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SOIL CONSERVATION



Commissioners: Gary Wagner, Jeff Bergman, Charles T. Nealey, Frank C. Hedges, Sherman A. Smith.

Welcome to the MAX

Welcome to the MAX

By James Graham, Iowa MAX Coordinator

To produce corn and soybeans profitably, many Iowa farmers are making changes in their production methods which only a few years ago were considered to be radical experiments. These changes have been stimulated primarily by two concerns: generating consistent profits and preserving valuable resources. To help farmers with these concerns, the MAX Program (Farming for Maximum Efficiency) was developed in 1991 to provide farmer-generated economic data on efficient use of residue management systems. Farmers from 80 counties volunteered to share 192 crop production records on one or two fields, the 821 official Iowa entries in 1992 surpassed the national MAX participation of 600-plus from 16 states in 1991. The no-till, mulch till and reduced till entries were relatively evenly distributed across the state. Ridge-till entries were more concentrated in the northern counties. The small number of moldboard plow participants were mostly in the northern half of Iowa. Strip-till entries were included with no-till systems.

The program gives "bottom line" comparisons of mulch tillage, no-till, ridge-till, and conventional tillage systems. It offers Iowa farmers an opportunity to look at the costs and returns of some of their neighbors, and compare more than just yields. Comparisons show that yields are important, but top yield systems are not necessarily the most economic systems.

Comparisons can be made on seeding rates, herbicides and insecticides, fertilizer rates, and number and type of tillage operations. Soil conservation needs are also considered.

The MAX is a national program sponsored by Successful Farming magazine, the Conservation Technology Information Center, and Ciba. The Iowa Soil Conservation Service (SCS) has committed to promote the educational aspects of the MAX, with help from the Iowa Association of Soil and Water Conservation District commissioners, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Division of Soil Conservation, Iowa State University extension, volunteers acting as county coordinators, and agribusinesses.

Graham's 1992 MAX observations

1. Ridge till appears to be the most consistently profitable system overall.

2. In corn-soybean rotations, no-till appears to have a slight profit advantage over ridge till.

3. Comparatively high machine operations costs and pesticide costs tend to make mulch till less profitable than no-till and ridge till.

Summing up

•Tillage systems with the lowest production costs tend to be the most profitable.

•Tillage systems that maintain high crop residue levels are most profitable and reduce soil erosion problems.

Use of Crop Residues On the Rise

Iowa farmers nearly tripled their use of no-till farming this year, and also now the lead the nation in total acreage of crop residue management.

The increase in no-till from 972,800 acres in 1991 to 2,730,600 acres in 1992 is the largest increase of any state.

More than 15 million acres of corn and soybeans were grown in Iowa in 1992 with at least 15% of the ground covered with crop residues.

That's two out of every three acres being farmed with crop residues. It's about a million acres more than 1991, and the residue levels were higher, too.

Iowa farmers are second in the nation in acres of conservation tillage, defined as all types of crop residue management that leave at least 30% of the ground covered after planting. The Iowa figure for conservation tillage in 1992 is 9,16,000 acres - a 31% increase from 1991. Illinois farmers lead the nation in that category with 9.5 million acres.

There was an explosion in no-till use in 1992. No-till acreage in 1992 was three times what it was in 1991, four times what it was in 1990, and eight times what it was in 1982.

Roughly one out of every eight acres of Iowa's corn and soybeans were planted with no-till in 1992.

There's a growing recognition that less tillage and more residue can translate to more profit. Agribusiness was solidly behind efforts to help farmers use high residue levels in 1992.

Soil conservation requirements set by USDA have also had an effect. More than two-thirds of the farmers with conservation compliance plans include crop residue management as a soil saving measure.

Soil erosion and water quality is one of the most important environmental and conservation concerns our country is faced with. Every concern is centered around this basic problem. Wildlife management, fisheries management, forest and timber management, crop and agriculture management, flood plain management, landfill management, construction and even the economy as a whole, has one main priority and that is preventing soil loss and improving water quality.

As director of the Des Moines County Conservation Board, I deal with all of these natural resource management concerns. I often ask myself, "What can we do to better manage these resources?" By saying we, I mean what can governmental agencies and you, the people, do together to better manage these important natural resources? I firmly believe that the most important and potentially effective land and natural resource manager is you, the farmer and private landowner. With proper conservation education and direction, the private landowner can manage his own property just as effectively as resource managers manage public property. I base this opinion on the many private landowner contacts made. Landowners are constantly wanting to do the right thing, but want to know what is the right thing. What is the best way to improve wildlife habitat on my property? What is the best way to conserve soil on my highly erodible land? What is the best way to improve my timber? How can I stop the gullies in my row crops? How can I control noxious weeds on my property?

Less than 2% of Iowa's lands is under public ownership. This means that more than 98% is privately owned. Doesn't it seem logical to work with private landowners on proper land management techniques instead of buying more public lands? This is much more cost effective and will accomplish a common goal of conserving soil and improving water quality. In defense of public land acquisition, 99% of the land that is purchased for public property is considered marginal or

waste land to many. Very little acquired public land is good agricultural land. Public natural resource managers are always working with the least desirable properties, trying to improve it for public use and enjoyment for everyone.

It concerned me that there was only one person interested in one of the two Des Moines County Soil and Water Commissioners positions after Lloyd Schmeiser and Leonard Lane retired. I expressed this concern at one of the regular commissioner meetings, apparently this concern was mutual because after the first of the year, I was notified that I was elected as a Soil and Water Commissioner by write-in votes. I took my oath of office and now I have another opportunity to work with you to accomplish a mutual goal.

Public input was solicited during 1991 to develop a long-range plan for the Soil and Water District. These plans are available from the District's office. All of these plans and objectives are centered around the main goal of protecting soil loss and improving water quality. This goal can only be accomplished by a cooperative effort of county, state, federal officials, private landowners, farmers, sportsman clubs, and special interest groups.

We need to know what your ideas are. Please contact any of the five commissioners, SCS staff, or attend any of the monthly meetings.

Some of my personal goals working for you as a commissioner include:

1. Improving relationships with farmers and government officials.
2. Addressing urban erosion problems and developing control plans.
3. Educating landowners on good conservation and land management practices.
4. Improving cooperation with other government agencies.
5. Manage my own farm according to good land management practices.

Managing Crop Residues; Good Business

Crop residue management is more than reducing tillage. It's using last year's crop residue to your advantage.

Crop residues that decompose on the soil surface add organic matter to the soil.

More residues on top of the soil surface after planting mean more pieces of residue to intercept raindrops, preventing the mud splash that is the beginning of soil erosion.

And more residues mean fewer trips across a field, which translates to lower fuel bills, less soil compaction, and less wear and tear on tractors and other machinery.

In the long run, crop residue management can mean better soil structure and better soil tilth. Micro-organisms and earthworms can continue to build topsoil and improve structure when the soil is not tilled, for instance.

A 1991 poll of Iowa farmers listed these as clear advantages of farming with no-till, a high residue system:

- soil erosion control
- less labor
- less time
- less compaction
- improved water quality
- They listed these as disadvantages:
- increased chemical cost
- weed control
- insect control

Overall, the majority of farmers polled believed net profit was higher with no-till.

Growing crops with crop residues is a little different than planting in clean tilled ground.

As Carroll County, Iowa, farmer Barry Kusel explains, learning to farm with crop residues takes time. "We've made some mistakes and you're going to do something new now, so expect to make a few mistakes. But overall, we found farming with crop residues to be very easy," says Kusel.

Farmers from across the state and across the country have found numerous ways to farm with crop residues. They key to success is to develop a system that works for you; one that will fit into your total operation.

A national program has been implemented to help you and other farmers fine tune cropping systems-especially systems that leave more crop residues.

In 1992 more than 1,000 farmers - some from every county in Iowa - participated in this program that looks at the bottom line of corn or soybean crop production systems; the program is called Farming For Maximum Efficiency - the MAX. Participants keep accurate records of inputs, tillage methods, and yields. They then get help analyzing their system, and can compare their operation to those of other farmers.

Comparisons of specific inputs offer valuable information on the economics of various crop residue management systems. And that information will help farmers make better economical and environmental decisions.

Ask at your local soil and water conservation district for the results of the MAX program; they come out in December of each year.

Revolving Fund Account

Balance on hand, July 1, 1991 790.47

Receipts:
Flag Sales 97.72
State Reimbursement 392.04
CD Redemption 4,022.68
Donation 10.00
Loan 1,000.00
\$5,522.44 \$5,522.44
6,312.91

Disbursements:
Loan Repayment 4,007.27
Office Expense 54.04
Bank Charges 10.00
IASWCDC dues 200.00
Postage 809.00
Salary (RC&D) 1,000.00
Safety Deposit Box 9.00
Sales Tax 2.88
\$6,092.29 \$6,092.29

Balance on hand, June 30, 1992 \$220.62

CD Value, June 30, 1992 \$6,630.57

Obligation (loan + interest) \$5,500.00

ANNUAL REPORT

Mediapolis News
Thursday, February 25, 1993 Page 9

Annual Report of Des Moines County Soil & Water Conservation District

Fiscal Year July 1, 1991-June 30, 1992
Expenditures of funds provided by State of Iowa for District Commissioners' Expenses, Office Supplies and Expenses, Office Equipment, Financial Incentive Programs and Resource Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP).

1-M FUNDS- TRAVEL, OFFICE SUPPLIES, EXPENSES & EQUIPMENT	
Commissioners' Travel	501.74
Office Supplies & Expenses	957.04
Released to State of Iowa	278.22
Total Allocation	\$1,737.00

1992-93 STATE FINANCIAL INCENTIVE FUNDS	
Terraces, 1670 ft. completed	3,557.19
Obligated, terraces not completed	1,999.38
Unobligated, reserved for no till	5,806.33
Total Allocation	\$21,362.90

1991-92 STATE FINANCIAL INCENTIVE FUNDS	
Terraces, 15,240 ft. completed	25,078.82
No Till, 309.2 ac. completed	3,092.00
Total Allocation	\$28,170.82

1990-91 STATE FINANCIAL INCENTIVE FUNDS	
Terraces, 6,855 ft. completed	12,469.08
Water & Sediment Control Basins, 5 completed	1,839.14
No Till, 587.42 ac. completed	5,874.20
Total Allocation	\$20,182.42

1992-93 REAP-PRACTICES	
Timber Stand Improvement (not completed)	\$5,220.00
Total Allocation	\$5,220.00

1992-93 REAP-FORESTRY PRACTICES	
Timber Stand Improvement (not completed)	\$1,345.00
Total Allocation	\$1,345.00

1991-92 REAP-PRACTICES	
Timber Stand Improvement	6,339.93
113.9 ac. completed	6,339.93
Total Allocation	\$6,339.93

1991-92 REAP FORESTRY PRACTICES	
Timber Stand Improvement, 21.9 ac. completed	\$1,553.40
Total Allocation	\$1,553.40

DISTRICT ACCOMPLISHMENTS October 1, 1991-September 30, 1992		
Item/Practice	Number	Ac/Ft/Est
New Cooperators	594	58,866 ac.
Individuals Assisted	832	
Conservation Practices Applied	112	
Conservation Plans		1,539 ac.
Land Use & Treatment Site Plan Review	15	
Governmental Agencies Assisted	4	
Tracts with No Highly Erodible Land	12	
Tracts with Highly Erodible Land	16	622 ac.
Tracts with Conservation System Applied	55	1,912 ac.
Tracts w/approved FSA Conservation Plan	156	6,783 ac.
Field Borders		11,170 ft.
Conservation Tillage		2,256 ac.
Conservation Cover		53 ac.
Conservation Cropping Rotation		1,283 ac.
Contour Farming		442 ac.
Grassed Waterway		2 ac.
Pasture & Hayland Planting		4 ac.
Terrace		20,040 ft.
Water & Sediment Control Basin	12	
Cropland treated/Protected		2,343 ac.
Wildlife Acres Treated		15 ac.

COMMISSIONERS	
1992 Lloyd F. Schmeiser, Chm Sherman A. Smith, V-Chm Leonard Lane Charles T. Nealey Gary Wagner	1993 Gary Wagner, Chairman Sherman A. Smith, V-Ch Charles T. Nealey Jeff Bergman Frank C. Hedges
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONERS	
Horace Sutton, Treas. Arlyn Musselman Jeff Bergman	Horace Sutton, Treas. Arlyn Musselman Leonard L. Lane
OFFICE STAFF	
Terry Corby, SCS District Conservationist, thru 6/92 Larry Jones, SCS District Conservationist, beginning 9/92 Doug Ensminger, SCS Soil Conservationist, thru 12/92 John Horan, SCS Soil Conservation Technician Drew DeLang, SCS Soil Conservation Aide John Frueling, SCS Soil Conservation Aide Dorothy E. Davis, State & District Secretary Penny Williams, Volunteer, thru 10/92	



Staff: Drew DeLang, Larry Jones, Dorothy Davis, John Horan (Not pictured- John Frueling).

DISTRICT ACTIVITIES

Maximum Meadow Rotation. Commissioners set a policy to limit the maximum number of years of meadow that may be added to a sodbuster compliance plan. If a producer requests another year of corn in his plan, the number of years of meadow in the rotation may be increased. The maximum number of years of meadow will be limited to five years.

Regional Commissioners Meeting at Ottumwa. Sherm Smith and Lloyd Schmeiser attended.

Soil Judging Contest A Soil Judging Contest was held at Big Hollow. High school students from surrounding counties along with Des Moines County students participated. Des Moines County Soil and Water Conservation District, as host county, provided certificates to the winners.

State Cost Sharing is to be limited to \$3500 per fiscal year. No Till cost sharing is limited to \$10 per acre with a maximum of 60 acres. These limits would be comparable to ASCS cost share limits.

All state cost share maintenance agreements will be notarized and recorded at the courthouse.

Commissioners Leadership Development Program Commissioners attended a satellite program promoted by Extension.

January 1992 Election Lloyd Schmeiser was elected chairman and Sherman Smith, vice chairman. Horace Sutton, Jeff Bergman and Arlyn Musselman were appointed assistant commissioners. Dorothy Davis was appointed secretary and Horace Sutton, treasurer.

Gary Wagner was appointed to County RCSD Board; Sherman Smith, RCSD Executive Board; and Leonard Lane and Jeff Bergman to Education Committee.

Volunteers Des Moines County Soil and Water Conservation District received a State Volunteer Award from Soil Conservation Service for 1991. Darrell Balzer volunteered over 1000 hours. The district received a plaque and each commissioner, assistant, staff person and Balzer received an Earth Team jacket.

Soil and Water Resource Conservation Plan The Plan has been approved by State Conservation Committee. The title page and notification of where the plan can be located are filed with the county recorder.

Appeals and Complaints The district investigated several soil loss complaints. Commissioners voted that they want to be involved in part of the appeals process of the Food Security Act decisions.

A Memorandum of Understanding between the Des Moines County Soil and Water Conservation District and Iowa Army ammunition Plant has been approved and signed.

District Conservationist Larry Jones took the position of District Conservationist, replacing Terry Corby, who moved to Council Bluffs.

IN APPRECIATION

Des Moines County Soil and Water Conservation District sent out a letter asking for a contribution to the district program. As a result, the following persons have responded with a contribution. We thank you kindly for

your donation toward our efforts to promote soil and water conservation in Des Moines County.

Paul Beckman
Schrock Lumber
Bert O. Brayton

Williams Excavation
Lois G. Magel
Wilmer Faigle
Floyd Rowell

Wallace Thyne
Richard L. Totemeier
Ellsworth Dadds
Jack Brockelman

Mary L. Nollan
Marie L. Hudson
Marshall Zackmeyer
Vivian Wiemann

Perle J. Dumes
William J. Thele
B. Frank Hedges
Dorothy E. Klaus

Miller Farms
Homer Jones
Zelda Garrettson
Jana Husknecht

Richard N. Mapel
Tom Pratt
Chas. Van Dyke
C.E. Matsch, Matsch Bros.

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Mark Breder, Ltd.
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Bill Vierling
Farm Credit Services
A. Munkhovich

Cessford Construction Co.
Harold E. Otto
Farmers Cooperative
Melvin Gerdner

Frank W. Heckenberg
Roma Sater Wilhoit
Lola V. Fladt
Mediapolis Savings Bank

Helan Sandberg Ptnrshp
Dwayne A. Wright
Cletus Beckman Heirs Farm
GVM Corporation

Gary L. Wagner
James E. Miller
Shirley Hines
Marvin D. Lange

R.H. Brandau
Milton Distelhorst
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Crop Residue Management Tips

These tips can help you leave more residues on the soil surface.

-Follow a crop rotation sequence with high residue producing crops. Soybeans don't provide the same kind of protection as corn, for example. Also, high yields give more residues.

-Wait until spring for tillage operations. This is most important on low residue producing crops such as soybeans. Fall tillage of soybean ground is very vulnerable to wind erosion in late winter and early spring.

-Reduce the number of tillage passes. In most cases, this is as important as the type of tillage performed.

-Set chisels and discs to work shallower. Tilling deeper buries more residue.

-Stop using the moldboard plow.

-Drive slower on tillage operations. Driving faster throws more soil and covers more residue.

-Use straight points and sweeps on chisel plows instead of twisted points. Twisted points may bury 20% more residue.

-No-till drill soybeans instead of planting them in a prepared seedbed. No-till drilling keeps more residue on the soil surface, and generally produces a quicker

canopy.

-Convert to a no-till system. No-till disturbs residue only in the row.

-A straighter alignment of disc blades buries less residue.

-Strive for even distribution of residue from a combine at harvest. Also, leave residue size as large as possible. Smaller residue particles, such as chopped soybean residue will decompose more quickly and be buried more easily.

-Select crop varieties that produce more residue.

-Don't till when soils are wet. You compact the ground and bury more residue. This is most important in heavy ground.

-Scout crops for best application of pesticides and herbicides.

-Control weeds by spot spraying whenever possible.

-Other management tips-

Plant rye or winter cover crops to protect the soil surface over winter and early spring. This is a good option when you are growing low-residue crops such as soybeans or corn silage.