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SCS Program Far From Being Dead

By Chuck Hansohn

The Soil Conservation Service (SCS) is broadening its scope and approaches to plan and promote improved soil and water conservation in both rural and urban communities.

Herb Davison, Scott County conservationist, said the SCS is far from "dead," although some individuals may have assumed the service was axed in the same budgetary cut that killed the Rural Environmental Assistance Program (REAP).

REAP, which was administered by the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS), provided cost-sharing funds for soil and water conservation practices, which were designed on a referral basis by SCS engineers.

DAVISON said elimination of cost-sharing may be a partial setback for the conservation program, but there still are

farmers who recognize the need for application of appropriate practices to preserve the fertility and production capability of their land.

Because there will be no REAP referrals from ASCS to SCS, the conservation staff is turning to the files to find farm plans drawn in previous years at farmer request.

Technical assistance will be offered those still interested in installation of conservation practices, Davison said.

Among goals of the Scott County Soil Conservation District commissioners this year are:

— **Establishment** of a Conservation Education Committee comprised of teachers and interested members of social groups to promote conservation in the schools.

— **Development** of film slide sets related to soil and water conservation that

can be used by 4-H leaders in club work and other interested groups.

— **Continuation** of minimum tillage test plots and promotion of tile outlet terraces.

— **Promotion** of outdoor classrooms at schools, where landscaping can be utilized as an instructional base for a variety of classes.

— **Develop** an inventory of resources in Scott County, possibly starting this winter in evaluation of cropland, wildlife areas, timber and others.

— **Provide** technical assistance to farmers in design of livestock waste control facilities in compliance with state water pollution control regulations.

The district commissioners also have a new responsibility in administration of the Iowa Soil Conservancy Act, under which soil loss limits are established for both rural and urban areas to control excessive erosion.

Davison said the commissioners also are concerned about proposed state and federal land-use legislation and will seek policies that will protect prime agricultural land for future generations.

Attempts to undertake a soil survey in Scott County are supported by the district commissioners as an essential basis for local land-use policy.

Recognizing there are soil and water problems in urban areas as well as on the farm, the district commissioners have offered SCS technical assistance on a continuing basis to Bettendorf city officials.

A memorandum of cooperation is presently being studied by Bettendorf officials, Davison said. If there is interest, similar agreements would be worked out with other city officials in the county.

TWO WATERSHED projects are in diverse stages of planning, Davison said.

A preliminary investigation report recommending erosion control structures for the Buffalo Bill Watershed possibly may be completed by state SCS engineers this year. The 3,616-acre watershed in Butler Township is 1½ miles wide and 4 miles long, including 37 landowners, nearly all of whom are district cooperators.

Farmers in an area between Eldridge and Sunbury, extending three miles into Cedar County, still are considering the possibility of development of the Mud Creek Watershed.

There are 430 farms in the 78,020-acre Mud Creek Watershed, including 135 conservation district cooperators. There must be 210 farms under conservation plans before application can be made for federal watershed assistance.

Because there are many farms in Scott County where minimum tillage practices would provide adequate conservation protection, the district commissioners

plan demonstration plots again this year.

DAVISON said the Kenneth Tank farm near Maysville in Hickory Grove Township will be the site of minimum tillage field days at planting and harvest. Also, a nearby field will exhibit tile outlet terraces installed last year on 38 acres with a 5 per cent slope.

"We feel the farmer who is interested in preserving his land will see the value of conservation practices and go ahead without cost-sharing funds being a necessity," Davison said.

Both minimum tillage and terraces are practices being encouraged in watershed areas, he said.

"We're still selling the same idea of soil conservation," Davison said, "and we're helping the farmer who is soil conservation minded."