

ANNUAL REPORT
IDA COUNTY, IOWA, SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT
1948

DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS

Henry Dall, Chairman	Battle Creek, Iowa
Edw. C. Perion	Ida Grove, Iowa
Ross E. Baumann	Cushing, Iowa

TREASURER

Ray D. Bresnahan	Ida Grove, Iowa
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SECRETARY

Bruce W. Marcue, Extension Director	Ida County
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TECHNICIANS

Kenneth H. Burnett	Soil Conservationist
Albert M. Murphy, Jr.	Conservation Aid

INTRODUCTION

The following is a report of the activities of the Ida County Soil Conservation District and other cooperating agencies for the 1948 calendar year. Combined with the record of accomplishments of the different organizations is a discussion of the methods used in attaining these ends. It is hoped that by such a procedure, the experiences of this District may be gainfully employed by others. There is considerable duplication in the reports of the accomplishments of the District and of the Ida County Agricultural Conservation Association. Since this can not be eliminated, the reports of the two agencies must not be added together to project a picture of the total for the county or District.

In 1948 the District was given the following direct assistance:

From the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service:

Soil Conservationist (P-2) - 12 months service
Conservation Aid (SP-5) - 12 months service
Transportation, office space and supplies for the above. (U. S. Post Office Department furnished office space)

From the Ida County Farm Bureau, Cooperating with the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service and the Iowa State Extension Service:

Assistance of the County Extension Director in setting up and holding meetings, in laying contour guide lines on farms of prospective cooperators, and in acting as secretary for the District Commissioners.

From the Ida County Agricultural Conservation Association:

Assistance in laying out contour guide lines.

Much favorable newspaper publicity.

DEVELOPING INTEREST IN SOIL CONSERVATION

The development of interest in soil conservation is the first step in the District Work Plan. The goal is to obtain, if possible, proper competence and ideals of farm operators, especially as regards the fundamentals of soil conservation. This step is very important since it constitutes the threshold from which all soil saving activity must depart to establish soil conservation practices on the land. No set technique has been developed to arouse this interest. However, the operational aids set forth below have proved effective in many cases.

The economic approach now used by the Production Marketing Authority through its local Agricultural Conservation Associations has proved very effective in stirring up interest. Elsewhere in this report the accomplishments of this method in Ida County are set forth. The Little Sioux Flood Control Program operates in the north three-fourths of the District. It provides much the same incentive, in that the Federal Government provides water disposal systems to groups of farmers without cost where the farmers can guarantee the maintainance of the system. There are some who disagree with the idea of paying a farmer to help himself, but the value of the work as a whole can not be discounted where goal is to arouse enthusiasm.

Farm conservation plans resulting from Farmer-District Agreements have made excellent demonstrations for farmers to watch and study. During the past year this District has had seventy-eight such plans in operation. There will be about one hundred in 1949.

Tours have not been used extensively since most usually only small attendance can be obtained. In addition experience indicates that over a period of time it is the same small group which attends all of the tours.

Schools and demonstrations for teaching soil conservation techniques to farmers have met with indifferent success. Since the event must be held out of doors it is always subject to the vagaries of the weather.

There has been a Veteran's Agricultural Training School in operation in this District since March 1947. The District has received many requests for assistance with individual conservation practices, which can be attributed to this activity.

There are four newspapers in the District, all weekly. They are, The Ida County Pioneer-Record, The Battle Creek Times, The Holstein Advance and the Galva Tribune. All four have devoted much space to the printing of soil conservation news items.

The County Extension Director in his weekly newspaper column always brings out something on soil conservation. This column is printed in the four county papers and in the Farm Bureau Spokesman.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES FOR SOIL CONSERVATION IN IDA COUNTY (1)

The soils program in Ida County has been rather highly developed during the past 12 months, and has reached all of our townships. This program of soil conservation has reached a very intensified stage, due to some extent to the Little Sioux Flood Control program. The two sub-watersheds of the Little Sioux River in Ida County, the Perion and Kirkholm sub-watersheds, are now under construction. The Godberson, Smith and Brueck Construction Companies have been awarded the contracts for the construction in these sub-watersheds. A considerable amount of this work has been completed and will progress as weather conditions permit.

After discussing advancement in soil conservation with the District Commissioners, Henry Dall, Ross Baumann, and Ed Perion as well as Kenneth Burnett, Soil Conservation Technician, it has been decided the educational program should continue to be of an area basis rather than to intensify in watersheds of sub-watersheds until they are requested by farmers themselves.

It is thought that next year much additional work will be done in the development of watersheds and that the emphasis should be placed on applying soil conservation principles rather than on the erection of structures.

At the present time there are 96 Farmer District Agreements in effect and requests of approximately 80 additional agreements are on file.

In carrying out the educational program in soil conservation, three forage crop variety trials, one commercial grain trial, and one soybean demonstration areas, have been established. It is hoped that these demonstration areas will be able to assist farmers in developing rotation more suitable to the soil conditions for those areas. In the field of crop production, the various questions of weed control, rotation, and crop insect control have been of major importance.

SOIL CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES IN IDA COUNTY SCHOOLS (2)

The study of conservation in the Ida County Schools has been based upon the three year course of study as put out by the Iowa State Department of Public Instruction. These units consist of science units for fall, winter and spring with special emphasis upon conservation in at least one unit each year.

This work is adapted mostly to upper grades but a good teacher is able to begin the study to even primary pupils. We find that one obstacle to teaching the subject is the fact that teachers have had little or no training themselves. However considerable material has

- (1) Section prepared by Bruce W. Marcue, Ida County Extension Director.
- (2) Section prepared by R. J. McNelly, Ida County Superintendent of Schools.

been provided by the Extension Service and the Soil Conservation Service.

Approximately 400 students receive this instruction annually.

ORGANIZING FOR SOIL CONSERVATION AND FLOOD CONTROL

The second step used in this district in establishing soil conservation on the land is the organization of small watershed groups of farmers. This method is used because, it speeds up the work of the farm planner and of the technician who will assist the farmer in laying out and placing the individual practices on the land. Three district commissioners are unable to assume the entire responsibility for seeing that the work is done throughout the district, however, if a committee of local farmers assumes this responsibility, a better job will be done and the commissioners are free for other activities.

Ordinarily the County Extension Director has assumed the responsibility for organizing these groups. During the past year his activities have resulted in the formation of three groups, bringing the total to ten. The District has been responsible for obtaining cooperation between farmer groups and the Ida County Board of Supervisors.

GETTING SOIL CONSERVATION PRACTICES APPLIED

In 1948 this district has assisted cooperating farmers in establishing conservation practices in the amounts shown below:

Contour planting	3 619 acres
Seeding Waterways	277 200 sq. yd.
Terraces constructed	9.7 miles
Contour field boundaries established	1 405 rods
New permanent pasture established	103 acres
Adequate cropping systems planned	5 369 acres

ACTIVITIES OF THE IDA COUNTY AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION (1)

The following table indicates progress in soil conservation resulting from activities of the local AAA program.

<u>PRACTICE</u>	<u>UNIT</u>	<u>1948</u>	<u>1947</u>
Contour plow and plant	Acre	4 935(2)	---
Contour plant only	Acre	5 232	6 398
Contour plant row crop	Acre	10 604	6 398
Seeding waterways	Sq. Yd.	1 312	590 100
Small earth dams	Cu. Yd.	2 339	107 097
Lime spread	Ton	6 707	5 674
Fertilizer spread	Ton	732	379
Green manure crops	Acre	30 455	21 416
Grassed headlands established	Lin. Rod	42 277(2)	---

(2) Practice first used in 1948

The marked increase in contouring evidently occurred because farmers wanted to save moisture for crop production and to save soil. Grassed headlands was a practice tried this year for the first time. The practice has done much to increase the acreage of contouring in the county. Grassed waterways includes only those waterways which were specially smoothed and seeded. Where no special effort was made by the farmer no accomplishment is recorded.

(1) Section prepared by Fred Harder, Chairman, Edwin Carlson and Ed Reimer, Ida County AAA Committee.

LITTLE SIOUX FLOOD CONTROL ACTIVITIES IN THE DISTRICT

In 1946 four groups of Ida County farmers already cooperating with the district requested additional assistance in gully control. These requests were referred to the Little Sioux Flood Control staff of the Soil Conservation Service. To date arrangements have been made to handle the problems of two of the groups. The Service has let contracts totaling more than \$234,000.00. The District has assumed responsibility for the maintainance of these works. Individual owners in the groups have agreed to pay into a maintainance fund money totaling 3% of actual construction cost as a down payment and in addition not to exceed 1% a year for 15 years.

It is the policy of the District that in no case will the 3% payment exceed \$1.50 per watershed acre. The 15 annual payments are similarly limited to 50 cents an acre.

Costs to the Federal Government per watershed acre treated are high, but are regarded as an investment protecting lands as far away as New Orleans. The program gives to farmers in the Little Sioux Watershed the opportunity to control the large gullies that the individual is unable to successfully combat.

PROBLEMS

The District has been unable to arrive at satisfactory solutions to the following problems:

1. The shortage of man-power for educational purposes.
2. The difficulty of maintaining long-time land use and soil conservation plans where there is a rapid turnover of owners and operators.
3. The tendency of farmers to sacrifice soil organic matter and top soil for additional row crop acreage because of high prices or economic necessity that may result from low prices. In many cases these farmers think that contour planting and terraces will protect them from the result of their excesses.
4. The relative difficulty of controlling weeds in drilled corn, which in turn retards the general acceptance of contour planting. Widespread use of 2,4-D may provide a partial answer.
5. The lack of funds available to the Ida County Board of Supervisors for roads. This problem becomes critical where the Little Sioux Flood Control Program calls for a large number of structures on public roads.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Space will not permit the naming of all individuals and groups to which this District is indebted for assistance and cooperation. Many farm operators have carried on soil conservation practices without our knowledge. However, it is desirable to name the following organizations and persons, and to express appreciation for all assistance rendered.

Ida County Farm Bureau	
Soil Conservation Service	
Ida County Agricultural Conservation Association	
Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station	
Ida County Superintendent of Schools	
Iowa Agricultural Extension Service	
Production and Marketing Administration	
Battle Creek Times	Arthur Trust and Savings Bank
Galva Tribune	First Trust and Savings Bank (Galva)
Holstein Advance	Holstein State Bank
Pioneer Record (Ida Grove)	Ida County State Bank (Ida Grove)

PROGRESS SUMMARY
IDA COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT
ESTABLISHED-FEB. 19, 1945
WORK UNIT OFFICE OPENED-MAR. 13, 1946

	<u>In 1948</u>	<u>To Date</u>
Sub-watershed Groups Organized	3	10
Soil Conservation Surveys (acres)	10 321	40 742
Farm Conservation Plans Completed (No)	34	96
(Acres)	6 773	16 618
Acres Contouring Laid Out	3 619	— —
Miles Terraces Built	9.7	16.6
Acres Definite Crop Rotation Planned	5 369	12 334
Educational Meetings Held (No)	8	51
(Attend)	163	1 106
News Articles	36	83
Demonstrations (No)	1	30
(Attend)	29	169
Radio Talks	0	1
Birthday Party (No)	1	3
(Attend)	100	575

Henry Dall
HENRY DALL, Chairman
Ida County Soil Conservation District