

1988

Good News

SOIL CONSERVATION Practice with a Purpose



1988 Fayette County Soil Conservation District Annual Report

FINANCIAL STATEMENT July 1, 1987 to June 30, 1988

IM ORIGINAL ALLOCATION:		
Commissioners Expenses	1,490.00	
Office Supplies and Expenses	471.20	
TOTAL EXPENSES	1,961.20	
Returned to State	340.96	
HIM BUDGET COST-SHARE PROGRAM		
1988-1989 Original Allocation	46,231.00	
Obligated	32,232.55	
Unobligated Balance	13,998.45	
1987-1988 Original Allocation	44,511.00	
Obligated	6,490.37	
Spent	20,227.39	
Unobligated Balance	17,803.24	
Volga Lake - 75%		
Original Allocation	29,277.00	
Spent to Date	0	
Returned to State	29,277.00	

CONSERVATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS 1988 Fiscal Year

NAME	NUMBER	ACRES
Individuals and Groups Assisted	2,917	
Resource Management System Planned	134	
Tracts/No Highly Erodible Land	292	
Tracts/Highly Erodible Land	1,422	
Tracts with an Approved Conservation Plan	1,569	117,027
Tracts with Wetlands	879	75,727
Tracts with Converted Wetlands	15	98
Negative Wetland Determinations	5	38
Tracts received from ASCS for a Highly Erodible Land Determination	6	
Conservation Cropping System	2,783	3,230
Conservation Tillage System		2,900
Contour Farming		2,170
Grade Stabilization Structure	1	
Grassed Waterway		34
Contour Stripcropping		1,070
Terraces		31,050
Water & Sediment Control Basins	5	
Farmstead/Foodlot Windbreak	19	
Cropland Benefited		14,870
Conservation Reserve Program		3,195

October - 1987

Assistant Commissioner, Jon Steege, filled in for Soil Conservation Office Manager Jerry Muff to present the Outstanding Soil Conservation Award to Jon Grimes at the Annual Farm Bureau banquet meeting.

Ursula Allen won first place in the Junior Division of the Regional Essay Contest. Muff attended a Conserfill meeting on Oct. 28. Plans were made for the Economic Yield Contest.

November - 1987

Robin Burdon and Rick Miller were hired as District Employees. We are utilizing JTPA to make the District Employees money go further. Muff gave a presentation at a breakfast program for Ag business people covering the

Conservation Provisions of the 1985 Food & Security Act.

Muff contacted ridge tillers to work with Roger Koster and the extension service to set up field demonstrations and research plots illustrating the nitrogen fertilizer spoke injector system on ridges.

January - 1988

Jerry Muff and Earth Team Volunteer, William Bennett, worked on the Economic Yield Contest entries. There were 27 participants. Jim Graham developed a format and computer program for this project. He also worked with Howard County to help them get started on their Economic Yield Contest.

The Fayette County Conserfill Association held its annual meeting at Upper Iowa University.

February - 1988

Jerry Muff and Art Roseland, DNR Wildlife Biologist, met with the County Engineers to promote and plan seeding road ditches to native plants at the Volga River Recreation Area. The SCS staff assisted the SWCD with its Conservation Fair. Approximately 75 people attended.

Muff gave a Conservation Provisions presentation at a series of ASCS Feed Grain meetings. Approximately 300 people attended.

The Economic Yield Contest annual banquet was held at the Sportsmen in Oelwein.

March - 1988

Bob Siebrecht, Soil Conservation Technician, organized and emceed the contractors meeting held at the Valhalla in Clermont.

Jerry Muff provided a Conservation Compliance session for six co-op and Farm Service agronomists and the extension director. They were given detailed information on sodwater and swampbuster provisions. He also trained them on the use of soil loss tables to show their clients various conservation alternatives. The SCS provided these agricultural businesses with the soil loss alternative book.

Muff met with the Conserfill Board Association to make plans for a summer tour.

April - 1988

Muff spoke to a group of Vo-Ag students at the North Fayette High School.

May - 1988

Muff worked with the North Fayette Vo-Ag students to stake out Erosion Productivity Study plots.

June - 1988

The Conserfill Association held its annual Field Day at the Ben Hunsberger farm near Elgin. Ridge tilled corn, spoke injector, and cultivator methods were all observed. Muff discussed the Conservation Compliance Program. Percent residue cover, grassed headlands, waterways, and contouring were shown to those in attendance. The Fayette SWCD served the lunch sponsored by herbicide representatives.

July - 1988

Muff met with RC & D Coordinator, Ric Zarwell, and Duane Pieggenkuble to discuss the initiation of the Northeast Iowa Hay Growers Association.

August - 1988

Muff had devoted time to organize and set up meetings to secure funds to purchase a weigh wagon through the RC & D office. The purpose of the wagon was to improve accuracy and consistency of yield measurements for the Economic Yield Contest. The EYC has been very successful at enrolling many participants and at illustrating benefits of conservation tillage and prudent application of fertilizers and chemicals. This project was approved by the RC & D council, but it was turned down by the State Office. Had it been approved, Jerry Muff felt this project used as a pilot and shared with other neighboring counties would have gained credibility and grown to have far reaching water quality benefits.

September - 1988

The CCRG development group met to establish the ACP soil-share program. LTA's will hopefully be re-established in Fayette County. Cost-share rates for practices were adjusted according to priorities.

Fayette County held a Soil Judging and Contour Layout contest for vo-ag students at the Volga River Recreation Area. Twenty-two students participated.



SCSS staff

The people ready to assist farmers at the Fayette County Soil Conservation District are

(Standing, left to right) Jerry Muff, Kristy Alcorn, Alan Crowe, Alan Younk, Wally

Oxley, (seated) Robin Robinson, Lori Kohnmeyer.

Combining soil conservation with profit

by ART ROSELAND
Wildlife Biologist
Iowa DNR

Today's Conservation Farmer has two priorities when planning for spring field work: to use the land without abuse, and to achieve an acceptable net return.



Art Roseland

Those concerns determine how his crop acres are managed. Most farmers have set-aside acres where the real costs of management, and conservation concerns, should be equally important. Dollars, whether to pay for set-aside management or to

buy seed corn, come from the same pocket. The soil which leaves your farm is still gone, whether it washed from a corn field or this year's government ground.

Across Iowa, millions of dollars are spent annually on set-aside management, often with little regard for available options, relative costs, or potential soil loss.

Money, soil and wildlife can be saved if you manage set-aside carefully. Here are some suggestions.

1. **Multi-Year Seedlings:** Set-aside has been the rule for most years. Why continue with annual management which requires one to five times over the field, costing TIME and MONEY? Consider selecting ACR eligible cropland, perhaps five to 10 percent of your corn base, and seeding this for several years.

This practice will reduce, and may eliminate annual maintenance costs and weed problems. You will have a good forage crop should ACR be released for haying and/or grazing. You will reduce or eliminate soil erosion. You

may provide 100 to 150 pounds of nitrogen for your next corn crop. You will increase wildlife.

2. **Small Grain Seeding:** Typical small grain seedings are ACR might be described as too little, too late. Light seedings result in late May with subsequent mid-summer disposal exposes soil to erosion, increases management costs, gives poor weed control and soil fertility. However, small grain seedings, properly completed, can be GREAT for limiting costs, controlling erosion, reducing weeds and helping wildlife.

Seed early, as if oats were to be harvested, or you were establishing a seedling. Use a respectable seeding rate, at least two bushels per acre. This management will result in dense ground cover. The dense seeding will check erosion early in the growing season and control weed emergence. Later, costs of mowing or crop destruction for oats might be avoided by a visit to the ASCS office and

payment of the \$12.00 stipend fee for leaving oats in place for or for late disposal.

Wildlife Food Plots: Wildlife food plot management may be a good choice for landowners. Broadleaf planting of sorghum-sudan hybrids will provide excellent ground cover for erosion protection, and wildlife habitat. Food plots planted to program crops as corn and/or grain sorghum are not permitted, but special restrictions apply. 1989 rules on ACR corn-sorghum food plots will soon be determined. Phasants Forever Chapters often have free seed available for food plot planting. Cost-share assistance may also be available.

Set-aside acres management should be a part of cost analysis when planning your 1989 operation; and erosion control plans should include your annual set-aside.

Small changes in how you manage set-aside can significantly reduce costs and soil erosion, while improving wildlife habitat and soil fertility.

Fayette County Pheasants Forever

—SOIL CONSERVATION
—WATER QUALITY
—WILDLIFE HABITAT

Three things that fit into a total conservation picture

The Fayette County Pheasants Forever group supports the efforts of the Fayette County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Primary goal is saving soil

by ALLAN YOUNK
Soil Conservationist

The Conservation Compliance provision of the 1985 Farm Bill will effect nearly everyone who participates in USDA farm programs administered through the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS).

The primary goal of the conservation compliance provision is soil conservation. It states that if a producer is to remain eligible for most USDA farm programs, he or she will need to develop a conservation plan approved by the local soil and water conservation district by Jan. 1, 1990 on all highly erodible fields. The plan must then be fully implemented by Jan. 1, 1995.

In many cases, this means special practices may need to be in full operation during the 1994 crop year.

Your eligibility for USDA farm programs such as price and income supports, crop insurance, FmHA loans, Commodity Credit Storage payments, farm storage facility loans, and CRP annual payments, depends on your

completion and implementation of this conservation plan.

A conservation plan is developed by working with the Soil Conservation Service office in West Union. Your fields will be determined either highly erodible or not highly erodible based on type and the slope of the soils in the field. A list of conservation practices will be developed to bring soil losses down to allowable limits.

All land owners and operators have received notification to schedule an appointment to develop a conservation plan. Please do not wait until the last minute before you make an appointment.

If you do, we may already have a full schedule and be unable to get your plan done.

If you do not have a plan and wish to get one, give us a call and we'll make every effort to get you scheduled. If you already have had a plan developed and have not received a copy of it, the copy will be sent to you as soon as it is processed.



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FAYETTE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S 1989 TREE ORDER FORM

Name	Phone No.	Address	Tree Species	Size	Order	Price	Amount
					Bundled	Bundled	
Green Ash			Fast growing shade tree; good firewood tree	12-18"	x	\$18.00	+
American Arborvitae			Very hardy; thick foliage; dark green; excellent windbreak tree; 15-25 feet tall	6-12"	x	\$34.50	+
White Oak			Large timber tree; (C) planted on drier soils (VP)	6-12"	x	\$18.00	+
White Pine			Large, long-lived; well-adapted to NE Iowa 3" to 5" long; soft needles; blue-green	12-18"	x	\$37.50	+
Norway Spruce			Fast growing; best on drier soils; dark green	6-12"	x	\$21.00	+
White Spruce			Prefers moist soils; good wildlife tree; short blue-green needles	6-12"	x	\$21.00	+
Black Walnut			Valuable timber tree; good nut tree	12-18"	x	\$18.00	+
Native Nut Package			This native nut tree package is offered to help with growth and development of native reforestation		x	\$38.00	+
Autumn Olive			Spreading shrub 12' high; silvery foliage & red berries; fragrant spring flowers	12-18"	x	\$15.50	+
Colorado Blue Spruce			Prefers dry, well-drained soils; excellent ornamental tree	4-8"	x	\$5.50	+
Douglas Fir Blue			Moist, well-drained soils; dense foliage; soft needles	8-12"	x	\$13.50	+
East Anglia Scotch Pine			Fast growing; short needles; good Christmas tree	9-12"	x	\$15.00	+
French Blue Scotch Pine			Well-shaped tree; winter hardy; ornamental or Christmas tree	5-10"	x	\$ 9.50	+
Northern Red Oak			Fast growing; large shade tree; food and shelter for wildlife	12-18"	x	\$20.50	+
Red Osier Dogwood			Distinctive red bark; well adapted to wet soils	6-10" 12-18"	x	\$16.00	+
Silver Maple			Ornamental shade tree; silver green foliage; grows on moist soils	12-18"	x	\$13.50	+
SUBTOTAL							+
4% SALES TAX							+
TOTAL							+

by DAN BURKHART,
Fayette County Extension
Agricultural Director

Because of changes in the farm program, lower subsoil moisture and high oil prices, there is more interest in oat production this year. Oats do require a fair degree of management, but potentially fit into most Fayette County farms. The average oat production for Northeast Iowa in the low Yield trials show yields range from 80 to 113 bushels per acre, depending on the variety.

Estimate a State Production Costs for 80 bushel oat crop on land that rents for \$60.00 per acre will result in a \$1.61 per bushel cost to the farmer. With three-fourths of the cost allocated to the straw, the one ton of straw produced would cost \$64.25.

Often farmers wonder how high yielding oats can be obtained. The two most important management items are to select the right variety, and plant early. Ideal oat planting time is late March or early April. An early May planting would only yield 80 percent of the potential. It takes oats about 60 days to get from germination to bloom and milk stages. It is during these two stages that temperature and moisture stress can be most damaging. Stress at that time results in blasted oat heads or full-sized hulls with no kernel development. Stress will also reduce test weight.

Oat variety selection is the second most important management decision.

All sales are made in bundles of 25 except the Nut Package which is a bundle of 16. Trees have healthy root systems, however, we cannot guarantee survival. Orders will be filled on a first come, first serve basis. We have a limited number of trees allotted to us, so it would be advisable to order as soon as possible. Orders will be paid for when the trees arrive. The deadline for ordering is March 1, 1989. Delivery will be early next spring. We will notify you of the pick-up date.

Ridge tilling worked in 1988

Friday, February 10, 1989—The Register, Oelwein, Iowa—3



John Garnier

by JOHN GARNIER

How did ridge till work in 1988?

It had some ups and some downs during the season, but

as the crop year came to a close the final results compared favorably with results of other systems. It didn't perform miracles and make a crop happen if the subsoil was sand and gravel. It did work when it had a remote chance of working.

It was encouraging to find enough moisture at planting depth to provide excellent conditions for germination. Beans planted as late as the third week of May germinated well, even on some lighter soil.

Several influences appeared as the year progressed that probably wouldn't have been noticed in a more normal year. Trash left from 1987 was unusually green or live and didn't break down as rapidly as usual. This emphasized the importance of making sure

that enough "tillage" was done in the row by the planter to leave a clean, black strip after planting.

Although I normally like to apply anhydrous preplant, this happened to be one of the years I decided to address. No matter what the tillage system, it probably was better to have applied N13 early this particular year since we had so little moisture to release nitrogen later.

Dry fertilizer placement also seemed to be important. I say "seemed to be" since compaction could have also played some part in causing the row to row variation evident in the "early part of the growing season. This variation wasn't visible later in the season.

Although no definite conclusions were ever reached, I

know that even more care will be taken to set opener locations in the future, especially since all our phosphate and potash goes on with the planter.

Early preplant weed control worked great again. It's relatively cheap, probably as effective as mechanical incorporation programs and is done early so it spreads out the work at planting time. At least one cultivation still plays a part in our weed control.

We initially implemented ridge tilling as a soil conservation measure. We soon found it was also a very good way to reduce input costs while maintaining or improving yields.

It continued to work well in 1988.

Circumstances create interest in oats

by DAN BURKHART,
Fayette County Extension
Agricultural Director

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Oat variety selection is the second most important management decision.

yielders that is resistant to soil-borne dwarf, but susceptible to crown rust. In the late maturing category Porter produced the highest yield, but it does show some susceptibility to crown rust. The early maturing varieties generally had slightly higher test weights.

Oats should perform quite well on soils that test medium or higher with no additional

phosphorus or potassium applied. Nitrogen is needed for all grasses and 80 lbs. would be recommended for an 80 bushel crop. About three-fourths of a pound of nitrogen is needed for each bushel of oats produced.

Every Extension office has copies of the Oat Yield Test bulletin that compares yields and variety characteristics to help in the selection process. Stop in for your free copy.

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SCD
Commissioners

Fayette County Soil Conservation District Commissioners are seated (left to right): Richard Jensen,



George Halstead and Carl Nass; (seated) Paul Nuss, Larry Reeling and Bill Bennett.

How I feel about conservation and why

by LYDIA WINTERS

One morning recently I was looking out of my kitchen window enjoying three deer browsing on the CRP acres south of the pine grove, when the telephone rang.

The call was from the SCS office. Technician Wally Oxley wondered if I would like to express an opinion on how I felt about soil conservation.

In the summer of 1984 Wally had helped with a conservation work on my farm and he knew I was very interested.

Soil conservation is one of my favorite subjects, these are the reasons why. Let's go back in memory to the year 1942.

For 16 years, my husband, Charley, and I had farmed on level land west of Arlington. The farm we were on had been sold and a mine was in the future.

We were given the opportunity to buy a farm through the new government program called the "Tenant Purchase Program."

We were to choose an available farm. The Tenant Purchase Board up at the FMHA office would check the farm and investigate the farm family. If both farm and family met all of the government requirements, they would be accepted into the Tenant Purchase Program and be eligible for a government loan on the farm.

We chose a farm one mile north of Wadena. It was a dream come true for us when we were notified we had been approved.

Charley and I were full of high hopes. Our son, Francis, 11, and daughter, Katherine, 9, were wild with excitement and put skis on their Christmas lists.

We signed the contract with the United States Conservation land in 1942 "to buy and farm to the best of our ability," the farm I still call home.

In early February, we moved to Wadena and a very different type of life. We knew nothing about hill farming but we would learn.

It was beautiful country, but our new job would not be easy. This land had to produce enough to support our 25 cow milking herd, 12 young hog operation, all our own stock, our family and hopefully pay for the farm.

Our new farm had most of the problems of the average hill country farm. We had to learn the hard way.

Our farm contract came complete with access to all government agencies and programs available at that time.

Fayette County Soil Conservation District Commissioners are seated (left to right): Richard Jensen,

George Halstead and Carl Nass; (seated) Paul Nuss, Larry Reeling and Bill Bennett.

Living with the land
Lydia Winters, landowner

Fayette County Soil Conservation District Commissioners are seated (left to right): Richard Jensen,

George Halstead and Carl Nass; (seated) Paul Nuss, Larry Reeling and Bill Bennett.

Contractor brings soil back to life

by RICHARD JENSEN
SWCD Commissioner

As I have always been impressed with the artistic creations of the contractor's machine, I thought it would be interesting to interview an artist.

Farmers in Fayette County are fortunate that we have several highly skilled contractors to bring our soil conserving plans into effective practices. As we farmers move involuntarily with conservation compliance, we must consider the need of building permanent structure such as terraces, sediment control basins and ponds.

The contractor I was able to corner was in his repair shop performing an organ transplant on a dozer and open heart surgery on his backhoe. He reminded me that only about 100 days are suitable for

actual work in the field. The remaining 265 days, the machine was under intensive care at the shop getting ready for the next year.

His first dozer was purchased in 1955, primarily to fill in the many ditches that were growing in farm fields. The next few years "dozing" ditches expanded into grubbing trees, clearing brush and straightening out creeks.

He explained that the cost of improving land was considerably cheaper than buying extra land. At this time, fuel was 14 cents per gallon and machine time was \$8 per hour and labor at \$10 per hour.

This contractor still bemoans the acres of fine timber, brushy pasture, large barns and rolls of fence that were destroyed to answer the nation's call for more grain.

His first attempt at terracing was in the late 50's

with a contraption known as the Whirlwind Terracing machine. This plow-like machine had a spinning auger in the back which would pull the loose dirt into a crude terrace-like structure. Tiled inlets were not used at the time but soil erosion was prevented.

During the 60's/70's, land improvement accelerated, so did the contractor's need for more and bigger equipment. Two new dozers, a backhoe, a loader and a tilling machine were added to the fleet.

Miles and miles of tile were buried to drain the wetlands. We even had a waiting list in the 70's. With the heavy cultivation of these acres, new problems surfaced—excessive soil erosion. Many good farmers sought assistance from the SCS office to address this problem.

Quite often, permanent type conservation practices were called for, such as terraces, diversions, ponds and grassed waterways. That is when the landscape artists were called in to etch and carve a small art form which grace our countryside and protect our environment.

Grassed backslope terraces are this contractor's favorite practice as they also provide wildlife habitat when properly seeded.

As we reflected on the past, the dedicated names of Jim Barnes, Leland McCool, Earl Kerker, Lyle Jackson and currently Jerry Muff as D.C.'s were appreciated. We agreed that most farmers have better farms today because of these men.

We also agreed that farmers and contractors alike would prefer a less confusing, less time consuming farm program. But, he is committed to his work and is looking forward to the challenges of the 90's.

We, the commissioners, want to thank the contractors for their service to the rural landscape.

Some of the things our staff will do for you—without charge—are: Lay out contours, contour strip cropping, grassed water ways, drop structures, terraces, water and sediment control basins, grade stabilization structures, diversions, ponds and animal waste structures.

They will also help with conservation plans, conservation tillage information, animal waste management plans and provide information on most any phase of

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A solution for pollution

(Editor's Note: The following article was written by Erica Nue of Arlington when she was in the 8th grade. It received top honors in the Junior Division, Region 4, for the 1988 Soil and Water Conservation Essay Contest.)

Did you ever stop and think about how valuable our groundwater is?

The underground water, commonly called ground-water, is very important in our lives.

More than eighty percent of the water in the city water systems is taken from the ground. Other groundwater uses include irrigation, and almost all of the water in country homes and that which goes for livestock production.

Groundwater is a very important resource, therefore, we need to take some steps to protect it.

The first problem I will discuss is nitrate contamination.

Some reports state that less than half of the nitrogen fertilizer used for corn production is taken in by the corn plant. Knowing this, farmers probably don't need to apply as much fertilizer because the plants don't use all that is applied.

Another problem is that the runoff water, which is highly erodible cropland that was used to produce an agricultural commodity during any of the 1981 to 1983 crop years. Some 141 million acres—over one-third of the nation's 421 million acres of cropland—are subject to this provision. Farmers who produce an agricultural commodity on the cropland must have a conservation plan that is approved by their conservation district if they wish to maintain their eligibility for USDA program benefits.

These five factors are: (1) pollution—the way a

protecting our natural resources. The District also handles state cost sharing.

Some of the practices that are cost shared are: contouring, contour strip cropping, grassed water ways, drop structures, terraces, water and sediment control basins, grade stabilization structures, diversions, ponds and animal waste structures.

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pesticide sinks into the soil, (2) solubility—the way a pesticide dissolves in water, (3) degradation—the breakdown of a pesticide, (4) volatilization—the loss of a pesticide when it changes from a liquid to a gas, and (5) persistence—when a pesticide remains unchanged.

There are things you can do to minimize pesticide losses. I'll tell you about four such methods.

Crop rotation is when you change crops in the same field year after year. By doing this, you eliminate the need to use pesticides on the field for rootworms.

Contouring and terraces are structures which reduce soil erosion and pesticide loss by limiting the water runoff to a short distance.

Tillage practices that leave residue on the soil's surface are good. The more soil residue there is, the less likely that pesticides will move with the soil.

It is very good if your technician for spraying are in proper working order.

There is also a large concern about hazardous household products disposal. Paint strippers, solvents, and other products usually contain hazardous chemicals.

You should not dispose of unused chemicals in septic tanks or landfills. The chemicals may leak into the groundwater, which is to be avoided.

Of course, the best way we can help avoid contamination of groundwater is not to pollute in the first place.

Conservation saves taxes.

Top soil moves off the field into road ditches, culverts, drainage ditches, and slow moving bodies of water such as ponds, lakes, or small streams before it is carried to major rivers and streams. The cost in Iowa is in the millions of dollars. Money is needed to maintain open road culverts, dredging rivers, cleaning ditches, and repairing roadbed damage resulting from saturated roadfills. Additional costs are incurred from dust and damage.

Who pays for all this? You and others like you; the taxpayers.

Don't wait for us to ask how may we help you? Come ask us for help.

easy to spot during the winter months. The blowing of snow across the windbreak at least 100 to 150 feet and no more than 300 to 400 feet from the area where maximum protection is desired.

The SCS doesn't have cost-share on windbreaks, but if buildings and lots are being designed one, free to stop to an existing planting, contact our soil conservation district office or wildlife biologist for more information.

of the land as well as building arrangement. A general rule is to locate the windbreak at least 100 to 150 feet and no more than 300 to 400 feet from the area where maximum protection is desired.

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The 1989 Board
of the Fayette County

Conservation Association Board Members are (left to right): 78 President Bill Bennett, 79

President Ben Hunsberger, Richard Giese, Dennis Leuder and Raymond Perry.

Garnier recognized for tillage

The Fayette SWCD and Fayette County Conservation Association recognize Maynard farmer John Garnier.

John Garnier was a charter member of the Fayette County Conservation Association in 1981. In 1983, John was elected to the board and has served as treasurer for six years (three terms) through 1988.

John farms near Maynard, and has ridge-tilled for several years. (See the article written by John in this issue.) John states that he does not maintain high ridges as do many, but nevertheless considers his system as ridge tillage.

District director Jerry Muff states that John has been a very positive factor for conservation in the future.

State cost share funds still available

Fayette County has been allocated \$4.51 by the State of Iowa to be disbursed to landowners for applying conservation practices at a 50 percent cost-share rate. Of which \$13,000 remains to be allocated. The SWCD District has also been allocated \$25,227 for landowners in the Volga-Lake Watershed at 75 percent cost-share to accelerate conservation application above the lake to reduce siltation.

Jerry Muff, DC with SCS, states that mid to late summer is the best time to construct permanent conservation practices such as terraces, ponds, erosion control structures, and waterways.

The annual set-aside program offers an excellent opportunity for summer construction because it is usually under a temporary cover. ASCS will approve construction on these ACR acres upon request. The major reasons summer construction is advantageous is that the soil conditions are good, there is more time to do the work, and there is time to get protective grass to grow

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conserving your

If you're interested in designing a windbreak or developing wildlife habitat by planting new rows in a new windbreak or adding rows to an existing planting, contact our soil conservation district office or wildlife biologist for more information.

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Cunningham named outstanding conservation farmer

The Fayette SWCD recognizes Mike Cunningham as the 1988 outstanding conservation farmer.



Halstead thanked

Carl Nuss (right) presents Greater Halstead with a plaque, commemorating 12

Progress made, but more to be done

by GEORGE W. HALSTEAD
Post-Commissioner

On Jan. 1, 1989, I concluded 12 years as Fayette County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner. I decided last fall not to run for another term as I wanted to spend more time working for other organizations.

I really think these 12 years as soil commissioner were the most rewarding as any time I put toward any organization in my life time. As I look back on these 12 years, I think quite a lot of progress has been made in soil conservation. There certainly is a lot more minimum tilling and no-till planting being practiced.

On the other hand, there is far too much fall tilling being done. Farmers seem to be hooked on the idea that we can get a crop without tilling in the fall.

I haven't tilled in the fall for some years now. You do have to do things a little different if you till in the spring but I have found that you can get good crops and with a lot less erosion.

Also with the livestock numbers going down, there is much more intense row crop farming.

Soil conservation is a never ending battle as we have gained in some areas and lost in other areas.

The farm plans to meet the requirements to be eligible for the government programs after 1990 have been a big job for the soil conservation staff. I think our district will have these plans done by the deadline. The government relaxed the standards quite a bit since this law came out. We were not very happy about this as we thought they should have stuck with the original requirements. One personal disagreement I have with these requirements is that they really don't give any consideration to spring tilling over fall tilling. On the plus side they do seem to encourage crop rotation.

For the most part I am pleased with the number of cooperators that put into practice the soil conservation practices we have in the Volga Lake watershed. The cooperators are to be commended for their efforts. We were also very disappointed with some things in regard to Volga Lake.

Mike has been an active conservationist during his 50 years of farming. Even though he now rents his cropland out, he is still involved in managing his beef cow operation.

As a young man, Mike says he remembers the heavy rains with the run-off that would rush through the rows of corn like a river.

Realizing these floods were robbing his fields of fertile topsoil, Mike had the Soil Conservation Service lay out contours across his fields. With the rows now running across the hills instead of up and down, the topsoil was less susceptible to washing down the hills.

In 1992, Cunningham built terraces across his hills. He

also utilizes a strip cropping system. This entails planting a strip of corn, then a strip of hay, followed by maybe oats, then another strip of hay.

"The hay acts as a breaker," explains Cunningham. "It slows the water down. Instead of running down the hill, you want the water to walk down the hill."

According to Jerry Muff, District Conservationist for Fayette County, "Mike's always had a project. He's always modernizing — replacing contour strips or replacing furrows."

Cunningham still stays active and keeps up with farming. And, thanks to his conservation efforts, his soil is still in place and still productive.

Conservation farmer of '88

Farm Bureau President Dennis Martin presents Mike Cunningham with a plaque naming him the conservation farmer for 1988. SCS District Jerry Muff is at right.

Conservation farmer of '88



Conservation farmer of '88

Farm Bureau President Dennis Martin presents Mike Cunningham with a plaque naming him the conservation farmer for 1988. SCS District Jerry Muff is at right.

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by ALAN J. CROWE
Soil Conservation Technician

Rankings prove tilling works

by JERRY MUFF
Soil Conservation Director

Consider the rankings of Ridge Tilling (RT) and No-Till (NT) entries of the 1987 Economic Yield Contest. Of the six entries within the two categories, RT and NT average within the top 40 percent in net return per acre.

I am very impressed with those Ridge and No-Till farmers who have committed themselves to this soil and dollar conserving system of planting. They've taken the lead and made the necessary modifications to successfully compete with others who are using tillage systems that have been around for decades.

Also note how these systems

Cost share available for waste storage

Cost Share is available for animal waste storage in Fayette County.

The Fayette County ASCS has approved cost sharing of certain outside animal waste storage structures.

These structures must meet certain standards, and the required permit must be obtained. The area SCS office will help design the structures.

The Fayette Soil and Water Conservation District urges all livestock producers who are considering animal waste storage to contact the ASCS office in Fayette.

Let's all work together to help keep our drinking water safe. Animal waste can contaminate our water supplies if we do not use care.

"Preserve our marshes" they say. What's all the fuss about anyway? I can live just

fine without that slough my Dad has in back "40." Besides, what can a wetland do for me?

As a young boy growing up in N.E. Iowa in the mid 50's, my favorite activity was fishing the local trout streams. I still remember how beautiful the deep, clear water looked. And trout? I'm talking lunkers - native rainbow 14-18 inches and real fighters. The kind that would break 4-pound test line if you weren't careful.

I moved away from home about 25 years ago. I would return for short visits from time to time, but never set down "roots" for another three years ago.

Upon returning to my "hometown," the first thing I did was check out my old fishing holes. What I saw made me sit down and cry. Everything had changed. The clear rushing water was gone. The native trout were gone too.

In its place I saw a sluggish creek about half the size it used to be. The water was murky at best and sustained a population of creek chubs. I wondered how this could have happened so quickly. What caused it? What could be done?

Most people realize that soil erosion causes siltation of our lakes and streams. As the fine soil particles are deposited on the stream bed, the stream literally fills up with mud. Consequently, the water

quality is poor and the chances of trout reproducing are poor. Trout must have a sandy or rocky bottom to lay their eggs upon. If the eggs are covered by silt, air can't get to them and they will die.

What may not be so obvious is how the draining of our wetlands has contributed to this problem. Wetlands act as "settling" basins for runoff, help remove silt, fertilizers and other chemicals before reaching the water table or downstream waters.

When water enters a marshy area, its velocity is decreased. Undissolved particles settle and are deposited in bottom sediments. These substances may be broken down by microorganisms, absorbed when soils water, or be taken up in plant tissue. Bacteria play a role in removing nitrates from the water.

The result? Less runoff and cleaner water. Iowa has lost its wetlands at a staggering rate. In 1989 we had over four million acres of wetlands. Today we have only 27,000 acres. That's less than 1 percent of the original total.

Fortunately, the 1985 "Farm Bill" has addressed this problem through the "swampbuster" provision which states that if you convert a wetland area to cropland production, you lose eligibility for most

USDA program benefits. Not just on the converted area but on all land you own and/or operate.

Play it safe. If you're thinking of converting any area to cropland, contact the SCS first.

It's amazing how my children have a way of making me think about what the future holds for their children.

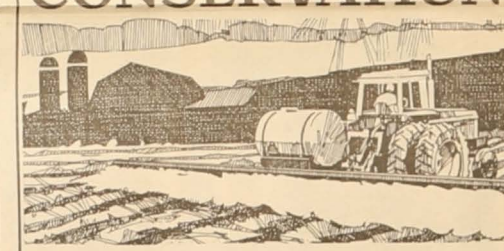
I am very worried about the condition of our environment! It's so hard to see the damage done from year to year. We can't see the gradual destruction of the ozone layer. We can't see the hazards of being on "top" of the food chain. We can't see the chemicals in the water we drink.

I've never seen a whooping crane that once thrived in Iowa's marshes. I probably never will. We destroyed their environment and only a few remain today.

In an article printed in the winter '86 issue of the "Iowa Natural Heritage," Chief Seattle of the Suwanhish tribe had this to say: "This

know. The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know: all things are connected like the blood which unites one family. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand on it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself."

This Land is Our Land - Protect It Through CONSERVATION



The future of this land is in our hands. We are supplied with an abundance of nature's treasures from coast to coast. Our farms prosper on the rich fertile soil. Our countryside, parks and preserves attest to its beauty.

But we cannot abuse our natural resources and expect them to thrive. Air and water pollution, litter, and elemental waste are the biggest threats to our environment! Let's stop this destruction now and start caring about our precious land. CONSERVATION IS EVERYBODY'S JOB!

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Fayette SWCD progress in implementing farm bill

by JERRY MUFF
District Conservationist
SCS

Conservation compliance plans seem to draw the most attention because they affect most farmers in Fayette County.

At this time we've entered over 120,000 acres of highly erodible land which is to have conservation plans developed by Jan. 1, 1990. We have, for

the most part, completed plans on approximately 70,000 acres.

These plans vary in stage from simply having the operators' decisions made, to total completion where all interested parties have their copy of signed conservation plans. In general, our field office staff who has been working diligently in this project for the past 1½ years have been quite surprised with

how well this has been accepted by farmers.

If you have been in to do the plan and have not received your plan, please contact our office, at which time we'll see that you receive it soon. If you have not been in yet to plan, do so immediately.

Soilbest plans — All producers who've soiltested H.E.L. the past few years, be sure to review and follow your

plans in 1989 to remain eligible for farm program benefits. If you plan to crop additional land that was not cropped 81-86, mark the ASCS 1026 form accordingly.

Conservation Reserve Program — So far Fayette County has over 30,000 acres enrolled. Another sign up is coming Feb. 6-20. The USDA has accepted bids up to \$90 per acre for all eligible acres.

Current CRP participants should watch seedlings for drought or ice damage, especially new seedlings or older stands clipped last fall. There is new eligibility criteria for CRP land if subject to flooding or is determined wetland if cropped two years in the 81-86 time frame.

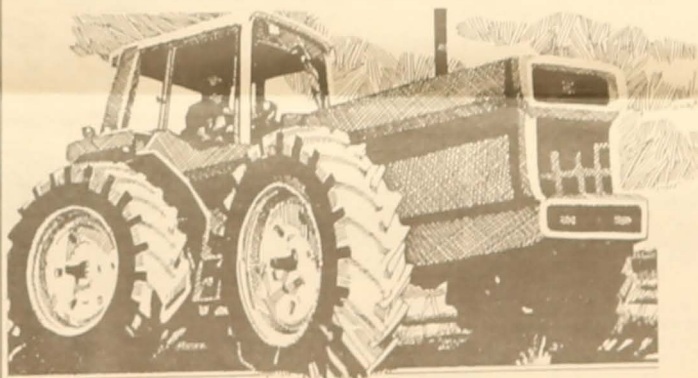
CRP participants are encouraged to plant wildlife food

plants, e.g. corn, sorghum, etc. These areas provide great cover and food for wildlife when most needed. CRP plans must be revised at our SCS office prior to planting them.

Also consider native grass plantings where past seedlings have failed or otherwise.

Finally, I'd like to thank all these individuals and agencies who were cooperative and patient with us this past year.

THE GOOD EARTH: PRACTICE FARM CONSERVATION



The Fayette County Soil Conservation Commissioners are proud of the District's accomplishments for Fiscal Year 1988 as many articles in this issue will express. This work could not be possible without the work and cooperation of our Earthwork Construction and Draining Tiling Contractors who are listed below.

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