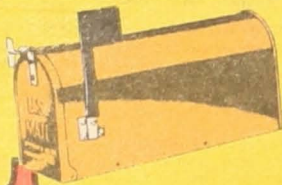


1987

RURAL



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THE NEWSPAPER MAGAZINE OF FARMING AND RURAL LIFE IN NORTHEAST IOWA
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On the cover...

**SCD commissioner
George Halstead cites
experience as the best
teacher for conservation,
the topic this RURAL
issue is devoted to...**

by Brian Meyer
Managing Editor

WEST UNION — George Halstead's best argument for promoting soil conservation practices is experience.

"I've been doing it and I know it works," he says. "There's no question in my mind it works, and I know it'll work for you. My own experience is the most positive thing I'd have to argue with on soil conservation."

This week's RURAL issue is devoted to the Fayette County Soil Conservation Service's annual report — with articles, photos and progress in the past year.

Halstead, who began his third two-year term as chairman of the Fayette County Soil Conservation Commissioners in January, has been a commissioner 10 years. He's got two years left on his second six-year term.

Ten years ago, a friend talked him into running for soil commissioner.

"When I really got interested was when Paul Schuchmann of Arlington was a commissioner. He's a longtime friend of mine — we used to show hogs at the fair. He talked with me, and talked me into running," says Halstead.

"And I sure enjoy being on the board," he adds.

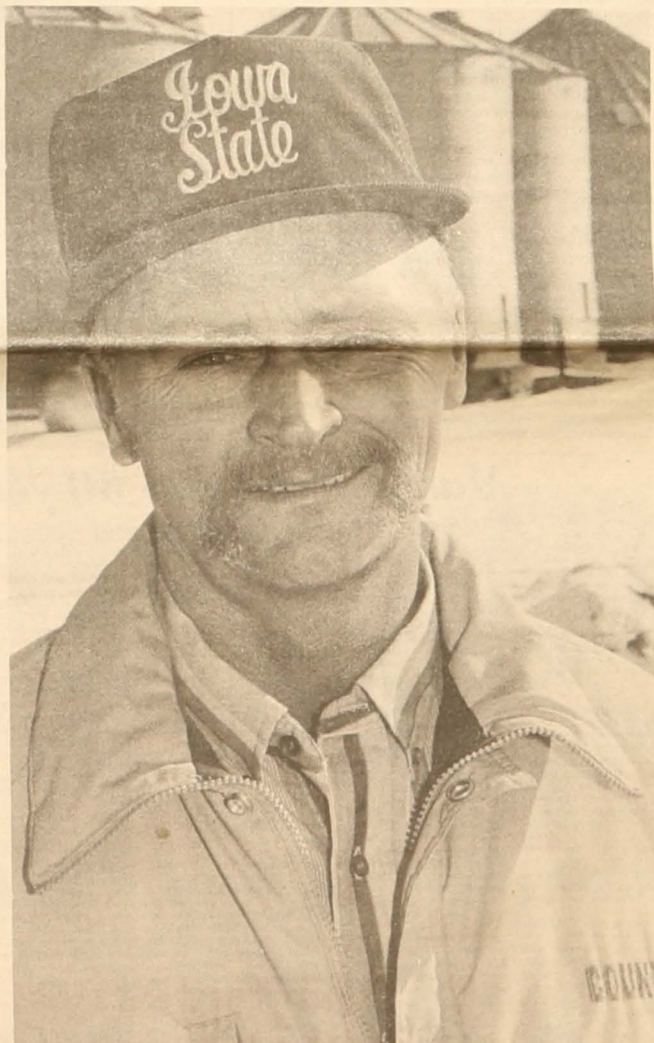
"I was the first commissioner to be elected in the general election. Before, the commissioners were elected at the annual banquet."

Being a commissioner is not necessarily for farmers only, Halstead points out.

"You don't have to be a farmer to be a commissioner. Any person, man or woman, interested enough to run can do so."

Halstead farms north of West Union. He's used conservation practices of one kind or another since 1957 — 30 years of experience.

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George Halstead

— Photo by Brian Meyer

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"Rocks and Rainbows."

Halstead... (Continued from Page 1)

"We've farmed on the contour since 1957. At times we've done a little stripcropping on the contour. We use minimum tillage, using a chisel plow. We don't till in the fall, it creates too much erosion. We tried it, but just didn't get along with it. We'd rather do it in spring.

"We've tried no-till. We've always practiced some crop rotation. We've constructed grass waterways and several cement structures for erosion control."

Halstead says conservation practices become more refined as the years pass.

"Since '57, when we began contouring, we've seen terrific changes in conservation. At first, if you plain contoured, you were doing a good job. But when come '67, we changed our tillage. We bought a chisel plow, quit moldboard plowing and went to minimum till. Since then, we've changed a little more. We've cut down on trips through the field. We're still looking for ways to get things better."

He says he was never completely sold on terraces for his own purposes, saying terraces on hay and small grain land don't work as well.

"Terracing is fine, but it's an on-going process. It takes years. But just about everybody who's put in terraces have maintained them."

"I think minimum till and no till, they've been the fastest growing soil conservation practices we've had. For the money spent, they're the best practices," he says.

Duties of the soil conservation district commissioners, according to Halstead, include overseeing how conservation money is spent (most on terraces or other permanent conservation practices, he says) and setting up conservation guidelines.

"We're paying a no-till rate now. For the first three years in no-till, they're paid a dollar an acre to help get people started. It's really seemed to work out."

One area the SCD commissioners have pushed hard on is the land around Volga Lake near Fayette.

"That was our duty. The state conservation department contacted us. They were very concerned about the lake filling up (with sediment) like other lakes had. We had meetings with farmers around Volga Lake about soil conservation, trying to influence them to do something.

SOIL COMMISSIONER

—George Halstead and his wife Helen have farmed north of West Union on Highway 150 for 30 years and have practiced soil conservation all those years. The Halsteads have nine children. (Photo by Brian Meyer)

Confused about local agencies?

By Bill Bennett
Soil Conservation
District Commissioner

Many people are confused about the many agencies with conservation in their names and also wonder where the local offices are located.

The Fayette County Conservation Board is appointed by the county supervisors and may levy taxes. They are responsible for county parks, museums, wildlife areas and other natural areas. Their office is located at the county farm.

The Iowa Conservation Commission is located in Des Moines and is responsible for state parks, lakes, recreation areas, wildlife areas, natural and cultural preserves and associated user facilities and services. They regulate fishing, hunting, trapping, boating and other recreational activities. They work closely with the County Conservation Board.

The Fayette Soil Conservation District Office is the lower level of the Farm Credit—Production Credit Association Building in West Union. The District Commissioners are elected and do not levy taxes. They work to

promote soil conservation practices and education. They also administer the state cost-share funds. They work closely with the Iowa Division of Soil Conservation and the USDA Soil Conservation Service. They also cooperate with the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service and the Iowa Conservation Commission.

The Iowa Division of Soil Conservation is located in Des Moines. They furnish a clerk for the District. The clerk works in the District Office in West Union.

The USDA Soil Conservation Service furnishes technical staff to work with the local District. The staff works out of the District Office in West Union. The SCS also has an Area Office in West Union. It is located at the southeast corner of the intersections of highways 96 and 196. The Area Office serves 15 Districts in northeast Iowa.

The USDA Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service is located in Fayette. They administer the federal cost-sharing. The SCS has a locally elected three-member committee. They also have a federal staff.



SCD COMMISSIONERS — The 1986 Fayette County Soil Conservation District Commissioners are (front) Jon Steege of Elgin (who replaces Steege this year), Paul Nuss of Hawkeye and Carl Nuss of West Union, Bill Bennett of Elgin, Back: 1987 commissioner Richard Jensen of Arlington. (Photo by Brian Meyer)

Conservation means different things to different people

by Jonathan Steege
Soil Conservation
District Commissioner

The word "conservation" certainly means different things to different people. Often when we think of conservation, we see in our mind's eye a rolling hillside covered with terraces or contoured and strip-cropped. Or maybe we think of newly emerging corn or soybean plants, pushing aside the residue to emerge strong and healthy in a no-tillage planted field. Still others may see a deer leaping across an alfalfa field in spring, searching for a

place to have her young. Some imagine wildflowers blooming in spring or the return of migratory waterfowl to their traditional nesting places.

Conservation includes a variety of ideas, attitudes and awareness of plant and animal life around us. It affects our soil, water, wildlife and even the air we breathe. Too often we take for granted that the things we grew up enjoying or possession will always be with us. But the truth of the matter is that we must take certain steps to insure that these things will be available to future generations.

The farmer who wants to leave his land to his children but allows his soil to erode at excessive rates is foolish to think anything of value will be left. We continue to worry about pollutants entering our wells and groundwater at a time when many farmers are still applying excessive amounts of fertilizers and pesticides. And we continue to convert marginal land to cropland at a time when an oversupply of feed grains exists. Meanwhile, we pay other landowners to retire their land over a 10-year period. We can harvest oak

and walnut logs or cut firewood, but do we take the time to replant our forested areas?

Conservation takes in all of these areas. True conservation of a resource is its wise use. We can continue to farm the soil if we protect it adequately from erosion. We can continue to drink clean water if we protect it from contamination by pesticides and fertilizers. And we can continue to enjoy forests and recreation areas if we replant trees and preserve some of the areas of natural beauty that already exist. When we do a soil conservation

project, we start to benefit from it immediately. But some of these other things take years to get to the point where they contribute to the quality of the environment. Some of the natural areas we have destroyed can't be brought back at least without tremendous cost.

A man whom I didn't know a year ago, but now have utmost respect for, told me, "When I think back on what I have done, I'm ashamed of myself." But when he did the things he did, he thought it was for the right reason at the time. Only after the wildlife and wild-

flowers were gone did he realize what he had lost.

Each of us can think of sloughs, tiled and tilled, woodlands cleared. We can't always change what we have done, but we can create a new awareness for the total conservation picture and work from there. Call it conscience, call it stewardship, or call it what you will, but each of us has a moral obligation for conservation or resources — to our families, to our friends, to our community, and to our Creator. Maybe for some of us, it's not too late.

First-term SDC commissioner appreciates obligations

by Richard Jensen
Soil Conservation
District Commissioner

As I begin my first term as a newly-elected Soil Conservation District Commissioner, I fully appreciate the responsibilities and obligations the board is committed to. The purpose and objective of your district commissioners is to promote protection, maintenance, improvement and land use of soil and water within our district.

This may sound to some land users as harrassive, restrictive or oppressive regulations that interfere with their land use decisions. I agree it does seem land users

are deeply ingrained with government compliance type programs. They may be confusing, complicated and contradictory, but generally participation in them is voluntary.

For the past few years most farmers have pressured more acres into producing higher yields, creating environmental quality and quantity problems. This adverse effect is known as erosion and pollution of our natural resources. The public awareness and concern about this problem is evident in the passage of the Soilbuster and Swampbuster Regulations contained in the 1985 Food Security Act. I support and commend these regulations as

they are aimed directly at protecting erodible and fragile soils, protecting wetlands and providing additional wildlife habitat. After many years of desecration to our environment, we also have the 10-year Conservation Reserve Plan allowing long-term reforestation. My point is not to chastise previous ag policies but to emphasize that I firmly believe these conservation plans within the farm program benefit everyone.

This definite urban interest and concern in regard to how farmers respect and protect natural resources is the point of my message. I'm convinced that if land users don't become better stewards of the soil,

protection of our streams and water resources, and guardians of our wildlife habitat, this urban force will be instrumental in mandating strict controls on our farming practices. Environmental protection legislation would then compel us to adopt agronomy practices that would result in minimal damage to our natural resources. The choice is our own but time is running out.

We have a willing and able staff at the SCS Office to guide and assist you with cost share incentive practices. Stop in and discuss with them different plans that will improve and extend your life as responsible farmers. The earth is our host, we would be parasites sapping its strength — instead partners who sustain one another to heritage. The needs of future generations.

SCD commissioner: A definition

by Bill Bennett
Soil Conservation
District Commissioner

At the co-op the other morning, I heard a group of farmers discussing the election of a neighbor as a Soil Commissioner. They weren't sure what his job was or where he worked to represent them. Since many others have the same question, I thought maybe I could answer it.

A Soil Commissioner is a person elected by all the voters in the county. A total of five people serve in the position at any one time. There may also be Assistant Commissioners.

They serve without pay, but are reimbursed for expenses. They work in the Fayette Soil Conservation District Office in the lower level of the Farm Credit Building in West Union. They work with the SCS (Soil Conservation Service) to promote soil conservation, administer state cost-sharing funds, review and approve completed projects and conservation plans, educate people about the cost of soil erosion, and help settle soil loss complaints. However they DO NOT levy taxes.

The first Fayette Soil Conservation District Com-

missioners was formed on April 11, 1946, with Harold Strong, Elgin, chairman; Glen Bennington, Fayette, and Herbert Messinger, Arlington. Since that time many others have served the District. Some people have served only a single term, while others have served for over 20 years. Nearly all Commissioners have attended meetings and schools to learn more about soil conservation beyond what is requested of them. All have been and are available to help anyone with soil conservation. They have and will continue to

(Continued on page 18)

HAPPENING NOW
1987



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*This week's Rural was published on Tues., Feb. 17, instead of Wednesday in order to provide extra circulation/distribution for our special 1987 Soil Conservation edition.

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The Register And RURAL

Water testing . . . (Continued from page 7)

chemicals without adequate research? In perspective, the majority of our groundwater is still of good quality. Where pesticides have been found in drinking water, generally the concentrations are very low, usually less than 1 part per billion. Once the surveys by the EPA and Department of Natural Resources have been completed, we will have a better picture of the problem and additional standards to determine acceptable water quality. Stricter regulations of future pesticide use is a certainty.

Reserve sign up 'til Feb. 27

The USDA's fourth sign up for the 10-year Conservation Reserve is going on now at the Fayette County ASCS office in Fayette, and will end Feb. 27.

There is a one-year, one-time bonus for the 1987 crop, to be paid in the form of an increased annual rent payment.

The Conservation Reserve Program is one of the new conservation initiatives contained in the Food and Security Act of '85 designed to reduce soil erosion.

USDA will establish maximum acceptable rental rates after sign up ends and bid data is evaluated.

During the first three signups, 8,916,185 acres of erodible cropland were accepted into the CRP.



TOPSOIL.—Severely eroded soils show up every spring in Fayette County. Once the topsoil is depleted, potential productivity is diminished forever.

A definition . . . (Continued from page 4)

help you have cleaner, healthier and a more beautiful environment in which to live and work.

Fayette Soil Conservation District Commissioner meetings are normally the third Wednesday of each month in the office in West Union. The meetings are open to the public. If you feel a

Commissioner can be of service to you, contact them at the District Office or at their homes.

The object of soil conservation has always been and will continue to be—to preserve, aid, and protect the very foundation of life on this earth—the soil.

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Paul Nuss
Hawkeye
SCD
Commissioner

"My advice is go over to the SCS office and get a soil conservation plan. Work closely with them. Soil loss is definitely your loss. Nobody else's, yours."



Carl Nuss
Arlington
SCD
Commissioner

"There's the old long-run benefits — leaving the soil in good or better condition than when you found it. It's plain common sense to me. Some don't see it that way."



Bill Bennett
Elgin
SCD
Commissioner

"I really think it's a way to save soil. And in the long run, it means being more profitable, although maybe not at first. It's going to keep the soil there where it belongs, and it won't pollute somebody's lake or well or stream. We can't afford to pollute or lose this topsoil. We're fortunate here. The good Lord gave us good soil to start with and we shouldn't rob future generations . . ."



Richard Jensen
Elgin
SCD
Commissioner

"I'm convinced it's a moral obligation to conserve our resources. There's no real choices anymore. We must practice good soil stewardship. There's no alternatives. It's that simple."

ASCS hikes ACP funds

by Don Carpenter
Executive Director
Fayette County ASCS

The Fayette County ASCS committee has increased its share of Agriculture Conservation Program (ACP) cost-share funds that will be paid for 1987.

The following is the name of the conservation practice and what share ASCS will pay:

- Permanent vegetative cover establishment, 75 percent.
- Permanent vegetative cover improvement, 75 percent.
- Strip-cropping systems, \$15 per acre.
- Terrace systems, 50 percent.
- Diversions, 50 percent.
- Field windbreak restoration or establishment, 50 percent, \$5 per tree, 50 cents per shrub.
- Farmstead and feedlot windbreak, 50 percent, \$5 per tree, 50 cents per shrub.
- Contour farming, \$6 per acre.
- No-till systems, \$10 per acre.
- Water impoundment reservoirs, 50 percent.
- Sediment retention erosion or water control structures, 50 percent.
- Sod waterways, 50 percent.
- Forest tree plantations, 60 percent.
- Forest tree stand improvement, 60 percent.
- Permanent wildlife habitat, 65 percent.
- Shallow water areas for wildlife, 50 percent.
- ACP limitation per year, per producer is \$3,500.



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Waucoma
Chairman
Fayette County
ASCS Council



Gerald E. Schmidt
Oelwein
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Robert L. Berry
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Fayette County
ASCS Council



Don Carpenter
Executive Director
Fayette County
ASCS Office

Soak up raindrops where they fall

No-till market growing

CEDAR RAPIDS (AP) — Everybody wants to get into a growing market, and the market for no-till and ridge-till equipment is definitely growing.

As a result, a score of farm implement companies, some almost as new as the tags on their products, have plowed their way into the tillage market.

Their scramble for the growing business has Ernie Behn smiling.

Behn, a farmer and inventor from Boone, has been a long-time proponent of no-till and ridge-till farming and holds patents on some products.

But he still remembers when no-till farming methods were laughed out of the field by most of his neighbors.

No-till farming is a technique that seeks to expose as little soil as possible in planting in an attempt to reduce erosion and save fuel. Ridge-till farming is a form of no-till farming that raises a small portion of the ground in an attempt to warm the soil more quickly in the spring.

"Twenty years ago, two-thirds of the soil was plowed black, maybe even three-fourths," he says. "Now you go through the country and you don't see much plowed land."

Implement companies haven't been blind to that change, Behn says.

"When I first started there was only one ridge-till planter on the market. That was Buffalo," he said.

"Then came Hinkler and a few of the others. Now there are plenty of planters and attachments for planters out there."

Behn compares the move toward less tillage with the entrance of hybrid corn or milk machines into the market. It took time for each idea to gain farmer acceptance.

And while the major manufacturers wait for that farmer acceptance, many backyard inventors and small companies make most of the major innovations.

DES MOINES — The best way to limit soil erosion by water is to soak up falling raindrops where they fall, and a well-managed, fully stocked woodland does a better job of that than pastured or grazed woodlands, according to William Farris, assistant state forester with the Iowa Conservation Commission.

Runoff water from sloping unprotected hills causes erosion, Farris said. In pastured woodlands, unprotected soils are bombarded by the impact energy of raindrops hitting the soil surface at full speed.

"The splash itself removes soil," the forester said. "And the steady pounding packs the soil surface, allowing little water infiltration. The resulting standing water runs down the slope, increasing in speed and removing more soil as it moves downhill."

In well-managed woodlands, the protective tree leaf canopy and the close growing undergrowth cover act as an umbrella that protects nearly 100 percent of the soil surface

from raindrop splash erosion, Farris said.

When landowners keep livestock out of their woodlots, the undisturbed, deep duff layer that gradually develops on the soil surface acts as a sponge. "One inch of duff can store up to a three-inch rain," he said.

Other advantages of not grazing woodlands include better infiltration of rain water and increased productivity.

Farris said untrampled timber soils are loose enough to allow percolation of trapped surface water into the root zone at rapid rates. And the nutrient value of the duff layer provides the plant food

necessary to assure maximum woodland productivity.

Several studies support the use of ungrazed woodlots to reduce soil loss.

A six-year study at LaCrosse, Wis., on land with a 25 percent slope showed a dramatic difference in water runoff between grazed woodlands and woodlands protected from grazing.

Grazed woodlands had an average water runoff of 2.31 inches per year (11.7 percent of annual rainfall), while protected woodlands had only 0.95 inches of water runoff (4.2 percent of annual rainfall). Open, managed pasture had an average water runoff of 6.79

inches per year or 4 percent of annual rainfall.

A nine-year study at Zanesville, Ohio, compared average annual soil loss for three different land uses on 14 percent slopes with 37 inches of annual rainfall.

Cropland (corn-oats-meadow rotation) lost 17.18 tons of soil per acre per year. Fertilized bluegrass lost 6 tons, and managed timber lost only 0.61 tons.

The water loss, measured by average percent of yearly rainfall, was also minimized by the timber cover. Cropland had runoff of 26.6 percent of the annual rainfall, pasture, 23.8 percent, and timber, 3.2 percent.



RIPRAP — The Army Corps of Engineers completed a riprap project near Elgin to protect the town from the encroaching Turkey River. Below: West of Fayette, soil erosion was evident on gently sloping cropland, by the silt deposits on the grass headlands.



Frustration, anticipation mark past year in SCS

By Rick Cordes
Area Conservation
The Soil Conservation

Service has just completed a year of many changes. It has been a year of frustration and anticipation. Frustrating in that we experienced a reduction in staff due to budget constraints.

Frustrating in that we are facing a workload greater than ever before.

The Food Security Act of 1985 created such programs as conservation reserve, sod-buster, swampbuster and conservation compliance. These programs have the potential of doing more for soil

conservation than anything we have had. We face this opportunity with anticipation.

As mentioned, these programs have created a workload greater than the Soil Conservation Service has ever experienced. In many cases, we are looking at a five-fold increase in conservation planning alone.

The Soil Conservation Service and Soil Conservation Districts will need to analyze their ongoing program to set priorities. It will be difficult to change what Soil Conservation Districts already considered a good program. It will require a hard critical look at the workload in order to make the needed adjustments.

Some of the adjustments may include streamlining conservation planning procedures, more volunteers, consultants, if the budget allows, hiring more staff people and dropping some present activities.

This is a challenging opportunity. The SCS is committed to doing our part to help landowners quality for farm programs. It's a big job that will require a cooperative effort from Soil Conservation Districts, landowners and all USDA agencies.

I'm confident we will be successful if we maintain a cooperative attitude and a commitment for getting the job done.



OFFICE WORKERS — Lori Kohnmeyer (above) of Sumner, SCD office secretary for the past year, checks the file drawer. Below: Kristy Aleson of Clermont is a part-time worker in the SCD office. (Photos by Brian Meyer)



State and federal water testing begins

by Lyle Jackson
Fayette County
Sanitarian

In November 1986, comprehensive testing of the 800 municipal water supplies in Iowa was initiated. Water analysis will include testing for 60 organic chemicals. Completion of the sampling program is expected by the end of this year.

Chemical contamination of our drinking water by agricultural pesticides is a real and legitimate problem. For a long time we assumed that natural degradation in the soil would reduce the chemicals to a harmless form. We now know that this is not

the case. Some of the pesticides are longer lived than expected and do pose a threat to our groundwater. From periodic sampling we also know that maximum levels of pesticides detected coincides with the time of application to farm fields.

It seems that the Environmental Protection Agency has been "sleeping at the switch" as far as agricultural chemicals are concerned. Little is known about the long-term health effects to humans when exposed to low level concentrations. Generally acute toxicity tests are conducted on laboratory animals with very

large doses of a compound. Results are then used to identify a general or sometimes a specific danger to humans.

"Risk assessment" is using available information to estimate exposure to a substance and its adverse health effects. Maximum concentrations (MCLs) for pesticides in drinking water have not been set by the EPA. However, a major effort is now being made by the agency to establish preliminary standards.

The EPA will be surveying public and private drinking water wells over the next 2-3 years across the nation to

determine the extent of agricultural chemicals and other substances in water supplies. The EPA project is called "The National Survey of Pesticides in Drinking Water Wells." Some 1,500 samples from randomly selected wells will be collected across the country.

Legal responsibility for the contamination of groundwater by pesticides is not clear. Should the farmer who sprayed it on his fields be held liable? Is the chemical company that manufactured the product responsible? Or is the EPA at fault for approving the widespread use of organic

pesticides? (Continued on page 18)

Work on Volga watershed

By Wally Osley
Soil Conservation Technician
District Commissioner

The last two years have brought some increased activity to the Volga Creek Watershed. About \$100,000 has been spent or allocated to jobs there in soil conservation.

These have consisted of terracing, erosion control basins and ponds. The extra money came from the Iowa Conservation Commission, which decided it would be

more economical to hold the soil on the field than to catch it in sediment ponds just above the lake itself. For this reason they authorized a 90 percent cost-share. The added increase in conservation planning alone.

We do not expect another allocation of money from the Iowa Conservation Commission. The Food and Security Act of mandatory compliance, by 1990, will strongly encourage farmers to bring their soil loss down voluntarily.

This 45 percent amount to 2,300 acres under contract. If we use a conservation estimate of

10 tons per acre per year, runoff would amount to 23,000 tons of dirt retained on the fields and prevented from washing downstream.

We do not expect another allocation of money from the Iowa Conservation Commission. The Food and Security Act of mandatory compliance, by 1990, will strongly encourage farmers to bring their soil loss down voluntarily.

Contradiction to erosion aid

by Richard Jensen
Soil Conservation
District Commissioner

The Food Security Act of 1985 is hailed as the greatest conservation program ever enacted.

Unfortunately, the 1987 Feed Grain Program contains an outrageous contradiction to this purpose. The erosion promotion I refer to is called cross-compliance. This regulation requires a participating farmer to plant and

only his allocated base of corn, but also oats, barley and wheat. Many farmers were allocated a reduced oat base or no base at all for the production of soil conserving small grains. By the stroke of a misguided pen, thousands of acres of soybeans will be planted instead of small grain rotation type practices. Soybean production on this acre increased erosion and surplus beans.

Many producers agree this requirement is in conflict with good soil stewardship and conservation. Won't you help correct this senseless reduction of oat base?

Here are some addresses to write for more information: Alex King, ASCS, United States Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2415, Washington, D.C. 20013, or the Sierra Club, Washington Office, 530 Pennsylvania Avenue, Southeast, Washington, D.C. 20003.

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CONSERVATION FARMER

— Tom Mann (above), winner of the outstanding conservation farmer award for 1986, looks over his hay crop. Tile outlet terraces are in the background. The Mann property drains into Volga Lake. At right: County no-tillers turnout for a field day at the Lueder farm south of West Union.



Strip-cropping gives the farm character, Arlington brothers find

by Rose Dallenbach
Arlington

Since brothers Bill and Larry Dallenbach started farming, they farmed in straight rows which continued from ditch to ditch with no grassways or buffer strips as most Iowa farmers do.

The main goal was to produce as much grain as possible. When the government programs were introduced, ideas on abandoning this traditional method were considered and new ideas on farming in ways to maintain the soil were concentrated on.

After a visit with the Soil Conservation Department, they offered to come out and look their situation over. To the brothers' surprise, they found their erosion to be up to 15 tons per acre on some areas of their farm. They knew there was some erosion, but had no idea they were losing that much down their creek, which leads to the Maquoketa River.

Soon the Conservation Department gave Bill and Larry some alternatives on how they could correct this. After a year or two of con-

sideration, in 1986, the brothers decided to apply contour strip-cropping to their farm, when the Conservation Department offered the cost-sharing program.

Once again the Soil Conservation was sent out, this time to measure and flag areas where the strips could be made to work to the best advantage in stopping erosion. Strips were measured at 150 feet wide and up to a mile and 1/2 long, which would accommodate 6, 8 and 12 row equipment.



Here's a photo of erosion on the Dallenbach farm before strip-cropping was started.



... and here, erosion has taken place but has been stopped by strip farming.



... erosion across a 130-foot section stopped by a hay strip.



... the shape of the contour strips is shown in the center of the Dallenbach's field. (Photos by Bill Dallenbach)

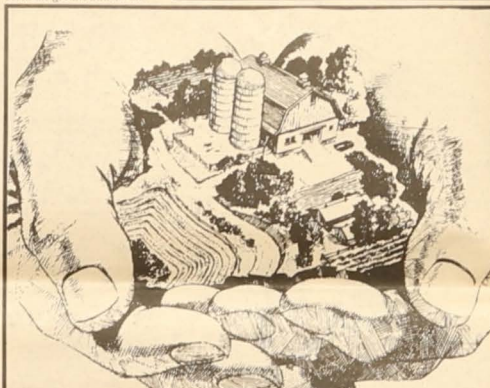
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Savings shown with ridge-till

(Editor's note: Here is an interview with Raymond Hall, rural Fayette, on his experience with ridge-tilling.)

Q. How did you get the idea to begin ridge-tilling?

A. My back would hurt when I moldboard plowed. The jerking of the tractor with one wheel in the furrow seemed to make it worse. That was 15 years ago.

Q. How did you learn about ridge-till?

A. My brother worked for a man in southeast Iowa who used a Buffalo till planter. Then my daughter and son-in-law lived up by Decorah and hired their corn planted by a Buffalo till planter. I was interested enough to read the articles in the farm magazines. Then when Dan Burkhardt and Jerry Muff formed the No-Tillers Club, I became a charter member.

One day they had a field day at the country farm. Demonstrating no-till planting. It was dry that spring and I could see that the no-till corn was put into moist dirt while on the chisel-plowed ground the corn was put into dry dirt. At that time I made the decision to go to ridge-till system.

Q. What are the savings of no-till, or as you use it ridge-till?

A. Well, the way I do it I save on chemicals. I band spray right behind the planter, and the tires work it into the moist earth. I use one quart of Lasso and four fifths of pounds of Bladex. I use liquid nitrogen as carrier at about 20 gallons per acre. This does a good job in the band. The centers are cultivated when you build the ridge. Some people don't like to cultivate, but I consider it my fall plowing.

Then there is a big savings on equipment. I don't need a big tractor, plow chisel, seedbed maker and all that. Also, time is an important factor. When the conditions are right, I don't have to spend time doing any field work but planting.

The biggest savings of all is in soil conservation. My soil loss is practically nil. That is a great satisfaction to me.

Q. Some people say you must wait longer to plant no-till and have well drained soil. What is your experience?

A. I use ridge-till, and I believe I can plant a little earlier than I would want to chisel. I have some sloughs which are tiled but are just naturally wet.

These are Clyde-Floyd complex, mapped 166B. It was formed from stratified valley fill. It is tiled but is naturally heavy. The ridges I plant dry out and warm up. It is wet down in between the rows, but I don't plant there.

Q. What are your yields running?

A. This year in the Economic Yield Contest, I got an official test of 120 bushels per acre.

Q. What advice would you give a person who is trying no-till for the first time?

A. You have to do your homework! That is so very important. Get help from people who know what they are talking about. Talk to Jerry Muff with the Soil Conservation Service about your soil, and Dan Burkhardt with the Fayette County Extension Service about the right chemicals for the soil.

Talk to your machinery dealer if he has experience in no-till or ridge-till. If he doesn't have any experience, find somebody that does. Ernie Behn's book is good. Join the No-Till Club in Fayette County and go to the meetings. You can learn a lot.

Most of us have been in long lines at the ANCS office as we

have signed up for the Program, or to collect our checks, or cash in PIK (Payment In Kind) certificates. We have seen the people working at the ANCS having to handle enough paper that we could probably heat at least half the homes in the country with it if it was burned.

That doesn't answer the question, so let's look at some of the parts of the Food and Security Act of 1985.

—1. Everyone must have a Conservation Plan by 1990 and

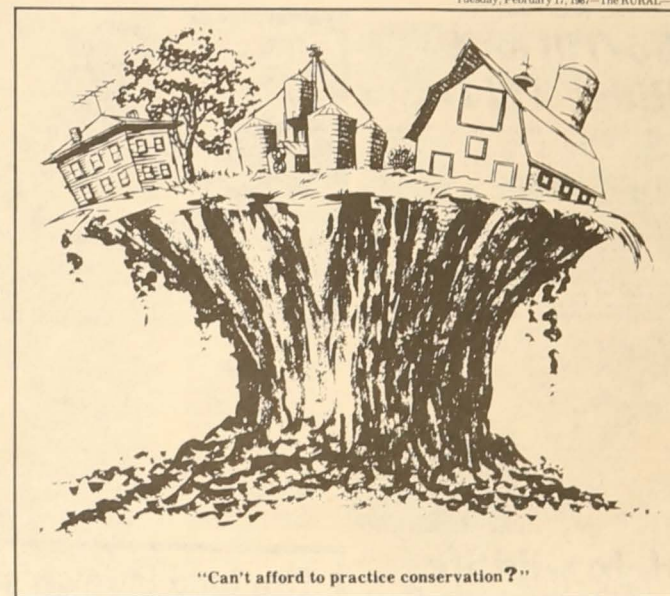
have it implemented by 1995. This means if you decide to work with soil conservation people to draw up a Conservation Plan and that if you follow it, you will be eligible to take part in the Farm Program. If you decide not to do this, you can continue farming as you have in the past, but you will not be eligible for any farm programs.

A Conservation Plan is a selection of ways to reduce soil erosion. It may be crop rotation, strip cropping, contouring, conservation

tilage, no-tilling, ridge-tilling, terracing, or a combination of these things. You and the Soil Conservation Service decide which things will bring your soil loss to a tolerable level.

—2. Sod-busting applies only to highly erodible land. Sod-busting is a name given to the planting of a row crop on land that has not had a row crop on it since 1960. If a row crop was planted on it in any year 1961 through 1985, it is not sod-busting. If you have land that has been in a long rotation of hay or pasture that you want to

(Continued on Page 18)



Look at Food and Security Act

By Bill Bennett
Soil Conservation
District Commissioner
The current Farm Program means a lot of things to a lot of people.

To some it means CRP (Conservation Reserve Program), to others it means Sod-buster and/or Swamp-buster rules. To some it means having to have a Conservation Plan by 1990, and to most it means the way to get the most returns on the farm operation.

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have signed up for the Program, or to collect our checks, or cash in PIK (Payment In Kind) certificates. We have seen the people working at the ANCS having to handle enough paper that we could probably heat at least half the homes in the country with it if it was burned.

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A new shelterbelt cost-share program offered

To Art Roseland
Wildlife Biologist, DNR
Anyone who's had a full season experience with a rural Iowa winter knows about shelterbelts.

Located north and west of farmsteads, these tree and shrub plantings are better known as windbreaks. Whatever the name though, it takes no imagination to appreciate how they ward-off the north wind and blowing snow. During winter, tree and shrub plantings may reduce home energy needs by up to 36 percent, increase feed conversion by livestock and greatly reduce snow accumulations around the farmstead. In summer, the plantings add beauty to the farm home.

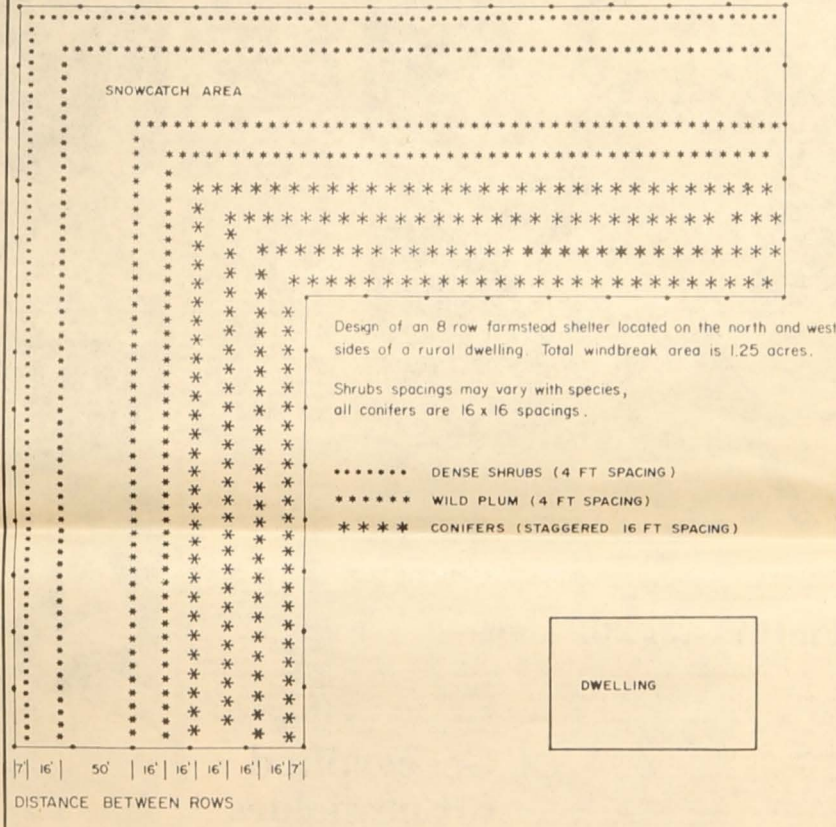
Throughout the year, wide shelterbelts provide Iowa wildlife with critical winter shelter and breeding habitat. Since so much of that wildlife is produced on farmsteads, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has designed a major shelterbelt cost-share program that's aimed to benefit both the landowner and wildlife.

In Iowa, the properly designed shelterbelt is one of the most effective tools to restore winter cover for pheasants and other wildlife. The DNR cost-share program is designed for use in all counties north of Highway 30 from funds derived from Wildlife Habitat Stamp sales and the Chickadee Checkoff. Contributions to the DNR from governmental and/or private conservation groups are also used to fund the program.

The program provides cooperators with 25 percent of the cost of shelterbelt establishment, not to exceed \$500, if planted according to DNR specifications. The program is designed to complement, or "piggy-back" other programs as the ASCS WL-1 practice. Permanent Wildlife Habitat. By combining cost-sharing provisions under both programs, a landowner willing to establish a minimum eight-row shelterbelt may be reimbursed for up to 90 percent of costs. Additional assistance, such as planting, might be available from County Conservation Boards or private groups as Pheasants Forever or Isak Walton Leagues.

If you're interested in developing wildlife habitat by planting more rows in a new windbreak, or adding rows to an existing planting, contact the Wildlife Biologist or Soil Conservation District office for more information.

A shelterbelt example



NO-TILL TRACTOR — Jim Graham of Northeast Iowa Farm Management in West Union farms north of Hawkeye. He is shown no-till planting corn into soybean stubble on the contour. The old rows ran up and down the hill.

His mounted six-row planter is set up to band herbicides over the row. Average soil loss before no-till was 16 tons per acre per year. After contouring and no-till, it was less than 1 ton per acre per year.



SOIL MOVES AGAIN — Many years of sheet erosion from the uplands in Fayette County have caused a build-up of sediment at these

footlopes. This causes an overfall, or dropoff, just above the county culvert, which is the cause of gully erosion evident in this photo.

First corn contest held based on most profit

by James H. Graham
Chairman
Northeast Iowa
Farm Management

Fayette County corn producers had an opportunity in 1986 to participate in the First Annual Economic Yield Contest for Corn Production. The contest was the result of the joint organizational efforts of the Fayette County Conservation District and the Extension Service, the Soil Conservation District and Farm Bureau.

The objective of the contest is not focused on maximum yield, but on maximum profit. The contest is designed to identify those management alternatives which produce the highest net returns per acre.

To be eligible to participate, a contestant was required to enlist the cooperation of a sponsor. The sponsor was responsible for properly measuring the plot harvested and recording the amount of corn which was produced. The harvesting procedure for the Economic Yield Contest is based upon the Master Corn Grower's Contest guidelines. Because of the duplication of procedures, several contestants were able to enter the same plot in both the Economic Yield and Master's contests.

There are several distinguishing features of the Economic Yield Contest. The competition was divided into three divisions based upon the previous crop produced. The divisions included: (1) corn after corn, (2) corn after soybeans, and (3) corn after soy. The participants were required to report the actual costs related to the production of the corn crop. Seed, fertilizer and chemical expenses were itemized on the data input form which each contestant filled out. Machinery operations were also reported and charged at custom rates against the crop income. The soil loss above the tolerance level was calculated for each harvested plot. The value of the soil lost due to erosion was added to the production expense. The land cost for each plot was based upon the average Corn Suitability Rating (CSR) of the soils multiplied by \$1 per CSR point.

A total of 21 entries were received for the three divisions of the contest. The results of the contest will be announced at a banquet honoring the corn producers and sponsors on Feb. 26. The Economic Yield Contest has been well received by the corn producers and sponsors who participated in its inaugural year.



SOIL CONSERVATION AWARD — Tom Mann of West Union (left) was the soil conservation district winner in Fayette County for 1986. Bert Henderson of Bureau's annual meeting. (Photo by Richard Wilkinson)

Loss of soil, nutrients severe in poor pastures

By Roger A. Koster
Area Resource

Conservationist
The loss of soil and nutrients from well-managed permanent pasture usually are not a serious problem. But the loss of soil and nutrients from poorly-managed pastures can be severe.

The well-managed continuous cover of grass and grass-legume species helps water infiltration rates. It provides protection from the pounding from falling rain drops which can seal the soil surface on poorly-managed pastures. Complete and

vigorous ground cover in pastures is of prime importance in reducing loss of nutrients and soil particles. Management suggestions to control nutrient and soil losses from pasture are:

1. Apply fertilizer only in amounts needed to provide vigorous stands and profitable yields. This is best done by reliable soil testing.
2. When rates of applied nitrogen exceed 100 to 120 pounds per acre, apply the N in more than one application, just ahead of the time of the growing season that the forage

is expected to make its greatest growth. This is usually spring and in late summer for cool season grasses.

3. Manage grazing to maintain at least two to three inches of growth in Kentucky bluegrass and three to four inches on other cool season grasses to help reduce runoff losses of nutrients and soil.
4. Do not apply manure on frozen pasture or hayland.

With best management, we can safely predict soil losses will be minimal and water quality will be protected.

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Rocks and Rainbows
by Julia Ingamells
Stanley, Iowa

It may seem a little early in the year to be thinking about soil conservation, but now is the time to start planning your layout for spring planting. We have a couple of areas on our farm that always erode. Grass strips don't stop the water trails much, and we've tried some conservation measures.

Lynn did some contour planting a couple of years in one area. We didn't think on that little bit of hill it would help all that much, or be necessary for the effort and time. Lynn said it didn't take much more effort to plant curved rows than straight ones. I'll bet he stayed awake better. What is more boring than going up and down those straight rows hour after hour? Besides, the contour is prettier.

Conservation is more than water washing away the soil. Wind does it too. I'm writing this on the windiest day we've had so far this year and I know if we had any snow at all it would be black with topsoil.

You know the topsoil is going somewhere, as often as we dig out the ditches. I don't know what the figures are, but a hundred years ago, there was a much thicker layer than we have now. It isn't going to last forever at this rate. I wonder about all the good dirt under the concrete going to waste. Maybe they haul it away before they build. I'm not into construction, but it would be nice to know somebody thinks about those things.

Conservation means a lot more than contour planting and soil erosion, though. It means keeping our air and water clean. I covered that topic not too long ago. Reagan made a lot of people angry when he killed the water bill. I hope they don't give up on it.

Sometimes I wonder if we will have anything left to care for the way we abuse what we do have. Our animals are dwindling away. Seems like most of them are extinct or on the endangered list. What ever happened to respect for nature? One of the things I always regretted was when our landlords straightened out the creek to increase tillable acreage. They pulled out the pussywillows and the trees (I'm a fanatic for trees). The deer no longer had cover so they left, and without roots to hold the soil together, the banks of the creek were always caving in.

What we need to do is quit kidding ourselves and teach those young folk a long forgotten word called respect. It's not too late for us older folk either. I doubt if any of us realize the long lasting implications, the intricate relationship the cycles of nature have on each other — the rain, the soil, air, groundwater, plants, all live in a delicate balance. We humans seem determined to upset and destroy it all in our greed. In the end it will be self-destruction. Better we start now to preserve what we have while there is something left. It's a lot harder to clean up a mess than to keep it clean as we go.

I'd like to commend the conservationists who do put forth the effort. Minimum tillage is a step in the right direction. Putting erodible land out of use helps. Lord knows we produce so much now we don't know what to do with it all. Soil and water testing, when done properly and for the right reasons, can be very beneficial in a number of ways. We tend to shy away from the truth, when that is the only weapon we have. How can we make improvements when we don't know what we are working with?

Everybody has to help. We can't leave it all to one small group. We pay for nature in many ways. Air is still free but it may not always be. The land is here now, and water is in danger of being contaminated. Wouldn't it cost less to keep it clean than to clean it up. We have made some improvements. I don't know what all the answers are, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't keep trying. Somebody surely will find some better ways.

Agate: Anybody who thinks ignorance is no excuse is probably well-informed.



ATTENTION! — The Fayette County Soil Conservation District office provides services to county residents. The office is located on the lower level of the Farm Credit Services building, Highway 150 South, West Union on the west side of the highway.

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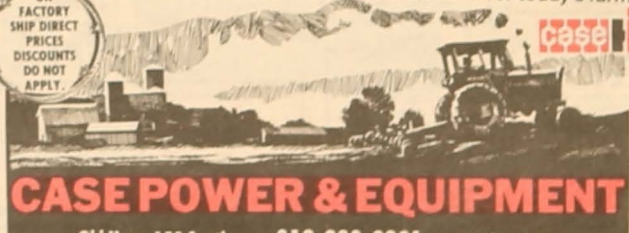


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