

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

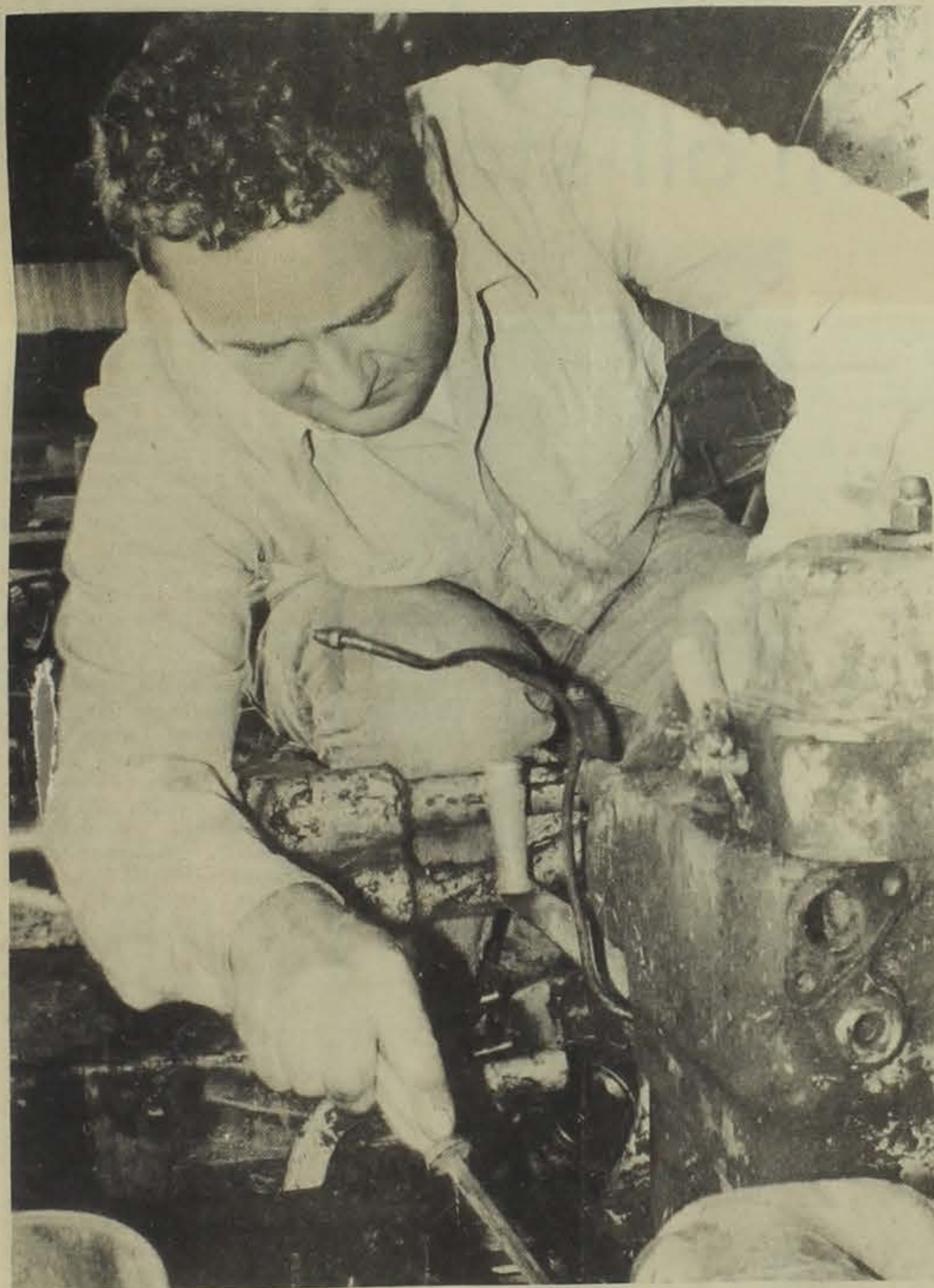
INFORMATIONAL ACTIVITIES

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He believes in conservation



Repair work

Don Chickering of near Floris is doing some repair work at his farm. Chickering was earlier named a Davis

County winner in the Iowa Conservation Awards Program.

By MARY RUNKLE
Farm Feature Editor

"Even if there were no cost-sharing program in effect to encourage farmers to do conservation work, I'd go ahead with conservation practices on my own—as I could afford it," says Don Chickering, local winner for this year's Iowa Soil Conservation Achievement Awards Program.

Chickering, who farms 640 acres two miles northwest of Floris, has been a cooperator in the Davis County Soil Conservation District for seven years.

He comments, "I think it takes a while for some of the conservation work to pay off, but some of it, like pasture renovation, pays off real quick." He added that he thought the local service offered big help to farmers who wanted help in improving their farm.

"With the kind of land we have in Davis County, there probably aren't many farms here that couldn't be improved with some conservation work," notes Chickering, who has cleared a lot of brush but has some 40 acres left.

His own conservation practices include 33 acres of row crops on contour; 4 acres of shaped, seeded waterways; 2.6 acres of terraces, some with tile outlets; 0.6 acres of diversion terraces; 2 ponds; 3 erosion control structures; 119 acres of renovated pasture; and installation of 3,200 feet of open drainage ditch as well as 2,500 feet of existing drainage ditch.

The owner-operator winner in Division I, Chickering will receive a plaque, presented by the Bloomfield Newspapers at the annual Davis County Soil Conservation District meeting. He will also compete against other farmers at district in the state-wide program sponsored by the Des Moines Register and Tribune and conservation groups.

"Any conservation work not only helps the farmer who has it done but other people around him," notes Chickering who added that every erosion structure put in helps toward flood control.

A member of the Soap Creek Watershed Committee, Chickering commented, "I think we can see some difference in flooding of Soap Creek as compared to 20 years ago—it isn't as wild as it used to be. And it's the fellows on upstream who have helped us down here."

Most of his crop ground is on bottom land. Last year, he had 200 acres of corn that averaged 140 bushels per acre. His 27 acres of beans on rented ground made 41 bushels per acre and he says his own 50 acres of beans this year look equally as good.

Besides grain growing, Chickering has 52 stock cows and feeds out his own calves, and sometimes buys extras. "I like to sell heifers when they are 900 to 1000 pounds and steers about a hundred pounds heavier," he says. His stock cows are mostly black with some Shorthorn in them. "I like to have a little dairy in my beef breed so the calves will get more milk and grow faster," he said.

"I thought of getting a horse to work stock, but found out you can't beat a motorcycle for locating new

calves, or checking and chasing cows," he said. He added, "When straying cows hear that motor, they head right back where they belong because they know they can't outrun the machine."

Chickering has had hogs in the past but hasn't for two or three years now. He says he's thinking about getting some, though, to eat up extra corn.

His farm extends to the north edge of Floris and his father lives right across the road so the two "work together quite a bit".

Chickering's have six children, all at home: Diana, 16; Donnie, 15; Doug, 14; Danny, 13; Debbie, 11; and Danelle, 16 months. The children naturally get in on the work at the Chickering farm.

Ask his favorite farm work, Chickering said, "Putting in a crop, taking care of it and getting it harvested." He said he also liked working on machinery. "If I couldn't farm, I'd go back to implements, and machanic work." He is now doing repair work on his crawler-tractor and, on rainy days, he does some overhaul jobs for neighbors.

"It's hard to beat a farm life; I enjoy my freedom," he says. His wife, Kay, put in, "Yes, he's much happier on the farm, even though each year we think it's going to be easier but we find we're working harder."

About conservation work planned for future years, Kay laughed, "I've heard Don say we could keep a bulldozer busy for a year here."