



Des Moines County Soil & Water Conservation District

Annual Report

Personnel

COMMISSIONERS

Jeff S Bergman, Chairperson
Frank C Hedges, Vice-Chairperson
W Donald Lounsbury
Myranell Dockendorff
Laura Wagner-Ertz

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONERS

Todd D Heckenberg
Arlyn L Musselman
Bradley J Weiss

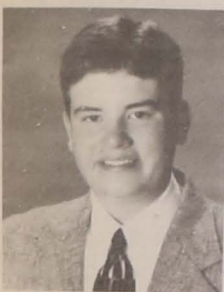
OFFICE STAFF

Michael F Lewitke, District Conservationist (January-February)
J B Martin Jr, District Conservationist (started April)
Michelle L Maderak, Soil Conservationist (January-August)
John J Horan, Soil Conservation Technician
Jill L Westercamp, Soil Conservation Aide (started February)
Tyler W Messser, Soil Conservation Aide
Jamie L Fair, State & District Secretary

AREA OFFICE STAFF (Fairfield)

Bruce W Trautman, Area Conservationist
Shawn Dettmann, Area Resource Conservationist
Mark R LaVan, Area Resource Soil Scientist
Sue M Long, Civil Engineer
George A Schaefer, Agricultural Engineer
Ron P Wilson, Civil Engineering Technician
Kerry K Richards, Computer Specialist
Suzette D Betts, Administrative Management Assistant
Darlene G Lauder, Area Secretary

Soil & Water Conservation District Scholarship Recipient



Trent Kuntz of Oakville was chosen as the 1997 recipient

of the Des Moines County Soil and Water Conservation District scholarship in conjunction with the Iowa Association of Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners Auxiliary scholarship.

Trent was chosen from the applications received from seniors throughout the county. Trent graduated in May from Medapolis High School and started college in August at Southeastern Community College in West Burlington.



NRCS/District Office Staff (L-R): Jill Westercamp, J B Martin, John Horan, Tyler Messer, and Jamie Fair.



Des Moines County SWCD Commissioners (L-R): Jeff Bergman, Frank Hedges, Don Lounsbury, and Laura Wagner-Ertz. Not pictured: Myranell Dockendorff and Assistant Commissioners Arlyn Musselman, Todd Heckenberg, and Brad Weiss.



Copeland Receives Scholarship

Ross Copeland of Mediapolis is the 1997 recipient of a \$500 scholarship given by the Des Moines County Soil and Water Conservation District.

The money was contributed to the Tri-State Agricultural Education Foundation which helps promote agriculture in the three state area.

The Foundation was established to assist students enrolling in Southeastern Community College agriculture programs.

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The Farm Bill and Opportunities for Wildlife

by JB Martin Jr., DC

The next Farm Bill is scheduled for the year 2002. It may provide a higher, lower, or similar level of wildlife benefits compared with the 1996 Farm Bill. If the trend of recent years continues, public funding for commodity subsidies will decline further and will be replaced with increasing public financing for conservation on agriculture lands. The level of wildlife opportunity provided by the 2002 Farm Bill depends largely on how well wildlife managers and advocates implement the 1996 Farm Bill, document its wildlife benefits, participate aggressively through the entire length of the 2002 Farm Bill debates, and follow through on implementation at the national, state and local levels.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is the lead federal agency charged to work with landowners on private lands to conserve natural resources. The mission of NRCS is to provide national leadership in partnership effort to help people conserve, improve and sustain natural resources on nonfederal land.

NRCS's primary function is providing technical planning and financial assistance to farmers, ranchers, communities, state and local governments and other land users to develop conservation systems suited to the land which provide wildlife benefits.

In addition to this outreach form of conservation technical assistance, NRCS also provides technical assistance to other agencies to facilitate implementation of related programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Forestry Incentive Program (FIP), Resource Conservation and Development Program (RC&D), Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) and Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP).

More information about NRCS and its programs can be found at your local county office.

Linder Receives Gary Wagner Memorial Award

The Des Moines County Soil and Water Conservation District, with the assistance of the Des Moines County Conservation Board and Des Moines County Conservation Foundation, is happy to announce that Harold Linder of Sperry has been chosen as the first recipient of the annual Gary Wagner Memorial Land Stewardship award.

Mr. Linder is a dedicated land steward and teacher. He volunteers many hours writing articles for various publication and assisting educational programs at Starr's Cave Nature Center. Mr. Linder has made a career of improving the varieties of apples in his orchard. He also works diligently to develop native grass seedlings and tree plantings for wildlife habitat. He has spent a lifetime being a good land steward to improve the natural resources he loves very much.

Mr. Linder will receive a \$250.00 cash award to be used for conservation or enhancement project and a plaque recognizing his efforts. These will be presented to Mr. Linder at a date to be announced.

The Gary Wagner Land Stewardship award was developed by family and friends of Gary to honor his memory and recognize his personal conservation efforts and to encourage others to follow his example demonstrating a personal commitment to the protection and enhancement of Des Moines County's natural environment.

To be eligible for the award, a nominee must own property in Des Moines county, show long-term dedication and commitment to conservation and environment in the areas of wetlands, woodlands, wildlife, prairies, conservation awareness/education, and farming practices, and show commitment to conservation/environment through personal accomplishments, not professional work.

For more information about the nomination process, please call the Des Moines County Soil and Water Conservation District at 753-6221.

Continuous Conservation Reserve Program

by Jill Westercamp, SCA

A program called Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP 17) is currently being promoted in Des Moines County.

The Farm Service Agency pays the landowner a rental payment for 10-15 years. The payment is on cropland and the rental rate is based on soil types with payments ranging from \$58 to \$152 per acre. Some practices include a 20% bonus that will be calculated and added to the payment rate.

Land that is eligible for this signup includes cropland or marginal pastureland that is adjacent to any permanent waterbody. Waterbodies include streams, lake, ponds, creeks, wetlands and drainage ditches.

Practices that are eligible are Filterstrips, Riparian Buffers, Shelter Belts, Living Snow Fences, Field Windbreaks, Grassed Waterways and Shallow Water Areas. These practices have conditions where practices can apply.

In Des Moines County, 373.6 acres have been enrolled for the filter strip practice and 21 acres have been enrolled for the filter strip practice and 21 acres have been enrolled for riparian buffer, totalling 394.6 acres.

For information and assistance on eligibility and benefits for this CRP signup contact the Des Moines County Natural Resource Conservation Service at (319) 753-6221.

Why Is All Our Farmland Disappearing?

by Jeff Bergman, Chairperson

If you have visited the rural areas of Des Moines County during the past couple of years, you have probably noticed how the subdivisions are growing at an alarming rate. Des Moines County lost approximately 131 acres of farmland in 1996 to subdivisions and development. The figures for 1997 are not definite yet, but it looks as if approximately 300 acres of farmland will disappear.

Nationwide, this loss of valuable farmland is becoming a critical issue. The American Farmland Trust reported that during the 1980's and early 1990's, 4.3 million acres of farmland was lost to development. Michigan alone lost 854,000 acres of farmland between 1982-1992. That loss amounted to ten acres of land lost every hour every day. Polk County, Iowa, lost almost 4,000 acres of farmland in 1995 to residential and commercial development.

Why is this loss of prime farmland a concern of natural resource managers? Approximately 97% of the land in Iowa is under private ownership. That leaves a very small percentage as public land. As the farmland disappears so do the natural areas adjacent to the farmland. Soil erosion on construction more often than not exceeds soil loss limits and results in the siltation of storm sewers, road ditches, streams and rivers. As more acres are paved, runoff from storms is concentrated in more narrow areas, speeding the flow of water. In more pristine areas, the water would slowly enter the soil and gradually discharge into aquifers. This rapid discharge into streams increases the potential for stream bank erosion and flooding. This, in turn, increases the sedimentation and decreases the water quality entering our river systems.

Besides the loss of valuable soil resources, rural development has other consequences if not planned properly. The fish and wildlife affected emigrate to the remaining natural areas. The population densities in these areas become too high causing management problems. In some areas, the more sensitive fish and wildlife simply disappear.

As development spreads further outward from city centers, reliance on the automobile increases. Air pollution and the dependence on imported fossil fuels spark growing concerns.

What can be done? Proper land use planning and regulation are key components. Although considered a controversial issue, it is not particularly restrictive. Used as a guide, it will allow landowners to do what they want with few restrictions.

Eighteen states have programs that purchase the development rights from farmers. These rights are calculated at the development value minus the agriculture value. The landowner receives the equity in the land in exchange for a permanent easement that restricts development. The owner still manages this property and can sell or transfer the land for agriculture use. Under provisions of the 1996 Farm Bill, \$14.5 million in federal funds were made available to these eighteen states to help purchase development rights. Much of our wetland reserve program in Iowa works similarly to these as perpetual easements for natural area protection. Iowa is not one of the eighteen states that receive funding for development rights.

Information from this article came from the American Farmland Trust and the Conservation Districts of Iowa.

Make a Difference Day

On October 25, J B Martin Jr., District Conservationist of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Burlington High School students worked together constructing a riparian buffer for "Make a Difference Day".

The project began when Doug Beckman from Burlington was approved for a riparian buffer along Flint Creek through the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program. A riparian buffer is a zone consisting of trees, shrubs and grass along a body of water. The zone filters sediment and pollutants entering the water.

The Ecology Club of Burlington High School contacted the NRCS office for a tree planting project and then organized the day with help from their advisor, Sherman Lundy. Other clubs from BHS involved included Student Council, Varsity Club, National Honor Society, and the Flint Creek Water Quality Group.

As volunteers on Saturday afternoon, they planted 300 trees that will "make a difference" in the water quality of Flint Creek. The effects of these students selfless work will last for generation.

The students who participated from BHS were Katie Abrisz, Becky Boetz, Molly Buhrow, Morgan Carter, Virginia Cordts, Robyn Davis, Andrew Hendrix, Amanda Holzwarth, Amanda Long, Cara McCabe, Matt Moore, Melissa Phillips, Rachel Roewe, Matt Snow, Rebekkah Snow, Eugene Su, Jennifer Wallerich, and Hollyn Woods.