

Black Hawk Soil & Water Conservation District

Midyear Report

2005

BLACK HAWK COUNTY ACRE STATISTICS

Your Black Hawk SWCD works cooperatively to protect and enhance natural resources in both rural and urban areas of our county. In this mid-year report, we thought you might be interested in some county acre statistics by zoning classification.

The total public and private land in the county encompasses over 345,000 acres. As you might expect, agricultural land, at 295,826 acres, makes up the lion's share. Exempt acres, which is primarily public land, totals 22,620 acres. Urban and rural residences, at 18,559 acres, make up the next largest class. The remaining 8,265 acres is comprised of industrial and commercial business property.

If you have suggestions, or need information on programs available to preserve, protect, and enhance soil and water quality on the portion of these 345,270 acres that you impact, please contact a commissioner or call the Service Center office at 319-296-3262.

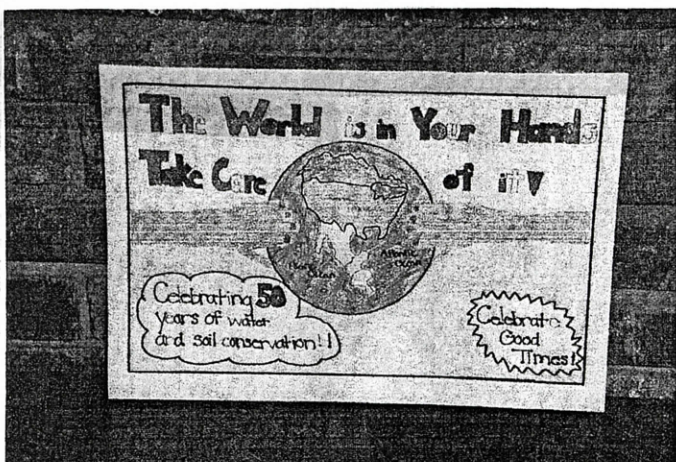
POSTER CONTEST WINNER

Union Middle School Student Wins Competition

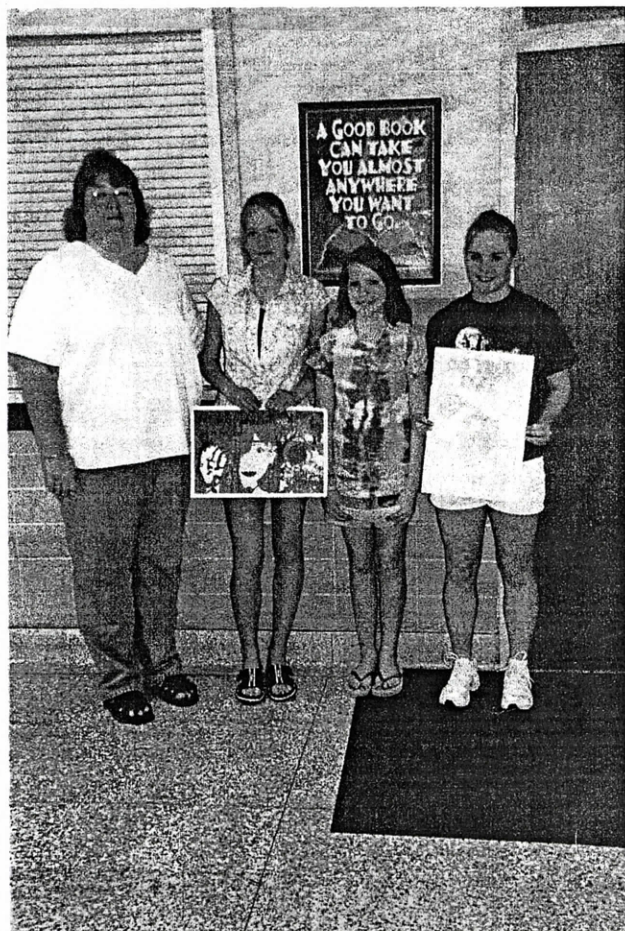
The Black Hawk Soil & Water Conservation District is pleased to announce that Hanna Kelly won first place in the Division 4 grade category of the Conservation Districts Auxiliary Poster Contest. Hanna is the daughter of Sue and Tom Kelly of LaPorte City and is a 7th grade student at Union Middle School in Dysart.

First place winners at the county level advance to compete on the regional level and then can advance to the state and national competition. The theme this year is "Celebrate Conservation" and is to promote conservation education to our youth. Entries were judged on how well they conveyed the message of conservation, visual effectiveness, universal appeal and originality.

To participate in the Poster Contest next year, contact your local SWCD at 3216 Thistledown Drive, Waterloo, IA 50702 or visit www.cdiowa.org for Iowa.



2004 Conservation Districts Auxiliary
Poster Contest Winner - Created by Hanna Kelly



Left to Right: Dandeena Schadle, Andi Jordt,
Hanna Kelly, Emily Williams

"Farm the Best....Buffer the Rest"

Buffer-filter strips remove high percentages of nitrate and sediment run-off from surface water. They support five times as many bird species as row cropped land and allow water to infiltrate the soil much faster. Quite often, the farmer's best land is good soil along a creek and there is reluctance to enroll that good soil in a filter strip. Abnormally heavy rains falling in a short time can cause severe erosion all along the creek bank and soil loss can be extensive. Buffer-filters will not only help hold the soil, but filter water and provide a good source of wildlife habitat on your farm.

Weed control is very important to grass buffers - when weeds are controlled, grass stands improve. Maintenance consists of clipping or spraying weeds before they become a problem. The sooner the grass strip grows to maturity, the more wildlife will make use of the cover when bad weather hits.

Concerned landowners in Black Hawk County have enrolled 2600 acres of buffer-filter strips, with over 90% of those acres seeded to native grasses. Our thanks to all who have supported the buffer-filter strip initiative in our county.

Larry Weigle was hired by the district in 1998 as the Buffer Strip Specialist. He will soon be leaving to become fully retired. The tremendous success of the buffer-filter strip initiative would not have been possible without Larry's tireless work. If you see him, please tell him thanks for the role he has played in soil and water conservation.

Landowners interested in being paid to set aside grass buffers along their streams should call the NRCS office at 319-296-3262.

CORN STALK NITROGEN TESTS

What is an "end-of-season corn stalk nitrogen test" and should you be using it? Nitrogen is a water-soluble nutrient that promotes vegetative growth. This year the price of "N" has really taken a jump. Since it is water-soluble, it can easily be lost through leaching, as rainfall moves through the soil profile.

Nitrogen levels and application rates can be evaluated and managed by using the "end-of-season corn stalk nitrogen test." Stalk samples properly collected 1 to 3 weeks after black layer can be analyzed in a laboratory to determine if you have applied too much or not enough nitrogen to maximize yield and profit.

To help keep nitrogen out of our water supply and put more money in your pocket, contact your fertilizer supplier and ask about the inexpensive "end-of-season corn stalk nitrogen test."

New District Employees

The Black Hawk SWCD recently hired two part-time employees who help promote conservation practices and perform technical duties in the Service Center office. Welcome to:

Emily Luttrell-Narigon, hired January 2005

Derek Culppepper, hired June 2005

Conservation Security Program

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes on Tribal and private working lands. Working lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pasture, and range land, as well as forested land that is an incidental part of an agriculture operation.

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (2002 Farm Bill) amended the Food Security Act of 1985 to authorize the program. CSP is administered by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The CSP is available to agricultural producers, including Tribal producers. The CSP sign-up was conducted from March 28th through May 27th for landowners and producers in the Upper Wapsipinicon watershed.

Interest was very strong and there was good participation in CSP workshops in Black Hawk County. Despite the two-month signup period, a familiar trend emerged: a very strong surge of applicants came to our offices in the closing days of signup. In some areas, this last minute interest has so outpaced the staffing available, that interviews are likely to continue for at least two weeks.

Drinking Water Concerns in the Cedar River

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will host several public meetings to address water quality monitoring results from the Cedar River that show elevated nitrate concentrations in the water. High nitrate concentrations could affect the quality of drinking water for the many people who draw their drinking water directly or indirectly from the Cedar River.

Nitrate commonly comes from commercial fertilizers and manures applied to agricultural lands and residential areas. Nitrate can also come from waste water treatment plants in the Cedar River watershed. Decomposing soil organic matter and atmospheric deposition are additional sources of nitrate.

Many methods are available to reduce the amount of nitrate that enters surface and ground waters. The DNR is requesting input and assistance from individuals and groups as water quality improvement plans are developed.

More information on TMDLs can be obtained from the DNR website at:

<http://www.iowadnr.com/water/tmdlwqa/index.html>

-Jerry Neppel, TMDL specialist, DNR

Dry Run Creek Watershed Survey Results

Dry Run Creek flows into the Cedar River from the southwest through Cedar Falls. The Iowa DNR has placed Dry Run Creek on the 303d Impaired Waters list for a lack of biological activity.

In January of 2005, Black Hawk SWCD randomly selected 348 property owners within the Dry Run Creek (DRC) Watershed and sent these landowners a watershed survey. The purpose of the survey was to identify landowner awareness, concerns, and attitudes of water quality issues specific to the Dry Run Creek Watershed. The survey also asked landowners which conservation practices they may be interested in implementing, given more information from SWCD. Two hundred sixty-three (263) surveys were returned.

The watershed survey asked respondents their global awareness of the DRC watershed water quality. The majority of respondents (74.7%) were "unaware" or "not sure" of the issues. This indicates a great need for the Black Hawk SWCD to reach out to landowners with educational materials related to the current water quality status of DRC.

Landowners did overwhelmingly "agree" or "strongly agree" that

- *Water contamination is an important environmental issue in DRC - 70.3% "agree" or "strongly agree."*
- *New construction & development have increased the amount of soil loss in the area - 56.3% "agree" or "strongly agree."*
- *Runoff from paved surfaces including parking lots, affect the water quality of DRC - 68.9% "agree" or "strongly agree."*

GLOBE UPDATE

Hartman Reserve has been involved in a program called GLOBE (Global Learning/Observations to Benefit the Environment) for over a year now. GLOBE is an international program which collects data of all kinds-atmospheric data, soil data, plant growth data, hydrology data; you name it, GLOBE is testing the environment around us to eventually create a world-wide composite of information to take a large scale look at what the world as a whole is doing around us and how we may impact it. For instance, if four contrails (slender, skinny lines of clouds across the sky that are an effect of jets and airplanes) are produced in the western United States, they can create a cloud the size of the state of Pennsylvania by the time they reach the eastern seaboard. With the help of accumulated data, the scientists with GLOBE can analyze what kind of impact these clouds may have on our weather and climate.

From the very large, as in the case of the contrails, to the very small, such as the growth of a single limb, to determine the length of growing seasons for trees, GLOBE is gathering data. Students in the Cedar Valley are helping to gather data. With the assistance of the Iowa Academy of Science, teachers in the Cedar Valley who teach in elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, community colleges and state universities, have been trained to follow GLOBE protocols so everyone is collecting usable data in the same fashion. Without the help of these students, the data may never be collected. After the information is compiled, scientists from across the United States can analyze and make hypotheses from it.

Land cover is a particular concern, and Black Hawk County has been chosen to perform a study for our area. Ten atmospheric stations have been placed around the county with the permission and help of private landowners, and data have been collected every 15 minutes of every day since last summer. GLOBE is testing water, as well, around all areas of varying land cover, to see how the composition differs from prairie to agricultural to urban areas.

This is a fascinating program to be part of, and a wonderful experience for area school children, as well as adults. Various websites that are involved with GLOBE are listed below:

GLOBE 1 website:

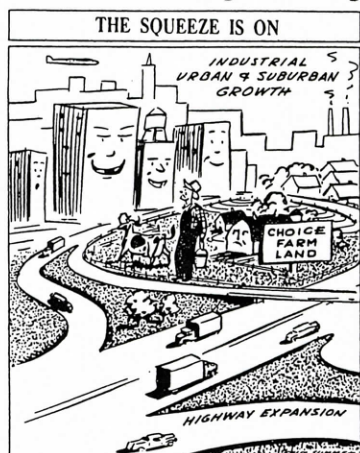
www.globe.gov/globeone

GLOBE Iowa:

<http://www.uni.edu/~iowawet/globe/globe.html>

Results of atmospheric and soil data sites:

<http://www.hwr.arizona.edu/globe/sci/globeone/>



2005 Envirothon

The Envirothon is North America's largest high school environmental competition. Teams representing over 45 states and Canadian provinces compete at the national level for \$35,000 in scholarships and prizes.

The Iowa Envirothon is a statewide program developed in conjunction with the National Envirothon policies, with the top team in the state representing Iowa at the Nationals and sponsored by Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI). This year, LaPorte City's Union High School students participated in the Iowa competition, winning Third Place in the Wildlife test.

The Black Hawk SWCD donated \$100.00 from Supporter's Club funds to pay for registration of four groups of students from Union High School.

Congratulations to Union High School!

INRCOG and Land Use Planning

The Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments (INRCOG) is a 6-county regional planning agency that serves Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, and Grundy counties in Iowa. "COGs" serve several specific local government planning responsibilities, one of which is land use planning. Land use planning has always been a service offered to our member governments in the way of technical assistance, plan and ordinance development, as well as implementation.

Currently, INRCOG helps its member cities and counties develop land use tools, such as Comprehensive Plans, Zoning Ordinances and Subdivision Ordinances, and land development assessment tools, such as Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA). These tools are developed by INRCOG at the request of the local government in conjunction with local elected officials, planning and zoning commissions, staff and the public. The purpose of the tools is not to impede an individual's ability to use their property, but to protect the health, welfare, and safety of the public. Developing a land use program for a geographic area as large as a county or metropolitan area may seem challenging, and possibly even in conflict with the short-term interests, of some landowners. However, the local government's intent is to provide a general framework within which landowners may use their property.

INRCOG seeks to work with the local government to direct growth to areas that can support it. Our hope is that public services and public infrastructure will be provided concurrently with any development that is proposed so residents have access to services they need. When working with counties, our approach is usually more conservative when looking to convert land from agricultural use or open areas to urban uses.

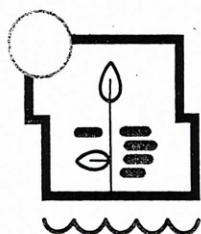
If you have questions about COGs or land use planning, please visit the Iowa Assn. of Counties (IARC) website at www.iarcog.com or the INRCOG website at www.inrcog.org to obtain information.

-by Brian Schoon, Director
Planning and RTC, INRCOG

Black Hawk Soil & Water
Conservation District
3216 Thistledown Drive
Waterloo, IA 50702

June 2005

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Waterloo, IA 50702



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Sherman Lundy, Vice Chair
Jon Mixdorf, Co-Treasurer
Cathy Livingston
Bob Hansen

BLACK HAWK SWCD

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Vern Fish
Jerry Kramer
Kathleen Scholl

STAFF:

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Julie Falcon, Soil Conservationist
Elaine Hammer, Soil Cons. Technician
Larry Weigle, District Cons. Technician
Emily Luttrell-Narigon, District Cons. Technician
Derek Culpepper, District Cons. Technician

Promote Soil & Water Conservation

Your District Commissioners and office staff work diligently to educate and inform the public of the programs and opportunities available to them. It is essential to have the materials and financial support necessary to promote conservation and to assist our landowners, operators, teachers, students, church ministers, and citizens of Black Hawk County in their efforts to learn more about and prosper from our natural resources.

Donated dollars are used for a variety of projects including: conservation materials for schools, the annual Poster Contest sponsored by CDI, the Hawkeye Farm Show, the annual Conservation Field Tour, and conservation awards.

Please take a moment to consider a donation to help conservation efforts!

CDI 2005 Spring Regional Meeting

The Black Hawk Soil & Water Conservation District hosted the Region 4 Spring Meeting on March 28th at the Hartman Reserve Nature Center in Cedar Falls. SWCD commissioners from 10 counties participated in this educational and informational meeting. Special thanks go out to Mayor Hurley, Mayor Crews, and Supervisor John Miller for attending the meeting and speaking out for conservation!

2005 BLACK HAWK COUNTY CONSERVATION SUPPORTERS

The Black Hawk Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) commissioners wish to sincerely thank the following members of the 2005 Conservation Supporters Club for their generous donations to conservation this year:

Kay Connelly	Peterson Contractors
Agri Drain Corp.	Hershberger Tiling, Inc.
Basic Materials Corp.	Hancor
Northern Nat. Gas	Ralph Leymaster
	Bob/Marian Roth

Make a Splash With Project WET Water Festival at Hawkeye Community College!

Over 50,000 students in all 50 states will participate in the 4th annual "Make a Splash" event this year. Letters were sent to all 4th grade teachers in Black Hawk County in May explaining the water festival, which will take place in September 2005. Tentative plans are to hold the event on the Hawkeye Community College campus. District commissioners and Marcy Seavey, Education Director at UNI, will coordinate the event.

The websites containing information about "Make a Splash" and Project WET are listed below:

<http://www.projectwet.com/wet.html>
<http://www.riverofwords.org/>

Watershed Protection Grant

Your Soil & Water Conservation District recently received \$7,000 from the Watershed Protection Program of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship/Division of Soil Conservation. This will allow the district to continue work which was started last year to protect and improve Dry Run Creek.

Black Hawk SWCD prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs and marital or family status. Black Hawk SWCD is an equal opportunity employer.