

Black Hawk

Soil & Water Conservation

District Newsletter

April 2007

Teacher of the Year

Press release

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship chose Carol Boyce, of the Waterloo Community Schools, as the 2006 Division I conservation Teacher of the Year. The award was presented to Ms. Boyce at the 60th annual meeting of the Iowa Soil and Water Conservation Districts held on November 15th and 16th in Ames. Ms. Boyce teaches at Orange and Kittrell Elementary Schools, and has a long record of involvement in conservation and environmental education. She has an Iowa Master Conservationist certification, volunteers for the IOWA-TER Program and the Nature Mapping Program, monitors a bluebird trail at Hickory Hills and monitors water quality on Wolf Creek in Tama County. During the 2005-2006 school year, she guided Orange Elementary students in restoring a wetlands area on the school property.

Ms. Boyce shares her interest in preserving the environment with her students by leading them in collecting data for the GLOBE Program at Orange and Kittrell Schools and Hawkeye Community College. She was chosen to write curriculum to accompany the DVD, "America's Lost Landscape: The Tall Grass Prairie." She has worked with her peers in training them to be GLOBE Program teachers and has been invited to be involved



in a program entitled, "The Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning," a program of the State Education and Environment Roundtable.

The Black Hawk Soil and Water Conservation District named her the "Conservation Teacher of the Year" in 2005. Local commissioners are interested in promoting environmental education to area K-12 students. The commissioners also recognize and reward those teachers that have exhibited an interest in issues relating to our natural environment. This might be demonstrated by creating lesson plans within the SEE TEACHER/Page 8

Comments from the Chair

Commissioner Changes

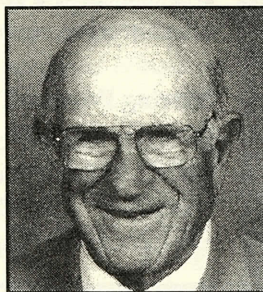
Since the last newsletter we have had three significant changes within the commission.

Jerry Kramer, a retired Waterloo school teacher and property owner in Bennington Township resigned his position. For several years as an assistant commissioner Mr. Kramer directed our conservation education and awards efforts. His expertise and dedication will be sorely missed.

Bob Hundley, from West of Cedar Falls, resigned his position as commissioner on January 2nd. Sherman Lundy had moved to Cedar Falls and state law says that two individuals from the same township may not serve on the commission. We are thankful that Mr. Hundley has since accepted an appointment as an assistant commissioner. Along with serving on the Dry Run Creek Watershed Advisory Council, Bob is the editor of this newsletter and supervises activities of the supporters club.

Nick Meier from Big Creek Township will replace Bob Hundley

and serve the next two years as a commissioner. In addition Mr. Meier is a well respected conservationist south of Waterloo and chairs the Upper Miller Creek Watershed advisory committee. Good dependable people create an environment for success in any endeavor and in my opinion these are three of the best.



Conservationist Remembered

Each of us who knew Quinter Lichty well will always remember his concern for people and his passion for conservation and the natural environment. Mr. Lichty, a life long farmer from Orange Township, died December 20, 2006. He served your Black Hawk County Soil and Water Conservation District as an elected commissioner from 1989 to 1995. Quinter and Alice, his wife of 58 years, have been faithful contributors to the conservation supporters club. Thanks for the memories.

The significance of watersheds, the importance of BMPs

By Rebecca Kauten, watershed coordinator

Did you know that you are part of a watershed no matter where you stand on the face of the earth? All of the earth's surface water drains into our lakes, rivers, streams and oceans. The land on which the water drains is divided up into watersheds, depending on the final destination. In Black Hawk County, your SWCD is paying special attention to two specific watersheds. Rural conservation practices are the focus in the Miller Creek watershed, south of Waterloo and west of LaPorte City, while the Dry Run Creek watershed is host to a number of urban conservation practices in Cedar Falls. In both watersheds, the goal is to educate land owners and fund "best management practices" in specific areas.

BMP 101

A best management practice, or BMP, can be defined as method for preventing or reducing the pollution that results from land disturbance. The term originated from rules and regulation in Section 208 of the Clean Water Act. In rural communities, examples of BMPs include buffer zones, public access restrictions, grazing deferments and a number of soil conservation practices. Urban BMPs concentrate on treatment of sheet flow and volume of water that is unable to infiltrate back into the soil due to impervious surfaces. Impervious surfaces include streets, rooftops, driveways and also compacted gravel roads. Urban BMPs include rain gardens or bioretention/bioinfiltration cells, permeable transportation surfaces and construction site erosion and sediment control practices.

In both rural and urban environments, BMPs are designed to encourage infiltration and absorption of stormwater back into the soil and, ultimately, possibly

recharge into groundwater sources. Instead of diverting water directly into storm drains, ditches or tile inlets, BMPs are installed to slow down sheet flow, spread the water out over a wider surface and allow for pollutants like sediment to drop out of the water as it infiltrates, or before it moves to another area. Over time, the areas treated with BMPs send a smaller volume of cleaner, cooler water to nearby lakes, rivers and streams.

Miller Creek BMPs

In 2006, several roadside buffers were seeded in the Miller Creek watershed. Six local producers also participated in a secondary cover crop experiment. In 2007, Black Hawk SWCD plans to promote additional roadside buffers in the Miller Creek watershed, as well as throughout Blackhawk County. By dedicating more area to native vegetation, producers have the benefit of retaining soil in farm fields, which keeps production levels high.

Dry Run Creek BMPs

The City of Cedar Falls was home to several urban BMP installations. A grant from the Community Foundation of Waterloo, Cedar Falls and Northeast Iowa funded a bioretention cell located in the Towers parking lot on the UNI campus. The lot is at the corner of 22nd Street and Campus Street. Also, Shoff Engineering has designed a bioretention/bioinfiltration cell for the Prairie Lakes Church, which will treat sheet flow runoff from a parking lot south of the church. This particular site will also host a rock chute as part of an urban erosion control demonstration.

Moving Forward

In 2007, several other practices will be installed throughout the Dry Run Creek watershed. The City of Cedar Falls is expanding the capacity of a detention

basin on Hudson Road. The finished product will exist as a wetland demonstration park, with pool/riffle structures and graded according to NRCS specifications to allow for water quality treatment, as well as flood prevention. Downstream from this project, the University of Northern Iowa is working with Iowa DNR Fisheries experts to design a streambank restoration project that will also be tested as a possible urban trout habitat. Further downstream, in the College Hill neighborhood, Kwik Star will work with the City to install a permeable parking surface that will treat sheet flow from the property. This BMP replaces a flume that currently sends parking lot runoff directly into the creek. A local developer is also incorporating low-impact design elements and reducing the need for traditional storm sewers in a new residential area on the west side of Cedar Falls.

Each of these sites and practices will be monitored for its effectiveness. Iowa DNR professional water quality monitoring staff are working with the District on a detailed BMP monitoring program. Data generated from this project will be available statewide as a review and analysis of those practices installed.

Other than the UNI biocell, all projects in both watersheds have been funded in-part by the Iowa Watershed Improvement Review Board (WIRB). More developments are planned in both Miller Creek and Dry Run Creek watersheds. For instance, a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Section 319 Nonpoint Source Program has been awarded to the District to fund rural conservation practices in the Dry Run Creek watershed. For more information or to learn how you can get involved with either project, contact Rebecca at 319-296-3262, or email rebecca.kauten@ia.usda.gov.

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Producers Find No-Till Corn-on-Corn Success

For Immediate Release
April 3, 2007

By Dick Tremain

With corn prices doubling over the past two years, many producers are expected to expand their corn acreage and plant corn-on-corn this spring. According to Iowa NRCS State Agronomist Barb Stewart, corn-on-corn planting can be a good thing if done right. "Corn is a high residue crop, when properly managed, can protect the soil from erosion and add carbon and nutrients to the soil for future crops to use," she said.

But, according to Stewart, the key to a successful transition to corn-on-corn rotation is resisting the urge to till.

"There's a myth out there that tilling has to take place when planting corn into corn residue," said Stewart. "Tilling a no-till field releases stored carbon by oxygenating the soil which stimulates microbial activity. It also increases evaporation of crop moisture and burns up resources that can reduce the soil's ability to produce future crops. You don't need to till everything black to go corn-on-corn."

Darrell Stamp, of Walnut, agrees with Stewart. He won't be tilling his corn-on-corn fields this spring. An East Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District commissioner, Stamp has been a 100 percent no-tiller for 20 years.

Stamp's experience on his 1600 acres of row crops has been very positive. As a result, Stamp says to his fellow producers, "Don't be afraid to no-till."

Because of high corn prices, Stamp plans to plant more corn this year because he says the return of corn-on-corn is better than soybeans at today's prices. Planting corn-on-corn no-till fields for Stamp simply means he will try to split the rows with his no-till drill.

Stamp says trash whippers will be a must this year. Other than that, Stamp says "No-till is not really hard to do. Especially with gas and fuel (prices) as high as they are today and the wear and tear on the tractors. Last year and the year before no-till gave me some of the best results I've ever had. My no-till corn-on-corn fields yielded over 200 bushels per acre."

Thad Bridges of Elliott has also had good results with no-till corn-on-corn. Farming 2,300 acres in Pottawattamie, Cass and Montgomery counties, Bridges was really surprised with his corn-on-corn no-till results. The last three years, Bridges checked yields on farms in multiple fields within a section. He expected his no-till corn-on-corn yields to stay the same. Instead he saw a 25 bushel an acre yield increase. The fields were across the road from each other and had the same soil quality and moisture. Bridges thinks hybrid selection was responsible for the increase.

On his farms, Bridges plants 85 percent of his acres no-till and uses high residue minimum tillage on the rest. He continues to experiment and try to improve production practices. Over the years he's discovered second year no-till corn-on-corn yields to be much better than second year tilled.

"Contrary to what I thought when I began farming," Bridges said, "corn-on-corn used to be kind of an evil. Now we've been having excellent success with it. Some of our best corn year in, year out, is continual corn; part of that being no-tilled into residue from the year before."

While Bridges guesses his wife, Denise, might say he spends too much time working, Bridges says there is an added benefit to no-till. "It frees me up to be involved in family activities. We're active in our church, but I don't want to live in a tractor every minute. There are peak seasons when we need to be there, but there is more to life than driving a tractor. (No-till) allows me time to do other things I'm interested in. Besides, it saves the soil," he said.

According to Stewart, everyone, landlords and tenants, should look at all of their tillage options before planting. "Tilling can have a negative effect on the soil condition by destroying consolidation and macropore development. It also increases release of carbon reducing soil organic matter. SEE NO-TILL/Page 8

What type of tillage system is right for your operation? USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service has developed an Energy Estimator to increase energy awareness in agriculture. The tool estimates diesel fuel use and costs in the production of key crops in your area and compares potential energy savings between conventional tillage and alternative tillage systems. The Energy Estimator is available online at: <http://ecat.sc.egov.usda.gov/>.



Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS

Eastern Iowa Home Show

by Sherman Lundy, Vice Chair

Black Hawk County Soil & Water Commissioner

On February 8-11th, the Eastern Iowa Home Show, held at the Five Sullivan Brothers Auditorium in Waterloo, offered visitors the opportunity to see "what's new," for the home and the latest information in Urban Soil and Water Conservation. Black Hawk County Soil and Water District Commissioners along with District Staff and NRCS Personnel provided visitors to the Home Show information regarding the Dry Run Creek Watershed Project and information regarding implementation of soil and water conservation practices in urban settings. Ideas regarding Rain Gardens, Bioswales, Bio Retention Cells, Porous Pavements, Back Yard Conservation and other similar concepts were made available to the visitors at the Home Show. The District booth was busy with questions and interest in Urban Conservation along with handing out pens, pencils, magnets and brochures to the public.

Regional Envirothon

by Susan Nieman

The 2007 Regional Envirothon was held March 5 at Hawkeye Community College in Waterloo. The Envirothon is a team competition for high school students sponsored by the Conservation Districts of Iowa. In the field and classroom, teams of five students are challenged to use their knowledge and critical thinking skills to conduct hands-on investigations, solve real-life scenarios and answer written questions. All high school students in Black Hawk County are eligible and encouraged to compete. One of the ways the local Soil and Water Conservation District can encourage participation is by offering scholarships to offset the registration cost. This year, twelve teams from NE Iowa competed in the Regional competition in the areas of Wildlife, Aquatics, Forestry and Soils. The overall winning team was the Unpickled Herrings from Decorah High School.

The top 15 teams from around the state will meet April 23 at the Springbrook State Park in Guthrie Center, Iowa. This competition will be held outdoors. The top team in the state of Iowa competition will receive an expense paid trip to attend the Canon (national) Envirothon, which will be held July 29th-August 4th at Hobart & Williams Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York.

The Envirothon is North America's largest high school environmental competition. It was started by the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts in 1979. The first National Envirothon competition was held in 1988 with Iowa joining in the 1995-1996 school year. Currently, teams representing over 45 states and Canadian provinces compete at the national level for \$75,000 in scholarships and prizes. Visit www.envirothon@cdiowa.org for more information regarding the competition.

Money For Conservation!!!

by Elaine Hammer, NRCS Technician

If you're thinking about building a terrace, planting a windbreak, establishing a new waterway or reshaping an existing one, or other practices, you might be eligible to receive financial assistance in getting these done.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a federal program that is managed by the Farm Service Agency (FSA). This program provides cost share assistance for new grassed waterways, filter strips along streams or wetlands, wetland restoration, shallow water areas, riparian buffers, shelterbelts, and field windbreaks. CRP also offers additional incentives and an annual payment based on soil types. Eligibility for CRP is determined by the FSA office.

Another federal program is the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This is managed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Assistance is available for live-stock manure management, grazing land management, pest management, soil erosion control, and water quality improvement practices throughout the state. Other practices are available in selected priority areas only.

State cost share funds are available for permanent and management practices to control erosion and reduce sediment such as terraces, waterways, and structures. The local soil and water conservation district (SWCD) sets priorities for funding of these practices. These funds are managed by the Black Hawk SWCD.

Another source of funding through the SWCD office is the Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program. Cost share is available for practices such as farmstead windbreaks, field windbreaks, tree plantings, and timber stand improvement. Technical assistance on these practices is provided by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) forester and the NRCS staff.

This is just a general description of cost share programs available for various conservation practices. To find out more specific information on any of these, please contact the NRCS/SWCD office at 296-3262.

Newsletter Sponsorship

Since the Black Hawk Soil and Water Conservation District is a non profit organization, we are seeking businesses to help offset publication costs. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated and your business will be recognized for your generosity. Please call the office at 296-3262 for further details.

Financial Report

The Black Hawk Soil & Water Conservation District approves the plans of operation and funding for federal and state conservation practices. Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and Conservation Security Program (CSP) are three well known USDA programs administered within the Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS). Iowa Financial Incentives Program (IFIP) and Resources Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP). Waterways, grass buffers, native grass plantings and windbreaks are some of the eligible state funded conservation practices. Money from the REAP specialty license plates is used for this program.

Below is a summary of IFIP and REAP expenditures in Black Hawk County.

IFIP

2006-2007 allocation	\$12,936	applied to Conservation	\$4,270
2005-2006 allocation	\$29,001	applied to conservation	\$26,302
2004-2005 allocation	\$21,449	applied to conservation	\$18,001
2003-2004 allocation	\$18,323	applied to conservation	\$17,307

REAP

2007 allocation	\$10,468	applied to conservation	\$9,826
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The Watershed Improvement grants for Dry Run Creek and Upper Miller Creek are to be used in three years from 2006 through 2008 and must be used exclusively for those watershed projects. Black Hawk County Board of Supervisors is also providing some cost share for Upper Miller Creek practices.

Dry Run Creek

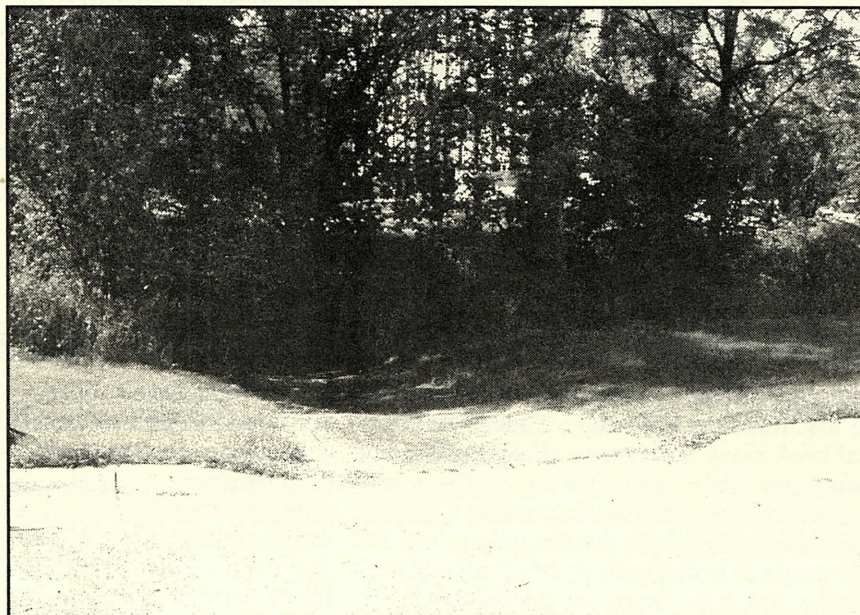
Total Allocation	\$500,000	applied to project	\$37,928
Upper Miller Creek	\$68,900	applied to project	\$2,077

Please call or stop by the office to learn more about how these and other conservation practices will protect and improve the soil and water quality on your property.

SWCD Works to Secure Construction Sites

By Rebecca Kauten

On March 15, more than 80 local contractors, home builders and laborers attended "The New Math," a workshop devoted to construction site erosion and sediment control. This day-long event was held at the University of Northern Iowa. Speakers included Bettendorf public works director Wally Mook, and Jennifer Hildebrand, an erosion and sediment control expert from the Twin Cities. Vendors also presented information on pervious concrete, compost as an erosion control practice and the benefits of combined practices to secure a job site. Feedback from attendees and vendors alike was very positive. The event was produced as part of the Dry Run Creek watershed project. Sponsors included the University of Northern Iowa and the City of Cedar Falls.



Most parking lots shed their water to drains. This one drains directly into Dry Run Creek. It will serve as the control for a monitoring experiment on the UNI campus. A bioretention cell has been installed across the creek from this flume. Both will be

monitored throughout 2007 and 2008 to determine the impact on water quality, and how much a biocell can reduce this impact. Stay tuned for updates or contact your SWCD today for more information on this and other low impact development practices you can implement to improve water quality.

CSP Meeting a Success

by Susan Nieman

The meeting for the Cedar River Watershed Conservation Security Program and the Upper Miller Creek Watershed Annual Meeting were held on February 22 at Tama Hall on the Hawkeye Community College campus. Over fifty people attended!

Watershed coordinator Rebecca Kauten gave us an update on the Miller Creek project. Even though the percentage of participation is low, what is being done is making a difference. Further efforts will include convincing producers to go no-till, a practice which prevents soil loss and is totally cost-effective. Ms. Kauten continues to monitor the Miller Creek project as well as the Dry Run Creek Watershed project.

Aspects of soil quality were presented by Robert Vobora, Area Soil Scientist, Robert has been doing research in the Miller Creek Watershed with the Soil Quality Test Kit since fall of 2005. He discussed some of his findings and some of the factors which influence soil respiration and infiltration including compaction, crop rotation, and residue management. "If soil becomes too compacted, roots are unable to penetrate the soil, rain is unable to infiltrate the soil and increased runoff is inevitable" says Robert. He promotes conservation tillage to alleviate these problems. He hopes to continue his research over the next two years.

Getting Ready for CSP is an ongoing process for producers in the Cedar River Watershed. Shaffer Ridgeway, District

Conservationist, again reviewed the program, clearing up some widespread myths and reminded everyone to keep records!

Nutrient Management specialists, Steve Brinkman and Douglas Bahl, covered yield goals, soil testing, N<P<K, manure availability and sampling. We were reminded that soil tests must be done every four years and one sample should only represent 10 acres. They discussed Nitrogen credits for soybeans, alfalfa and green manures. Steve talked about the range approach as stated in Iowa State's publication 1714. This publication should be used when determining your nitrogen needs. The 1.2 lb. of N/bu yield goal can only be used when manure is being applied.

Julie Falcon, Soil Conservationist, gave an overview of all the cost share programs available here in Black Hawk County. These include the Conservation Reserve Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Wetlands Restoration Program, EPA Section 319 Program, and State of Iowa funding Programs, including no and low-interest loans.

The Conservation Reserve Program was discussed in more detail by Rose Woerner, the FSA County Executive Director. She reminded everyone that even though there is no new funding for general CRP at this time, it is possible to apply through Continuous CRP, which is always available as a federal cost share program.

Women, Land, and Legacy

Women, Land, and Legacy is an outreach initiative for female landowners and women who are involved in agriculture. The goal of the project is to develop a local network of women in agriculture. As a group, these women will gather information, identify issues and determine educational needs that will assist in the decision making process for their farming operations. The project is a combined effort of NRCS, FSA, and Iowa State Extension Service. More information will follow regarding meeting dates and times.

To grow, you must be willing to let your present and future be totally unlike your past. Your history is not your destiny.

-- Alan Cohen

"SODBUSTING"

By Shaffer Ridgeway

Sodbusting is anytime a producer brings ground that has **never** been cropped into production. With corn prices moving near the four dollar level more and more people want to farm the old pasture or the low spot that in past years we just let go. Remember that before you do any tillage or planting operations on the proposed sodbust area, you should have a conservation plan. The plan must be approved by the Black Hawk Soil and Water Conservation District at one of their monthly meetings. Any producer that does any tillage or planting without an approved plan will risk having the plan denied and being found out of compliance, which will jeopardize their farm payments.

If you have any questions or concerns about a potential "SOD-BUST", we strongly urge you to stop in or call the local NRCS office.

New Soil Surveys Now Available

The Black Hawk County Soil Survey can now be obtained in three different formats. The first format is hard copy. Though this may look like the traditional book many things have changed. Some of the changes include map sizes, table data and six new soil map units were added. The second format is an interactive Compact Disk (CD). This CD contains tabular data for the county and the digital soil survey. The program is designed to bring several data layers together, including the soils layer, an annotation layer,

USGS topographic quads, orthophotos, roads, streams, civic boundaries, and water bodies. Lastly all of this information can be viewed on the Web Soil Survey (<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>). It contains soil maps with orthophoto backgrounds and soil information tables and manuscript, all which can be customized. Anyone interested in obtaining a copy of the book or a CD feel free to stop by the Black Hawk Service Center.

The Black Hawk Soil & Water Conservation District helps you and your neighbors conserve our most valuable natural resources – our soil and water. We believe that promoting soil and water conservation is everyone's job and we invite you to help. Although outside funding is received for certain urban and rural programs under our purview, there are several projects and activities performed by the office staff and District Commissioners that we must rely on local contributions to fund. Examples of these include conservation materials for schools, local conservation awards, the district newsletter, and conservation field days. Listed below are the 2006 contributors for which we are very thankful, and hope these individuals and businesses, along with others, will continue to support our efforts in 2007. Beginning this year, to further show our appreciation to those contributing, a certificate will be issued to those contributing at the *Sponsorship*, *Stewardship* and *Conservationist* levels (\$25 or more). **PLEASE CONSIDER A TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION TO HELP OUR LOCAL CONSERVATION EFFORTS.**

John Hoffman, Chairman

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Sherman Lundy, Vice Chairman

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Bob Hansen, Treasurer

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_____ *Sponsorship* Level (\$25 - \$49)

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Elaine Hammer, Soil Cons. Technician
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Teacher

Continued from page 1

curriculum that stimulate interest in conservation, innovative class activities that promote conservation, involvement in environmental issues in the community, or actively practicing and promoting conservation in his/her personal life. Entry forms for the "Conservation Teacher of the Year Award" are mailed to the principals of K-12 schools in the Black Hawk District in March of each year. More information may be requested from:

Black Hawk Soil and Water Conservation District
2950 Southland Drive, Suite 2
Waterloo, IA 50701
319-296-3262

No-Till

Continued from page 3

This can have a negative effect on the soil's ability to hold nutrients and moisture for the crop. And reduced soil condition usually means reduced yields."

Stewart urges producers and landowners to talk to their technical service providers, crop consultants, ISU Extension or NRCS service center personnel and see what corn-on-corn options are available.

As a 20-year no-tiller, Stamp strongly encourages other producers to give no-till a try. "No-till will work. Work with it," he said.