

Dickinson Soil & Water Conservation District 1998 Annual Report

*Mark
Ingwersen*

Published by Lakes News Shopper (712) 338-2232



Dickinson SWCD, 2412 17th St. Spirit Lake, IA 51360
Ph. (712) 336-3782 Ext. 3 E-Mail swcd@rconnect.com

1998 Highlights

January

- Election of Officers:
 - Mark Ingwersen, Chair
 - Keith Van Kleeck, Vice Chair
 - Orville Berg, Treasurer
 - Tim Hemphill, Secretary
- Lance Heikens was re-appointed as Assistant Commissioner
- Clean Water Alliance Meeting
- Tuition assistance was granted to Kathy Kleen to attend the Iowa Project WET workshop

February

- District newsletter published
- Conservation Poster Contest co-sponsored by SWCD
- Bob & Shirley Mann were selected for the 'Cooperator of the Year Award' which was presented at the Pheasants Forever Banquet

March

- Michael Lambert was selected as the Dickinson SWCD Scholarship recipient. Michael received a \$500 scholarship and was advanced to the State Conservation Districts of Iowa Scholarship competition.
- Regional Envirothon attended by 2 teams from the Terril, School which were sponsored by the SWCD. One team advanced to the State competition at Springbrook
- Staff attended NRCS All Employee Meeting in Cherokee
- Jim Bell, Earth Team Volunteer received the State Volunteer Award
- EQIP Core Group meeting was held

- Spring Regional was attended by Mark Ingwersen, Keith Van Kleeck, Ann Ditsworth, John Wills and Carroll Oskvig
- Poster Contest winners were:
 - * Alex Miles - Spirit Lake First Grade
 - * Kay Oskvig - Second Grade
 - * Sarah Marsh - Okoboji Fourth Grade
- Soil & Water Stewardship Week materials were distributed to interested Churches in Dickinson County
- District co-sponsored the 5 County Contractor's Meeting
- Tuition assistance was provided for Fran Cerny, Terril Elementary, to attend the Food, Land & People Teacher workshops
- Assisted with Northwest Iowa Technology Expo

April

- SWCD co-sponsored the '98 Wings & Wetlands Tour
- SWCD Foundation was listed with the Secretary of State
- 1999 Silver Lake Watershed 319 Pre-Application was submitted
- EQIP Core Group meeting was held
- Commissioners delivered Green Ash trees for each 6th grade student in Dickinson County to the schools
- Nursery Stock were delivered and District Tree Sale was concluded for '98
- SWCD co-sponsored Earth Week activities (Wonders of Wildlife Gardens) at the 4 Elementary Schools in Dickinson County
- Stewardship Week was observed April 26 - May 3



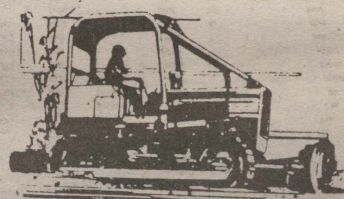
**It All Begins
On
The Farm...**



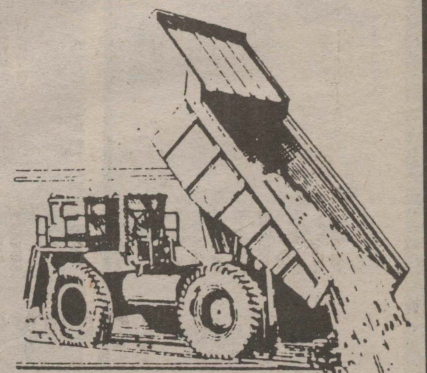
HWY. 9 & 71
SPIRIT LAKE

Practice Conservation -

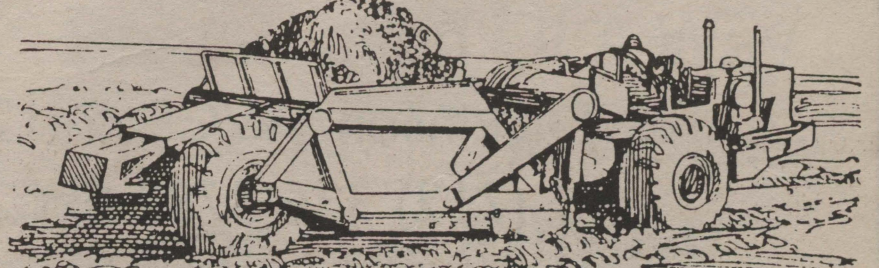
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1998 Highlights (continued)

May

- ♣ Terril's Envirothon Team won the State Competition and will represent Iowa at the National Event in Michigan this summer
- ♣ SWCD co-sponsored the Okoboji & Spirit Lake Middle School Shore Patrol '98
- ♣ Staff assisted with Okoboji Elementary's Outdoor Classroom
- ♣ District newsletter published
- ♣ Paula Koster was hired through an agreement with the local Pheasant's Forever Chapter, an IA DNR Grant, NRCS and the SWCD

June

- ♣ Madeline Meyer, Odebolt, was appointed to the State Soil Conservation Committee to represent Northwest Iowa
- ♣ Silver Lake Watershed 319 Application submitted to State
- ♣ Clean Water Project radio spots were aired on KUOO promoting water quality protection

July

- ♣ SWCD donates Backyard Conservation kits to the City Libraries in Dickinson County
- ♣ Acreage windbreak funds received from County

August

- ♣ Donated items to help fund Conservation Districts of Iowa Scholarships
- ♣ Commissioner Hemphill resigned from Board
- ♣ State Soil Conservation Committee appointed Bill Northey to fill vacant Commissioner seat

September

- ♣ Annual Outdoor Classroom was held at Kettleson-Hogsback Area with 225 6th grade students attending
- ♣ Keith Van Kleek received the Ken Wagner Young Farmer Award
- ♣ Marc Benedict received the Statewide Conservation Teacher Award for grades 7-12
- ♣ Commissioners & staff assisted with Clay County Fair SWCD Booth
- ♣ District Newsletter published

October

- ♣ 18th CRP Sign-up started October 26 and runs through December 11
- ♣ Continuous CRP report given to Pheasants Forever by Paula Koster and Carroll Oskvig at PF Executive Meeting

November

- ♣ Funding approval received from REAP Water Protection Funds to assist with 1999 WAE position
- ♣ Ann Ditsworth, on behalf of the SWCD, worked with Farm Bureau (FB) and Harris-Lake Park FFA Instructor, Randy Nicks, to prepare a grant application for the FB Nonpoint Source Pollution Information & Education Grant

December

- ♣ SWCD Foundation Tree Sale begins
- ♣ Commissioners attend Fall Regional Meeting in Spencer entitled 'Conservation Toolbox'
- ♣ Bob & Shirley Mann were presented an Izaak Walton Windbreak Award by Mark Ingwersen, SWCD Chair
- ♣ 1998 SWCD Annual Report Published by Lakes News

THANK YOU

**to the Dickinson County Soil
and Water Conservation
District for letting us publish
your 1998 Annual Report.**

*Lakes News
Shopper*

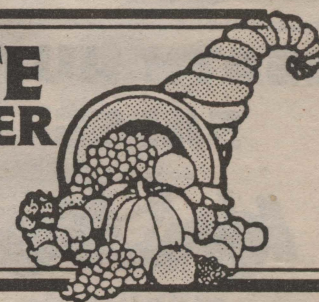
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Dickinson SWCD Financial Report

Fiscal Year 1998

1M Budget — District

Funds provided by the State of Iowa for printing costs, office supplies and equipment, District Commissioner's mileage, and associated travel expenses

Allocation	\$ 2,500.00
Supplemental Allocation	\$ 1,400.00
Commissioner Expenses	\$ 960.28
Office Supplies and Equipment	\$ 2,858.72
Printing	\$ 81.00

3M Budget — IA Financial Incentives Program

Funds provided for cost-share assistance to landowners for installing permanent soil and water conservation practices and offers 30% of the allocation for tillage incentives

Allocation	\$ 13,678.00
Amount Obligated/Spent	\$ 4,103.40
Unobligated Amount	\$ 9,574.60

REAP (Resource Enhancement & Protection)

Allocation	\$ 8,015.00
Amount Obligated/Spent	\$ 3,791.80
Unobligated Amount	\$ 4,223.20

REAP (Forestry & Native Grasses)

Allocation	\$ 1,808.50
Amount Obligated/Spent	\$ 1,557.51
Unobligated Amount	\$ 250.99

REAP (IA Great Lakes Clean Water Project)

Allocation	\$ 70,000.00
Amount Obligated/Spent	\$ 34,662.00
Unobligated Amount	\$ 35,338.00

Purpose...

Government interest in better management of our natural resources began during the Depression with Franklin D. Roosevelt's conservation programs. Since that time a great deal of concern for soil and water conservation has come about. From the Dust Bowl Days of the '30s to the Flood of '93 the District has played a significant part along the way. The Soil and Water Conservation District is in its 54th year of service and is available to help solve resource management challenges. Whether you live in the city or country and are a landowner or not, you are invited to contact our office for assistance in conservation related practices.

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1999 Tree Sale

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Colorado Blue Spruce (18-24")	\$9.50
Norway Spruce (15-18")	\$7.00
Scotch Pine (15-18")	\$7.00

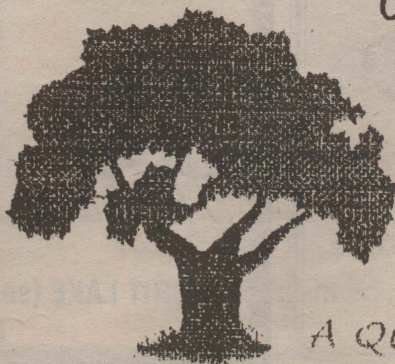
~ Bundles of 10 ~

Amur Maple (2-3') 80¢ ea	Green Ash (5-6') \$1.80 ea
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~ Bundles of 25 ~

Red Dogwood (3-4') 80¢ ea	Red Oak (2-3') \$1.75 ea
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A Quality Environment

Partnering in '98

by Carroll Oskvig ~ District Conservationist

The Dickinson Soil & Water Conservation District worked with many partners in assisting landowners in installing conservation practices in 1998.

The Dickinson County Pheasants Forever Chapter joined with the SWCD Commissioners and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to provide funding for one part-time staff position. Paula Koster was hired for this position, which was to promote the Conservation Buffer Initiative. Paula made over 200 personal contacts with farmers, resulting in Conservation Reserve Program contracts with the Farm Service Agency for nearly 200 acres. Conservation buffers include contour buffer strips, filter strips, riparian forest buffers, windbreaks, shelterbelts and grassed waterways.

The Dickinson County Cooperative Extension Service partnered with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, SWCD Commissioners and Farm Service Agency Committee and others to provide educational services for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Meetings have been scheduled for this winter for farmers currently enrolled in EQIP, and for those interested in the program. EQIP provides cost-share payments to farmers who install livestock grazing systems, grade stabilization structures, waterways, terraces, sediment basins, livestock waste systems and windbreaks. EQIP also provides incentive payments to farmers using integrated nutrient/pest management practices.

We would like to give a special thanks to the five Earth Team volunteers for the 731 hours they donated to the Dickinson SWCD in 1998. These volunteers included: Jim Bell, Clarence Call, Maurice Dougal, Tom Koster, and Keith Van Kleek. Jim Bell was awarded the NRCS Volunteer of the Year for 1998 at the All Employee's meeting. He also received recognition for this award at the Annual Conference of the Conservation Districts of Iowa in Des Moines this fall.

Public Land Management Benefits Environment

by Doug Harr ~ DNR Wildlife Biologist

Dickinson County is host to a substantial amount of public land and water, much of which is owned by Iowa Dept of Natural Resources (DNR) and the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS). As in Minnesota, Wisconsin and other neighboring states, public lands for outdoor recreation tend to be located in areas where lakes, marshes and streams abound or where rough topography can make good agriculture more difficult. Such concentration is bound to attract visitors who enjoy hunting, fishing, hiking, camping and similar outdoor pursuits. But it's sometimes easy to forget those large tracts of public land benefit more than just outdoor recreation. Our environment may be the biggest beneficiary of all.

Whenever possible, DNR and FWS plans call for consolidating existing public lands into larger contiguous tracts, rather than trying to scatter parcels across the entire county. Because existing public tracts tend to be

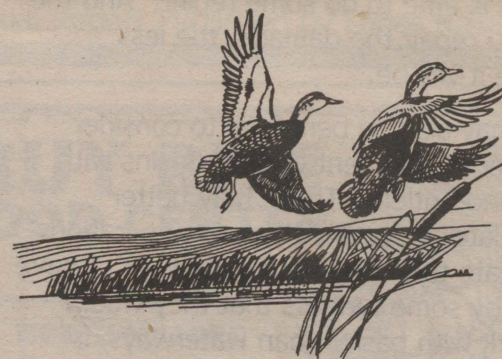
situated in areas where soil erosion and water pollution are of greatest concern, enlarging these parcels makes the most sense in reducing environmental problems. Under this scenario, less erosive and prime agricultural areas, such as most of Lloyd, Milford, Okoboji, Richland and Westport townships are best left in private ownership and utilized to maximize agricultural production. In those locations, both agencies urge landowners and tenants to work with the Dickinson Soil & Water Conservation District to meet soil and water conservation needs while pursuing the goals of a healthy agricultural economy.

In areas where public lands are concentrated, DNR and FWS restore wetlands, sow highly erodible soils to various grasses and broadleaf plants and plant thick stands of shrubs and small trees. These practices, while designed chiefly for wildlife benefits, greatly reduce soil and water erosion. Additionally, runoff from rain or snowmelt is filtered to reduce excess nitrogen, phosphorous and

various pesticides from reaching the region's valuable recreational lakes. By enlarging current public land holdings, environmental benefits are greatly increased and land management efforts are made more efficient.

It is not always necessary for agencies to purchase lands to reap such increased benefits, however. Conservation easement programs are available through the Soil and Water Conservation District or from the FWS. Easements pay landowners to make long-term or permanent changes to their farm operations, usually involving some of the same tools used by managers of DNR or FWS lands. Private properties linking public lands frequently are well suited to such easements and often exhibit environmental problems. Participating farmers retain ownership and control of their land, while providing most of the benefits that might accrue the environment if publicly owned. In short, landowners and the environment both come up winners.

The Dickinson Soil & Water Conservation District, Iowa DNR's Wildlife Bureau and the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Iowa Wetlands Management District all work in close partnership to find the best solution to environmental problems, both on public and private lands. Persons seeking assistance in soil, water and wildlife conservation are encouraged to contact personnel of any of these agencies. All these agencies pledge to work with landowners and tenants to find the most appropriate solutions to problems of good land management and conservation.



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The Conservation Reserve Program

by Willard Punt ~ Conservation Technician

With so many fields coming out of CRP the last couple of years and more continuing to expire in the next few years, it is likely that there will be a considerable need for conservation treatments prior to cropping the fields. Many of these areas will qualify for grassed waterways under the Continuous CRP Sign-up. Which would allow for the establishment of the grassed waterway as well as a rental rate for the term of the CRP contract.

Waterways cover approximately 100,000 acres of land in the State of Iowa. Many are doing a great job of controlling or limiting erosion, thereby reducing the amount of soils & silt in our streams, rivers and larger water bodies. A great 'plus' for water quality. There are also quite a number of patches of grass, often incorrectly labeled as grassed waterways, doing little or nothing to help keep topsoil on the farm. Waterways are likely one of the conservation practices on your farm requiring more maintenance than some others.

Many elements enter in to determine how well or long a waterway does its job. A number of these elements are in the control of the steward of the land such as tillage practices and direction of rows, while others, such as the weather, are not. At any rate, there is a constant cut & fill process going on causing sediment deposition. This in turn causes gullies either along the outside edges or forming in the center of the waterway. Whatever the case may be, if you see gullies forming it is time to do some repair. And the earlier you repair the damage, the less expensive it will be.

It may also be beneficial to consider some Water & Sediment Control Basins with underground outlets. These may better accommodate the present farming operations and eliminate the need for a waterway. I have been told by some farmers that they would rather work with basins than waterways, it really depends on the land and the farming methods of the farmer.

The staff in the Dickinson SWCD and NRCS would be happy to visit with anyone that may have a need for waterways, terraces, basins or other conservation practices.

Why Bother?

by John H. Willis ~ Project Coordinator

In a world where it seems that it is always the other guy's fault why should you, as an individual, even try to protect the environment?

It's a good question to ask. If you've said 'why bother' or 'they should be doing

something about that,' then this article is for you. To answer the first question, 'why bother,' I would like to tell you a story about two men who were working hard on their job. These men went to lunch each day and the first man had a variety of lunches. The second man, however always had the same thing, peanut butter sandwiches. He always complained about the peanut butter sandwich to the first man. Finally, after years of this complaining the first man got tired of it and said 'why don't you just tell your wife to pack something different for lunch.' The second man said 'leave my wife out of this, I pack my own lunch!' In other words you shouldn't blame someone else for pollution or a poor environment. You need to start with 'you.' Everyone causes pollution, some cause more than others, but if you don't bother to change then nobody else will either. It is time to stop blaming somebody else and work together to fix our problems.

That should also answer the second question. Since it is everyone's fault it is also everyone's responsibility, including you. I was always taught to take responsibility for my mistakes and to correct them. In that case, since it's everyone's mistakes that are causing the problems, we need to work together and fix it. Fixing a problem doesn't always mean we have to spend thousands of dollars or work hundreds of hours to do something. It may be as simple as making sure to pick up a piece of paper on the ground or using a phosphorus free fertilizer on your lawn. Working together, we can make a difference and protect this area we call home.

**Your natural resources glass—
half full, or half empty?**

By Leroy Brown ~ NRCS State Conservationist

As we approach not only the next decade, but a new century, it might serve all of us well to ask ourselves how well prepared we think we are to take care of ourselves and those who will follow us on this earth. In answering that question, we have to ask whether we are taking care of the soil that feeds us, the water we drink, bathe, swim and fish in, the air we breathe, the plants that sustain and beautify our countryside, and the animals that also call our part of the world home.

I believe our soil conservation glass is half full and rising because we have cut soil erosion by a third in the past 10 years. Our soil erosion rates on sloping Iowa cropland averaged more than 10 tons an acre a year as recently as 15 years ago. Now, our average soil loss is about 5 tons an acre. Much of the credit goes to Iowa farmers who have

undertaken conservation tillage methods, terracing, planting of grasses and trees on the most sloping lands, contour farming and other measures. On the other hand, there was severe soil erosion in Iowa this year with heavy rains. And in many counties, the state and federal cost-share funds that are offered are quickly depleted because there are many more landowners wanting to apply conservation measures through this partnership than have cost-share funds available to them.

Just a few short years ago, I would have been very pessimistic about our wetlands resources in Iowa. When you think of wetlands, you think of states like Louisiana, Florida, and Minnesota. But Iowa, known for its corn, soybeans and hogs, is also a national leader in the restoration of wetlands. Through USDA wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and other programs, NRCS has helped Iowa landowners restore about 50,000 acres of wetlands, and more are scheduled. Together, we've actually reversed the trend of draining or otherwise losing wetlands to one of bringing them back. There's also been a considerable amount of progress in improving water quality, with landowners reducing the amount of nitrogen and other fertilizers they apply, and application of pesticides only in amounts and where they are needed. Livestock owners have worked at installing safe manure storage systems and nutrient management plans, but there's much more to be done in that area.

Yet another area of conservation is what homeowners can do in their backyards for a better environment. Many homeowners are using the same technique; ones that farmers use, but in a smaller scale. The fertilizer and pesticide management, plants that provide habitat, water conservation methods and ground covers such as mulching, all make a difference in our overall wellbeing.

We're looked at in Iowa as national leaders in conservation. We are fortunate to have so many landowners, organizations, and citizens interested in caring for our natural resources. It starts at the local level, where enthusiasm for conservation can make great things happen.

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DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS — Front, left to right: Mark Ingwersen, Chair, Spirit Lake Twp.; Orville Berg, Treasurer, Center Grove Twp. Back, left to right: Chris Hoffman, Lakeville Twp.; Keith Van Kleek, Vice-Chair, Milford Twp. Not pictured: Bill Northey, Superior Twp.; Lance Heikens, Assistant Commissioner, Silver Lake Twp.



SPIRIT LAKE FIELD OFFICE STAFF— Front row, left to right: Tim Moran, conservation aide; Willard Punt, technician; Carroll Oskvig, district conservationist. Back row, left to right: John Wills, project director; Jim Bell, team volunteer; Ann Ditsworth, state secretary.

New USDA office

by Jeff Kestel ~ RC&D Coordinator

The Iowa Lakes Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) opened their new office this year in Spencer. RC&D is a locally run program. Projects are developed by working with local people. The RC&D can help individuals and communities improve their economies and quality of life through wise use and development of their natural resources. The Iowa Lakes RC&D primarily covers the five county area of Buena Vista, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet and Palo Alto.

The RC&D can help individuals or groups face problems or take advantage of opportunities. It can assist in planning projects to meet needs or opportunities. It will help with project funding through grant application assistance. The RC&D can also provide technical help from in-house or other sources such as government agencies or private consultants.

The RC&D is organized as a non-profit corporation under chapter 501 (c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Service and is a tax-exempt and tax deductible organization.

Some projects currently underway include: pedestrian bridge for city of Lake Park, Adaptive Fishing grant assistance, Jerry's Tree Service grant assistance, Nutrient and Pest Management workshops for farm operators, Native Grass Drill rental program, Native Grass harvest project with farm owners and operators, Dry Fire Hydrant installation with rural fire departments, and environmental education grants and programs with schools.

If you would like more information about the Iowa Lakes RC&D contact Jeff Kestel at 712-262-2083 or email jeff.kestel@ia.nrcs.usda.gov.

Farm Service Agency Annual Report

by Larry Lago ~ CED

It has again been a very busy year with the 16th General CRP Sign-up, Production Flexibility Contract (PFC) payment, Cropland Report of Acreage, Continuous CRP Sign-up and Price Support Activities.

Our goal is to provide the agricultural community with funding that will assist in strengthening and stabilizing our rural farming communities through a variety of programs and services.

PFC payments are provided to those producers that have previously established a contract acreage and want the flexibility to plant the types of crops they choose while following necessary conservation plans.

The CRP program provides assistance to producers who have environmentally sensitive land. The 10-15 year contracts provide annual payments are provided for establishing a conservation cover that protects the natural resources and creates wildlife habitat. Currently there are over 6,400 acres enrolled in CRP in Dickinson County.

Additionally, emergency programs exist to ensure that existing conservation practices can be re-established.

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AREA EDUCATOR RECEIVES CONSERVATION HONOR— Jean Eels, Executive Director, Iowa Conservation Education Council, (left) and Jerry Perkins, Farm Editor, *The Des Moines Register* (right), presented Iowa Soil Conservation Awards to Marilyn Bentley, Muscatine, and Marc Benedict, Terril, on Sept. 3, during the 52nd Annual Conference for the Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) in Des Moines. The award program honoring outstanding conservation teachers in Iowa, is sponsored by the CDI, the State Soil Conservation Committee, the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, the Iowa Conservation Education Council, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and *The Des Moines Register*.

The Division II Teacher, grades 7-12, winner was Marc Benedict, Terril Community School, Dickinson SWCD. Marc Benedict has been teaching the sciences to middle school and high school students at the Terril Community School in Terril for 13 years. He said, "I believe that conservation education must be hands-on and relevant to one's daily life in order for it to be internalized. The learner must be taught to recognize environmental problems, appreciate their complexity, understand their role (and the roles of others) in the problem, and participate in the solution if lasting personal growth is expected."

Benedict relies on a variety of environmental experts such as the county naturalist, district forester, NRCS staff, and other instructors to teach key concepts and practical skills, and to expose his students to possible career choices relating to the environment. He also serves on a number of local boards and committees to encourage more effective utilization of community resources in conserving, maintaining and protecting human and natural resources.

When the Iowa Envirothon was established, Benedict immediately sought to have his students participate, saying the problem offers young people the unique opportunity to practice problem-solving as a team activity while broadening the students' scope of awareness about their state. His enthusiasm for the program was carried through by his students. The 1997 Envirothon team from Terril finished second in the state competition. Their 1998 team finished first, and will be representing Iowa in the National Envirothon.

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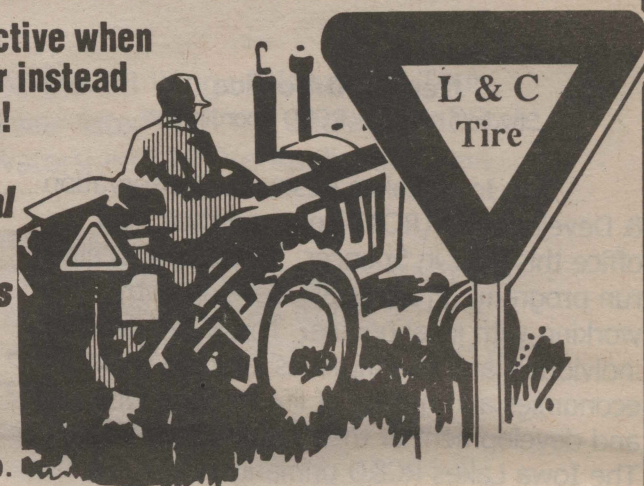
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**Dickinson County
Pheasants Forever**

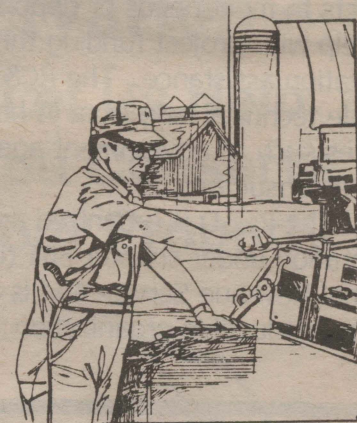
ranks in the top 20 chapters
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