil loss is to reduce tillage. No-Till farming methods have been around for many years. Twenty-five years of University Experimental Farm research proves that soybean yields are essentially the same, whether tilled or no-tilled. So why do we still chisel plow corn stalk ground? Economically No-Till methods are the proven winners in both corn and net profit per acre. We have all suffered the effects of high fuel prices. Even though we are seeing a bit of relief at this time, the higher prices will be back sooner or later. The use of available conservation practices will save soil, but why not save fuel and soil at the same time? We have several Fayette county farm operators that have been using no-till farming methods for over 22 years. They stand ready to help others make the shift to no-till farming. All you have to do is ask. Let's reduce our dependence on foreign oil, let's "Grow Green"!

Benefits of urban rain gardens

By: Carrie Davis

Rain gardens are just what they sound like- gardens that soak up rain water, mainly from your roof and driveway. In a rain garden shrubs and perennials are planted in a natural or man-made depression that catches rainwater runoff before it leaves your property. These plants absorb and filter the water before it percolates into the soil, thus reducing storm water runoff and protecting water resources.

Many homeowners are surprised to learn that hundreds of thousands of gallons of rainwater fall on their lot each year. A half acre lot in eastern Iowa receives over 435,000 gallons of rain each year. The majority of this water rapidly enters the storm water system carrying pollutants such as bacteria, sediment, lawn care products and grass clipping directly into local streams and lakes.

In addition to carrying pollutants to rivers and lakes, storm water runoff causes frequent increases in stream flows which leads to bank erosion and increased flood potential. Historically, runoff would have been a rare event. Native prairies had an infiltration rate of more than 90 percent. This infiltrated precipitation was used by native plants, recharges

deep groundwater aquifers, or reservoirs of water located deep in the bedrock. But at least half of this infiltrated rainwater would have moved as groundwater flow and surfaced in wetlands, stream, lakes or spring. This caused rivers and streams to have clean and stable water levels.

Properly designed and built rain gardens should have standing water for no more than 24 hours, eliminating many peoples concerns of mosquitoes and provides valuable habitat for wildlife such as songbirds. The list of native grasses and wildflowers that thrive

in a rain garden include Butterfly milkweed, Pale purple coneflowers, Columbine, Little bluestem and Fox sedge. So rain gardens can be as beautiful as they are beneficial to the environment.

Anything that we can do to help increase the amount of rainwater that can infiltrate into the ground and thus reduce the amount of runoff we are sending directly to our rivers and lakes will benefit us. There are numerous resources available online or at your local library regarding rain garden design and installation. Check out rain gardens.

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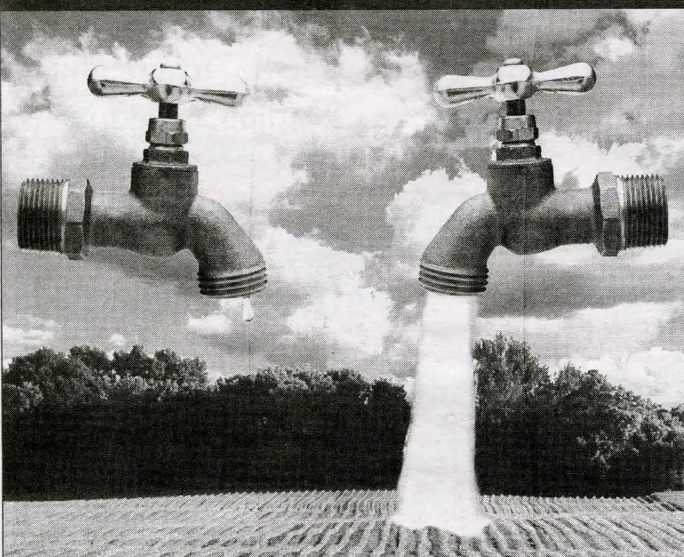


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Water infiltration rates increased with no-till (strip-till) farming

By: Robert Vobora

Area Resource Soil Scientist, NRCS

Infiltration is the process of water entering the soil. When soil is in good condition or stated another way when the soil has good health, it has stable soil structure and continuous pores to the surface. This stable soil structure and the continuous pores to the surface allow rainfall to enter the soil unimpeded.

Many factors affect the infiltration of water (rainfall) into the soil. Texture (the amount of sand, silt and clay in the soil), compaction, tillage, organic matter content, cover on soil surface and water content are just some of the factors. The texture of a soil cannot be easily or

economically changed nor can the water content. Compaction, tillage, organic matter content, and cover on the soil surface all can be changed.

No-till farming is one way to change the infiltration rate of the soil in a cropped field. No-till leaves crop residue on the surface of the soil protecting the surface from the force of the raindrops. Raindrops hitting the bare soil surface will seal the surface and prevent the water from infiltrating into the soil. No-till limits the number of trips across a field thus reducing compaction from the tillage equipment. No-till increases the organic matter in the soil. This organic matter is the food source for the macro and micro organisms that live in the

soil. These macro and micro organisms contribute to the health of the soil and create stable soil structure and good pores in the soil.

An example of how no-till changes infiltration has been a study on a farm in Northeast Iowa. This farm was converted from conventional tillage to no-till six years ago. Infiltration was measured on four sites during the third and fifth years of no-till. The infiltration was measured using the method in the Soil Quality Kit developed by the Agricultural Research Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. With this method a 10 inch ring is pounded into the ground and then the equivalent of one inch of water is placed in the ring. The time is measured for the

water to soak (infiltrate) into the soil. The infiltration rate measured during the third year of no-till was very slow. The range in infiltration was 0.6 inches per hour to 1.7 inches per hour. During the fifth year of no-till the range of infiltra-

tion at the same sites was 0.8 inches per hour to 35 inches per hour. The increase is very good for the type of soil on this farm.

It takes time to heal a soil that has been degraded but this example shows that it can be done.

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Another disaster year, cont. from page 15

rotation. With this management, and tillage being the norm, infiltration rates are greatly reduced, runoff increased and hence more water getting to streams and rivers. Other factors which decrease infiltration while increasing the runoff rates are:

- * Draining wetlands.
- * Construction of buildings, roads, etc. Asphalt or concrete applied to soil surface.

If you have lived in Fayette Co since 1990, you should be asking yourself, how many hundred or five hundred year rainstorms can we have within an 18 year period? I found a recent article where Harry Hillaker the State Climatologist stated that "With four of the 10 largest floods in Iowa's recorded history occurring from 1994 to 2008, you can throw your old hydrographs away." He went on to say "there is some statistical basis for believing that Iowa's climate is becoming wetter and more prone to catastrophic flooding."

The FSA has administered ECP (Emergency Conservation Program) funding five years since 1991. To become approved for ECP, requires severe and widespread damage to agricultural land within the county.

So what are we to do as landowners or tenants who have a responsibility to conserve their natural resources, namely soil and water? Continue to act help-

less and be surprised every time these major storms strip away our soil? The answer is that there are numerous ways to effectively reduce the impact of these storms, while remaining profitable with the farming operation. Probably the most significant practice one could utilize is no-till farming. Once no-till (in actuality considered as strip tillage) is used for three years or more, soil properties change quite substantially. Bob Vobora, Area Resource Soil Scientist for NRCS has been doing soil quality studies on several fields in NE Iowa.

Refer to his article in this report for more information, but basically for infiltration comparison of a newly no tilled field in 2004 in Delaware Co, he completed 3 repetitions on 4 plots. The field infiltration rate for the first inch of water applied, averaged 15 times faster in 2006 after only 2 years as compared to the first year of no-till in 2004. Soil erosion rates are equally impressive when comparing no-till to more common mulch tillage operations.

Other management conservation practices which can be applied at little to no cost are contour farming, contour buffer strips and contour strip cropping. These practices, while they may not completely protect the field in the event of the most severe storms, are designed to slow the runoff

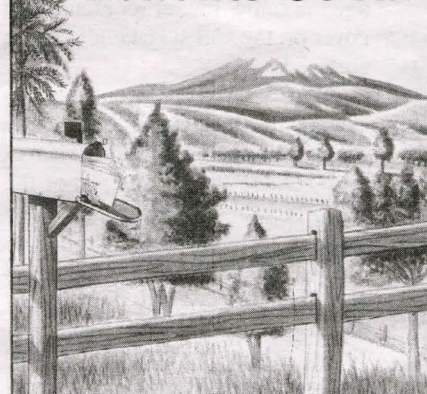
down and allow for more infiltration. Other construction practices such as terraces are vulnerable to damage during heavy downpours because they are designed to store a given amount of the runoff.

After these heavy storms, we at the NRCS office can predict with

certainty that our office will get a similar deluge of contacts from landowners or tenants who now want to fix their fields. Many are very upset at the excessive erosion but will simply want to repair their waterways or terraces. And as we do what we can to accommodate them with their wishes, are not shy in promoting better land use on the entire farm. At least the area draining into the eroded waterway(s) may need a better conservation system, such as the management practices mentioned above. We refer to this as "upland treatment". With the best upland treatment applied, a landowner would not only greatly reduce soil loss from their farm, but increase the lifespan of their waterways plus reduce flooding impacts downstream.

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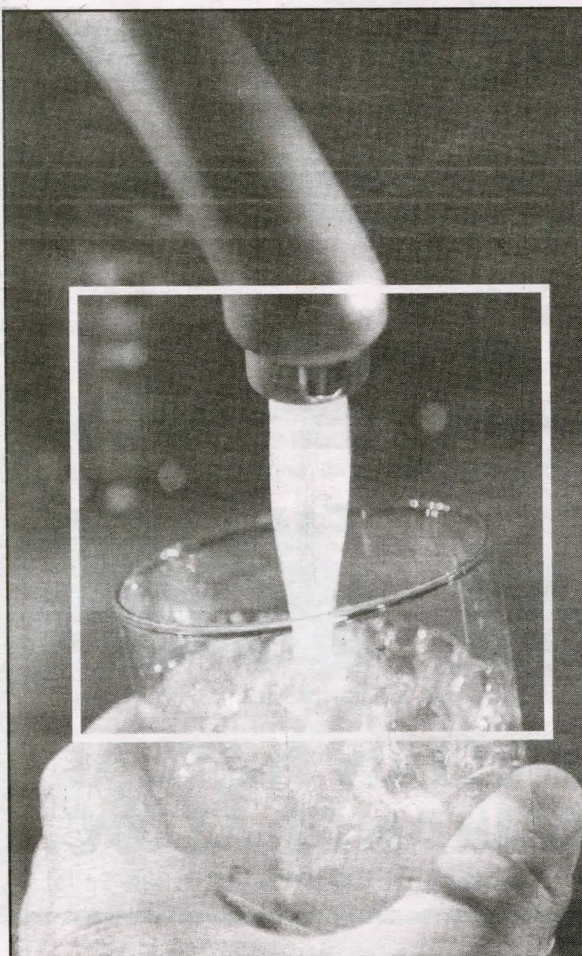
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Don Carpenter retiring after 26 years

Jerry Muff, District Conservationist for NRCS states that it's not just the producers that will miss Don's



Don Carpenter

presence and assistance, but so will the NRCS staff and the Fayette SWCD. Don has always had a positive attitude and consistency in managing one of the most active FSA offices in the state.

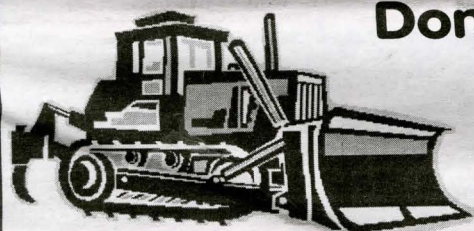
We work closely with the FSA on a daily basis on numerous occasions, but the primary project we work together on is the Conservation

Reserve Program. This is one of the most effective soil, water, and wildlife habitat programs in existence. Don and his staff have been great to work with to get Fayette County almost 3,000 contracts which are mostly the buffer strip or continuous CRP contracts. Unofficially Fayette ranks second in the number of contracts of the continuous CRP in the state. This statistic speaks volumes for our county and the people who are involved with it.

The NRCS Field Office and Fayette SWCD wish the best for Don and Cindy Carpenter in their retirement years.



Fayette County FSA director Don Carpenter assists an area producer, Chris Strong, of Elgin.

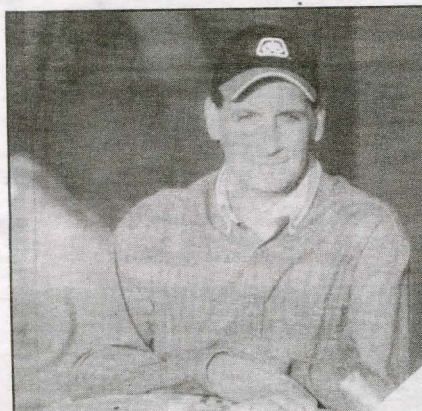


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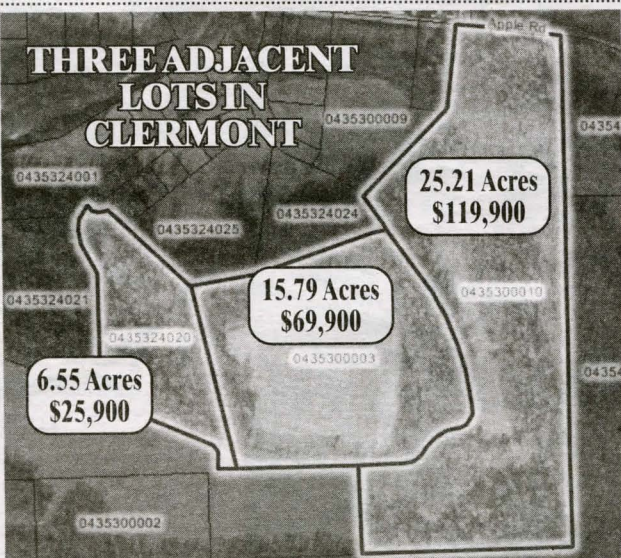
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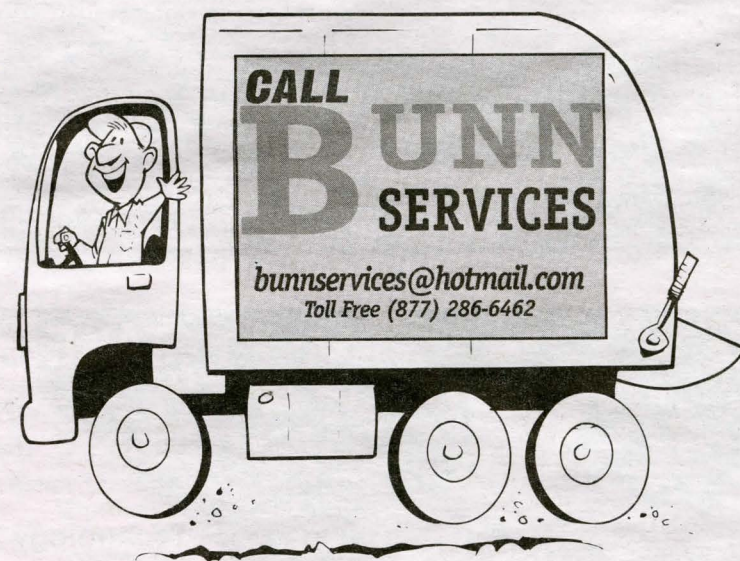
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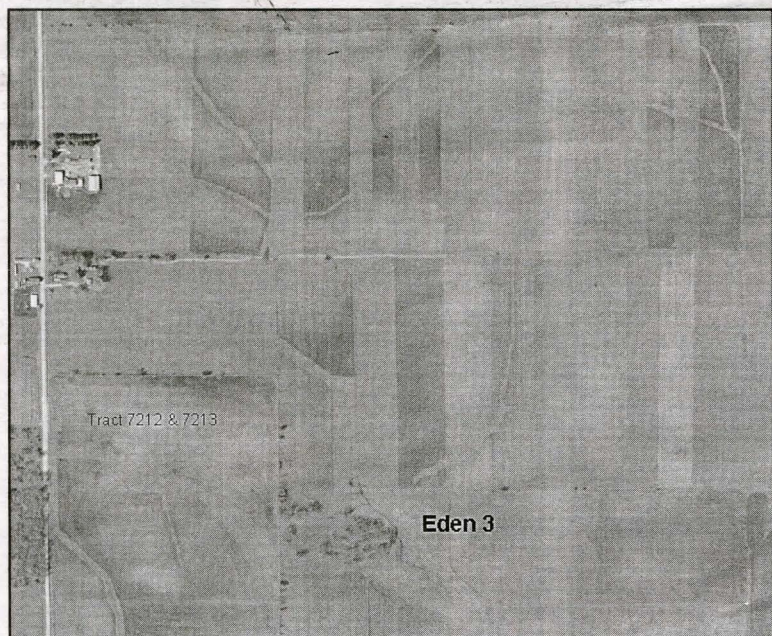


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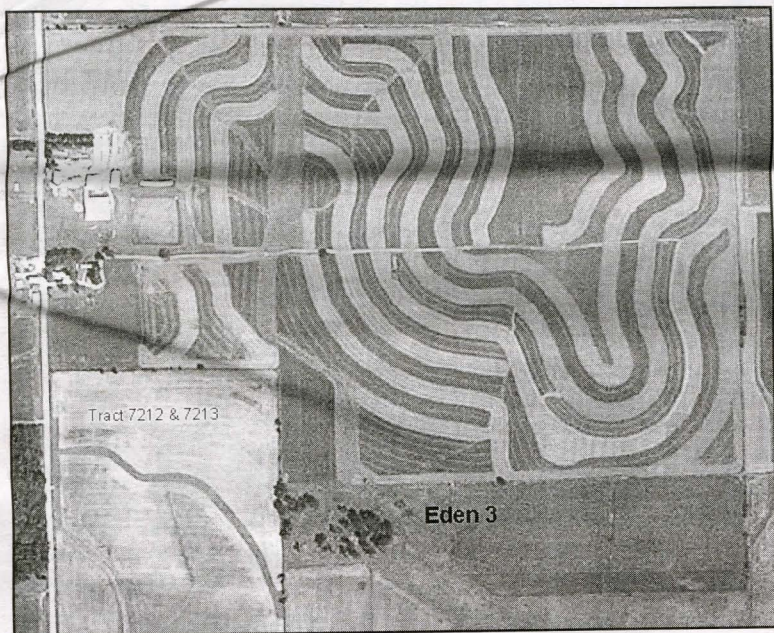
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The Adams farm before contour strips were applied:



Contour strip cropping, as shown below, is a conservation system of alternating row crop and hay on the contour in somewhat even width strips. This is the Scott Adams farm southeast of Waucoma in Eden Township. Scott applied contour strip cropping on the land about 6 years ago, which had previously been farmed with straight rows. The contour strips are effective in reducing soil erosion because the contoured rows slow the runoff. The alternating hay strips are added benefits to further slow the runoff and effectively filters the runoff.



While farmability of contour strips can be debated due to the inevitable odd areas that show up, on the average it is common to have longer rows as compared to straight row farming.

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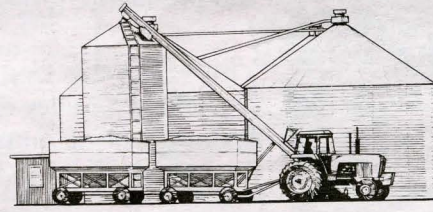
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Steeges, cont. from page 16

never seen their project as a windbreak.

"It was a surprise because it's something we do just because we like to do it. It was nice to be noticed," said Susan. "We see the need for more trees. A lot of trees are cut down for farmland. Instead of using our land for farmland we saw it as more of a benefit to set aside the land for trees."

"This will be something that will last for years and be a benefit for the land."

Adds Ken, "We've had a lot of comments on it and a lot of people say they really enjoy it."

Susan said the best advice to give someone who is interested in creating a windbreak is to do a lot of research.

"Really read up on what grows best in your area. We did and still do, and we're still finding out what we should have done differently. It's just really rewarding watching it grow."



Ken and Susan Steege were presented with the 2008 Izaak Walton League Windbreak award at the annual Farm Bureau meeting. William Bennett (far right) presented the award.

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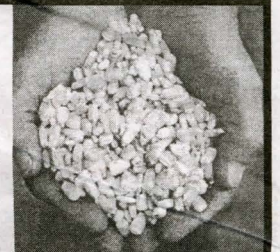
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Woodland owner sows seeds for future

NEW HAMPTON – When Bob Sanford was a boy scout, he enjoyed his time outdoors among nature. That planted a seed in the young man that grew over time which he now shares with his family. That love of the land is what prompted the Fayette County Soil and Water Conservation District to name Sanford as the Woodland Owner of the Year.

Sanford owns approximately 70 acres in Fayette County. He and his wife, Debbie, purchased property north of Wadena in 2000. That investment joined several properties to the family's portfolio. The Sanfords also own land near their home in Chickasaw County, in Minnesota and near Strawberry Point.

"We been planting trees on

our Minnesota property since the 1980s," he said. Sanford is originally from Minnesota and the family moved to Iowa 15 years ago.

"When we were first married there was a recession in the farming industry and I was able to cut down trees and sell them for firewood," said Sanford. That experience to help him earn extra money sparked his interest in forestry.

He is now the manager at Bay Valley Foods in New Hampton, a food processing plant.

"Having an office job I enjoy getting outside and feeling like I'm making improvements."

Sanford and his five sons, ages 12 to 22, use the Wadena property primarily for hunting. "I've gotten my boys involved with planting

new trees. This has given them a commitment to the land," he said. "We originally bought it for hunting. We take game from the land but we do what we can to promote good stewardship and increase the hunting habitat for us."

He said a few of his older sons, now Eagle Scouts themselves, want to move to the Wadena area and build on that property. The land borders Mink Creek on one side and has several other streams that run through the property.

Sanford said when he first bought the land, a forester had trouble deciphering where the property line ended along the creek bed.

"The previous owners were farming right up to the creek and we couldn't tell where the farmland ended and the creek bed started."

He said his first project was installing buffer strips to repair the land that had been so badly eroded. So far, Sanford has planted 2,200 trees along the streams and has the rest of the property in CRP.

"You don't get reimbursed for all of the work you do. Each year for at least the past 12, I've bought over 500 trees. Sometimes there's a program to help, sometimes there isn't."

The Sanfords don't do it for the reimbursement though. "It's a passion. It's not 'when are we going to be done.' It's 'what are we going to do next year.'"

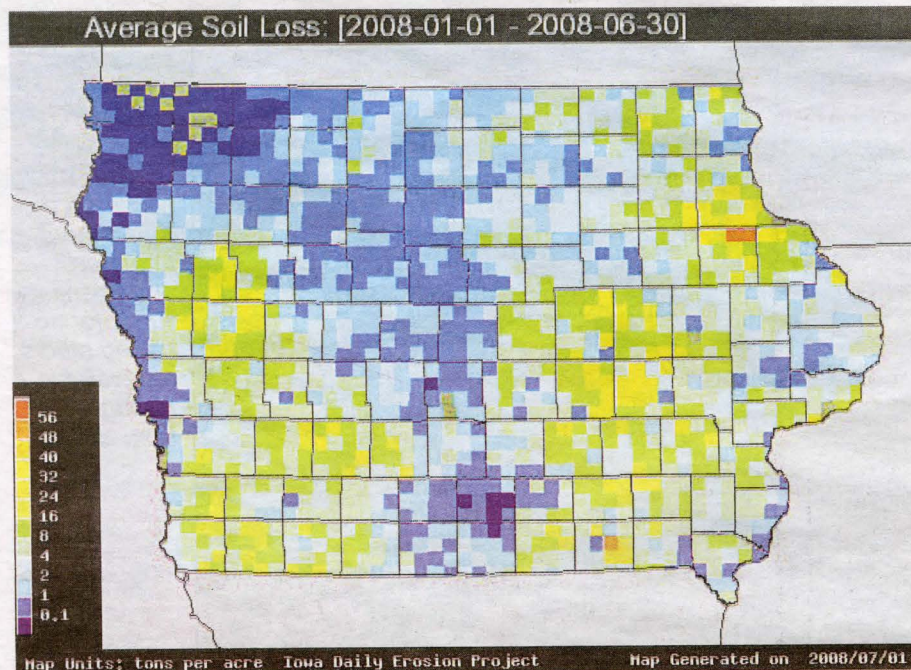
The entire Sanford family gathers on weekends and makes plans for what they want to do with their woodland. "If it's not at the Wadena property it's another one. As the kids get older



Bob Sanford of New Hampton was named the Woodland Owner of the Year. He is pictured among the trees his family planted seven years ago on their land near Wadena.



Joe, Tom and Bryce Sanford and the rest of their family help to plant trees on several of their family's properties. Their father, Bob of New Hampton, was named Woodland Owner of the Year.



This is an erosion estimation of earlier this year. It was published in the Journal of Soil and Water Conservation Society of America. The work was done by a team led by Rick Kruse, Dr of Agronomy at ISU this year. If anyone would like more information regarding this subject, contact the Fayette NRCS office in West Union at (563) 422-3868, ext 3. The complete article is available.

it's important for us to do this together. It's a project we enjoy."

Planting and caging saplings and cutting down weed trees has become a favorite pastime for the family. "If I could have, I would have changed this award to have been for the whole Sanford family, not just me. It's more of a celebration for us than a job."

Projects are never something the Sanfords fall short on. They undergo forestry tree weeding practices on all of their land, have an active

timber project on their property in Clayton County and complete timber stand improvements.

The planting of new trees and the stewardship of his land stays with him all year round. "When I'm hunting up in a deer stand I'll look over and see a tree that needs to be cut down. I'm always thinking about what needs to be done. Every year I come up with a new project."

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View of contour buffer strips on John Moore's field. These buffer strips reduce soil erosion and protect water quality in the Mink Creek watershed. Contour buffer strips are a ten year practice under the CCRP (Continuous Conservation Reserve Program) that you can receive rental rates for the years applied to the land.



CRP seeding of mixed native prairie was established north of Clermont. CP25, Rare and Declining Habitat, consists of nine prairie grasses and 14 wildflowers. CRP is administered through the Farm Service Agency (FSA).



A terrace intake installed originally to approximately 3 foot in height. During the heavy rains of 2008, the siltation collected at the intake leaving the soil on the land. In order for this terrace to function properly, the storage area will need to be cleaned out and replace damaged inlet. Maintenance to terraces is important keeping terrace capacity, storage, ridge height and outlets to design. Control weeds, brush and trees to the back slopes/front slopes too for maintenance.



Grass back terrace, southeast of West Union, damaged during the heavy rains in the spring of 2008. The terraces were also weakened due to rodents working through them.



A grade stabilization structure or pond was constructed on the Mark Nelson property, northeast of Clermont. The Nelsons constructed terraces prior to the pond which will reduce sedimentation within the pond, extending the ponds effective life. EQIP, a cost share incentive program, was used to help defray the cost.



No-till beans into corn stalks with contour buffer strips in the back-ground. This field is on the John Moore farm north of Wadena. Funds for no-till and others are available through EQIP from NRCS.