

Aid available for conservation

The state of Iowa has funds available to help farmers implement soil and water conservation practices on their land.

"The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship is assisting farmers through programs that demonstrate conservation practices," Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Dale Cochran said. "These practices minimize soil erosion and protect our surface water and groundwater."

The Department provides financial assistance to farmers through Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The Resource Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP) will provide the districts with up to \$25 million this year. The funds are divided equally among the districts.

One-fifth of the REAP funds will be allocated to the Department of Agriculture for groundwater protection projects. Some conservation measures that may be eligible for funding include establishing filter strips, terracing, grass waterways and closing agriculture drainage wells.

Fall is considered one of the best times of year to implement conservation practices, according to Cochran. By planting cover crops and leaving crop residue, farmers can protect newly harvested land against wind and rain of the coming winter and spring, he said.

"Iowa farmers have been pioneers in the areas of soil and water conservation because they understand how priceless these resources are," Cochran said. "Our groundwater protection laws encourage landowners to voluntarily adopt management techniques that enable farmers to use less fertilizers and chemicals to protect our water resources."

Farmers interested in obtaining financial assistance should contact local Soil and Water Conservation District offices.