

Cherokee County Soil Conservation District



ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1952



By The
DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS
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INTRODUCTION

In the Little Sioux Valley, we have an active soil conservation program plus a flood control program. The Little Sioux flood control program is based upon the reduction of soil movement and water runoff in small watersheds.

All rain falls on watersheds. Each one of us lives in a small watershed. Each one of us should feel a direct responsibility for the cooperative management of our watershed to make sure that it plays its proper part in storing the water which falls upon it.

Watershed management can help to lower flood peaks by slowing down runoff and permitting maximum infiltration. Watershed management also may reduce flood damage by controlling erosion, thus lowering the sediment load of our streams. Too, it protects flood control installations against filling up too rapidly with sediment.

Storage of water is of first importance both in conservation and flood control. This storage begins in the soil itself if the soil of the watershed is properly cared for. A productive soil is a soil high in organic matter; such a soil has a high water holding capacity and can absorb water much faster than a soil low in organic content. Water taken care of here does not move down our slopes carrying away top soil and adding to the water disposal problems farther downstream.

Practices such as terraces, proper land use with adequate crop rotations, contouring, grassed waterways and headlands are the backbone of the small watershed program. And it follows that such a program can, at best, be only partly successful if these soil conservation practices are not installed in **adequate quantities** in the small watersheds of the Little Sioux Valley.

Our soil conservation program is rolling; it needs to roll faster and better. We need to develop a more vigorous philosophy concerning the conservation of our soil. The soil is our working capital. Use it, yes, in every way we can but let's not abuse it. Self interest alone, should give us as a goal nothing less than balancing our soils budget. Remember, you can conserve soil without improving it, but you can't build soil up without conserving it.

DISTRICT COOPERATORS

At the close of 1952, 364 farmers were cooperating with the District in applying complete conservation programs on their land (a total of 72,778 acres). The distribution of cooperators, by townships, is as follows:

CHEROKEE COUNTY

Marcus Township	3
Liberty Township	13
Cedar Township	10
Spring Township	21
Amherst Township	13
Sheridan Township	12
Cherokee Township	25
Afton Township	17
Tilden Township	22
Rock Township	28
Pilot Township	38
Pitcher Township	24
Grand Meadow Township	34
Willow Township	44
Silver Township	48
Diamond Township	12

PROGRESS MADE BY THE DISTRICT IN ESTABLISHING SOIL CONSERVATION PRACTICES

1952

PRACTICE	UNIT	AMOUNT COMPLETED
1. Soil conservation practices established by farmers with district assistance:		
a. Contouring of row crops	Acres	8,777
b. Contour field divisions established	Rods	17,024
c. Tile Drainage	Lineal Feet	193,759
d. Terraces	Mile	4.2
e. Diversions	Mile	2.3
f. Gullies filled and shaped into waterways then seeding	Mile	1.6
g. Grassed headlands	Acre	64
2. 335 Cherokee County farmers received district assistance in establishing the various soil conservation practices.		
3. In addition to the above, contour lines were re-established on 1349 acres (these had been previously laid out but lost or the new owner or tenant had doubts about their location.		
4. In cooperation with the State Conservation Commission, the Little Sioux Rod and Gun Club and the Marcus Gun Club, the District assisted in establishing 2.1 miles of multiflora plantings and 2.0 acres of wildlife plantings.		

OTHER DISTRICT ACTIVITIES

1. Additional activities of the technicians assigned to the District by the Soil Conservation Services were:

Demonstrations held during 1952 included four waterway shaping and seeding demonstrations, one contour layout demonstration and one contour plowing demonstration.

There were three watershed tours with 4-H groups and High School agriculture classes. Three information meetings were also held.

News articles have appeared in the local papers covering the work of the district and radio broadcasts have been participated in over the Storm Lake radio station. The local newspapers have been very helpful in telling the story of our District program.

2. Pilot Rock Plowing Match:

The above named association sponsored a 4-H Livestock show and contour plowing match in August of 1952. It was held on the Walter Fuhrman and Sylvester Rupp farms (west of Cherokee). Junior and Senior plowing events were held; our soil conservation technicians assisted with the layout and staging of these two contests.

3. Sioux City Program for Permanent Agriculture:

The Cherokee District participated in this program in 1952. Cherokee District winners were F. O. Mortenson & Sons, Gilman Fee, Paul Cedar and John Bierman.

4. State Conservation Commission:

Technicians assigned to our District worked with Conservation Officer Frank Starr in lining up seven areas on co-operators farms which are to be planted to trees and shrubs in 1953 (for wildlife cover and travel lanes).

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION PROGRAM UNDER THE PRODUCTION & MARKETING ADMINISTRATION

As predicted, the technical responsibilities (in connection with the Agricultural Conservation Program of PMA) which were assigned the Soil Conservation Service by the Secretary of Agriculture added materially to the work load of the technicians assigned to the Cherokee County Soil Conservation Districts.

These responsibilities included all technical work needed in helping ACP participants carry out permanent type practices. This work included a finding by the SCS that the work contemplated was needed and practical on the farm, all necessary site selection and layout of practices, needed supervision of installation and a certification that the work was done and met technical specifications of the ACP.

The technicians assigned to the Cherokee District spent a total of 232 man days (driving 9,223 miles) completing the above described assignment. Of the 232 man days, 84½ were spent working with ACP cooperators who were also District cooperators; the remaining 147½ man days were spent with ACP cooperators who were not District cooperators.

The County PMA committee referred 596 requests for permanent practice payment to our local technicians last spring. Practices were recommended as needed and practical on 594 of these. 221 of them requested and received assistance with layout and installation of practices on their farms (from our Soil Conservation Service technicians). Of the 596 requests, 483 completed practices listed and performance was certified as meeting ACP specifications on 453 of the 483 farms. Performance was certified as meeting ACP specifications on 23,013 acres of contouring, 89,026 lineal feet of tile drains and 3,800 lineal feet of terraces.

During 1952, the Cherokee County PMA committee made available, to the Soil Conservation District, a total of \$2500.00 to help defray the expenses incurred by the local technicians in carrying out their responsibilities in connection with the ACP program. This sum was sufficient to cover the cost of 138 man days of technical time and 6,748 miles of travel.

Township PMA committeemen aided materially in completing the certification of permanent type practices by checking most of the contouring for compliance with ACP specifications and amounts performed.

There have been several changes in the operation of the PMA agricultural conservation program in the past two years. The main changes in the 1952 program were the assignment of certain responsibilities to the Soil Conservation Service (for permanent type practices) and the direction that the 1952 ACP program be developed after a meeting of representatives of the Soil Conservation Service, Extension Service, Farmers Home Administration, District Commissioners and the County and Township PMA committeemen. A meeting was held (in January, 1952) to review the then current AC program and make recommendations for the 1952 program. The program adopted was the same as recommended at this meeting. In September, 1952, a similar meeting was held to develop recommendation for the 1953 AC program; the program adopted was the same as recommended at this meeting. Your district commissioners were at both of these meetings.

An additional change was made in the operation of the Agricultural Conservation Program for the coming year, 1953. The goal being to encourage farmers to select conservation practices most needed on their farms and encourage them to put these practices into effect. The major change in operating procedure is that the 1953 AC Program provides for township committeemen to visit each farmer for the purpose of helping him consider the (a) conservation practices included in the county AC Program and most needed on his farm. (b) the possibility of applying this practice or practices during the 1953 year and (c) whether ACP assistance is necessary in applying the practice. In order to provide more information to the township committeemen who did this work, a two day training school was held last September to review soil conservation practices and under what conditions they are to be recommended (this program included a field trip.) Both Extension and Soil Conservation Service personnel assisted with this school.

These changes have put an additional work load on the Soil Conservation Service technicians assigned to the Cherokee District. During 1952, this has meant a reduction in the amount of time that could be spent on farm conservation planning. However, we commissioners believe that any steps taken to get more people working together toward the same goal will, in the long run, insure more and better conservation of the land.

LITTLE SIOUX FLOOD CONTROL PROGRAM

The foundation upon which this program rests continues to be the treatment of farm lands to reduce erosion and runoff (on a small watershed basis) by means of rotations, terracing, contouring, sod waterways, etc. Supplementing this is the building of structures to control major gullies (so large that they cannot be controlled by individual action) and reduce peak flows; this part of the program is accomplished through the use of flood control funds.

The Little Sioux Works Committee, which is composed of one commissioner from each of the districts in the Little Sioux drainage area, has always followed the principle that flood control assistance in building gully control structures shall be made available to the small watershed groups of farmers who have accomplished the most in applying the farm land treatment program.

Following is a list of the small watersheds that have received assistance in the form of control structures built with flood control funds:

Buena Vista	— Garton Watershed
Cherokee	— Martin Watershed — Mortenson Watershed — Simonsen Watershed
Ida	— Kirkholm Watershed — Perion Watershed
Monona	— Croy Watershed — Habinck Watershed — Masters Watershed — Nepper Watershed
O'Brien	— Black Slough Watershed
Woodbury	— Theobold Watershed — Walling Watershed

Of these small watersheds the following were worked on during 1952: the Simonsen Watershed in Cherokee, the Croy and Habinck in Monona and the Walling in Woodbury.

The next small watersheds to be treated, according to priorities set by the Little Sioux Works Committee, are the Helming in Woodbury, the East Aldrich Creek in Ida and the Fee in Cherokee.

District commissioners in each district determine the order in which minor watersheds (from within the district) are recommended to the Little Sioux Works Committee. This committee then determines the priority order, among the districts, in which the watersheds are recommended to the Soil Conservation Service for treatment.

Ideal conditions for the operation of such a program as this would be to have the farmland treatment part of the program completed on every small watershed before and gully control work is contemplated. If practices such as terraces, good crop rotations, contouring, etc. were present in every minor watershed in adequate amounts it could well reduce the amount of gully control work needed.

Practically all of Cherokee County lies within the drainage area of the Little Sioux River. Think of the tremendous tonnage of silt that would never reach the river if every small watershed in the county had adequate conservation practices in effect.

EXTENSION SERVICE

At the request of the Agricultural Mobilization Committee, a county wide soil conservation school was sponsored. Five farmers from each of the sixteen townships in the county were invited to attend. The Extension Director, in cooperation with the Soil Conservation Service technicians, conducting the school.

This school was set up as a series of three meetings. Subject matter of the first meeting was soil building projects to maintain fertility. The second meeting was an analysis of the Iowa State College report on the productivity of Iowa soils. The third meeting dealt with tying together crop rotations, fertilizers, contour farming and terracing into a complete conservation program. The group that attended these meetings has become more aggressive in selling soil conservation; largely through the information acquired at these sessions.

The use of commercial fertilizers for the improvement of crop rotations has been emphasized at every opportunity. Also, one training school was held, by the Extension Service, to inform dealers of the proper use of fertilizer in establishing adequate rotations.

Interest in Birdsfoot Trefoil, Reed Canary Grass, and adapted Brome has continued to grow. It has been found that seed starts of Birdsfoot Trefoil can be secured by broadcasting the seed on bare ground late in the winter as well as by preparing the seed bed.

During 1952, the project activity for 4-H work was wildlife conservation. Each club held two meetings on wildlife. A set of conservation slides (one on rotations) and the movie "Good Seed" was shown to each group. Wildlife and conservation demonstrations were given at 6 of the clubs.

SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

During the past year the Soil Conservation Service has provided the district with the following technical assistance:

1 Planning Technician (12 months) — Harvey Lindberg

1 Junior planning Technician (12 months) — Dale C. Barker

1 Conservation Aid (12 months) — Glen Craft

1 Conservation Aid (12 months) — Glen Berglund

In addition to the above, the District received part time assistance from a District Conservationist, a Soil Scientist, an engineering specialist and the staff of the flood control section of the Soil Conservation Service.

It is anticipated that, during 1953, the District will have the full time service of one planning technician, one junior planning technician and two conservation aids.

STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

The State of Iowa, through its legislature, makes funds available each year for soil conservation work within the state. These funds are allotted to Soil Conservation District in Iowa on the basis of budgets submitted by the district commissioners.

The Cherokee District budget, as approved by the State Soil Conservation Committee, includes the following items for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1952:

Clerical assistance	\$898.56
Commissioners expense	147.16
Office Supplies	66.50
Printing annual report, letterheads, etc.	85.00
Prizes for district contests	50.00
Rental of meeting halls, etc.	20.00
Material for exhibits, demonstrations, etc.	25.00

TOTAL STATE FUNDS	\$1292.22
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STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

The State of Iowa, through its legislature, makes funds available each year for soil conservation work within the state. These funds are allotted to Soil Conservation Districts in Iowa on the basis of acreage within the district. The State Soil Conservation Committee, created by the State Soil Conservation Act, Chapter 174, Section 1, Iowa Code, 1931, is the body which administers these funds. The Committee's budget is approved by the State Soil Conservation Committee, and the following items for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1932:

Classical assistance	\$298.00
Commissioner's expense	147.10
Office supplies	68.50
Printing annual report, letterhead, etc.	80.00
Prizes for district contests	50.00
Material for exhibits, demonstrations, etc.	30.00
Material of traveling salesmen, etc.	20.00
TOTAL STATE FUNDS	\$1,000.00

