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Conservation knowledge is there; need will

The knowledge is available, but there must be the will if soil erosion problems are solved, Verle Arnold, Davis County Soil Conservation Service (SCS) director, told the Bloomfield Rotary Club last week.

"We must keep trying if we sincerely believe in our land," he said.

Arnold said that less than half of Iowa's land is adequately protected against erosion. In the past 100 years about half of the original 12 to 14 inches of topsoil has been lost on sloping ground, he said. On unprotected land, another inch is lost every 12 years.

Arnold said the total cost of protecting Iowa's land is estimated at about \$2 billion. In the past, he said, probably \$20 million a year has been spent on conservation.

Arnold also gave some of the history of soil conservation in Iowa including the formation of the 100 soil conservation districts in Iowa that since 1970 include cities and towns.

He said two major conservation practices evolved in the 1960s. One was the parallel tile outlet terrace designed to catch water on hills and carry it through underground tile to release it safely at the bottom of a slope.

The other practice is conservation tillage, the practice of leaving crop residues on the soil surface to protect soil against wind and falling raindrops.