

SOIL CONSERVATION



DICKINSON COUNTY Soil & Water Conservation District Annual Report 1990-1991

FOREWARD

Dickinson County SWCD Commissioners present this 1991 Annual Report, with appreciation to the landowners who have worked closely with the District staff to accomplish another successful year of conservation.

We, the Commissioners of the District, also would like to acknowledge the many organizations for their cooperation in the conservation effort in Dickinson County: ASCS, County Extension Service, Soil Conservation Service, DNR, County Board of Supervisors, County Newspapers, Contractors, State of Iowa, Iowa State University Extension Service, County Engineer, radio stations KUOO and KICD who make our regular and special news items available to the public, and the local soil districts bordering the county.

Activities of the District are accomplished through funding appropriated by the Iowa State Legislature, and allocated through the State Conservation Committee to Iowa Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

We hope that this report will remind you as landowners or users of the responsibility we all have to treat our land with care; and let you become familiar with the service offered by our Soil and Water Conservation Office.

Past Year Soil Conservation District Activities

JULY 1990

NACD North Central Regional Meeting in Perrysburg, Ohio; attended by Orville Berg.
Commissioner's Summer Picnic at Cutty's.

AUGUST 1990

Designation of Silver Lake as REAP priority watershed submitted to State Soil Conservation Committee.
Supplemental memorandum of understanding with ASCS was signed.

SEPTEMBER 1990

Outdoor Classroom held at Hogsback area.
Regional Meeting in Pocahontas.
REAP 5 Year Program Plan discussed.
New health plan made available to cooperators.

OCTOBER 1990

NACD's Sustainable Agriculture Symposium "Growing into the 21st Century" in Memphis attended by Orville J. Berg.

Resubmission of Silver Lake Watershed to State Soil Conservation Committee to be used county wide on Animal Waste System.

Project Agreement between Division of Soil Conservation and Dickinson SWCD for Iowa Great Lakes Project reviewed.

NOVEMBER 1990

Annual Conference in Des Moines; attended by Orville J. Berg, Mark Ingwersen and Maurice Dougal.
1990 Annual Report circulated.
Discussion of 1990 proposed IASWCDC resolutions.

DECEMBER 1990

NACD's "National Urban Conservation Symposium" in Kansas City; attended by Orville J. Berg.
Commissioner's Christmas Party at Vern & Coila's.

JANUARY 1991

Election of Officers--Orville J. Berg, Chairman; Mark Ingwersen, Vice-Chairman; Tim Hemphill, Secretary.

Introduction of Greg Brown, Natural Heritage Foundation staff employee.

Short Course in Ames; attended by Orville J. Berg.
Discussion & Concern on Airport Issue in Dickinson County by citizens.

FEBRUARY 1991

NACD Annual Convention in Atlanta; attended by Orville J. Berg.

Resource Conservation Plan - public meeting held.
Sponsor at Sheldon Tillage Show.

MARCH 1991

Roger McGinnis, Environmental Specialist hired for Water Protection Fund.

NACD Leadership Conference in Denver; attended by Orville J. Berg.

County Contractor's meeting in Spencer.

RC & D Project Agreement considered.

IASWCDC Scholarship Applications submitted.

APRIL 1991

Soil & Stewardship Week materials donated.

Trees distributed by District to co-operators.

Trees given to 6th grade students in Dickinson County.

MAY 1991

Grant Application submitted to University of Okoboji, requesting a Fertilizer Awareness Program for Urban Residents with the Iowa Great Lakes Watershed.

Resource Conservation Plan Draft Review.

JUNE 1991

Supplement for Project Agreement between IDALS and the Dickinson County SWCD District (Soil and Water Enhancement Account).

David Beck, Area Conservationist, presented more information on the RC&D program.

New Conservation Information Available

The following is a list of new brochures and videos that are available from the Soil Conservation Service office. Single copies of the brochures are available free of charge and the videos can be checked out with no charge.

1. "Conservation Catalog for the 1990's" features 19 soil-saving practices. It explains how each works, gives pointers on installing or managing it, and suggests how the practice may be combined with others for soil and water conservation systems.

2. "Conservation On Your Own" is a one-hour videotape showing how to apply or manage eight conservation practices yourself. It covers how to lay out a contour line, measure and manage crop residues, establish grass waterways and contour buffer strips, and more.

3. "Better Land, Better Water" is a 52-minute showing on how to use six methods to improve land and water. It covers how to test soils for nitrates, how to plug an abandoned well, how to plant a tree and establish a farmstead windbreak, and more.

4. Series of full color "Job Sheets"--Conservation practices are explained in detail...what they are, what they do, and how to install them.

5. "Farming with Residues" is an 8-card two-sided publication that shows corn and soybean residue amounts at 10% intervals up to 60%. Includes tips on how to leave more residues.

6. "Lines on the Land" is a package of a 10-minute videotape, a 24-page brochure, and 16 learning activities that explain conservation in terms understandable to non-agricultural audiences.

7. "The Wealth in Wetlands" is a 23-minute videotape explaining how wetlands can be restored and features the values five U.S. farmers find in wetlands.

Soil & Water Conservation District Chairman's Report for 1991

By Orville J. Berg, District Chairman

After three years of organizing we have finally seen the water quality project for the Iowa Great Lakes watershed started.

In December of 1990 the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation opened an office here and brought in Greg Brown to work on the project.

January and February of 1991 we signed grant agreements with the Iowa Division of Soil Conservation and the USDA, Soil Conservation Service. March 1 brought Roger McGinnis to the District office as the new Environmental Specialist to work on the 62,000 ac. watershed.

Twice this spring Silver Lake watershed near Lake Park was rejected by the State Committee for designation as a Priority Watershed. This designation would have made more cost-share funds available for conservation practices in the lake's watershed.

August brought a gift from the University of Okoboji Foundation to help fund an urban environmental education program. This project is aimed at helping home owners care for their lawns in a way that will not damage our lakes.

The Clean Water Alliance for the Iowa Great Lakes is a committee of over 20 private organizations and government agencies that meet regularly to coordinate their efforts in the lakes watershed. Without all these people working together it would not have gotten off the ground. I wish to take this opportunity to say THANK YOU, to all those who are working with us in protecting the lakes.

Now that this project has been turned over to staff, the District Commissioners attention will be turning to coming issues such as FSA compliance, promoting conservation tillage, land coming out of CRP, Integrated Crop management as a water quality solution, urban erosion control, etc.

County Soil & Water Conservation District Here To Serve You

By Leo Preston, District Conservationist

The Dickinson County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is available to help landowners and land users solve resource management problems. Typical assistance includes erosion control planning, water management planning, soil interpretation for site development planning, farm management and home site evaluations.

The SWCD is governed by five Commissioners, each from a different township who are elected in a general election to serve a six year term. The Commissioners serve without pay and are charged by the State of Iowa with the restoration and conservation of the soil and water and related resources in the County.

The following is a list of the major activities the Dickinson SWCD has been involved in this past year. Originator and lead organization in the Clean Water Alliance, initiation of the Clean Water Project that provided staff and financial assistance to help improve water quality of the Iowa Great Lakes, implementation of the Tree Program that provided over 12,000 trees at a low cost that were planted throughout the county, sponsored an environmental awareness field day for all the 6th graders in the county (also gave each student participating a tree to plant), provided technical assistance to the county in the development of the silt-fence ordinance, and assisted over 200 landowners in applying practices (windbreaks, terraces, waterways, conservation tillage, critical area seedings, wetland restorations, etc.) to their land that protects and enhances our resources.

There are several ongoing activities too numerous to mention that provide a continued service to the community.

The USDA Soil Conservation Service appoints personnel to the district to provide technical assistance to the Commissioners and the community. A strong bond and good working relationship has resulted from this cooperative effort.

Your Soil and Water Conservation District is at your service whether you live in the city or in the country. You are also welcome to get involved with district activities by volunteering your time to serve on any of the several projects.

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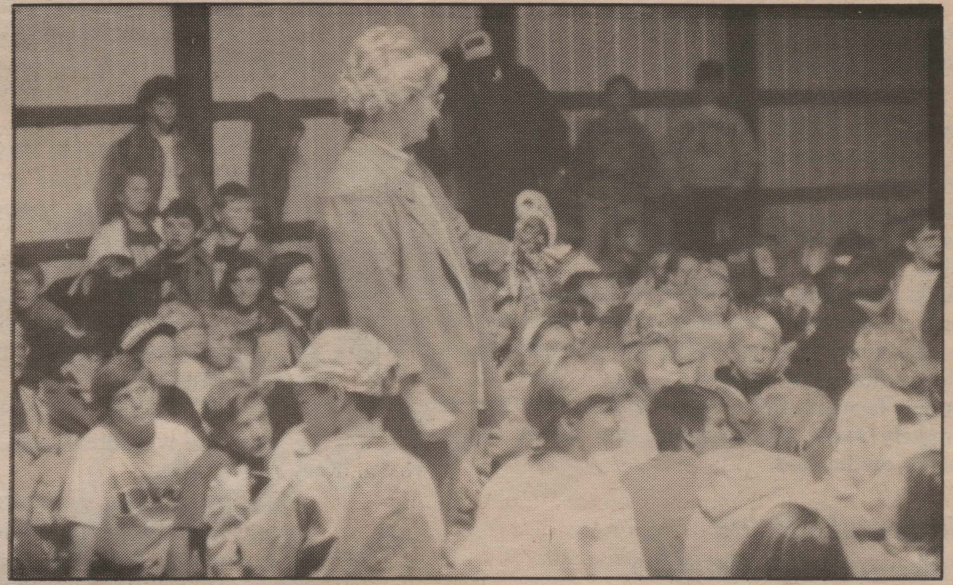
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OUTDOOR CLASSROOM IS A HUGE SUCCESS--The annual sixth grade outdoor classroom September 17 had 200-plus participants. Each year, during the fall, the Dickinson County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Soil Conservation Service sponsor the outdoor classroom. The classroom is held at the Kettleson-Hogsback area, above left, west of Spirit Lake. This area provides facilities for indoor classrooms and a variety of outdoor situations. What makes the annual event such a success is the location and all the people that are involved. The instructors included volunteers, paid speakers,

District staff and Department of Natural Resources employees. This year the program included presentations on Orphan and Injured Wildlife by Linda Hinshaw, above right, Soil Conservation, and Indian Lore. Hands-on adventures included a nature trail and upland wildlife, wildlife birds and hunting dogs, fish and fisheries, wild geese, and a new segment was featured on the Iowa Great Lakes (water quality). The day was filled with education, entertainment, fun and a beautiful setting. The children and everyone involved enjoyed the day very much.

ASCS Annual Report for 1991

by Larry Lago, Executive Director
Dickinson County ASCS

USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service has actively promoted since the 1930's, the wise use of our land and water in partnership with farmers through cost shared conservation programs.

Two of the conservation practices that are most popular to farmers are the Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP) and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

1991 Agricultural Conservation Program

ACP is a cost-share program that stresses solving soil, water and pollution problems on agricultural land. It emphasizes the completion of lasting conservation and environmental practices to solve these problems in order to protect and improve the nation's food producing capacity. ACP also encourages energy conservation.

ACP shares the cost of conservation practices with farmers and ranchers and helps protect soil, water, wildlife and woodland resources. ACP is available in all agricultural counties.

Farmers are eligible for cost-share help of up to 75% for conservation, water quality and pollution abatement measures on agricultural land. Practices eligible for cost-share are those selected by farmer-elected county committees from a list approved by the State ASC committees and the Secretary of Agriculture. ASC county committees may approve practices only after being assured that cost-shares will be used to carry out enduring soil and water conservation measures, which the farmers and ranchers would not perform without assistance.

ASCS administers the program. The Soil Conservation Service, the Forest Service, the Extension Service, and other agencies provide technical and educational help. Farmer-elected county committees manage program activity in their counties. State ASC committees supervise state programs and give overall direction and guidance for planning and coordinating the program's impact on soil, water and woodland conservation and on antipollution programs. The program offers long-term agreements for 3 to 10 years. Those agreements are aimed at solving problems on land with critical soil erosion, water quality or pollution.

Private investments by farmers for carrying out practices may equal or exceed the federal cost-share. Incentives provided by the federal cost-share stimulate private investments and bring conservation accomplishments that otherwise would not take place.

ACP provides for public benefits by maintaining and improving soil, water, woodland and wildlife resources which helps continue an adequate supply of food, fiber and timber for America's future. (In emergencies from flood, drought, hurricane, earthquake, and other natural disasters, Emergency Conservation program funds may also be available for restoring damaged farmland to predisaster conditions.)

ACP is authorized by the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of 1936, as amended; The Rural Development Act of 1972, and Title X of the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1977, and further modified under annual Agriculture, Rural Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Acts.

1991 Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

CRP is a long-term conservation program designed to take eligible cropland out of production and convert it to trees or other permanent vegetative cover.

To participate in the program after a producer decides what eligible cropland to offer for the reserve, he files an application at his local ASCS county office during the authorized signup period.

Eligible cropland to be placed in CRP is land planted or considered to have been planted at least 2 of the 5 crop years from 1986 through 1990. This includes land previously in the Acreage Conservation Reserve or set-aside programs or land that was in a prevented-planting category.

Cropland under a CRP contract cannot be counted as set-aside or diverted acres for the annual commodity program. ASCS will temporarily reduce bases by the ratio of cropland designated for CRP to the total cropland on the farm. The producer chooses the bases, that would be reduced, and this history would be preserved during the life of the contract.

Producers would receive annual rental payments after October 1 each year for 10-15 years. There is a \$50,000 maximum payment limitation per person per year. Payments will be made either in cash, commodity or in a negotiable payment-in-kind certificate.

Producers could also receive up to 50% in cost-sharing from the Commodity Credit Corporation toward the establishment of trees or permanent cover. Cover must be established in accordance with practice specifications in an approved conservation plan. The \$50,000 payment limitation does not apply to cost-share payments.

The local conservation district approves the conservation plan that is needed for the land to be entered into the CRP. The owner or operator must maintain the practice during

the 10-15 years of the contract including weed and pest control. Some practices also require useful life easements of either 15 or 30 years.

Eligible CRP practices are permanent tame specie cover establishment, permanent native specie cover establishment, forest tree plantations, permanent wildlife habitat, field windbreak establishment, shallow water areas for wildlife and other practices to establish permanent cover.

Haying and grazing are not permitted on CRP acres during the life of the contract unless authorized by the Secretary.

ASCS administers the CRP with assistance from the Soil Conservation Service, Forest Service, Extension Service, state forestry agencies and local soil and water conservation districts.

The CRP was authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985 as amended by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990.

Conservation practices to prevent soil loss and water pollution have public benefits that justify cost-sharing and technical assistance by the Federal government. These practices are not immediately profitable to the individual farmer or rancher, but help all of the general public by maintaining the productivity of agriculture. The Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) administers a number of programs to help rural land owners and operators conserve the soil, maintain the fertility of the land, keep the water of the streams and lakes clear and usable and promote a flourishing wildlife.

Soil Conservation Videos Available

"Better Land...Better Water", cooperatively produced as a followup to "Conservation On Your Own", is 53 minutes long and has six segments: How to Plug an Abandoned Well, How to Test Soils for Nitrogen, How to Plant a Tree, How to Plant a Farmstead Windbreak, How to Get Grasses Growing, and How to Use Filter Strips.

The Soil Conservation Service in Iowa, the Iowa Association of Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and the Iowa State University Extension Service cooperated to produce the video.

Twenty-five VCR tapes have been distributed throughout the county, and both videos are available for check-out at the SCS office in Spirit Lake.

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Conservation By Design

By David L. Kohlhaase, SCS Technician

The best Conservation Plan is one that has been designed especially for a specific farm. A farmer consults with the Soil Conservationist, Foresters, Agricultural Engineers, Economist, Soil Scientist, and other specialists to develop options about possible conservation practices. Among their considerations are soil types, erosion potentials, and farming goals.

After examining the options, the plan is developed. It lists which conservation practices will be used and where they will be applied. The plan also includes a schedule of when each practice will be applied.

It is farmers--the people closest to the land--who ultimately make the decisions that affect everyone who depends on the land.

Windbreaks Bring Environmental Benefits

AMES, Iowa--Windbreaks should become an integral part of the farm landscape because of their positive effects on the environment, according to Paul Wray, Iowa State University Extension forester.

"All Iowa farms and rural homes can benefit from windbreaks because they reduce chill effects during winter, reduce some pollution because of the trees' air filtering characteristics, enhance wildlife habitat and provide many other benefits to humans and farmstead livestock," Wray said.

Other windbreak benefits include decreased home heating costs, improved feed conversion in livestock, increased property value through beautification and reduced wind erosion, he said.

Iowa soils most susceptible to wind erosion will benefit greatly from shelterbelts. Rows of trees placed 500 to 1,000 feet apart will reduce wind speed enough to keep soil in place, rather than blowing into roadside or drainage ditches, Wray said.

Trees also provide habitat for birds and other desirable wildlife. In dryer parts of the country, windbreaks trap snow, providing the soil with additional moisture. Windbreaks can have a positive effect on crop yields by reducing the amount of water lost during the hot, dry stress periods of crop growth.

Normally, shelterbelts consist of two to three rows of hardwood trees planted in a pattern to provide protection from prevailing winds during spring and summer. Row spacings vary from 12 to 20 feet, with eight to 15 feet between trees within a row. Several different species can be used, including green ash, silver maple, hackberry, oaks, walnut, basswood and cottonwoods or hybrid poplars.

Wray said the expansion of the tree's root system into adjacent fields is a major complaint because it results in crop yield reduction. However, cutting the tree's root system at the edge of the shelterbelt with a deep tillage implement every two to four years can reduce or eliminate yield losses.

Following are some general rules to follow for planning farmstead windbreaks:

*The minimum windbreak in Iowa should consist of

two rows of conifers and a row of shrubs usually planted on the outer edge of the windbreak. Increase protection by adding rows of trees. A better windbreak consists of three to six rows of conifers, two rows of shrubs and one to two rows of large hardwood trees.

*For conifers, plant at least two rows on the north and west side of the farmstead and plant at least two different species. Always choose species that will adapt well to the planting site, Wray advised.

*Smaller conifers (arborvitae and eastern red cedar) may be planted as close as 10 to 12 feet apart. Large hardwood trees are typically planted 12 to 20 feet apart. Shrub spacing varies depending on the species, but usually ranges from three to six feet.

*To reduce snow drift problems, leave 50 to 100 feet between the windbreak and critical farmstead areas, according to Wray.

*Conifer species commonly used for farmstead windbreaks include Scotch, white and red pines; white, Black Hills, Norway and blue spruces; white fir; eastern red cedar and arborvitae. Common shrub species include ninebark, dogwoods, lilac, amur maple, spirea and viburnums. Some of the large hardwood trees used include silver maple, ashes, hackberry, cottonwoods and hybrid poplars.

CRP Conversions to Tree Plantings

by Gail Kantak, DNR District Forester

Major Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) changes now permit you to extend your CRP payments for an additional 1 to 5 years if pre-1991 grass contracts are converted to hardwood trees (CP3A). This applies to Introduced Grass (CP1), Native Grass (CP2), or Vegetative Cover (CP10) contracts. Cost share assistance is available for this conversion. This provides a great opportunity to extend your CRP payments and establish a hardwood forest on highly erodible land.

To qualify:

- Extend your CRP contract for an additional 1 to 5 years.
- Request conversion to a CP3A practice at the ASCS office.
- Have your DNR district forester assist you with the development of a planting plan.
- Plant native hardwood species (ex., walnut, oak, ash, silver maple, cottonwood, etc.). Conifers may be included for diversity but cannot exceed 10% of the total planting stock. Shrubs may not be included.

Why plant trees?

- You receive extended payments with an extended contract.
- The planting establishment and one additional year of maintenance are cost-sharable (minus the amount cost-shared for the original seeding).
- The entire contract area need not be converted. The field may be subdivided and only a portion planted to trees. This may be a good alternative to poorly established seedings.
- Areas that are larger than 2 acres in size will be exempt from property taxes under the Forest Reserve Law after the contract period.
- Trees provide a crop on land uneconomical to row

crop and they can return an 8-15% return on investment over a 40-60 year period.

- Trees can provide income to the landowner after CRP through the sale of sawlogs, pulp, and fuelwood.
- Planting high value hardwoods will provide a valuable legacy without being taxed on the increase in value each year.
- Trees provide excellent erosion control and wildlife habitat, while they enhance landscapes and improve water quality.

START PLANNING NOW! Typically site preparation is done in the fall with tree planting to follow in the spring. Planting stock also needs to be ordered in a timely manner (usually at least by December) to insure availability.

For more information contact your local DNR District Forester or your county ASCS office.

State Soil & Water Commissioners Auxiliary Report

During the last four years it has been a privilege to serve as the Iowa State President for the Association of Soil and Water Commissioners Auxiliary. The auxiliary membership consists of people interested in soil and water conservation including spouses of the District Commissioners.

Each year the Auxiliary assists in local District activities and also promotes state-wide projects. The annual scholarship awards are given in the spring to three graduating seniors in the State of Iowa. Over \$1,000 in scholarships are awarded based on applications. We have given six scholarships to date and are quite proud of the young people as they report their activities back to us.

A conservation poster contest is sponsored annually by the Auxiliary in cooperation with Grinnell Mutual Insurance Company. The state winners are entered in the national contest each February. Awards are cash on the state level and savings bonds nationally. Our young people are very creative and produce some outstanding posters.

This past year Iowa hosted the eight-state regional convention in Des Moines. The Auxiliary was responsible for many activities from the opening Soil Stewardship Program to the closing door prizes. The three day event offered many seminars and the opportunity to meet with commissioners and auxiliary members from the north central region of the United States.

Auxiliary members are active across the country promoting Soil and Water Conservation.

Kay Berg
Iowa SWCDC
Auxiliary President



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DICKINSON COUNTY SOIL COMMISSIONERS--Front row, left to right: Orville Berg, Maurice Dougal, Mark Ingwersen. Back row: Jared Herbert, Tim Hemphill and Chris Hoffman.



SOIL CONSERVATION STAFF--The Soil Conservation staff, front row, left to right: David Kohlhaase, Soil Technician; Leo Preston, District Conservationist; Roger McGinnis, Environmental Specialist. Back row: Kerisa Olson, WAE; Jo Groves, District Secretary; and Deirdre Braband, WAE.

Thank You!

to the Dickinson County Soil
and Water Conservation
District for letting us publish
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DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS:

(Elected for a 6-year term at general elections)

Orville J. Berg, Chairman	Center Grove Township
Mark Ingwersen, Vice-Chair	Superior Township
Tim Hemphill, Secretary	Okoboji Township
Jared Herbert	Silver Lake Township
Chris Hoffman	Lakeville Township
Maurice Dougal (Assistant Commissioner)	Westport Township

SPIRIT LAKE FIELD OFFICE STAFF:

Leo J. Preston, SCS District Conservationist	Field Office, Spirit Lake
David L. Kohlhaase, SCS Technician	Field Office, Spirit Lake
Roger McGinnis, Environmental Specialist	Field Office, Spirit Lake
Jo Groves, District Secretary	Field Office, Spirit Lake
Deirdre Braband, WAE	Field Office, Spirit Lake
Kerisa Olson, WAE (May-August 1991)	Field Office, Spirit Lake

DICKINSON COUNTY SWCD FINANCIAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 1991

Expenditures of funds provided by the State of Iowa for District Commissioner's Expenses, Office Supplies & Expenses, and Office Equipment.

DISTRICT 1M FUNDS BUDGET (90-91)

Allocation from State	\$ 3,670.00
Commissioner Expenses	2,354.35
Office Supplies & Expenses	1,257.37
Total Expenditures	3,611.72
Released to DSC	58.28

3M BUDGET - IOWA FINANCIAL INCENTIVES PROGRAM

The 3M Budget provides cost-share assistance to landowners for installing permanent soil and water conservation practices.

1989-1990 Allocation	\$21,337.00
Amount Obligated or Spent	3,384.18
Unobligated Amount	17,952.82

1990-1991 Allocation	\$26,092.00
Amount Obligated or Spent	6,892.15
Unobligated Amount	19,199.85

REAP (Resource Enhancement & Protection Practices)

1989-1990 Allocation	\$13,095.00
Amount Obligated or Spent	3,065.79
Unobligated Amount	10,029.21

1990-1991 Allocation	\$27,280.00
Recalled to DSC	9,900.00
Amount Obligated or Spent	-0-
Unobligated Amount	17,380.00

REAP (Forestry/Native Grasses)

1990-1991 Allocation	\$10,000.00
Amount Obligated or Spent	4,639.15
Unobligated Amount	5,360.85

WATER PROTECTION FUND

1990-1991 Allocation	\$20,000.00
Amount Obligated or Spent	666.72
Unobligated Amount	19,333.28

COUNTY FUNDS CONTRIBUTION (Tree Plants)

1991 Allocation	\$ 412.62
Amount Obligated or Spent	412.62
Balance	-0-

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**Dickinson Co.
Farm Bureau**

Spirit Lake, Iowa
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**Northwest
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Spirit Lake, Iowa
Phone 336-3660

Iowa Great Lakes Watershed Clean Water Project

by Roger McGinnis
Environmental Specialist

After many years of planning, and the process of obtaining funding, the fiscal year of 1991 saw the commencement of The Iowa Great Lakes Watershed Clean Water Project. This project was originally proposed by the Dickinson County Soil and Water Conservation District. Besides the funding and the support of the district, the project is funded through the Division of Soil Conservation, Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship, U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service, Iowa Natural Heritage, and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Local support from the various lake protective associations, the ISU Extension Service, and the local county and city governments will play a big part in the success of the project.

The objective of the project is the enhancement and the long-term protection of the water quality of the lakes watershed. The strategy is to stop pollution before it enters the water. The economic, environmental, and recreational viability of the Iowa Great Lakes region revolves around water quality.

Landscape restoration and conservation protection practices will be major thrusts of the project. Areas of concern for the project include land use in critical drainage areas, re-establishment of buffer and filter strips in those drainage areas, the protection, enhancement, and restoration of wetlands (ecological water filter systems) in critical areas, and the implementation of practices for the control of runoff from pasture, cropland, and lawns. Conservation easements on wetland restorations will help protect water quality for the long-term.

Information and assistance for landowners will play a critical role in the protection of water quality. An "on-site" visit program will bring interaction between the landowner and the Environmental Specialist of the project. These "on-site" visits will inform the landowner as to "their" benefits from the project and information about financial assistance for implementing water quality practices. Landowners around the lakes will learn how they can better manage "their" property to protect "their" water quality.

Soil & Water Stewardship Week April 28 - May 5, 1991

"As You Sow" was the theme of the 37th Annual Soil and Water Stewardship Week. Emphasizing everyone's role in protecting soil and water resources for future generations, the Commissioners of the Dickinson County SWCD provided material to churches in the county for this observance.

Church bulletin covers, program inserts and children's educational supplements were provided free to the churches. The Commissioners also furnished educational materials and posters to the area schools and libraries, to create a larger awareness of our responsibilities for stewardship of the natural resources that sustain us all.

Dickinson County Tree Program

The Dickinson County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners conducted another very successful tree program again this year. Over 12,800 trees and shrubs were planted this year in windbreaks and shelterbelts.

Cost-Share money is available for helping co-operators establish windbreaks and shelterbelts.

Every year the Commissioners present each 6th grader in the county with a green ash tree.

The Commissioners are again offering trees at low prices for Spring 1992 so stop in at the SCS office in Spirit Lake.

Conservation Efforts Yield Wildlife And More

by Doug Harr, Iowa DNR Wildlife Biologist

Dickinson County has become a real focal point for exciting new conservation projects in recent years. Cooperation between Dickinson SWCD, Iowa DNR, USDA, US Fish & Wildlife Service, plus several local and national conservation groups, has sent an example for the rest of Iowa to follow. Wildlife certainly has benefitted from these efforts, along with the landowner and even visitors to our region. Wetland restorations and the CRP program have done much to yield these benefits, and new ideas now being tried may offer even more incentive to preserve our heritage of natural and agricultural resources.

Both inside and outside the Iowa Great Lakes watershed, several developments have spelled better water quality, reduced soil erosion, increased wildlife populations, new income sources for landowners, and better opportunities for public recreation.

Iowa Department of Natural Resources has restored nearly 60 previously drained marshes on both public and private lands, using funds from the US Fish & Wildlife Service and Ducks Unlimited. At least 10 more wetlands are scheduled for restoration in the fall of 1991. Return to near-normal precipitation this past year has refilled both natural and restored wetlands, resulting in the largest local duck hatch in two decades.

USDA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), has similarly begun yielding returns, in terms of better wildlife production. Pheasants have flocked to CRP lands and are now back at population levels unknown since the early 1970's. This is a fine example of how a government program designed to reduce soil erosion and crop surpluses can still provide farm income and greatly affect the welfare of wildlife, from deer and rabbits to pheasants and ducks.

Tree planting practices, also often cost-shared through the CRP program, Iowa REAP (Resource Enhancement and Protection) program, and Iowa DNR wildlife and farmstead shelterbelt practices, have done much to reverse the trend of woodland losses. Songbirds, deer, wild turkey and other forest wildlife have been served well in Dickinson County through these various woody planting incentives.

These and other conservation programs demonstrate how landowners and government agencies can work cooperatively to seek the goals everyone looks for: soil and water conservation, supported farm income, increased wildlife production, and recreational opportunities or a better quality of life. In effect, such cooperative programs can help sustain and preserve not only our local agricultural economy, but might also enhance our region's growing recreational economy as well.

Today, new programs are entering the conservation scene, promising even more exciting opportunities for landowners to preserve their natural, rural environment while yielding a source of income and more wildlife resources for everyone to enjoy. Two "conservation easement" programs are now being offered in Dickinson County, one through the Clean Water Project for the Iowa Great Lakes Watershed, and another by the US Fish & Wildlife Service for areas outside the watershed. Both programs will pay the landowner not to drain, fill or burn natural or restored wetlands, and easements within the watershed may also in-

clude payments to protect uplands around marshes. These perpetual agreements will still allow landowners to make most other normal uses of their property and to control who has access to their lands. Most lands can remain on the county tax rolls, so almost everyone ends up benefitting from the programs. For more information about easements, interested individuals should contact the Dickinson SWCD office, or DNR Wildlife Bureau personnel.

The future of Dickinson County depends, to a large extent, upon how we citizens wish to protect the wealth of natural resources existing here. Innovative, cooperative conservation ventures may be just the answer needed.

Conservation Tillage in Sustainable Agriculture

Sustainable agriculture implies profitable farming on a continuous basis while preserving or conserving the natural resource base. It represents the most efficient mix of crop production technologies with technologies that protect soil productivity and environmental quality.

The level of input necessary to obtain an economic response from any crop depends on soil properties and cropping systems. For some fertile soils high yields can be obtained even with no input. Some soils may not respond to inputs at all. Most of the earth's arable land falls in the middle of these extremes; they respond to suitable production inputs.

Tillage and seedbed preparation can be major inputs in a crop production system. Plow-based conventional tillage systems can also contribute to accelerated soil erosion.

Conservation tillage system leaves at least 30 percent of the previous crop residue on the soil surface after planting. This tillage includes mulch tillage, ridge tillage, and no-tillage. When used correctly, conservation tillage may reduce energy consumption and significantly reduce erosion. The goal is to apply the right amount of tillage to optimize yield while decreasing energy input, reducing erosion, and reducing other environmental hazards.

Conservation tillage may have many energy-saving benefits. These include: 1) less fuel used due to fewer field operations, 2) less power required due to the type of equipment used and improved soil structure, 3) less time and labor required, 4) increased possibility of double cropping, and 5) lower investment in farm machinery. Just as with conventional tillage systems some activities associated with conservation tillage require energy. Examples are 1) weed control with herbicides, 2) control of insects and pathogens, and 3) use of fertilizers.

Actual energy needs and costs for a conservation tillage system depend upon the relative mix of factors listed above. Observed fuel savings have been as much as 40 percent of no-till when compared with conventional systems. Adoption of legume-based rotations may lead to greater saving through improvements in total nitrogen. The saving in total energy by conservation tillage depends upon the degree to weed infestation and its control. There can be conditions in which weed control through herbicides can be more cost and energy-effective than mechanical measures of manual or motorized operations.

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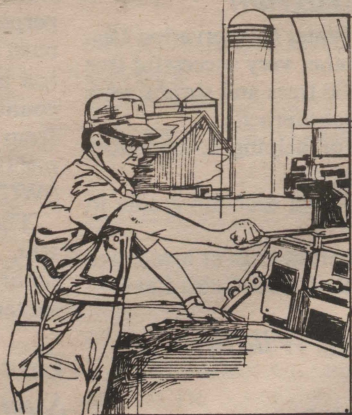
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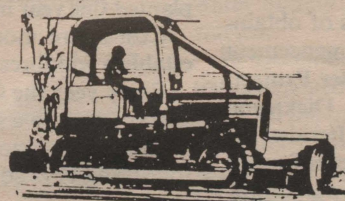
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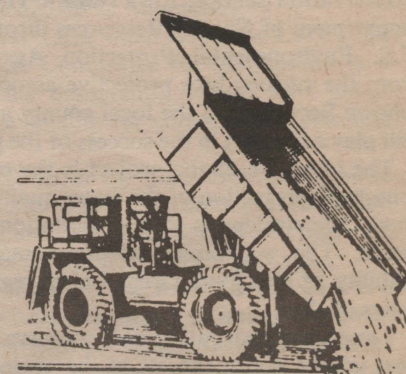
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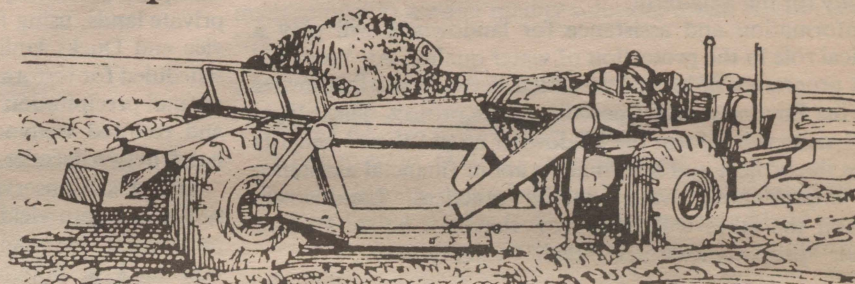


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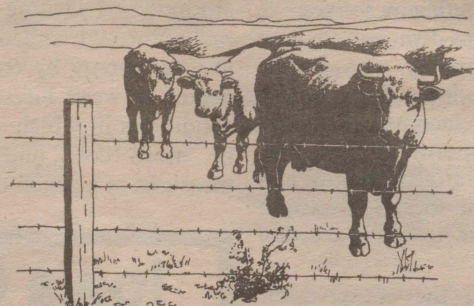
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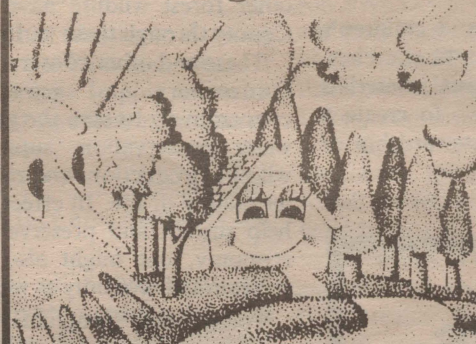
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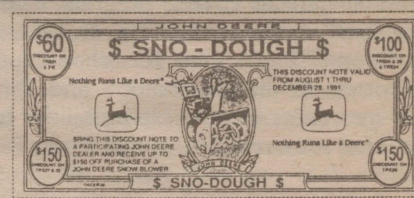
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