

The last three years have seen an increase in the popularity of grade stabilization structures and ponds as conservation practices in Henry county. The Henry County Soil and Water Conservation District, in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service [NRCS] and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation [IDALS-DSC], has played an active role in the promotion and funding of these practices.

There has been some confusion as to the difference between a grade stabilization structure and a pond. The primary purpose of a grade stabilization dam is to impound water to an elevation that will cover an upstream overfall or gully, thus stabilizing the upstream grade. A secondary purpose of this structure might be to provide a water source for livestock, or for recreational use, or a combination of both. Ponds are usually installed as a primary water source for livestock, but they can also be used for recreation, and they always serve as a viable soil conservation practice.

Funding for both ponds and grade stabilization structures can be obtained through several sources. The state of Iowa administers a no-interest loan program, which the Henry County Soil and Water Conservation District has generally reserved for the construction of livestock water ponds by producers of traditional livestock. There is a maximum limit of \$10,000 for each loan through this program. During the past two years the state of Iowa has made available additional funds through the Local Water Protection Program[LWPP], from which an individual may borrow from \$5000 to \$50,000 for the construction of soil conservation practices, at a maximum interest rate of three percent. While the LWPP loan is not limited to ponds or grade stabilization structures, for the past year it has been used extensively for these practices in Henry County. Currently the state of Iowa has five million dollars available through this program. The re-payment of both the no-interest loan and the LWPP loan can be scheduled for a period of up to ten years.

Federal money for the construction of ponds is available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program [EQIP], which provides for cost-share funds at a rate not to exceed fifty percent of NRCS established average costs per practice. Applicants for EQIP funds are given a ranking based upon the type of practice, number of separate practices, proximity to priority watersheds, total cost of the proposed projects, and other factors. If a person is funded through EQIP, the approved practices can be installed over the duration of the EQIP contract, which is generally for a period of five years.

The benefits gained from the installation of grade stabilization structures and ponds are not limited to soil conservation, livestock water, and recreation. Ponds and grade stabilization structures can provide both water and habitat for many species of wildlife, as well as enhancing the aesthetic appeal of your land, which can increase your property value. The staff at your local NRCS office, located at 2205 East Washington Street, Suite 101, can inform you of your financial options to secure funding for the construction of a pond. Personnel at the local NRCS office can also provide the technical assistance you need for an estimate, survey, and design for your pond, services that are provided free of charge. Please stop at our office or call us at 319-385-2824 for further information. Office hours are 8:00 to 4:30 Monday through Friday.