

Omaha World Herald - Sat. 10, 2005



RUDYSMITH/THE WORLD-HERALD

Pottawattamie County farmer Loren Nusser planted tall grass as a buffer between his corn crop and neighboring streams. Iowa encourages landowners to voluntarily establish buffer strips to reduce farm runoff and improve water quality.

Buffers' benefits clear to Iowans

Conservation measure promoted at national conference

By CHRIS CLAYTON
WORLD-HERALD
STAFF WRITER

ST. LOUIS — A western Iowa farmer with a passion for pheasant hunting spoke recently at a national conservation conference, sharing his success story on how small projects can grow into a statewide initiative.

Kenny Snyder of Carroll, Iowa, established a buffer strip of grasses between his fields and neighboring streams that reduced erosion and chemical runoff and provided habitat for game birds.



"You can also notice a difference in the clarity of the stream and the soil we are retaining on the outside of the buffer strips."

Kenny Snyder

Last week's White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation focused on how public-private partnerships, without government regulations or mandates, can improve the environment.

Following Snyder's lead, Iowa has encouraged land-

owners to voluntarily establish buffer strips to reduce farm runoff and improve water quality.

"There are some tremendously good things coming, and they are being pushed by the landowners," Snyder said. Currently, 65 percent of the

landowners in rural Iowa use buffer strips, covering more than 238,000 acres. Iowa leads the nation in buffer strips around waterways, although more landowners nationally are enrolling in the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program, which promotes buffer strips and wetland restoration.

Buffer strips absorb runoff from farm chemicals before they reach waterways and also act as a barrier to reduce erosion. A few years after Snyder established a buffer strip, the erosion after a

See Buffers: Page 2

Katrina may cost insurers up to \$60 billion

will be recovering a very substantial portion of their losses." She stopped short of granting final approval to the pacts and is awaiting a further submission by lawyers.

"She seriously seemed to indicate that she'll approve the settlements," Jeffrey Golan, a lawyer for the investors, said after the hearing.

If approved by the judge, more than 30 settlements will provide investors with \$3.5 billion from banks that underwrote WorldCom securities, including Citigroup and JPMorgan Chase; auditor Arthur Andersen; and top executives including former WorldCom Chief Executive Bernard Ebbers. —Bloomberg News

Insure: Floodwaters hold key

Continued from Page 1

AIR Worldwide, which had three damage survey teams on the ground in the affected states last week, said its estimates cover wind and surge damages but include very little from flooding.

Jayanta Guin, AIR Worldwide's vice president for research and modeling, said that "with Katrina, things are very unusual because of the degree of flooding in New Orleans."

Guin said it could be well over a year before final figures for the damage are available, noting that data are still coming in from the four hurricanes that hit Florida last year.

The four hurricanes last year — Charley, Ivan, Frances and Jeanne — together caused nearly \$23 billion in insured losses in Florida and neighboring states, according to figures from the Insurance Services Office, an actuarial company based in Jersey City, N.J.

Another risk-modeling firm, Egecat Inc., has projections of \$14 billion to \$22 billion for insured losses from Katrina. Egecat is based in Oakland, Calif.

Earlier Friday, Europe's biggest insurer, Allianz AG, said it could pay out as much as \$583.6 million in claims from Hurricane Katrina.

The company, headquartered in Munich, Germany, estimated total claims from the storm, which hit the Gulf Coast on Aug. 29, at more than \$37 billion.

Louisiana Insurance Commissioner J. Robert Wooley has estimated the insured losses in his state alone at \$19 billion. The Florida insurance commissioner

Buffers: Iowa initiative catches on

Continued from Page 1

heavy rain was noticeably less, he said.

"You can also notice a difference in the clarity of the stream and the soil we are retaining on the outside of the buffer strips."

Ideally, a stream or river buffer should be about 125 feet wide, but smaller buffers also provide results.

Nebraska, too, had a program to market at the conference. In cooperation with Pheasants Forever and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission demonstrated how tilling and reseeding grasslands improves grass diversity and boosts wildlife numbers.

Game birds, in particular, tend to nest in buffer strip areas, which not only improves the hunting, but also bird-watching and the overall scenery as well.

"It's quality of life," Snyder said. "People buy acreage in the country because they want to see the wildlife."

A fellow Carroll County farmer also saw an increase in wild game after creating buffer

strips, Snyder said. That farm typically had 20 or so pheasants but now supports 300, with some 100 roosters harvested during hunting season.

Ron Nargang, Minnesota state director for the Nature Conservancy, said he hoped to incorporate details from Iowa's program into his state's plans to reduce farm runoff.

"I was stunned by the results," Nargang said. "It isn't highly scientific, but it has empirical evidence of improving upland wildlife."

Pheasants Forever and other wildlife groups are leaders in promoting conservation measures such as wetland restoration and buffer strips. Typically, a farmer-hunter will start a program on his own property, which then is adopted by neighbors after they see the results.

Pheasants Forever and Iowa state officials began promoting the buffer program about five years ago. Lawmakers and Gov. Tom Vilsack pushed a water-quality initiative focusing on the success in Carroll County. Pheasants Forever now uses Iowa as a model for other states to follow.

"The best way to sell this is farmer to farmer," Snyder said. "It's caught on in Iowa to where we really don't have to do that anymore."

Another group in Iowa integral to the success of buffer strip programs is the Cedar Rapids-based Trees Forever. The group promotes planting trees and prairie grasses for stream buffers and shows farmers how to get such areas developed. Trees Forever will work with farmers to get state and federal funds.

"Water quality is what has gotten everyone involved in buffers as a best management practice," said Shannon Ramsay, president of Pheasants Forever.

For Trees Forever, a project north of Ames, Iowa, showed dramatic improvements in the late 1990s. The project made such strides that groups such as the Iowa Farm Bureau became more aggressive in educating farmers about the improvements from buffer programs.

"That's why Iowa has gotten so far out ahead of other states," Ramsay said.

Stocks: Airline sector woes persist

Continued from Page 1

nation's benchmark rate by another quarter point despite concerns about inflation and fallout from the storm.

"Right now, I believe they will raise the rate by 25 basis points. They have been very clear telegraphing what they plan to do," said Paul Cherney of Cherney Market Analysis. "They're going to have to address (Katrina's impact) in some fashion, but they'll probably use plain vanilla, uninspiring wording."

Oil futures traded lower even after the Department of Energy said domestic energy costs this winter would be the highest in 10 years, and that at least four Gulf Coast refineries would remain closed for months. A barrel of light crude dropped 41 cents to \$64.08 on the New York Mercantile Exchange, where gas futures declined 7.6 cents to \$1.96 a gallon.

Airline stocks fell after Continental Airlines warned of a "significant loss" for 2005, as soaring fuel costs continue eating

job and benefits cuts. Northwest Airlines also plans to lay off two-thirds of its mechanics and ask for \$200 million in concessions in its latest proposal to

its mechanics union, which has been on strike for three weeks. Continental dropped 49 cents to \$12.11, and Northwest was down 4 cents at \$3.48.

BONUS!

7¢ Per Lb With This Ad!



WE BUY CANS!

Fast, Friendly Service!
We honor all local ads!

CAN PAC

RECYCLING

346-2488

7 Locations
(See Yellow Pages)
Open 6 days 9-5

PLAZA
Collection
by SHERRILL



Council Bluffs Daily Nonpareil

THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 2006



Submitted photo

Ken Tow, Director of the Division of Soil Conservation for the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (third from left) presented a \$10,000 check to the West Pottawattamie County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners for the Carter Lake Water Quality Improvement Project to Steve Wilber, Carter Lake City Council Member; Russ Kramer, Mayor of Carter Lake; Dean Fischer, Vice Chairman for the West Pottawattamie County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners; Alan Tiarks, Chairman of the West Pottawattamie County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners and Rob Livingston, West Pottawattamie County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner, at an award ceremony on Friday. The Water Quality Improvement project is a part of the Watershed Protection Project Development Grant Program. The purpose of this program is to provide individual Soil & Water Conservation Districts with grants to assist in the development of effective water quality projects designed to improve and protect the state's water resources.

Council Bluffs Daily Nonpareil

May 31, 2006

Urban conservation workshop to be held

The West Pottawattamie Soil & Water Conservation District will host an educational demonstration and installation on urban conservation after receiving a grant from the state of Iowa for watershed improvement.

The public is invited to a

class and demonstration on rain gardens on Wednesday, June 7, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Rain gardens are an innovative conservation practice that anyone can do in their own back yard. Attendees will learn the process of planning a rain garden, then head outdoors for

hands on experience installing rain gardens. Conservation staff will be on hand to answer questions.

For more information contact the West Pottawattamie Soil & Water Conservation District at (712) 328-2489 Ext. 3.

—Nicole Weis

SWIOWAN NEWS

Council Bluffs Daily Nonpareil • Clarinda Herald Journal
Denison Bulletin & Review • Shenandoah Valley News
Logan Herald Observer - Woodbine Twiner

12/01/2007

ISD lauded for its conservation efforts

EMILY KESTEN, Staff Writer



Staff photo/Emily Kesten - Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey observes a map of the Little Pony Creek Watershed, which extends from the Council Bluffs airport past the Iowa School for the Deaf. The students at ISD are a spotlight of urban practices in rain gardens, bioswales and wetland rehabilitation.

Pottawattamie conservationists braved Friday morning cold to show Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey the urban conservation practices happening at the Iowa School for the Deaf.

As part of Soil and Water Conservation Week (Nov. 25-Dec. 1), Northey has been touring the state to speak with district officials and residents about farmland and urban conservation practices.

"It's exciting," said Cynthia Angeroth, outreach coordinator for ISD. "We're happy he chose the school."

The choice was, well, natural. Northey wanted to emphasize the importance of urban conservation practices. In May, ISD became the first school site in the state to install a rain garden to capture storm water from the green house and cafeteria, and it maintains an acre of wetland and prairie it rehabilitated over a decade ago. The students also monitor water samplings from Little Pony Creek and the wetland.

Director of facilities Rich Connell also reported that the school's progressive recycling program has reduced its daily trash outtake to an average of three bags a day.

Northey commended the students' efforts.

"Don't take this for granted," he told them. "This is new and really neat. It's not done everywhere."

Northey explained that while the Department of Agriculture has largely focused on farmland conservation in the past, the impact of urban practices is now being realized. Urban practices are being taught and implemented through Soil and Water Conservation District offices; ISD's rain garden was possible through a grant from the West Pottawattamie SWCD.

"This is new to the state and our division," said Northey. "We have to walk before we can run. We're hoping to add money and hire more urban conservation technicians."

Kristen Newton, the high school science teacher guiding ISD students through water monitoring projects, shared her observations with the secretary.

"We found that pesticides were going straight to the creeks and rivers," said Newton. "But the amazing part was seeing how just cleaning our tiny area had such an impact on cleaning up downstream."

Northey thanked district conservation officials for their efforts in Pottawattamie County for helping developers and private homeowners implement urban conservation practices. Cost-share for a rain garden is currently \$500 per house. According the West Pottawattamie SWCD, the Hills of Cedar Creek Housing Development has installed eight bioswales, a landscape drainage system that removes silt and pollution from surface runoff water.

"County interest really varies," said Northey. "Some don't even know what we're talking about."

The secretary and Kevin Seevers, county resource planner, both observed that developers are learning that low-impact development practices are beneficial for the environment and business.

"It's worth more to new buildings and it's the right thing to do," Northey added.

Then the secretary focused on why it's an exciting time to be the Iowa Secretary of Agriculture.

"We're first in corn, soybean, hog and egg production in the nation," he said. "We produce a quarter of the hogs and eggs. There's a farm in northern Iowa that produces all the eggs for all the Egg McMuffins west of the Mississippi."

Only Texas and California trump Iowa in wind-generated electricity, "and those are big states, so I like to think we're No. 1 per capita," Northey joked.

When asked about ethanol, Northey said the current problem is delivery. "We're looking into pipelines and special train terminals. Right now, we're mostly using trucks and small sections of trains, which is expensive."

With ethanol plants popping up like dandelions across Iowa, the cost per gallon for 10 percent ethanol fuel has dropped below gasoline. Northey said automotive maker warranties and federal regulations create a challenge for producing more E-85 fuel, but Iowa is looking into 15-20 percent ethanol fuels.

The 2007 Farm Bill was also a concern Northey addressed. He explained that 2/3 of the spending will be for food programs, but conservationists should see additional funding. Currently, more than 200 amendments and changes are filed on the bill sitting on the Senate floor. "Normally there's about 20," said Northey. "The House and Senate will eventually agree on one version."

"It sounds like a big mountain, but it's not inconceivable," Northey said.

Even when the bill passes, Northey encourages the ISD students and Pottawattamie residents to keep up the good work.



©SW Iowa News 2007

2007

Media Advisory

For Immediate Release

Contacts: Tess Capps, IDALS-State Office
515-281-8606 or 515-401-8282 (cell)
West Pottawattamie Soil and
Water Conservation District office
712-328-2489 ext 302.

NORTHEY TO HIGHLIGHT IMPORTANCE OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION EFFORTS AT POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY EVENT

*Iowa School for the Deaf has a number of projects designed to protect
the Little Pony Creek Watershed*

DES MOINES – Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey will be at Iowa School for the Deaf at **8:00 a.m. on Friday, November 30th** to meet with students and local residents about conservation practices as a part of Soil and Water Conservation Week throughout the state.

The Iowa School for the Deaf is in the Little Pony Creek Watershed in Pottawattamie County. The school has implemented a variety of conservation efforts including restoring a wetland and bioswales. Urban practices such as these help prevent storm water runoff from carrying pollutants and sediments into Iowa's waterways.

The Little Pony Creek Watershed project is coordinated by the West Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District. The West Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District has worked in partnership with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Services, US Fish and Wildlife, US Geological Survey, IOWATER, Iowa School for the Deaf, the Watershed Improvement Review Board, and Barton Solvents to improve the watershed in their efforts.

Who: **Bill Northey**, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture
Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship representatives
West Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District members
Iowa School for the Deaf students and staff

Where: **Iowa School for the Deaf** – (Green house / rain garden, moving into the cafeteria.)
3501 Harry Langdon Boulevard, Council Bluffs

When: **Friday, November 30th at 8:00 a.m.**

What: West Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District Little Pony Creek Watershed event.

How: For more information about the event please contact Tess Capps with the Iowa Department of Agriculture at 515-281-8606 or 515/401-8282 (cell) or the West Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District office at 712-328-2489 ext 302.

New urban ag projects planned for Pott. County

Tom McMahon, Staff Writer (Daily Nonpareil)

08/25/2007

[Email to a friend](#) [Post a Comment](#) [Printer-friendly](#)

Bioswales, geowebbs and rain gardens may become more plentiful in Pottawattamie County during the next year.

They are all environmentally friendly practices used to prevent pollutants from entering waterways, and Council Bluffs will soon be home to a conservationist who can share such practices with communities, businesses and landowners.

Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey Friday announced his department is hiring four new conservationists to focus on the state's urban areas. The department's Soil Conservation Division will provide one-year funding to West Pottawattamie, Dickinson, Johnson, and Polk Soil and Water Conservation districts, he said.

The new conservationists will be able to provide information and technical assistance on soil and water conservation methods to land development professionals, city officials, government agencies and private landowners.

Dustin Vande Hoef, spokesman for the agriculture department, said the positions are designed to supplement work currently being done in the state's 100 soil and water conservation districts to provide information and technical assistance to rural landowners.

"For a long time the focus was on farmers," he said. "We want to get that expertise into the cities, too. We might assist a business putting in a new parking lot or a community planning a new development."

Vande Hoef said developers and conservationists have both requested the move into the urban areas. He said that while the new employees will be located into the rapidly developing areas of Council Bluffs, the Iowa Great Lakes, Iowa City and Des Moines, they will provide expertise to communities across the state.

Northey said utilizing a conservationist is strictly voluntary, but he is aware of the need.

"Many rapidly growing communities and the developers working there have an interest in making the investment necessary to improve water quality, but don't necessarily have the expertise," he said. "This initiative is not an effort to regulate, but is designed to provide the assistance communities need to include water quality improvement projects from the very beginning in new developments."

It is important that everyone is doing everything they can to protect the state's water supply, Northey said.

"Often times our urban storm water system take water directly from the streets to our rivers, lakes and streams," he said. "While it's important that we effectively get our water off our roadways and keep it out of our basements, the current system often carries too many pollutants directly into our waterways."

Council Bluffs Mayor Tom Hanafan said he is pleased with the news.

"I've attended seminars on water management issues and I think having this resource available will be a real benefit," he said.

Hanafan said developers have to incorporate storm water retention into their plans.

"This will give them other options besides digging a big hole in the ground," he said, adding he hopes to utilize the expertise.

Iowa School for the Deaf provides an example of a facility that has done so.

In 2006, the West Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District received a three-year, \$215,000 grant from the Watershed Improvement Review Board to reduce storm water runoff, reduce sediment delivery and improve water quality in the Little Pony Creek Watershed. ISD lies at the bottom of the 2,875-acre watershed.

The timing of the WIRB grant coincided with the school's desire for less rainwater to run into storm sewers and more water to flow in their wetland. A 2006 roads project on the ISD campus was the perfect opportunity for the school and Natural Resources Conservation Service to work with contractors in devising a way to direct storm water to the wetland area.

To allow storm water to flow from a parking lot into the wetland area, ISD installed a curb cut and chute. The curb cut allows water to flow from the parking lot to a concrete chute, which outlets water to a newly constructed bioswale, which is a vegetated conveyance system that provides an alternative to storm sewers. The bioswale allows water to infiltrate and flow through to the wetland area during larger rain events.

Vande Hoef said the new conservationists would offer local government more tools for addressing urban conservation questions and concerns. Each of the four pilot projects will respond to requests for information and assistance, conduct training, and establish demonstration projects to showcase innovative and proven conservation systems, he said.

As part of the soil and water conservation district, project coordinators will be able to work with both private and public landowners when dealing with watersheds that have both rural and urban land uses. In many areas, efforts are needed to protect resources ahead of development to minimize the impact on water quality and local infrastructure systems, Vande Hoef said.

The projects will also promote better use of available soil survey information, and will encourage consideration of alternatives that feature reduced runoff, lower impact from development, and higher priority on greenbelts, trails, stream buffers and open space.

"Soil and water districts have the responsibility for protecting natural resources in all areas of the state, rural and urban alike," Northey said. "We hope this is just the beginning of efforts to expand our efforts to assist urban areas."

The program is expected to be operational by the end of September.