

ANNUAL REPORT
IDA COUNTY, IOWA, SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT
1949

DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS

Ross E. Baumann, Chairman	Cushing, Iowa
Henry Dall	Battle Creek, Iowa
H. L. Elk	Galva, Iowa

TREASURER

Ray D. Bresnahan	Ida Grove, Iowa
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SECRETARY

Bruce W. Marcue, Extension Director	Ida County
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TECHNICIANS

Kenneth H. Burhett	Soil Conservationist
Joseph E. Clarey Jr.	Soil Conservationist
Albert M. Murphy Jr.	Conservation Aid

INTRODUCTION

The following is a report of the activities of the Ida County Soil Conservation District and other cooperating agencies for the 1949 calendar year. Combined with the record of accomplishments of the different organizations is a discussion of the methods used in attaining these ends. It is hoped that by such a procedure, the experiences of this District may be gainfully employed by others. There is considerable duplication in the reports of the accomplishments of the District and of the Ida County Production and Marketing Administration. Since this can not be eliminated, the reports of the two agencies must not be added together to project a picture of the total for the county or District.

In 1949 the District was given the following direct assistance:

From the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service:

Soil Conservationist (P-2) - 12 months service
Soil Conservationist (P-1) - 4 months service
Conservation Aid (SP-5) - 12 months service
Transportation, office space and supplies for the above. (U. S. Post Office Department furnished office space)

From the Ida County Farm Bureau, Cooperating with the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service and the Iowa State Extension Service:

Assistance of the County Extension Director in setting up and holding meetings, in laying contour guide lines on farms of prospective cooperators, and in acting as secretary for the District Commissioners.

From the Ida County Production and Marketing Administration:

Assistance in laying out contour guide lines.

Much favorable newspaper publicity.

From the State Soil Conservation Committee

\$250 for miscellaneous expense.

DEVELOPING INTEREST IN SOIL CONSERVATION.

The development of interest in soil conservation is the first step in the District Work Plan. The goal is to obtain, if possible, proper competence and ideals of farm operators, especially as regards the fundamentals of soil conservation. This step is very important since it constitutes the threshold from which all soil saving activity must depart to establish soil conservation practices on the land. No set technique has been developed to arouse this interest. However, the operational aids set forth below have proved effective in many cases.

The economic approach now used by the Production, Marketing Administration through its local office has proved very effective in stirring up interest. Elsewhere in this report the accomplishments of this method in Ida County are set forth. The Little Sioux Flood Control Program operates in the north three-fourths of the District. It provides water disposal systems to groups of farmers without cost where the farmers can guarantee the maintenance of the system. There are some who disagree with the idea of paying a farmer to help himself, but the value of the work as a whole can not be discounted where the goal is to arouse enthusiasm.

Considerable difficulty has been encountered in obtaining the necessary cooperation with land owners in the matter of maintenance funds for the Little Sioux Flood Control Project. It is felt that if the County Board of Supervisors could be prevailed upon to assume maintenance functions as authorized by Iowa laws, this difficulty would be largely eliminated.

Farm conservation plans resulting from Farmer-District Agreements have made excellent demonstrations for farmers to watch and study. During the past year this District has had about one hundred such plans in operation. There will be about one hundred and fifty in 1950.

Tours have not been used extensively since most usually only small attendance can be obtained. In addition, experience indicates that over a period of time it is the same small group which attends all of the tours.

There has been a Veteran's Agricultural Training School in operation in this District since March 1947. These young farmers have encountered considerable difficulty in convincing their landlords that they should practice soil conservation on their farms. During the past year several of these veterans have succeeded individually in breaking down this barrier to soil conservation, and have requested the District for assistance in applying soil conservation practices to their farms.

Soil conservation education was given a big boost in this District last summer through the efforts of the Holstein Advance and its editor, Mr. Bruce Bye, in conjunction with the Holstein Chamber of Commerce. The nationally famous Tom Kelly was obtained. He held an audience of 250 spell-bound for more than an hour.

Meetings have been attended by local people interested in soil conservation, at Marcus where Louis Bromfield was featured, and at Aurelia where Ollie Fink, secretary of Fields of the Land was the speaker, and at Cherokee where Dr. Forman talked on "Soil and Nutrition"

The Sioux City Journal and the Sioux City Chamber of Commerce sponsored the four-state Sioux City Program for Permanent Agriculture. This has been very helpful in recognizing actual farmer accomplishments in soil conservation.

There are four newspapers in the District, all weekly. They are, The Ida County Pioneer Record, The Battle Creek Times, The Holstein Advance and the Galva Tribune. All four have devoted much space to the printing of soil conservation news items.

The County Extension Director in his weekly newspaper column always brings out something on soil conservation. This column is printed in the four county papers and in the Farm Bureau Spokesman.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES FOR SOIL CONSERVATION IN IDA COUNTY

The following has been extracted from 1949 annual report of the Ida County Agricultural Extension Director, Mr. Bruce W. Marcue.

"The work of this agent, the Soil Conservation Service, and the Soils District in surveying Battle township for soil conservation needs was highly successful. The purpose of this survey was to find what the work load would be for the coming spring, to locate prospective leaders and to ascertain where we are falling down in our soil conservation program. I believe the results of this survey indicate that some farmers do not know where to go for assistance, that most farmers are sympathetic with the soil conservation program and there are many leaders who have not been used in developing our program. Probably one of the most important findings was the fact that most farmers have a rather hazy idea as to the definition of terms as contouring and terracing. Primarily they are farmers who accept recommended crop rotations. They hesitate to accept some of these other practices because they do not understand what they may be."

"This survey was conducted by six parties of two men each. One member of each party was a recommended farmer, one who has used one or more recommended soil practices. The other member was a technical man or a Soil Conservation District Commissioner. These teams did a rather splendid job, however, it is recommended that in further surveys of this nature each team have at least one man with technical background."

"Probably in the field of soil conservation the Soil Conservation Short Course was next in importance. This short course was designed to fill in some of the gaps definitions, to show pictures of the operation of various types of soil conservation measures. It was one designed primarily to be used in a continuing program. . . . "

"The cooperation of the Holstein Chamber of Commerce in presenting the summer's program was greatly appreciated. The audience that turned out to hear Tom Kelly was rather small, however, there was many who had never before attended a soil conservation meeting. From this respect it was highly successful."

ORGANIZING FOR SOIL CONSERVATION AND FLOOD CONTROL

The second step used in this district in establishing soil conservation on the land is the organization of small watershed groups of farmers. This method is used because, it speeds up the work of the farm planner and of the technician who will assist the farmer in laying out and placing the individual practices on the land. Three district commissioners are unable to assume the entire responsibility for seeing that the work is done throughout the district. However, if a committee of local farmers assumes this responsibility, a better job will be done and the commissioners are free for other activities.

Ordinarily the County Extension Director has assumed the responsibility for organizing these groups. During the past year his activities have resulted in the formation of one group, bringing the total to eleven. The District has been responsible for obtaining cooperation between farmer groups and the Ida County Board of Supervisors.

GETTING SOIL CONSERVATION PRACTICES APPLIED

In 1949 this District has assisted cooperating farmers in establishing conservation practices in the amounts shown below:

Contour planting	5473 acres
Seeding waterways	166,200 sq. yd.
Terraces constructed	10.4 miles
Contour field boundaries established	3124 rods
Adequate cropping systems planned	5180 acres

CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES OF IDA COUNTY PMA

The information in this section was prepared by Fred Harder, chairman, Edwin Carlson and Ed Reimer, Ida County PMA Committee. The accomplishments in the table below represent 1949 ACP payments.

<u>PRACTICE</u>	<u>UNIT</u>	<u>1949</u>	<u>1948</u>
Standard terraces	Mile	6*	—
Contour plow and plant	Acre	7 288	4 935
Contour plant only	Acre	7 363	5 969
Contour plant row crop	Acre	14 651	10 904
Seeding waterways	Sq. Yd.	1 055 422	1 312 000
Lime spread	Ton	6 049	6 707
Fertilizer spread	Ton	838	732
Green manure crops	Acre	36 603	30 455
Grassed headlands established	Lin. Rod	23 100	42 277

* Practice first used in 1949

Farmers in Ida County are becoming more soil conservation minded each year. For the past four years the acreage of contour planting has steadily increased from about 6000 acres in 1946 to the present 14500 acres. Further increases are expected in 1950.

Last year Ida County farmers did not take full advantage of the PMA soil testing program. Probably some of the fertilizer that was spread was applied incorrectly. Undoubtedly, the use of fertilizer was not as extensive as it might have been.

The amount of grassed headlands established declined somewhat this year since only those headlands seeded around contoured fields could qualify for ACP payment.

Payment of \$1.50 per hundred linear feet of standard terrace constructed was made in 1949 for the first time. Payments for the practice amounted to about one half one one percent of the total 1949 ACP payments for this county.

LITTLE SIOUX FLOOD CONTROL ACTIVITIES IN THE DISTRICT

During the past year flood control works were established on two sub-watershed areas in this District. The projects have been very effective in stimulating further interest in soil conservation. The difficulty has been experienced in justifying to the general public the cost of the installations because they do not comprehend the downstream flood control benefits of these structures. The Federal Government allocates money for these structures because of their help in curbing floods downstream.

In regard to a local problem, the Kirkholm sub-watershed of Odebolt creek is just a beginning and covers only 2% of the area of the Odebolt Creek Watershed.

It is now the policy of the District to assume the costs of maintenance of the Flood Control Structures. Costs are defrayed by individual payments to a District wide maintenance fund. Maintenance payments are calculated on a watershed basis and this total is sub-divided by the individuals concerned as they see fit. An initial payment of 3% of the construction cost but not to exceed \$1.00 per watershed acre is collected. Thereafter, 15 annual payments of $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1%, not to exceed 25¢ per acre will be collected from individual landowners in the watershed.

PROBLEMS

The District has been unable to arrive at satisfactory solutions to the following problems:

1. The 1950 system of corn acreage allotments is based on past history, modified by judgment of local township PMA committeemen. The law does not provide for ample consideration for good land use. Old Soil Conservation District cooperators who in previous years have reduced corn acreage to comply with good soil conservation practices, now must reduce corn acreages again by the same percentage as non-cooperators who have had a high corn acreage. Better integration of these two programs is badly needed.

2. The shortage of man-power for educational purposes.
3. The difficulty of maintaining long-time land use and soil conservation plans where there is a rapid turnover of owners and operators.
4. Many farmers overlook the need of a good rotation to assist contouring and terracing practices in following good soil management practices.
5. The relative difficulty of controlling weeds in drilled corn, which in turn retards the general acceptance of contour planting. Widespread use of 2,4-D may provide a partial answer.
6. The lack of funds available to the Ida County Board of Supervisors for roads. This problem becomes critical where the Little Sioux Flood Control Program calls for a large number of structures on public roads.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Space will not permit the naming of all individuals and groups to which this District is indebted for assistance and cooperation. Many farm operators have carried on soil conservation practices without our knowledge. However, it is desirable to name the following organizations and persons, and to express appreciation for all assistance rendered.

Ida County Farm Bureau
United States Soil Conservation Service
Ida County Production and Marketing Administration
Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station
Ida County Superintendent of Schools
Iowa Agricultural Extension Service
Production and Marketing Administration
Sioux City Journal Tribune
Sioux City Chamber of Commerce
Battle Creek Times
Galva Tribune
Holstein Advance
Pioneer-Record (Ida Grove)
Arthur Trust and Savings Bank
First Trust and Savings Bank (Galva)
Holstein State Bank
Ida County State Bank (Ida Grove)
First State Bank (Battle Creek)

PROGRESS SUMMARY
IDA COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT
ESTABLISHED - Feb. 19, 1945
WORK UNIT OFFICE OPENED - Mar. 13, 1946

	<u>In 1949</u>	<u>To Date</u>
Sub-Watershed Groups Organized	1	11
Soil Conservation Surveys (acres)	11 700	52 442
Farm Conservation Plans Completed (No)	39	135
(Acres)	7 191	23 809
Acres Contouring Laid Out	5 473	
Miles Terraces Built	10.4	27
Acres Definite Crop Rotation Planned	5 180	17 514
Educational Meetings Held (No)	14	65
(Attend)	513	1 619
News Articles	24	107
Demonstrations (No)	1	31
(Attend)	9	178
Radio Talks	1	2
Birthday Party (No)	1	4
(Attend)	250	825

ROSS BAUMANN, Chairman
Ida County Soil Conservation District