

Teams to aid conservation implementation

Farmers do not have to go it alone in their race to meet federal standards in reducing soil erosion. A group of state agencies and major farm organizations is leading a move to create voluntary citizen's support and advisory teams.

The purpose of the county conservation implementation teams is to spur action on the conservation plans required by the 1985 federal farm bill and help farmers meet the December 1994 deadline for compliance, according to Jerry DeWitt, associate director of Iowa State University extension service.

The federal government requires Iowa farmers to greatly expand the amount of conservation practices in place to protect the 12 million acres of Iowa cropland classified as highly erodible, which is nearly one-half of the state's cropland.

"We have a lot of work ahead in the next four years,"

said Jeff Vonk, state conservationist for the Soil Conservation Service.

Iowa farmers must convert 6 million more acres to conservation tillage and increase contoured land from 200,000 to 860,000 acres. In addition, they must construct an average of 5,400 miles of terraces and 80,000 acres of grass waterways each year through 1994 to meet conservation compliance.

Along with ISU extension and the SCS, the groups supporting the teams include the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa Association of Soil and Water District Commissioners, Iowa Soybean Growers Association and Iowa Corn Growers Association.

"Farmers want to save soil," said Lisle Cook, president of the Iowa Corn Growers Association. "We want our soil to

continue to be there to grow those good crops. We are enthused about the team idea."

"It's a real challenge for all of us involved in agriculture to come into full compliance by the end of 1994," DeWitt said. "By working together, compliance will be a lot easier."

Under the proposed structure, the teams would consist of

a cross section of 15 to 20 individuals in each county who would meet at least quarterly. Among the groups the backers would like represented are farmers, farm organizations, agriculture businesses, lending agencies, local elected officials, media, environmental groups, and soil and water district commissioners.

The teams will be totally vol-

untary, according to the organizers.

Although no formal funding is available for the teams, both ISU extension and SCS have agreed to provide some support, while encouraging teams to pursue local funding and partnerships.

Those interested in participating in a team should contact their county extension office.