

Watershed Project Will

BY BOB NORBERG

Capturing, slowing and controlling water headed for the South and Little Wyacondah river streams will save Davis county nearly \$50,000 a year.

Although flooding on these streams has never been a serious problem, gully erosion has been a plague wreaking an estimated \$38,400 damage in the average year.

Concerned about the situation, landowners banded together and in 1957 asked assistance from the federal government. In the meantime, many of them went ahead with conservation practices on an individual level.

Five years later, the federal machinery ground out its final answer: It would invest \$815,000 in a \$1-million project to

correct the situation.

The final green light came in the past session of Congress, clearing the way for the letting of contracts and the actual beginning of construction, expected to come next summer or fall.

It's the largest approved watershed in southeast Iowa, embracing 36,275 acres, a 19-mile-long finger pointing diagonally into Missouri, coming between Bloomfield and West Grove.

Implementation of the \$1.08-million program will be over an eight-year period.

A basic part of the project's progress will be land treatment measures applied on an individual basis — such as terracing, contour farming, grassed waterways, farm ponds, and pasture renovation.

Such projects as these will be financed by individual farmers, who can apply for government cost-sharing under the Agricultural Conservation Program.

(ACP funds would cover 60 per cent of the cost of most of these projects, going to 70 per cent for cut and fill and standard terraces, and 80 per cent for some tree practices.)

Verle Arnold of the Soil Conservation Service office here said landowners should not underestimate their important role in making the watershed a functioning reality.

In the official work plan, 228 farms are said to be cooperating now with the Soil Conservation District, with basic farm plans (conservation programs) written for

102 of them (45 per cent).

The program calls for revising 60 of these present plans and writing 54 additional plans during the implementation of the program.

The program's pay-off is a big one. There are 228 farms in the watershed and the project would:

- Reduce floodwater damage on 16 of these farms, an estimated annual saving of \$640.

- Substantially reduce gully erosion an annual saving of \$38,390.

- Permit more intensive and different land use on some farms, worth some \$3,371 a year.

- Reduce bridge maintenance and replacement costs to the county about \$3,250 per year.

Major features of the con-

Save \$50,000 Annually

October 16, 1962

struction program will be two floodwater retarding structures, which will cut the volume and speed of water flowing into the Little Wyacondah — which is prone to flooding.

The floodwater retarding structures will have a total surface area capacity of 70.5 acres, about 80 per cent of the Lake Fisher surface area. One will be located on the Frank Shively farm. The other structure will be on the Bonnie Houston farm, but the water will back up on the Clay Barnett farm.

In connection with the flood prevention, the Little Wyacondah will be dredged and widened for 3.9 miles, preparing it for handling the peak flow that develops once every five years during the growing season.

The channel improvement will

run southeast, from below the Clay Barnett and Jack Finley farms to northwest of the Ernie Bohi farm.

The project will include 57 grade stabilization structures to stabilize major watercourses in the watershed. Minor watercourses will be stabilized by the individual land treatment practices.

Fifty-four of these structures will be of the drop-inlet type, which will back up small bodies of water. Purpose of these structures is to collect run-off water during a rain, holding a certain amount, releasing the excess at a rate slow enough to curb erosion and flooding.

In the larger structures, the release of water can still be go-

ing on 24 hours after a hard rain.

The local contribution of \$272,660 will include land, easements and rights-of-way, plus operation and maintenance of the project when it is completed. ACP funds will pick up much of the local bill.

It's estimated the project will return \$1.60 in direct benefits for every dollar of project cost.

Outlined in the work plan is the program for forming a sub-district of the Davis County Soil Conservation District, which would be authorized to impose a special annual tax. Funds thus accumulated would apply to repaying expenses incurred in organization, land acquisition, repairs, alterations and maintenance within the water-

shed's boundaries.

The special tax would be levied only when needed and would range from no levy to a maximum of 4 mills. None of the money could go for construction, but could be employed only for maintenance of structures constructed with federal watershed funds.

Such a levy would be collected only in the watershed district, but some Iowa counties are using another method of accumulating maintenance funds — a 0 to one-fourth mill levy on all agricultural land in the county. Proponents of this levy explain that watershed programs reduce the amount of bridge and road maintenance for the county, thus reducing the tax burden for all residents.