

Soil and Water Stewardship Week- April 24-May 1

Our soil is a basic resource depended upon to produce our nation's food and fiber

"Stewardship Is Our Future" is theme of National Soil and Water Stewardship Week

Emphasizing everyone's role in protecting soil and water resources for future generations, the Louisa County Soil & Water Conservation District (Louisa SWCD) is encouraging local churches, organizations and individuals to join the nationwide observance of Soil and Water Stewardship Week, April 24 through May 1, 1988.

Olin Jennings, Chairman of

the Louisa SWCD, said that while farmers know that good conservation practices help increase yields and improve their profit potential, they also know the importance of passing on well-cared-for natural resources for future food producers. "We could give our children all the money in the world, but it would do them little good unless we also give

them a productive soil on which to live," said Jennings.

Since 1955, the National Association of Conservation Districts has sponsored Soil & Stewardship Week, in cooperation with nearly 3,000 local conservation districts nationwide, as one way to emphasize the importance of good stewardship of basic soil and water resources.

AMES, Iowa -- "We need to constantly remind ourselves that no nation is so rich and so prosperous that it can afford to lose the basic resources needed to produce its food and fiber," says Iowa State University Extension agronomist Min Amemiya.

"Stewardship is Our Future" is the theme for Soil and Water Stewardship Week this year, April 24 - May 1.

The week is an annual spring observance to emphasize society's responsibility to protect, conserve and wisely use soil, water and related resources, according to Amemiya.

For the past 34 years, Iowa's 100 soil and water conservation districts have joined more than 2,900 other districts across the nation in recognizing Soil and

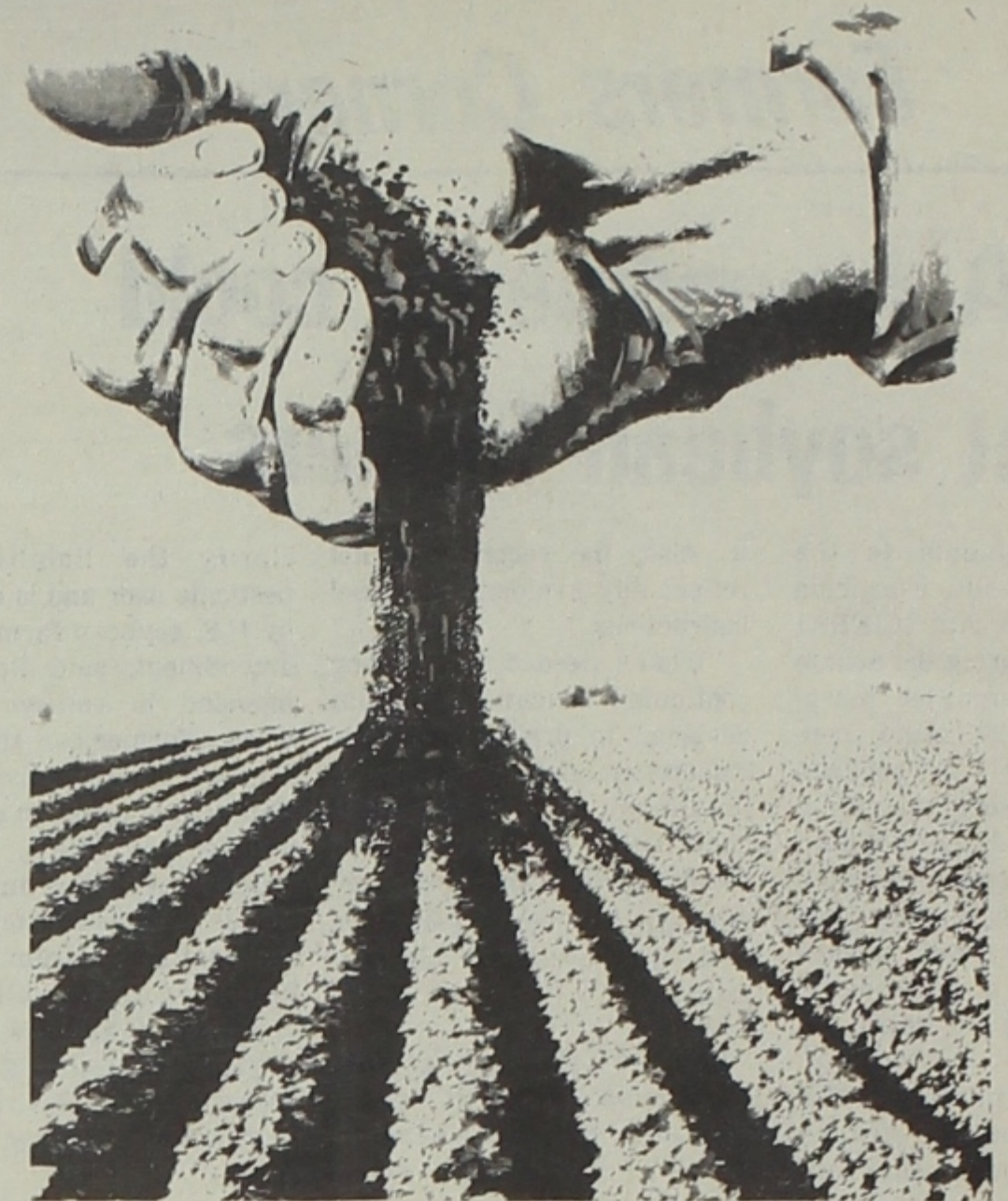
Water Stewardship Week.

"Today's agricultural landowners and producers must play an essential role as active stewards of our soil and water resources in assuring that the productivity of these resources will benefit generations yet to come," Amemiya said.

"There is no time like the present to get involved in soil and water conservation programs," he said.

He added that landowners and producers seeking technical or financial assistance in becoming soil and water stewards can get help from federal and state agencies through their soil and water conservation districts.

"Caring for the soil and water resources of the state and nation is a responsibility none of us can ignore," Amemiya said.



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The origin and observance of soil and water Stewardship Week

For centuries, men and women have offered humble thanks to God for the priceless gifts of soil, water, air and sunshine which make all living things possible. This gratitude by religious people has been expressed in many ways over the years but in all its forms there has been a continuing thread of emphasis on the wondrous powers of the Almighty to create and to heal.

There has been stress, too, on the universal dependence on His grace for salvation and for all good things.

The world as we know it could not exist without a fruitful agriculture. A regular harvest is a critical matter. But nature, like man, is erratic. There are times when the very elements

seem to conspire against a yield.

When the rains cease and the earth cracks, when storms and pestilence wreak their havoc, fields become barren and livestock grow gaunt in search of grass. It is then, and particularly in times of prolonged hardship, that the call goes out for divine intervention to ease the suffering and restore the bounty of the soil.

That is what happened in France more than 1,500 years ago in the city of Vienne and its surrounding countryside. Bad weather, fires and earthquakes had brought crop failures and widespread hunger. The Bishop of Vienne, Saint Mamertus, called for prayer and penance on the three days preceding

Ascension Day. The people responded and implored God for help in their suffering and privation.

Word of what happened in Vienne spread throughout France and then to other countries beyond the Alps. The supplication filled a need in the hearts and minds of the people and, as the years went by, the practice of setting aside these special days — Rotation Days — was widely established on an annual basis. By the end of the eighth century, the Church formally adopted the custom.

In our own country, the decision to set aside a week each year to acknowledge before God our gratitude for His gifts of soil and all the bountiful resources associated with it has met an evident need of a great many people.

The week — now known as Soil and Water Stewardship Week — has become a special time to remind all people that these gifts of the Creator warrant their best in creative conservation and considerate management.

In parts of the South earlier in this century, a few churches and their congregations began to set aside the fifth Sunday after Easter as Soil and Soul Sunday. Subsequently, this designation was changed to Soil Stewardship Sunday when, in 1946, the publishers of Farm and Ranch magazine took an initiative. They suggested to religious leaders in a number of southern states that one Sunday be set aside each year as a time for a special reminder to the men and women of their congregations about the ethical obligations of all people to serve as responsible stewards of the land.

The response of clergymen and laymen was so warm and widespread that observance of Soil Stewardship Sunday spread steadily to additional churches and additional states. In 1954, the publishers of the magazine (circulated primarily in the South) suggested to the officers of the National Association of Conservation Districts that a still wider observance of Soil Stewardship Sunday could aid significantly in bringing about a national awakening and recognition of man's duties as stewards of the Lord's earth.

To help achieve this goal, the publishers offered to transfer their limited sponsorship of Soil Stewardship Sunday to the Association, which represents some 3,000 local conservation district organizations in all the states and territories of the nation. The NACD accepted and, beginning in 1955, undertook to foster the observance on a nationwide basis.

A year later, recognizing possible conflicts with Rural Life Sunday and other events often observed on church calendars, Soil Stewardship Sunday was changed to Soil Stewardship Week — beginning always with the fifth Sunday after Easter and continuing through the sixth. The change provided a helpful latitude in church timing for the observance.

Since these two Sundays occasionally conflict with Mother's Day or Memorial Day, Soil and Water Stewardship Week was designated as the last Sunday in April through the first Sunday in May. Beginning with the 1988 observance, Stewardship Week will not conflict with Easter, Mother's Day or Memorial Day until well into the twenty-first century.

In its stewardship efforts, the association has been guided by a Soil and Water Stewardship Advisory Committee of clergymen representing a number of the nation's major religious denominations. Many other church leaders have provided notable assistance. Officers and members of the NACD Auxiliary have been particularly helpful, as have members of several cooperating farm and conservation organizations.

The Soil and Water Stewardship Week observance, by its very nature, is one to be joined in by everyone who shares a sense of personal responsibility under God for the care of soil, water and the other vital elements making up our environment. The prime concern of our conservation districts, along with thousands of involved clergymen and laymen, is to encourage an evergrowing participation by Americans in this annual recognition of the continuing importance of thoughtful stewardship.

Youth Conservation Leadership Program

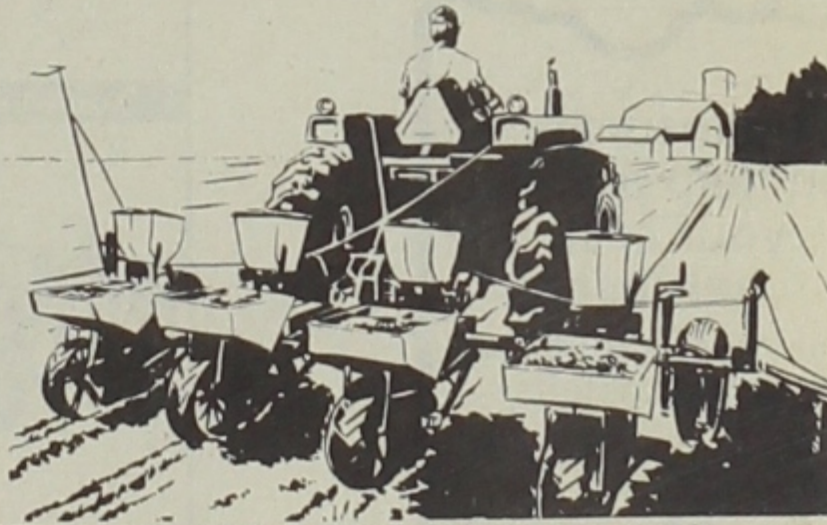
A conservation program for high school students will be held July 11-14, 1988 at the Iowa 4-H Camping Center near Madrid, Iowa. Learning about Iowa's natural resources, land-use decisions, and conservation careers are all a part of the program.

This year's theme highlights "Wildlife for the Future." Students will be actively involved in outdoor sessions about both game and non-game wildlife, and how forestry, soils, and water interact with wildlife and wildlife management. Top students in the program will divide at least \$500 in college scholarships donated by conservation organizations. The scholarships are based on leadership skills and the results

of a written test given at the end of the program.

The Youth Conservation Leadership Program is a state-wide program sponsored by the County Conservation Boards, Soil Conservation Districts, and Cooperative Extension Service. The cost is \$60.00 for each student. High school students interested in attending the Youth Conservation Leadership Program should contact one of the following county offices by May 1st to obtain further information.

Jim Rudisill of the County Conservation Board at 523-8381; Randy Phelan of the Soil Conservation District at 523-6411; or Shirley Werner of the Cooperative Extension Office at 523-2371.



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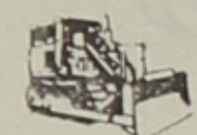
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