

ANNUAL REPORT

POWESHIEK COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

January 1, 1945 to December 31, 1945

The Poweshiek Soil Conservation District was established during the calendar year of 1945. The preliminary work for securing a district was major project of the Poweshiek County Farm Bureau cooperating with the State Conservation Committee in 1944.

The circulation of the petitions for a district was under the direction of J. J. Boatman, chairman of the Farm Bureau Soils Committee. On January 1, 1945 there were 493 signatures. This was approximately 25% of the land owners of the county.

These signatures were submitted to the county auditor and the county chairman of the AAA committee who approved them as land owners. The petitions were filed with the State Soil Conservation Committee at Des Moines and arrangements made for a hearing to be held at the City Hall, Brooklyn, on Wednesday, February 28, at 1: 30 P. M.

There were approximately 100 in attendance at the hearing at which Mr. Alvin Mann, President of the Farm Bureau, acted as temporary Chairman. Members of the State Soil Conservation Committee included Chris Jensen, Clark Huntley, Earl Elijah and Clyde Spry. Mr. P. C. Taff, representing the Extension Service, and Kenneth King from the State office of the U. S. Conservation Service were also present.

Mr. Mann presented a statement as to the soil situation in Poweshiek County and the interest shown by the farm owners and operators in meeting the problems in a definite way. The meeting was then given to Mr. Chris Jensen, of Audubon who conducted the hearing.

Members were present from every township. Speaking for the establishment of a district here were J. J. Boatman, George Paul, representing the AAA; Marvin McLain, representing the Farm Bureau; L. G. Chrysler, Grinnell; Kelley Davis, Montezuma; Raymond Pilgrim, Grinnell; Howard Sears, Malcom; and J. S. Quist, Acting Co. Extension Director.

Among the statements made by the speakers showing the desire and need for a district, emphasis was placed upon the fact that:

(1) Approximately 90 per cent of the land of the county is rolling and has slopes of 3 or more per cent.

(2) There has been serious erosion losses of the top soil in the county.

(3) War time food demands have caused a heavy cropping and that conservation practices are necessary to restore the land as a whole to its normal productive condition.

(4) There is a great need for a county-wide educational program on land use for the maintenance of its fertility and to check losses from erosion, heavy cropping and indifferent mangement.

Following the hearing the State Conservation Committee voted unanimously for establishing a district in Poweshiek County.

A nominating committee composed of Clem DeMeulenaere, George Paul, and Estel Pilgrim presented the following list of candidates for county commissioners of the district. Those nominated were: J. J. Boatman, Jackson Township; Howard Sears, Sheridan Township; Elmer Dunnick, Deep River Township; Waldo McLennan, Jefferson Township; and Willard Wells, Washington Township.

Following the hearing, notices were published as required by law in the Grinnell, Montezuma, and Brooklyn papers for holding a referendum and election Saturday evening, March 31.

The following polling places and officers were secured for holding the election:

<u>Place</u>	<u>Judge</u>	<u>Clerk</u>
Clindinin Office, Grinnell	R. S. Pilgrim	Earl Fowler
High School Guernsey	Bob Green	George Norden
Old Barber Shop, Hartwick	L. L. Lambert	Calvin Kornis
Court House, Montezuma	W. E. McKee	Kelley Davis
Farm Bureau Office, Brooklyn	John Carlson	C. DeMeulenaere
Farmers Elevator, Malcom	Wm. Molison	George Eichorn
Old Bank Bldg., Searsboro	Earl Mincer	Floyd Hasley
Sheridan Township	Elmer Baustian	George Simmons
Deep River Township	Bob McWilliams	C. A. Postma

Mr. Earl Elijah supervised the election. The polls were open from 7:30 to 10:00 P. M. Results of the election were as follows:

<u>Polling Places</u>	<u>For</u>	<u>Ag-</u> <u>inst</u>	<u>Boat-</u> <u>man</u>	<u>Dunn-</u> <u>ick</u>	<u>McLennan</u>	<u>Sears</u>	<u>Wells</u>
Guernsey	4	0	4	4	3		1
Hartwick	12	0	11	3	12	7	3
Montezuma	30	1	27	25	11	12	15
Brooklyn	35	10	28	20	21	25	11
Malcom	7	0	7		5	7	2
Grinnell	37	1	32	10	11	30	31
Searsboro	7	0	7	4	3	2	5
Sheridan Twp.	7	0	4	2	4	6	5
Deep River	<u>23</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>4</u>
	132	12	143	91	82	96	77

The election gave a large majority in favor of establishing a district. The commissioners elected were J. J. Boatman, for 6 years, Howard Sears for 4 years and Elmer Dunnick for 2 years.

The first meeting of the commissioners of the Poweshiek County Conservation District was held at the Farm Bureau Office Wednesday evening, April 18. Present at the meeting were J. J. Boatman, Howard Sears, and Elmer Dunnick. Others were: W. T. Maackstead, representing the State Soil Conservation, Bryan Boatman, District Soil Conservationist, and J. S. Quist. The commissioners elected the following officers: J. J. Boatman, Chairman; J. S. Quist was appointed as acting secretary. Discussion at this meeting was given to the duties of the officers, the memorandum of understanding to be made between the county soil commissioners, the agricultural Extension Service, the State Soil Conservation Committee and the United State Soil Conservation Service. An authorization was made for signing necessary agreements and requests made for assistance in writing and developing the work program.

Other meetings of the Board held during the year were on May 28, June 28, July 27, October 26 and November 27.

ACTIVITIES

The development of a Soil Conservation District has been the outgrowth of a county-wide education program, brought about by a series of meetings sponsored by the County Farm Bureau.

At these meetings discussion was given to the soil situation of Poweshiek county, erosion problems, soil fertility and soil losses from heavy cropping. In January a county conference was arranged at which members of the county AAA committee, Soil Conservation Service, Extension Service and approximately 25 representatives from the county attended. At this meeting a rather definite soil program of work was developed dealing with soil conservation practices, uses of commercial fertilizers and 1945 conservation payments. In addition material was prepared for use at township meetings throughout the county.

The soil situation was given a prominent place in most of the township Farm Bureau meetings during the year. Mr. Bryan Boatman, District Conservationist, attended meetings in Pleasant Jackson, Sheridan, and Washington townships. Members of the Farm Bureau soils committee attended meetings and discussed the soil situation in Chester, Grant, Deep River and Jefferson township. The County Extension Director discussed this project with the Chamber of Commerce at Brooklyn, Rotary Club at Grinnell, the county Farm Bureau Women's meeting held in Malcom, and the Farm Bureau meetings in Bear Creek, and Sugar Creek Townships. It was also a basis for discussion with the county and township AAA meeting held in the spring of 1945. These meetings reached approximately 2000 people.

DEMONSTRATIONS

In March Mr. J. J. Boatman met with the Farm Bureau Board of Directors and discussed active soil conservation work which could be carried on until a soil district was established. The directors recommended that a series of contouring demonstrations be arranged. The following demonstrations were carried on by Mr. Boatman and Mr. Quist.

<u>PLACE</u>	<u>TOWNSHIP</u>	<u>ATTENDANCE</u>
Marvin Eflin	Union	55
Forrest Read	Madison	8
Lester King	Scott	6
Harry Taylor	Deep River	65
Bert Butler	Jackson	90
Floyd Hasley	Sugar Creek	35
Fred McDowell	Washington	35
Marvin Himschoot	Warren	15
Russell Winburn	Pleasant	40
A. J. Blinkensop	Jefferson	30

In addition, the County Extension Director assisted in setting up contour demonstration fields for Charles Foster, in Sheridan township, Marvin Watson and J. L. Zhorne in Union, Everett Johnson in Scott, A. C. McIntosh in Jackson, Chris Schilder in Pleasant township, Leon Johnson in Malcom township, John Siehl and Son in Chester township, and A. J. McCormick in Pleasant township.

It is estimated as a result of these demonstrations and assistance that more than 400 farms established contour practices on an approximately 12,000 acres during the year.

A special field day was held in October, through the cooperative efforts of the County Soil Conservation Service, AAA, and the Farm Bureau and the John Deere Implement Company, Grinnell. This was a terracing and ditch filling and grass waterway building demonstration. Mr. Morton James, County Technician, and Mr. Russell Winburn on whose farm the demonstration was presented, spent approximately two days in making plans for this event. One terrace was completed, the lines laid out for building another. Also one ditch was filled and another prepared for filling so that those attending might see the completed work as well as watch the operation. This event was of county-wide interest attracting approximately 500 people.

Through the meetings, demonstrations, field day, and personal contacts there has been developed a consciousness that the land in Poweshiek County has reached a critical condition. Approximately 2/3 of the surface soil has been lost in addition to serious damage from gulleys. The educational program awakened the people to the necessity action and has demonstrated that something could be done. It has established confidence among many that can do contouring farming.

PUBLICITY

Much of the success of developing an active soil program was due to the splendid publicity received from the Grinnell Herald-Register, the Montezuma Republican and the Brooklyn Chronicle. Progress reports were prepared each week of the development of the soils district in the county. The County Extension Director supplied timely news stories of all meetings. Mr. Dave Sutherland, editor of the Montezuma Republican, attended a number of the meetings and demonstrations and took pictures showing erosion damage, results of contour practices and of the attendance at meetings.

The Farm Bureau Spokesman, which has a page given to Poweshiek County activities, likewise was supplied with timely material.

FIELD OPERATIONS

The county commissioners in developing the work plan suggested that the following procedure should be used.

1. That individuals interested in developing farm plans and desiring the help of the soil conservation district should set up an organization meeting. It is the responsibility of the Farm Bureau to assist those interested with these arrangements.
2. This meeting is purely informational and educational. If after presentation, the individuals are interested, they are to sign an application requesting assistance from the county commissioners. If enough signed to form a local planning group, a chairman is elected. A special petition form has been developed for these organization meetings.

Fred Yount of Warren Township arranged for the first farm planning group in the county. The meeting was held at his home on June 21. There were 16 land owners and farm operators present. All signed the application and Fred Yount was elected as Chairman.

During the remainder of 1945 there were 8 additional groups organized.
These were:

<u>TOWNSHIP</u>	<u>MEMBERS</u>	<u>CHAIRMAN</u>
Deep River	18	Harry Taylor
Union	14	Marion Palmer
Madison	7	Forrest Read
Pleasant	15	Russell Winburn
Jackson	20	Lewis McKee
Washington	15	Gaylord Dempster
Jackson	11	Basil Kicks

On December 31 meetings had been set up for an additional farm planning group to be organized in Washington township and two groups in Chester township.

Mr. Morton James was assigned to Poweshiek County on July 1. After the applications had been approved by the county commissioners at their June 28 meeting. Mr. James began preliminary work so that Mr. Sanford Smith, District Soil surveyer could start surveying the farms of the applicants. Following the surveying, the county soil technician held three meetings with the members of the farm planning group No. 1. These meetings discussed:

1. Soil origin, development and classification.
2. Grasses and forage crops for control of soil erosion.
3. Soil conservation practices.

Following these meetings the technician works with each farm operator and develops a complete farm plan. In group No.1 two farmers dropped from the original group, but two new applications were accepted.

Mr. Robert P. Lord began work in the county as an aid in November.

The summary of the work accomplished with farm plans for 1945 is as follows:

There have been a total of 164 applications received involving 26,240 acres. These are all active applications. Fourteen plans have been signed involving 2,022 acres.

The major soil and conservation practices to these farms is as follows:

Contouring-326 acres; Strip cropping-1104 acres; Terracing 82 acres; Grass Waterways-69 acres; Liming- 792 acres; Fertilizing 699 acres; Tree Planting-4 acres; Drainage-30 acres; and Pasture Improvement-221 acres.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

While the development of the soil conservation district in Poweshiek County has been largely under the leadership of the local Farm Bureau organization, it has had the wholehearted cooperation of the organizations and community groups of the county. Much of the preliminary work for creating interest in the district came from the county AAA Committee composed of Kelley Davis, Chariman, Forrest Read and George Paul. This committee supplied many useful statistics to show the cropping situation and the necessity of good land use practices in our farming operations. They also gave assistance in petitioning for a district and presented outstanding statements at the hearing. There was close relationship between the Emergency War Food program that the AAA and the program of the District in the County.

The two vocational agricultural departments, one at Grinnell with Leslie Douglas as instructor and other at Montezuma with Loel Ferguson instructor did much through their night schools and with their agricultural classes in expanding the program in the communities. These vocational departments arranged special meetings and assisted with contouring demonstrations. They helped in a material way to make the program of greater value to the farmers.

Directors of township Farm Bureau's held at least one special meeting relative to the district program and were largely responsible for selecting key people to attend various meeting for getting a district established and a program into operation. The 4-H clubs of the county discussed conservation work at their meetings and on field trips. The annual banquet of the boys and girls of the county at which approximately 350 attended, placed the emphasis at this meeting on conservation. The main address of the meeting was given by Ellen Hartnett, Superintendent of Schools in Jasper county. She has an outstanding record of talking to young people in terms of soil conservation.

SUMMARY

The Poweshiek County Soil Conservation District is serving as a needed agency in the county. Because of the vulnerability of more than 90% per cent of the soil area to serious erosion, and because of the high quality of the soils of the county there was an urgent need for a program to assist farm owners and operators in developing quickly a conservation measures that would check the rapid loss of soil due to heavy wartime cropping.

The district has served as a means of awakening the consciousness of the people to seriousness of the situation. The demand for action has come faster than ability to provide assistance. The expression of one man at a meeting who said, "Why have we waited so long to get started?" typifies the interest of the people of the county. The problems of the soil conservation are many. Among those most acute are:

1. A broad educational program that will help farmers who can not be given assistance in farm planning now, select and apply practices which will fit into definite farm plans later on.

2. Provide information and assistance on ditch filling and the establishment of grass waterways.

3. Provide information on grass and forage crops and their planting to aid erosion control.

4. Develop a working relationship between the conservation program and the Board of Supervisors on projects of mutual interest to both.

5. With 160 applications for farmers on file and more to be received soon it is a real challenge to maintain interest and the confidence of those needing help now. There is need of some plan whereby these organized groups may be supplied with practical help with conservation problems until the farm planners get to them with more thorough individual assistance. Such help might well be given in meetings called the various group chairmans.

The Soil District Commissioners are aware of their responsibility. All three members in addition to attending the regular meetings of the board have attended various soil conversation conferences.

At every one of the nine local planning groups organized in the district there has been at least one of the district commissioners in charge to explain operation of the district and the procedure in obtaining assistance. That this method of approach in the district is effective as well as popular seems to be born out by the spontaneous response of various farmer groups and the prospects of still more in the year ahead.

Commissioners-Poweshiek County Soil Conservation District

J. J. Boatman-Chairman

Howard Sears

Elmer Dunnick

J. S. Quist-Secretary

Dear Friend:

COUNTY HAS VOTED A SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT! SO WHAT?

1. What is a Soil Conservation District? It is an association of landowners in this county, organized under state law, for the purpose of bringing about better land use and conservation of the soil.

2. Who manages the district? Three commissioners, _____, Chairman, _____ and _____ who have been elected by the landowners of the county.

3. How do the commissioners function?

A. From their personal knowledge and experience and through consultation with farmers, they determine the nature and importance of the soil and water conservation problems in the district.

B. With the assistance of representatives from the Extension Service and the Soil Conservation Service they make up a program of work and a plan for putting it into action.

C. Make formal request for assistance from the Extension Service, Soil Conservation Service and such other agencies and institutions as they believe can assist in carrying out the program.

4. How can a farmer get assistance from the district? By getting together a group from 5 to 15 farmers in a neighborhood and making application to the district commissioners.

5. What kind of assistance will be given? Major emphasis will be placed on farm planning, although demonstrations will be given when advisable in order to further the work in various communities.

6. Why a group? Why shouldn't all farmers get individual assistance? Experience has demonstrated that much more can be accomplished through group action.

A. Much less man power and travel is required to assist 6 or 8 farmers if they are located in a group than if scattered over the county.

B. In farm planning one of the first essentials is to get a soil map of the applicants' farms. The small number of soil surveyors, now available, can accomplish much more if they can work farms in groups.

C. In the group approach each farmer will have the opportunity to attend 3 or 4 planning meetings with the planning technician, at which the several phases of land use and soil conservation will be discussed. These meetings have proven to be very interesting and helpful.

7. How are farm plans made?

A. When applications for plans have been approved by the commissioners, a soil survey and air map is furnished for each farm. This gives information on types of soil, degree of slope, amount of erosion, etc.

B. A series of meetings are then held with the Farm Planner during which the farmer will, with the assistance of the Planner, develop a farm

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