



Monroe County SWCD News

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Vice Chairman

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Commissioner

Marvin Wirtjes
Commissioner

Joe Pyle
Commissioner

Assistant Commissioners:

Colleen Putnam

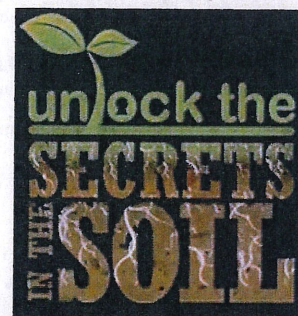
Jim Nelson

Soil Health Is Our Responsibility

You may be asking if you can afford to worry about soil health, but the real question is: CAN YOU AFFORD NOT TO WORRY? Over 200 years ago, Thomas Jefferson used vetch, peas and other cover crops to give back to the soil. He understood that tillage depletes the soil structure making it less fertile. We now know that tillage does not help soil to soak in water but rather causes it to collapse under the pressure. For many years, NRCS and the District have been promoting the idea of "No-till", but that is only part of the picture. In order to increase the quality and value of your soil, you have to make an effort to manage your farm in a way that will benefit soil as the valuable resource it is. Compared to ground that is native and has not been farmed, today's crop ground has only half the organic matter that supports the biological cycle. As farmers, we must consciously replenish organic matter because otherwise it will be completely depleted. Our job at Monroe SWCD along with NRCS and IDALS is to help you help your land. We would love to work with you to implement a management system that holds soil health as a main goal! Soil health is a vast subject that we encourage you to ask questions because we have the resources to find an answer. President Roosevelt said, "A nation that destroys its soil, destroys itself." In America, Iowa is a big part of agriculture, ranking 2nd in total Agricultural exports. If we soil health in Iowa, we can spark changes across the country and around the world! Let's make an effort to make soil more productive for ourselves and future generations!



No such thing as a free lunch
Invest in healthy soils



South Central IA Cedar Creek WMA Progress

The South Central IA Cedar Creek Watershed Management Authority (WMA) continues to work toward their goal of implementing water quality and flood control practices on the Cedar Creek Watershed. We are therefore asking for your continued support in developing an environmental sustainability project for the Watershed. This organization, with representatives from Appanoose, Lucas, Monroe, Marion and Mahaska counties remain committed to collaborate and implement solutions to reduce flooding and improve water quality. To date, the WMA has:

- ◆ Acquired marketing material to showcase the Watershed
- ◆ Attended several meetings to find the potential of funding and lobbied for funding of flood control and water quality funds
- ◆ Developed a 2017 calendar which consisted of Watershed facts and history and was sponsored by local contractors
- ◆ Assessed all branches of the Watershed

The WMA is currently securing a hydrology study on the Watershed's Bleubaugh Branch. This hydrology study's cost is \$10,000. The Iowa Flood Center will be providing in-kind products in the amount of \$5,000 but the WMA must present a cash match. When grant opportunities come available, a hydrology study "on the books" will be advantageous for priority consideration. The WMA will work tirelessly to secure grant funds for necessary studies and practice implementation.

DNR District Forester: Top 10 Things To Avoid When Selling Timber

Trees are a valuable product; some woods can be worth several thousands of dollars per acre and if managed properly can earn you hundreds of dollars per acre per year. If you own woods, you should manage them properly. Part of management is selling timber; these are the basic things you should know if you ever sell timber.

- 1. DON'T SELL TO A TIMBER BUYER THAT IS NOT BONDED.** Iowa has a bonded timber buyer's law that requires anyone that buys timber to be bonded. This may not mean that all bonded buyers are reputable but it gives you a good starting point.
- 2. DON'T SELL UNLESS EVERYTHING IS IN WRITING.** A good timber contract can go a long ways to ensure that you have a good experience selling timber. The contract should state how the trees are marked, how many trees, the purchase price, time period to remove the timber, what logging conditions are acceptable (dry or frozen), and who is liable for damage to the property, etc.
- 3. DON'T SELL UNMARKED TREES.** If the trees to be harvested are marked there is no question as to which trees should be harvested. It is also advisable to solicit comparable bids on the timber when each company is bidding on the same item. After the sale is done, don't add or exchange trees, remember trees vary considerably in value, by changing things the whole bid process can be ruined.
- 4. DON'T SELL TIMBER ON THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT.** Think about what you are doing. Once you sign the contract or accept the money there is no going back. The deal will more than likely be there tomorrow, so take time to check it out. Timber varies considerably in price-know what you are selling.
- 5. DON'T SELL TREES ON A DIAMETER LIMIT.** The size of the tree shouldn't dictate if that tree should be harvested, the condition or potential of the tree should. The woods contains many different species, each maturing at a different age and size, when selling on a diameter limit you often will over-cut the woods selling many trees that would increase significantly in value in the near future.
- 6. DON'T SELL ONLY YOUR BEST TREES.** Trees vary considerably in value, often only from a few dollars to hundreds or on occasion thousands of dollars. Selling only the best trees is called high grading and can hurt the long term productivity of the woods. When selling timber sell the trees that are declining in value, sell the less desirable or weeds trees and mix in the best trees when they've reached their peak value. The best trees are probably earning you at least 10% per year and you will always find a buyer who wants them.
- 7. DON'T SELL CUT AND SCALE OR ON SHARES.** Unless you know how to cut and scale trees you are relying on the buyer to determine what trees are worth and to maximize the yield from the tree. Some buyers may not want to mess with the lower grade logs at the tops of the tree even though there may be value in those logs. Sell your timber on a lump-sum, up-front payment and "take it or leave it" for only the marked trees.
- 8. DON'T ACCEPT CASH.** Accepting cash may not be a problem, but it often may entice you into acting too quickly to sell. Don't forget once you accept the money and sign the contract it's a done deal-there's no going back.
- 9. DON'T ENTER INTO A MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT GIVING A COMPANY EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO YOUR TIMBER.** A management agreement may sound good, but there is usually a cost. The buyer has a conflict of interest if he works for the timber company and they want your timber.
- 10. DON'T INCLUDE TREES DAMAGED DURING THE LOGGING.** This may sound like the logical thing to do the problem is trees can be damaged on purpose. When the trees are marked care should be taken to make sure the trees can be harvested without damage to the remaining trees.

For more information, please contact the District Forester's office at 641-774-8733.

By following four basic soil health principles, producers can improve their soil health and sustainability:

- 1 Keep the soil covered as much as possible
- 2 Disturb the soil as little as possible
- 3 Keep plants growing throughout the year to feed the soil
- 4 Grow a variety of plants to diversify soil

Financial Report

IA Financial Incentive (IFIP)	
Beginning Obligation	\$93,698.54
FY16 Allocation.....	\$115,637.00
Funds Spent	\$124,454.70
Funds Obligated.....	\$84,863.43
Recalled.....	\$17.41
Practice Installed w/Funds Spent	
Grade Stabilization Structures— 5	
Terraces — 813 ft.	
Basins — 35	
Summer Incentives — 3.6	

IIIM Budgets FY2016

Reap Practices	
Beginning Obligations.....	\$8,315.39
FY16 Allocation	\$10,061.47
Funds Spent	\$15,429.22
Funds Obligated	\$0.00
Recalled.....	\$2,947.64
Practice Installed w/Funds Spent	
Forest Stand Improvement—98.3 acres	
Conservation Cover—16.64 acres	
Reap Forestry & Native Grass	
Beginning Obligation.....	\$1,920.00
FY16 Allocation	\$3,357.41
Funds Spent	\$2,040.00
Funds Obligated	\$3,180.00
Recalled	\$57.41
Practice Installed w/Funds Spent	
Forest Stand Improvement — 17 acres	

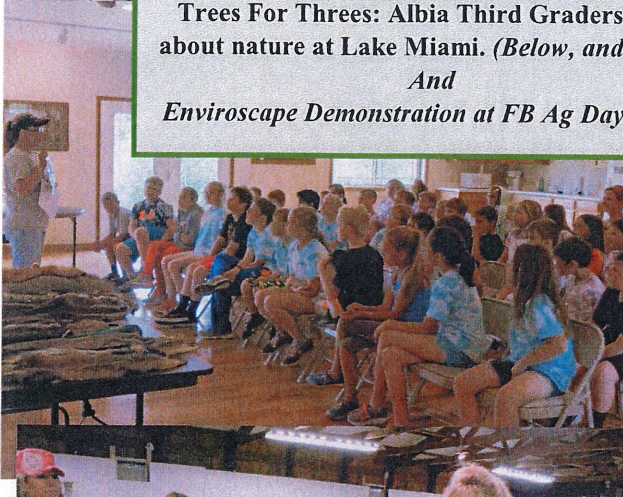
IM Budgets 2016

Water Quality Initiative	
Funds Spent	\$18,859.05
Practice Installed w/Funds Spent	
Cover Crops— 1,017.27 acres	
No Interest Loans	
Beginning Obligation.....	\$0.00
Beginning Bal	\$0.00
FY16 Allocation.....	\$20,000.00
Funds Spent.....	\$20,000.00
Funds Obligated.....	\$0.00
Recalled.....	\$0
Practice Installed w/Funds Spent	
Water & Sediment Control Basin—6	
319-Rathbun Lake Special Project	
Funds Spent	\$0.00
Commissioner/ Office Expense	
FY 16 Allocation	\$2,000.00
Supplemental.....	\$750.00
Mileage.....	\$820.56
Supplies.....	\$611.94
Conservation Awards.....	\$80.00
NACD Dues.....	\$387.50
CDI Dues.....	\$850.00

Monroe County SWCD: A Year In Review

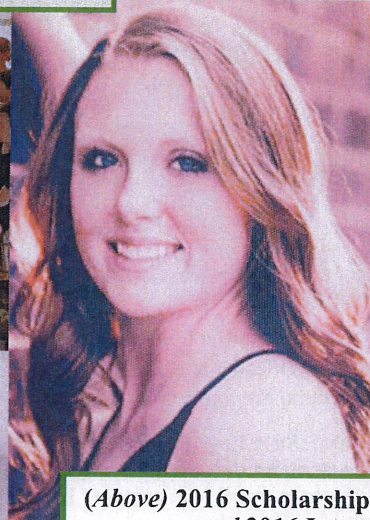


Trees For Threes: Albia Third Graders learn about nature at Lake Miami. (Below, and Above) And Enviroscope Demonstration at FB Ag Day (right)



Albia Third Graders learning about things that impact water quality through a demonstration at Farm Bureau Ag Day (Above) and

2016 SWCD Conservation Achievement award presented to Gene Beary by Chairman, Mervin McDanel (Below)

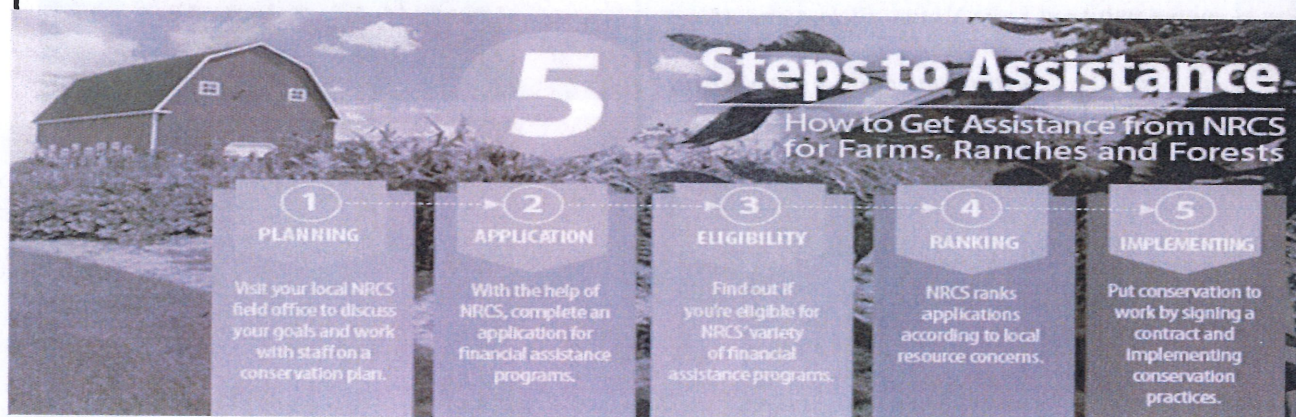


(Above) 2016 Scholarship recipient, Ryley Heffron (left) and 2016 Intern, Josey Ryan (right) and 2016 IFIP/ Miller Creek Cost Share Basin, designed by Ronald Peterson, Soil Conservation Technician (Below)



Programs Available through NRCS/IDALS/DSCWQ/

<u>Environmental Quality Incentives Programs</u>	<u>Conservation Stewardship Program</u>	<u>Water Quality Initiative Program</u>	<u>IFIP</u>
- Provides financial and technical assistance to landowners to develop and implement conservation practices. A contract plan will help specific natural resource concerns.	- Assists agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities addressing resource concerns. Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance—the higher the performance the higher payment	- Provides a per acre incentive for producers to apply cover crops to existing fields. As the Nutrient Management Strategy becomes a larger part of a total planning package, producers can see incorporating this practice will improve their soils health.	- This program allows landowners to implement a practice such as structure, terrace and basins. IFIP will cost share up to 50% of the estimated cost of these practices. Requirements are that a landowner owns minimum of 10 acres contiguously with a minimum of \$2,500 annual agricultural income from the property.



Low Interest Loan Program: This program offers financial assistance when implementing practices such as terraces, basins, grade stabilizations etc. Working with your local lender at a 3% interest rate can make conservation more affordable. These loans can be used in conjunction with State and Federal programs or stand alone.

No Interest Loan Program: The 1983 State Legislature established the conservation practices revolving loan fund to provide loans up to \$20,000 to eligible landowners at no interest for the construction of permanent soil conservation practices. Repayment is made in 10 annual payments equal to 10% of the initial loan amount. In the event of land ownership transfer, payment is due immediately.

INFORMATION CORNER

Did you know...

A watershed is an area of land where all water drains to a central point like a lake, river, or stream. When rain sweeps over a surface, it will eventually make its way to that central point.

What?

Throughout a river's journey to the ocean, it flows through a landscape that is rich in diverse land uses from lush forests and deserts to farmland, cities and manufacturing plants. Each of these environments has an impact on the river's health.

How can you increase the water quality of your watershed?

There are many practices that you can implement to improve water quality. These include: planting cover crops, implementing diverse cropping rotations, and reducing pollution due to nutrient application. To read more, go to https://www.leopold.iastate.edu/files/page/files/Practices-to-Improve-Water-Quality_revised_9-2016_1.pdf.



Improving soil health and water quality begins in the field. Contact the office to talk about practices you want to implement!

Have We Been Ignoring Water Quality in Iowa?

**Article by: Vince Sitzman; Chief;
Bureau of Field Services**

Over the past couple of years we have heard a lot about water quality in Iowa. Even more so now than I can ever remember in my 18 year career with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. And rightly so. Water quality is and should be important to Iowans, all Iowans. But just because we never used to talk about water quality doesn't mean we've been ignoring it.

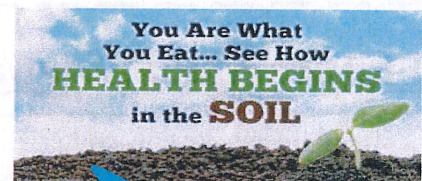
In 1971, Iowa legislature passed the sediment control law that establishes soil loss limits for every soil type in the state, making it the first of its kind in the nation. In 1973, Iowa was the first state to appropriate state cost share funds to work with landowners to address soil erosion. In 2013, Iowa was the second state in the Mississippi River Basin to develop a nutrient reduction strategy for the entire state. Not once in the three examples listed above was the word water quality mentioned, however all of these programs have had a major impact on the Iowa's water quality.

So what's the relationship between reducing soil erosion and protecting

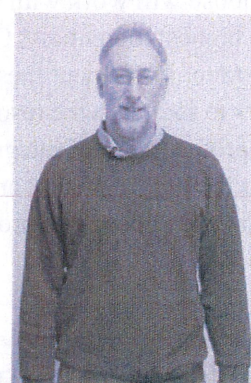
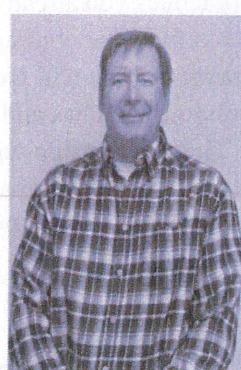
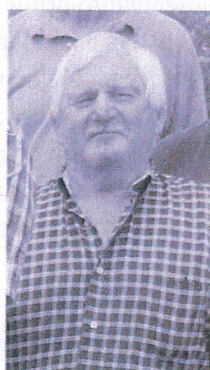
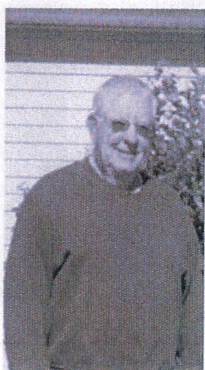
water quality? Every ton of soil we keep in the field helps keep it out of the stream. Sediment is also a major transporter of phosphorus. If you stop the sediment you stop much of the phosphorus too. Keep in mind that reducing soil loss doesn't solve all our water quality concerns we have in the state, but it's a great start, particularly in fields that have highly erodible soils. We need to continue looking for more and better ways to address both phosphorus and nitrogen losses from our fields, but solving these issues requires multiple approaches. Some areas of the state are very susceptible to nitrogen losses while others phosphorus. Addressing water quality issues across the state will require a diverse use of management practices such as no-till and cover crops, structural practices such as terraces and waterways, and edge of field practices such as bioreactors and saturated buffers. New and emerging technologies that have yet to be refined will also be a key if we are to continue making improvements.

So have we been ignoring water quality in Iowa? No, water quality just wasn't

the buzz word at the time, soil erosion was. The real question is can we do more? I believe the answer to that question will be coming soon. The governor's office, legislature, ag groups, and others have gone on record in support of additional funding for water quality. What that level of support ends up being has yet to be determined. As a lifelong Iowan, I'm looking forward to being part of the future efforts to protect our soils and continue to improve water quality in Iowa.



Meet the Commissioners

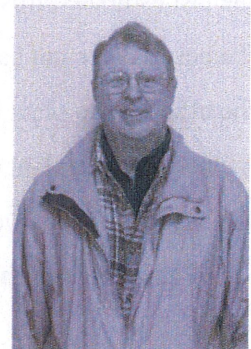


The Monroe County Soil & Water Board has an important role as a locally elected conservation leader. When the Board holds regular monthly meetings, they establish cost-share rates, approve funds for conservation needs in the County & work with USDA NRCS & other federal, state, and local organizations to secure funds for Monroe County producers.



Top Row (Left to right): Mervin McDanel (Chairman), Donald Niebuhr (Vice-Chair), Marvin Wirtjes, Bob Scott, and Joe Pyle (Commissioners)

Bottom Row (Left to right): Colleen Putnam and Jim Nelson



Miller Creek Watershed Project: Wrap-Up

We are now winding down the final stage of a three phase project for Miller Creek that began in 2008. Phase III was a Nutrient & Sediment Reduction Project that started in July 2014 and will be completed by June 30, 2017. The past three years the Iowa Department of Agriculture funded the Phase III project with Watershed Improvement Review (WIRB) funds. The Monroe County SWCD offered practices to producers that modeled the "IA Nutrient Reduction Strategy". Practices offered: cover crops, bioreactor demonstration, fall-stalk nitrate & late spring nitrate tests, soil grid sampling and tier practices involving the four (4) R concept of the Nutrient Stewardship method. The tiers were offered as incentive to complete several practices: Application of nitrogen from fall to spring; late spring nitrate testing to determine if and when to side dressing; followed by fall stalk testing. A few sediment reduction practices were also offered such as water & sediment control basins, terraces and grade stabilizations. Below is a report of practices installed in the last phase of the project. Special funding for Miller Creek Water Quality project will wrap up June 30, 2017.

Cover Crops Beginning allocation...\$24,000.00 Funds spent\$11,658.99 Funds obligated.....\$11,150.00 Remaining balance.....\$1,191.01 Acres Applied.....480	Grade Stabilization Structures Beginning allocation...\$7,500.00 Funds spent.....\$0 Funds obligated...\$7,500.00 Remaining balance...\$0 Number of structures....0	Soil Grid Sampling Beginning allocation...\$18,000.00 Funds spent...\$456.07 Funds obligated...\$0 Funds transferred...\$12,000.00 Remaining balance...\$5,543.93 Acres of sampling...80	Fall Stalk Nitrate Test Beginning allocation...\$6,000.00 Funds spent...\$378.37 Funds obligated...\$0 Remaining balance...\$5,621.63 Acres applied...413.9	Tier 1 Beginning allocation...\$1,440.00 Funds spent....\$240.00 Funds obligated...\$867.00 Remaining balance...\$333.00 Acres applied...40
Bioreactor Beginning allocation...\$2,500.00 Funds spent.....\$0 Funds obligated.....\$0 Transfer to basins.....\$2,500.00 Remaining balance.....\$0 Bioreactor thru EQIP.....\$0	Basins Beginning allocation...\$9,166.00 Funds spent....\$4,743.99 Funds obligated...\$4,422.01 Remaining balance...\$0 Number of basins...4	Terraces Beginning allocation...\$4,429.00 Funds spent...\$3,604.04 Funds obligated...\$0 Remaining balance...\$824.96 Feet applied...1,763	Spring Nitrate Test Beginning allocation...\$6,000.00 Funds spent...\$134.67 Funds obligated...\$278.45 Remaining balance...\$5,586.88 Acres Applied...160	Tier 2 Beginning allocation...\$0
				Tier 3 Beginning allocation...\$6,240.00 Funds spent....\$1,040.00 Funds obligated...\$3,120.00 Remaining balance...\$2,080.00 Acres applied...40

CSP: Conservation Stewardship Program

Good land stewardship not only conserves the natural resources on your farm, ranch or forest, but also provides multiple benefits to your community. These benefits include: better water and air quality, wildlife habitat, food, and fiber. Are you a sustainable producer who wants improve stewardship of the land? If so, the Conservation Stewardship Program might be for you! Every producer has the opportunity to protect and improve the land on which they make their living. NRCS is here to help with that! CSP is for working lands, and it is the largest conservation program in the United States. CSP helps you choose enhancements or practices to add to your current management system that will help you meet the goals of your farm. The improvements you choose will work with the practices you already implement to bring out your land's highest potentials! CSP is a five year contract and offers an annual incentive payment to implement these practices. You will work closely with a conservation planner to look at what resources your land has and how to get the most out of them while protecting their integrity. This relationship with NRCS will give you a chance to look at the bigger picture and learn more about what your land has to offer. If you want to learn more about this program, call 641-932-5144 ext. 3 to make an appointment!



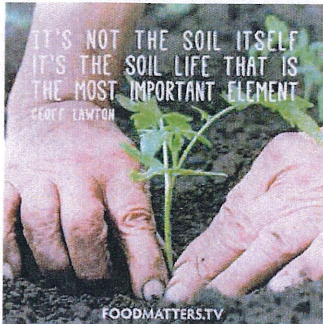
Farmer's Almanac 2017 Fun Facts

- ♦ The last estimated frost date in the spring is April 25 and the first estimated frost date in the fall is October 6
- ♦ The best days to cut hay: May 21&22, June 18&19, July 15&16, August 11&12.
- ♦ The best days to plant beans or corn are: May 1, 27&28, June 5-7&25
- ♦ The best days to plant cover crops or winter grains are: August 26-28, September 5,23,&24,
- ♦ The best days for harvesting are: September 1, 28&29, October 25&26, November 3, 21&22.

This and much more can be found in the *Old Farmer's 2017 Almanac* (225th edition).

Calendar of Events

- ♦ April TBA— Trees for Threes
- ♦ April 29– May 6- “Soil & Water Conservation Week”
- ♦ May 4- Farm Bureau Agricultural Day
- ♦ Aug. 28-30- Farm Progress Show; Boon, IA
- ♦ Commissioner Meetings are tentatively the first Monday of each Month.



A HUGE thank you goes out to our contributors: past, present and future. Without you, our community, educational activities and awards would not be possible.

Monroe County USDA Service Center

District Personnel

Linda Shumate— SWCD Watershed Coordinator
 Brooke Bodkins— Conservation Technical Assistant
 Brooke Bodkins—2017 SWCD Intern

IDALS-DSC Personnel

Diana Williams—State Conservation Assistant
 Ronald Peterson—State Soil Conservation Technician

USDA-NRCS Staff:

Margaret Cope—District Conservationist
 Hannah Grimm—Soil Conservationist
 Michael Gibbs—Federal Soil Conservation Technician

Pheasants Forever Staff:

Shane Weinberg—Farm Bill Biologist

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Monroe County SWCD

USDA-NRCS

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