

Putting a focus on conservation

TIM ROHWER
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This summer, when washing the car, how about doing it on the lawn.

Instead of letting rain flow down the spout and onto the ground, put a barrel there to capture the water and reuse it.

These are just two ways to conserve water that the West Pottawattamie County Soil and Water Conservation District will offer people who attend upcoming the Home Improvement and Landscaping show at the Mid-America Center.

"We're focusing on urban conservation," said Danelle Schmielau, a project coordinator for the agency. "Our display will focus on handling rain water."

Rain barrels are becoming an attractive and popular way of storing rainwater to reuse later, she said.

"The idea is to capture water from the spout," Schmielau said. "More and more people are putting them

in all the time."

Instead of having rain water from the spout splashing wastefully onto concrete, a barrel under that spout can store many gallons of water that people can use to water a garden, house plants, wash the car, even as bathing water, she said.

Speaking of washing the car or truck, Kevin Seevers, a county resource planner, suggested parking the vehicle on the lawn instead of the cemented driveway where water and pollutants can flow down into storm sewers and into area creeks. Washing on the grass will allow that water to seep harmlessly into the soil.

"An even better alternative is to do it at a car wash in which they're all hooked up to sanitary sewers," Seevers said.

He also recommended watering the grass early in the morning, giving the ground a "good drink," while allowing the heat to dry the grass. That helps prevent fungus from growing.

Conservation District representatives to be at annual home show

CONSERVATION/From Page 1A

The key to all this is to save and reuse this precious resource, which can save people money, Schmielau said.

"Between 40 percent and 60 percent of the expenses of the water we use come in the treatment of it," she said. "And 40 percent to 60 percent of the water we use is for watering lawns."

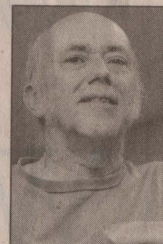
The agency, located at 305 McKenzie Ave., has had a booth at the Home Improvement and Landscaping Show held at the Mid-America Center for several years now to

better inform the public on what's called Best Management practices on perhaps the most important resource of all - water.

"We focused on the Little Pony Creek project the first year, and the second year we focused on rain gardens," Seevers said.

Information about rain gardens will also be available. Rain gardens are depressional areas landscaped with flowers and native vegetation that soak up rainwater, instead of it flowing into storm sewers that send to area creeks.

The Home Show won't be the only place where people can talk in person about saving water. The agency will also hold a rain barrel workshop and demonstration at the Council Bluffs Community Hall, 205 S. Main St., on March 27 and April 3 from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. both days.



Know of a site you'd like to see profiled in the Nonpareil?
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Submitted photo

Council Bluffs Daily
Nonpareil

Feb. 23, 2010

NONPAREIL *online*

The Daily Nonpareil, Council Bluffs, Iowa

Council Bluffs

Putting a focus on conservation

By TIM ROHWER, Staff Writer

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Published: Tuesday, February 23, 2010 11:05 AM CST

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Print Page



Submitted photo - Rain gardens like these along Harrison Street in Council Bluffs are an effective way to reducing polluted water from flowing into storm sewers, according to local conservation officials.



Submitted photo - Rain barrels, like these at Iowa School for the Deaf, can store rainwater for reuse later and cut down on polluted water flowing into storm sewers, according to local conservation officials.



Submitted photo - The West Pottawattamie County Soil and Water Conservation District will have a booth at the upcoming Home Improvement and Landscaping Show, like this one in 2008, to help the public learn more about water conservation.



Submitted photo - Rain barrels are becoming an attractive and popular way for residents to store rainwater for reuse later, according to local conservation officials.



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County Official Says No Chance Dam Will Break

Pottwattamie County Supervisor Counters Official's Worst-Case Scenario

POSTED: 9:26 am CST March 10, 2010

UPDATED: 9:36 am CST March 10, 2010

COUNCIL BLUFFS, Iowa -- Pottwattamie County's supervisor said there is absolutely no chance an earthen dam will break north of Council Bluffs.

Loren Knauss made the comment following concerns by the county's Emergency Manager Jeff Thuelen.

On Sunday, Thuelen mapped out for KETV NewsWatch 7, a worst-case flooding scenario involving the dam located near Old Lincoln Highway near Lake Hill Lane north of Council Bluffs. The dam regulates the amount of water that is released into Indian Creek. Thuelen said should the dam have a catastrophic failure, 2,500 homes and businesses would be flooded in the downtown Council Bluffs area.

On Tuesday, Knauss said the worst-case scenario laid out by Thuelen is simply impossible.

"Dams are designed to let water flow through them and that's what it does," said Knauss. "So any melting snow at this point would literally have to be with 14 inches of rainfall in a 24-hour period. There's now way the dam's going to break at this point."

Knauss said there are measures in place to prevent flooding, including two spillways and a pipe system that provides several drains at the lake next to the dam.

Thuelen had not comment when KETV NewsWatch spoke with him Tuesday.

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Using cover crops to heal the land

**(Information provided
by Thomas Hurford Area
Resource Conservationist)**

In the last two years Iowa has received exceptionally high rainfall. Much of this rainfall has come in very intense events, which have caused extremely high amounts of erosion.

As a result, rills and ephemeral gullies have shown up in areas where they have not been a problem in the past.

This has prompted many to perform spot tillage in fields to smooth these areas out in order to plant. The problem with this is that the tillage has further loosened the soil and made these areas even more susceptible to erosion when the next extreme rainfall event occurs.

Thus in many of these fields we are caught in a vicious cycle of erosion, tillage to smooth out the effects of the erosion, and even more erosion when the next event occurs.

The first question that should be asked is: Is this erosion truly caused by extreme events unlikely to occur in the future to the extent they occurred over the past few years?

If the answer to this question is no, than grassed waterways should be planned and installed.



If the answer is yes, than at a minimum, consideration should be given to seeding a cover crop such as oats, wheat, or rye to provide temporary cover in order to allow the soil to re-consolidate after tillage. By far the best option is to plant either winter wheat or rye in the fall early enough to allow some fall growth prior to the onset of winter. For this to work, the cover crop should be seeded prior to the middle of October. If this is not possible, than the second best alternative is to seed a small grain cover crop in the early spring. Any small may be seeded, however in the spring; a higher

seeding rate should be used than is normally recommended for cover crop purposes. Two to three bushels of oats to the acre would be the recommended seeding rate.

The crop can be planted through the cover crop but should be allowed to grow until it provides sufficient cover to control erosion, generally until it reaches eight to 12 inches in height.

The cover crop can then be killed with the first post emergent herbicide application.

"If a farmer wants to only seed down a filled in ditch, a grass cover such as rye can be an effective choice. It grows very aggressively and has less risk to the crop by being on only a small area." This according to Steve McGrew of McGrew Brothers Farm located in Mills County. The McGrew Brothers have successfully used cereal rye cover crops for several years now, to heal ephemeral gullies.



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The Daily Nonpareil, Council Bluffs, Iowa

Council Bluffs

Officials confident dam will protect downtown Bluffs

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By TIM ROHWER, Staff Writer

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Published: Wednesday, March 10, 2010 10:52 AM CST

Government officials and area residents seem confident that a dam north of Council Bluffs will hold any rising water from flooding the city.

"There's nothing wrong with that dam," said Doug Reed, an official with Pottawattamie County Emergency Management. "We don't have any immediate concerns about that dam failing. We've got folks that monitor that dam, and we're not getting any indication for flooding."

"It's structurally sound," added his boss, Jeff Theulen.

The earthen dam is located about two miles north of the northeastern edge of the city near Honeysuckle Road. It controls the amount of water going into Indian Creek, which runs alongside North Broadway and directly into the downtown area.

The dam's structural strength came about from improvements over the past few years to make it sturdier, officials said.

"I think everybody is confident that it is in good shape," County Supervisor Roger Williams said.

"The chances of that dam breaking is very slim," added fellow Supervisor Loren Knauss.

The only spot in the county where overflowing water may soon occur is on the Nishnabotna River where some homes along Highway 59 might be impacted, according to Reed. However, the Nishnabotna River is expected to crest at 13.4 feet, with actual flood stage being 14 feet, he said.

He also said the Missouri River should not rise any higher than 10 feet below its identified flood stage, according to his latest information.

Residents around the dam and downstream don't seem worried about the chance of flooding.

"People around here aren't concerned about it," said Betty Ranney.

The dam held a 10-inch downpour several years ago, so it should handle any remaining snow melt or storm, she said.

She and her husband live on Mudhollow Road, slightly away from the dam, but own land directly in any flood path.

"I'm not worried about it," Ranney said.

Frank Brabec, who resides along Indian Creek by Coit Road, has never experienced a flood in the years he has lived there, he said.

"Not in 40 years," he said. "That creek handles a tremendous amount of water. I'm not concerned about flooding. Even when there were no dams upstream, there was no flooding."

"That creek holds water volumes better than any other creek in the county," Theulen said.

"I don't think there's any panic, just caution," Williams said.



Staff photo/Cindy Christensen - With the heavy amount of snow over the winter plus the added spring rains, the chances of floods at the earthen dam, located on Honeysuckle Road, have increased drastically.



Staff photo/Cindy Christensen

The dam and adjacent reservoir are storing water runoff and releasing it in a controlled manner through Indian Creek.

Fire officials say dam working as designed

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Officials offer flood-related tips

The Indian Creek earthen dam and storage reservoir north of Council Bluffs are working as designed, said the city's Fire Department Wednesday, and major flooding is not imminent.

"The mayor (Tom Hanafan) and city staff, after conference with the West Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District, wants to reassure the citizens of Council Bluffs that a catastrophic release is not imminent," according to a press release from the Fire Department. "Those responsible for the dam and reservoir have performed the required inspections on the dam site, and no problems were found."

Melting snow and the recent rains can create some flooding issues, the department said, but the dam and adjacent reservoir are storing water runoff and releasing it in a controlled manner through

Indian Creek.

"We do support the message of the Emergency Management community that all Iowans should be aware of the weather and its potential for damage," the department said. "Spring brings severe weather potential, and everyone should take the time to prepare."

Residents are urged to take appropriate safety measures with electricity and natural gas during flooding, according to MidAmerican Energy.

Its customers should call the company to have services temporarily disconnected if their electric or gas meter is threatened by flooding.

Before an anticipated flood strikes, and if there's no water in the basement, people should unplug as many appliances as possible.

And, if possible, move them to a higher level. Nobody should touch or attempt to unplug or disconnect an electrical appliance if the floor is

damp or the individual is standing in water.

If water might rise high enough to cover electrical outlets, switch off the circuit breakers at the main electrical box. Be sure water is not covering outlets before entering the basement.

After a flood, if people smell natural gas, do not enter the building, but call MidAmerican Energy at (888) 427-5632. Once floodwaters recede, call MidAmerican to restore service if it was temporarily disconnected. People should not try to reconnect service themselves.

If the home was flooded, a professional electrician should examine the wiring and appliances to determine any safety issues.

Thoroughly clean and dry all electrical cords and appliances before using them. Also be aware of possible scams about flood relief. If something seems suspicious, call local law enforcement.

STICKY SITUATION

Supervisors mull drainage problem in county subdivision



Staff photo/Chad Nation

Even on a sunny spring day, water and mud can be seen on the road exiting Trace View Estates. An owner of property in the subdivision asked the Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors to do something about the problem Monday.

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The Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors discussed Monday whether county money should be used to fix a water runoff problem in a private development.

Russell Cain lives in Trace View Estates south and east of Council Bluffs and told the board the road going in and out of the subdivision is in "terrible" condi-

tion.

"You have to drive through a foot of mud and water to get to your home," Cain said.

The developer of the subdivision, Michael Collins, was fined \$14,350 by the Environmental Protection Agency in 2008 for failing to comply with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System storm water permit at the development.

As of December 2009, the EPA is seeking a penalty of up to \$157,500 for additional violations at the development by Collins.

Cain said the water and mud situation has been going on for more than three years.

"I keep getting told to go after Michael Collins, and I'm tired of it," Cain told the board. "He's gone."

Cain, who is also a homebuilder in the area, said 18 of the 34 lots in the subdivision have homes built on them, and some of the unfinished lots do not have proper erosion control.

DRAINAGE/See Page 2A

Council Bluffs Daily Nonpareil

March 30, 2010

Pg 2. →

Trace View residents frustrated with drainage problems

DRAINAGE/From Page 1A

Kay Mocha, Pottawattamie County Planning and Development director, said there are no local regulations dealing with storm water management.

"We are looking at developing them," she said, "but we have no enforcement. That is up to the EPA and (Iowa Department of Natural Resources); so even if we wanted to do something, we have no legal authority."

Mocha said the situation in Trace View Estates is a good example where a local ordinance might have prevented the problem from the beginning.

"DNR doesn't have the staff to get their arms around this issue at the local level," she said. "A local mechanism could review the development as it takes place and keep this kind of situation from happening."

Even with a local ordinance, Mocha said, the EPA would still scrutinize storm water runoff on developments. But if developers were following local ordinances, it could minimize fines from the EPA.

Supervisor Loren Knauss said any local ordinances

wouldn't have "the teeth" that DNR or EPA guidelines already have.

"It's a Catch 22; if we try to prevent this, we will get beat up for making new ordinances," Knauss said. "Or we clean up a mess that could have been prevented. It frustrates me as a taxpayer."

Cain proposed diverting the water runoff to another area, but estimated the fix would cost \$50,000.

"I'm apprehensive about using county money to finish a development," County Engineer John Rasmussen said.

Supervisor chairman Melvyn Houser said the board would take the matter into consideration but wondered what power the board has in the matter.

"The developer is not there, and we have no authority," he said.

"I don't think there is an easy fix," Knauss said. "But should the county pay money to fix a mistake?"

After the meeting, Cain said he didn't know what the outcome of his meeting would be.

"I just hope I didn't spend a half hour on deaf ears," he said.

NONPAREILonline

The Daily Nonpareil, Council Bluffs, Iowa

News

EPA's impact 'long time coming'

[Print Page](#)

By Emily Kesten, For the Nonpareil

Published: Wednesday, March 3, 2010 11:05 AM CST

Those towering snowdrifts will soon melt into headaches for land developers and homeowners alike, but the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will add a catch to the muddy mix.

In November 2009, the EPA issued a final rule to reduce water pollution from construction sites, which became effective in February. To be phased in over four years, the regulations seek to improve water quality and reduce the amount of sediment discharged from construction sites by up to 27 million pounds annually.

"It's 20 years too late," said Kristi Jerkovich of Council Bluffs and executive officer of the Southwest Iowa Association of Realtors. "This is a long time coming."

Jerkovich, on her third retaining wall, has spent years battling erosion in the Loess Hills. The set of practices called "low-impact development" that the EPA has issued would have been beneficial years ago, she said.

But, those new regulations and monitoring could cause headaches for area developers, landscapers and engineers. To ease the pain – and costly fines – the West Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District will bring experts together for a series of LID workshops.

Landscape architect Debra Schiel-Larson of Indianola has worked with the city of Johnston as the planner for its LID municipal stormwater project.

"We don't want to be just regulators," Schiel-Larson said of city officials that must now enforce the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' mandated LID project. "We want developers to understand and have input and streamline the process."

Battling conventional design and engineering practices has been Schiel-Larson's greatest challenge. At the Thursday workshop, she wants to show developers how to propose a project that complies with new permits and regulations.

Landscape architect Brian Leaders of Underwood has spent 13 years working with developers and wishing he could do something about on-site erosion. Leaders has often been asked to design against regulations when a developer hoped to negotiate with a municipality.

"When the authorities said no, I'd have to redesign it, anyway," he said.

Schiel-Larson noted similar experiences.

"Designers might spend thousands on drawings that don't meet regulations. We want to reach people before they reach that stage," she said.

"It's frustrating not to be able to truly design to the land on the developments I work on," Leaders said.

Now, with federal low-impact guidelines as a floor, enforcement will come down the pipeline, and Leaders is hopeful.

"There are some developers in the area currently going beyond what is required already," he said. "They're not being congratulated right now, but more people are interested in environmentally friendly subdivisions," so the rewards will come.

Outreach and education are the main goals of the workshop. With input from attendants, the West Pottawattamie SWCD plans to hold three or four workshops tailored to the needs and concerns of area developers and designers.

The first workshop will be held in Looft Hall on the campus of Iowa Western Community College, 2700 College Road, Thursday. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.; the workshop lasts from 9 a.m. to noon. Cost is \$30 at the door or \$15 for full-time students. For more information, call the SWCD office at (712) 328-2489, Ext. 3, or go online to www.pottswcd.org.

Why low-impact development?

Conventional development methods involve stripping the land, leaving soil exposed to erosion and unable to infiltrate water run-off. Less soil to absorb rainwater means more run-off reaches drains and storm sewer pipes – along with pollutants from vehicles, waste and chemicals – which ultimately ends up in streams and water supplies.

Stormwater management systems are costly to implement and maintain. However, LID is simple and cost-effective. It:

- Keeps run-off close to the source without complex engineering strategies
- Integrates green space, native vegetation
- Uses micro-scale techniques that cost less to install and maintain than conventional stormwater management systems
- Improves water quality in area watersheds and water supplies

LID plans can be customized to the site and involve something as simple as a rain barrel or bioretention area at the edge of a supermarket parking lot.

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KETV.com**Officials Keep Close Eye On Iowa Dam*****Council Bluffs Could See Catastrophic Flood If Dam Fails***

POSTED: 5:58 am CST March 9, 2010

UPDATED: 6:14 am CST March 9, 2010

COUNCIL BLUFFS, Iowa -- Emergency managers in Pottawattamie County have some serious flood concerns. Specifically, they are worried about a dam that holds back floods from inundating downtown Council Bluffs.

The dam located north of Council Bluffs controls the amount of water going into Indian Creek, which runs through the north side of the city and directly into downtown. If the earthen dam were to fail, officials said the flooding would be catastrophic.

"If it breaks, if it catastrophically fails, I have about a 58 to 98 minute warning time into Council Bluffs," said Pottawattamie County Emergency Manager Jeff Theulen.

Theulen said engineers have mapped out a worst-case scenario should the dam break. He said it would be a race against time to evacuate before a rush of water comes roaring down Indian Creek.

"We could have up to 2,500 homes and businesses affected," he said.

Theulen said his worries have been growing as of late.

"I mean we've got record snow pack. We've got ground that has not been frozen under the snow. So it's already laden with moisture and now with the forecast over the next couple of days, with a possible couple of inches of rain over the next five days, there's great concern," said Theulen.



But those who live near the lake held back by the dam said they understand the concern, but they aren't too worried.

"I've never seen any threat to the dam," said homeowner Dr. Bert Wood. "I've never seen the water more than ten inches, at the most, higher than it is right now."

Theulen said it's his job to look at any potential for a problem.

"The bottom line is it's an earthen dam, so there's always going to be a worry about it," he said.

Should the dam break, the county's 911 system would call all the property owners in the path of the flood.

Related To Story



Video: Emergency Officials Keep Eye On Iowa Dam

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News

Regulations on water run-off to change developments[Print Page](#)

By Chad Nation, Staff Writer
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Published: Friday, March 5, 2010 12:33 PM CST

Low impact development.

Those are the three words that developers better become familiar with as tougher water regulations are placed on developments.

New guidelines put in place over the next four years by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to preserve water quality and flood plain management rules currently in the Iowa Legislature will affect how and where builders develop land.

Dozens of builders and developers attended a workshop sponsored by the Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District Thursday at Iowa Western Community College to learn more about the existing and upcoming regulations.

Landscape architect Brian Leaders of Underwood – one of three presenters at the seminar – said, like it or not, storm water management for developers is here to stay.

The EPA's goal is to preserve and improve water quality and reduce water discharge from sites.

"You will be required to go above and beyond what you do now," Leaders said. "And expect vigorous EPA enforcement. I know that they were here three or four times last year."

And those EPA investigations have led to lawsuits against builders.

"What it comes down to is are we dealing with symptoms or problems. A road covered with dirt from run-off is not a problem, but a symptom," said Rich Maaske, conservationist for the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. "If we control the volume of run-off we won't have a problem."

Leaders said there are numerous ways to control water run-off during and after work on a development. Ditch checks, temporary ponding and phasing construction can limit the amount of soil erosion through water run-off.

After the development is built, Leaders said rain gardens, porous pavements and detention areas can help control water run-off.

Controlling the water during and after construction is key, Leaders said, because storm water run-off is carrying higher concentrations of pollutants into streams.

"If the water is not running through vegetation, it is running right through to the streams and creeks," he said. "What are we doing to the guy downstream?"

Reducing future flood damage is another issue developers will have to address in the coming years. Leaders said the Iowa Legislature is currently looking into acts related to flood plain management.

The act would limit reconstruction or new construction in flood plains and prohibit structure and infrastructure reconstruction of areas substantially damaged by a flood.

Maaske said more workshops would be held in the coming months to address low impact regulations that will affect developers.

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NEOLA/MINDEN

Senior Center plans roast beef dinner Friday, April 9

The Senior Center will be serving a roast beef dinner on Friday, April 9 at 5:30 p.m. at the Neola Area Community Center.

Come enjoy the outside presentation beginning at 4:30 p.m. A rain simulator will be on display to show soil erosion right in front of your eyes. This is a tool used to educate people on how rains affect different types of erosion and different types of soil situations. There will also be a stream bed simulator showing erosion in stream beds.

After dinner, enjoy the rain garden presentation by Danielle Schmie-

lau showing how to divert rainwater drainage out of downspouts and driveways to reduce pollutants before the runoff flows into stream beds.

Master Gardener Diana Benzing will give a presentation on gardening in a small space. Diana has several great ideas on how to utilize a small amount of space for a lush and prolific garden.

Please call Kathy at 485-2179 for reservations. There is limited seating available for this event.

Neola Gazette April 1, 2010



West Pottawattamie Soil & Water Conservation District Booth C06

Urban and agricultural residents, see us for your money saving conservation ideas.

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SWI counties receive watershed funding

DES MOINES (AP) — A new program will allocate \$5 million for water quality projects statewide.

The money will pay for work, such as erosion control and sewer improvements.

The Watershed Improvement Review Board, created by the Legislature last year, approved the \$5 million. Contracts must still be approved.

Iowa has more than 200 seriously polluted waterways, and ranks among the most fertilizer-polluted areas in the world.

Projects eyed for initial awards are:

■ Clear Creek watershed, Iowa County, \$500,000; Farmers Creek watershed, Jackson County, \$28,738; Muchakinock Creek watershed, Mahaska County, \$500,000; Viking Lake watershed, Montgomery County, \$58,500; Little Pony Creek watershed, Pottawattamie County, \$215,673; and Mill-

Picayune watershed, Shelby County, \$56,250.

■ Yellow River watershed, Allamakee, Clayton, Winnebago counties, \$229,000; Rathbun Lake best management practices, Rathbun Lake and Water Alliance, Appanoose, Clarke, Decatur, Lucas, Monroe and Wayne counties, \$500,000; Upper Miller Creek watershed, Black Hawk County, \$68,900; Dry Run Creek watershed, Black Hawk County, \$500,000; Storm Lake lake watershed, \$477,000; and Storm Lake watershed, \$23,000.

■ Elk River watershed, Clinton and Jackson counties, \$292,045; Dickinson County urban watersheds, \$486,800; Hewitt Creek watershed, Dubuque County, \$159,294; Clear Lake watershed, Hancock and Cerro Gordo counties, \$150,000; and Drainage District 1, Humboldt and Webster counties, \$500,000.

Council Bluffs Daily Nonpareil
March 2010

NONPAREIL*online*

The Daily Nonpareil, Council Bluffs, Iowa

News

Workshop to help people put a LID on it

[Print Page](#)

Published: Tuesday, February 23, 2010 11:05 AM CST

The Earth moves – sometimes right from under homeowners. Erosion can ruin any home's perch in the Loess Hills.

To help solve the problem, the West Pottawattamie Soil & Water Conservation District will hold a workshop for realtors, landscapers and developers March 4.

Conventional development in the Loess Hills has increased soil erosion and stormwater runoff, and ushered in lawsuits from homeowners and six-figure fines from the Environmental Protection Agency.

Pottawattamie County is poised to adopt low impact development ordinances, or LID, this spring. Omaha and Douglas and Sarpy counties have already adopted LID ordinances. Realtors, landscapers and developers attending "Working with Low Impact Development – Steps for Success" will learn about:

- n New EPA guidelines and upcoming developments.
- n Necessary steps to get a project and subdivision approved by local authorities based on real-life situations.
- n How to communicate with regulators and avoid costly penalties.

The workshop will be held from 9 a.m. to noon in Looft Hall on the campus of Iowa Western Community College; registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

Guest speakers include landscape architect Brian Leaders, certified planner Deb Schiel-Larsen and marketing director Rachel Flint of Hubbell Realty Co.

The workshop is the first in a series of three or four seminars focused on LID.

Registration is \$25 or \$10 for full-time students before March 2. Cost at the door is \$30 or \$15 for students.

To register or for more information, contact the West Pottawattamie SWCD at (712) 328-2489, Ext. 3, or go online to www.pottswcd.org.

Make checks payable to West Pottawattamie SWCD, 305 McKenzie Ave., Council Bluffs, IA 51503.

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Conservation measures

Northey announces figures from 2010 agriculture revolving loan program

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Staff Writer

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About \$12 million was loaned to Iowa farmers and landowners for voluntary conservation practices in fiscal year 2010.

In a release Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey announced the money loaned went toward the installation of practices that improve water quality.

Pottawattamie County farmers

received \$150,305.69, while farmers in southwest Iowa – Pottawattamie, Mills, Harrison, Cass, Monona, Crawford, Fremont, Montgomery, Shelby and Page – received \$6,174,672.89.

The low-interest loans were available through the Iowa revolving loan fund's Local Water Protection and Livestock the Water Quality Facility Loan Fund.

"As those funds are repaid they will be loaned out again to continue to support conservation in our state," Northey said in the release.



Northey

To apply for funds, farmers and landowners work with the Soil and Water Conservation District in their county.

MEASURES/See Page 2A

Council Bluffs
Daily Nonpareil
January 1, 2011

Figures announced for loan program

MEASURES/From Page 1A

Applications are accepted year-round and are "typically processed in a few days," according to the release.

"The program is helping put conservation on the ground at a faster rate than if we didn't offer an incentive," said Tony Toigo, a program planner with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. "It keeps soil in place and improves water quality."

The loans are administered

through a local bank or credit union at a fixed three-percent interest rate. Money is deposited in the local banks by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and earns zero-interest, Toigo said.

Asked why the department couldn't just directly loan the money to farmers at zero-percent interest, Toigo said local lenders are in a better position to work with local farmers.

"Also, administratively, a bank is in a much better posi-

tion to handle these loans," he said. "And banks are at risk if a farmer defaults."

Toigo said the loans the department would be able to help more farmers than if it relied solely on appropriations from the state legislature.

According to the release, water quality conservation practices covered by the program include but are not limited to:

- Terraces, grade stabilization structures and water and sediment control basins
- Pasture and hay land

planting or prescribed grazing

- Grassed waterways and filter strips
- Field borders, wind-breaks and buffers
- Waste storage facilities
- Deep bedded buildings or other roofed manure control structures

Darrell Stamp, who farms about 1,800 acres in the Walnut area, said the loan money, "sure makes things work better for me, made it easier to get conservation projects on the ground."

Stamp said with the help

of the loans he's installed a pond to retain chemical runoff, a compost area, put in about 2,600 feet of terraces and installed a cattle confinement building for manure runoff.

"We have to take care of the water quality and the land or we won't have anything," Stamp said.

Since the program was created in 2006, 1,800 farmers have borrowed more than \$54 million to support additional conservation on their farm, the release said.



Missouri Valley TIMES NEWS

Sunday, March 27, 2011

Local Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners attend Partnership Day

Sunday, March 27, 2011

More than 50 of Iowa's Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Commissioners joined their colleagues from across the state at the annual Conservation Partnership Day held at the Capitol in Des Moines on Wednesday, Jan. 26.

Held in the rotunda, Commissioners and other attendees were encouraged to talk with their local State Senators and Representatives about the crucial need for investment in Iowa's land and soil for both current and future generations.

Local Commissioners attending included Jonnie Meislahn of Audubon County; Ron Brownlee of Adair County; Larry Faylor of Harrison County; Lowell Forristall and Dwight (Pete) Hobson of East Pottawattamie County; Erica Bonkosky-Montefusco and Allan Tiarks of West Pottawattamie County. They represented CDI Region 5, which covers Crawford, Carroll, Harrison, Shelby, Audubon, Guthrie, Pottawattamie, Cass and Adair counties.

"Conservation Partnership Day is a great opportunity to share with legislators and other government leaders about the work being done by the Soil and Water Conservation Districts across the state," said Bill Northey, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture. "I appreciate the willingness of these Commissioners to come to Des Moines to tell that story."

The theme for the event was "Invest for the next generation...Conservation Can't Wait," and included displays highlighting current conservation projects in each of the nine Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) regions across the state.

Tim Palmer, CDI President, felt the day was a success, "We had several new Commissioners attending who had a satisfying day on the hill."

Also exhibiting were the Iowa Learning Farms, Iowa Department of Ag and Land Stewardship Division of Soil Conservation (IDALS DCS), Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Iowa Land Improvement Contractors Association (LICA).

More information about the activities of Iowa Soil and Water Conservation Districts and a list of local Staff and Commissioners can be found by clicking on "Soil and Water Conservation Districts" on the IDALS Division of Soil website www.iowaagriculture.gov/soilConservation.asp.

The event was coordinated through the partnership of the Conservation Districts of Iowa and IDALS Division of Soil Conservation.

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The Daily Nonpareil

COUNCIL BLUFFS/IOWA

July 31, 2011

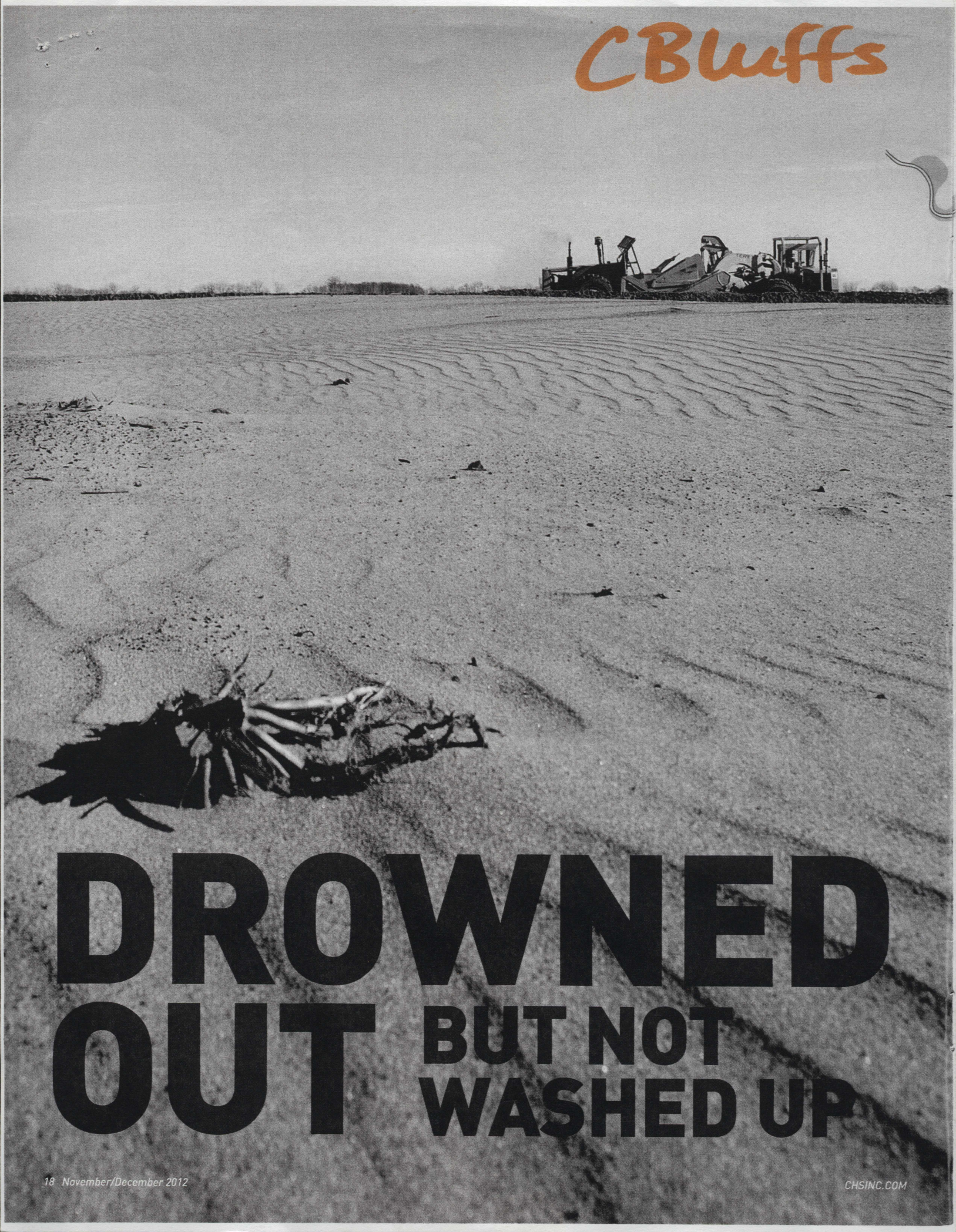
TAKING A WINNING PHOTO



Staff photo/Cindy Christensen

West Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners David Dittmer, left, and Allan Tiarks, right, stand with the winners of the first-ever West Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation photo contest, from left, Katelyn Larson, Carla Grosvenor, Haylee Grosvenor and Pearl Huddle, front. Other winners (not pictured) are Wendy Leaders, Clint Schmielau and Sydney Leaders. All photos from the contest can be seen at the West Pottawattamie Soil and Conservation booth at Westfair through Sunday.

Family says goodbye as old crane gets new digs

A black and white photograph of a beach. In the foreground, a piece of driftwood lies on the sand. The middle ground shows a wide expanse of sand with some small debris. In the background, a bulldozer is visible on the beach, and a line of trees is in the distance under a clear sky.

CB Bluffs

**DROWNED
OUT BUT NOT
WASHED UP**

WRITTEN BY: Peg Zenk

PHOTO CREDIT PAGE 18: Kent Sievers

PHOTO CREDIT PAGE 21: Tim Hynds

MAP SOURCE: Doug Demers, Washington
County Bank, Blair, Neb.
July 3, 2011

THE 2011 MISSOURI RIVER FLOOD ALTERED LANDSCAPES AND FIELDS ALONG ITS BANKS, BUT FOR MOST GROWERS THERE, SOIL FERTILITY IS ON THE REBOUND.

For Lee Westergaard, the most memorable thing about the Missouri River flooding in the summer of 2011 was the image of sand dunes, some up to 5 feet deep, stretched across his field. Sand and silt washed up from the riverbed nearby covered 45 acres of his Iowa land west of Whiting, Iowa.

Flooding along the southernmost 1,700 miles of the Missouri River covered more than 560,000 acres in seven states that summer, including 447,000 acres of farmland, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The cost in lost production and damage to infrastructure in Iowa alone was estimated at \$207 million for the six southwestern counties most impacted.

But what made this flood unique was its duration. Typically, floods along the river come and go within weeks. But the 2011 flood waters took months to recede. For Westergaard and other farmers between Sioux City and Omaha, the river level peaked in late July.

"We had about 300 acres under water, and it stayed that way until September," he says.

When the water receded, the damage was evident. "There was hardly a cornstalk left. All the crop residue was gone," he recalls. In some areas, up to 6 inches of topsoil had vanished, too.

"Sand and riverbank debris were spread all over," says Westergaard. "There was a huge trench, maybe 100 feet long, scoured out of the field by the force of the water." >>>



Almost a half-million acres were flooded along the Missouri River in 2011. Areas in blue show how far the river flowed beyond its banks between Nebraska and Iowa.

>>> Much of the work of filling in gullies and spreading all that sand had to wait until after harvest, when the wettest parts of the field had dried. Westergaard and his brother Mark, who have soil-moving experience, realized their own equipment wouldn't be enough to handle the job and hired a contractor.

"He came in with two scrapers and a bulldozer to load, haul and spread the sand 6 to 8 inches deep on other fields, and then my brother and son Doug and I leveled and incorporated it," says Westergaard. "We had to go somewhere with it, and we couldn't push it back in the river where it came from. So our best option was to spread it on our heavier soils."

"Compared to some, we were lucky. We didn't have flood insurance but did have crop insurance, and we were able to do a lot of work ourselves. For others, the cost of reclaiming the land was more than it was worth, and they've had to give up raising anything on it," he says.

Two Months Under Water

In the majority of the field, where moving sand was not an issue, the Westergaards cleared away debris and called Russ Todd, an agronomist for Western Iowa Co-op, for soil sampling.

"We had a few other growers in similar situations, and none of us really knew what to expect from soils that had been under water that long," says Todd. "Previous flooding along the river had never taken this long to recede, so we were all curious to see what nutrient content was left."

The impact was less than anyone expected. "In some cases, we were surprised to see higher levels of microbial activity in flooded soil than we typically see, although they were different types of microbes," says Tim Mundorf, technical field representative for Midwest Laboratories, which handles soil analysis for the region.

While the soil samples the lab received were never labeled as being from flooded soils, he says there were some trends within test results from samples drawn in fields near the river. "Nitrate levels were often very high. Levels of sulfate, iron and manganese were significantly higher than normal. Phosphate levels generally were low, possibly because some was tied up by the iron," Mundorf says.

"Our soil tests showed extremely high levels of sulfur and calcium in the sand-covered areas and very low P and K," says Westergaard. "Flooded soils with no sand on them showed high sulfur levels, but fairly normal P, K and calcium levels for that soil type."

Strategies to Rebuild Soils

After growers removed debris and filled in gullies in their fields, the next major concern was getting something to grow quickly in all that bare ground. "Even if they had weeds coming up, we recommended letting them grow," says John Wilson, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension educator. "It was better than nothing, and the soil needed some protection against further erosion."

"Planting a fast-growing cover crop such as oats, wheat, rye or triticale would help protect soil, help add organic matter, and stimulate microbial and fungal activity," he says. "Getting any kind of living plant in there would help increase those populations."

To get hands-on experience, Wilson and colleagues started conducting cover-crop, fertility and inoculant trials on formerly flooded land in early 2012.

Tallying the Flood's Impact

With an estimated 150,000 acres of Iowa farmland impacted by the 2011 flood along the Missouri River, the costs of the damage are significant. A study sponsored by Iowa Farm Bureau and Nebraska Farm Bureau attempted to total the damage:

- The impact on six southwestern counties in Iowa most affected was \$207 million.
- In Nebraska, crop losses totaled \$188.8 million, not including damage to infrastructure, future soil productivity and business operations.
- After crop insurance and disaster payments, remaining estimated losses for the 14 Nebraska counties primarily affected were \$41.1 million.

"With one season of data, we see a definite benefit to planting some cover crop versus none," he says.

Soil experts also recommended minimizing tillage on flooded land because it could further destroy soil structure. "Only farmers who had a layer of sand to incorporate really needed to till," Wilson says.

2012 Crop Bounces Back

The mild winter and early spring allowed many growers to get into fields earlier this spring than normal, which was a promising start to the new season, says Travis Kauth, agronomist at CHS

“

Many of these flooded areas went from having a 500-year flood to a 50-year drought in one year's time.

”

•• LEARN MORE ••

Watch a video
at chsinc.com/c.



Iowa farmer Lee Westergaard, left, and Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey examine flood-ravaged soil conditions.

Wausa, Wausa, Neb. "Although everyone was anxious to get into previously flooded fields again, we expected to see crops struggle. But that wasn't the case in many fields.

"In terms of nutrient recommendations, we estimated N, P and K rates for an average year, then suggested growers buffer that by adding about 20 percent. There was a wide variability in soil samples taken from flooded fields due to soil movement," he says.

Those estimates proved to be fairly accurate for many growers. "Tissue samples taken in mid-season this past year showed that most of the crops were getting enough nitrogen," Kauth says.

On the Iowa side of the river, 90 percent of the formerly flooded fields were planted, says Todd. "We generally recommended putting a little extra phosphate and nitrogen on those fields and using a mix of micronutrients in starter fertilizer."

In fields where sand was spread, the corn crop started slow and variable. Westergaard says, "Plants looked more yellow where more of the topsoil had been

washed away, but by late July, most of it had caught up to the rest of the field and looked fairly normal."

But all of that sand continues to prove challenging. "With so much sand laying on the surface, every time the wind blows, the sand blows and damages corn and beans," he says. "And when it rains hard, the sandy areas seem to seal up instead of absorb it. That's the reason I planted some soybeans on the contour this past year, to try to hold more moisture. I'll probably need to do that for several years."

And overcoming compaction from heavy earth-moving equipment will be a challenge. "It was pretty visible throughout the field where equipment had been driven the most — corn was only 3 to 4 feet tall there," Westergaard says.

This fall he planted ryegrass in those areas, hoping the deep roots will help break up compaction and add much-needed organic matter. But he knows improvement will take time. "It could take five years to get the soil back to the way it was before the flood." 

Two-Bucket Flood Test

When it became apparent that flood waters along the Missouri River weren't going to recede quickly in the summer of 2011, agronomists and farmers began calling Midwest Laboratories in Omaha, Neb., to find out how long-term saturation might affect soil fertility. To answer their questions, lab staff designed a simple experiment using two 5-gallon buckets of farm soil.

They kept one bucket of soil flooded with river water for 10 weeks, while the other received only rainwater from passing showers. Then holes were drilled in the flooded bucket so the soil could drain. Soil samples were taken from each bucket at the beginning and end of the trial.

Compared to the nonflooded (control) soil, the flooded soil had:

- **Lower phosphorus:** Flooding seemed to reduce the amount of available phosphorus.
- **Higher sodium:** Significantly higher sodium levels could have been caused by evaporation of river water over the summer.
- **Much higher sulfur:** Sulfur increased nearly 10-fold in the flooded soil but stayed consistent in the control, which could mean that more sulfur in the organic form was mineralized and became available in the anaerobic flooded soil.
- **Much higher manganese:** The amount of manganese increased 10-fold. Manganese is typically reduced (gains electrons) in anaerobic conditions and becomes more available in waterlogged soils.
- **Higher iron:** Iron increased nearly fourfold, and could have become more available in the flooded environment.
- **Higher copper:** These levels tripled, compared to the control.
- **High nitrate:** Initial testing after floodwaters were drained showed levels similar to before flooding. But soil samples taken two months later showed high nitrate levels, indicating possible mineralization of organic nitrogen into nitrate.

The researchers note that these results are based on only one trial and that individual farm results could vary greatly because the trial didn't include effects from soil erosion or deposition, or factor in debris commonly left by flood waters.

EPA rules try to rein in runoff

By EMILY KESTEN

WORLD-HERALD NEWS SERVICE

COUNCIL BLUFFS — Those towering snowdrifts will soon melt into headaches for land developers and homeowners alike, but the Environmental Protection Agency will add a catch to the muddy mix.

A final rule the agency issued in November to reduce water pollution from construction sites became effective in February. The regulations to improve water quality and reduce the amount of sediment washed from construction sites will be phased in over four years.

"It's 20 years too late," said Kristi Jerkovich of Council Bluffs, executive officer of the Southwest Iowa Association of Realtors. "This is a long time coming."

Jerkovich has spent years battling erosion in the Loess Hills, including building three retaining walls. The set of practices — called "low-impact development" — issued by the EPA would have been beneficial years ago, she said.

But those new regulations and monitoring could cause headaches for developers, landscapers and engineers. To ease the pain — and costly fines — the West Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District will

See Runoff: Page 2



Low-impact development practices, such as this landscaping, remove sediment from surface water runoff.

Continued from Page 1

hold workshops on low-impact development techniques tailored to the needs and concerns of area developers and designers.

Landscape architect Debra Schiel-Larson of Indianola has served as the planner for Johnston's municipal storm water project.

"We don't want to be just regulators," Schiel-Larson said of city officials that must now enforce the regulations. "We want developers to understand and have in-

put and streamline the process."

Battling conventional design and engineering practices has been Schiel-Larson's greatest challenge. At the workshop Thursday, she wants to show developers how to design a project that complies with the new regulations.

Landscape architect Brian Leaders of Underwood has spent 13 years working with developers and wishing he could do something about erosion. Leaders has often been asked to design against regulations when

a developer hoped to negotiate with a municipality.

"When the authorities said no, I'd have to redesign it, anyway," he said.

Schiel-Larson noted similar experiences.

"Designers might spend thousands on drawings that don't meet regulations," she said. "We want to reach people before they reach that stage."

Added Leaders, "It's frustrating not to be able to truly design to the land on the developments I work on."

Now, with federal low-impact guidelines on the books, enforcement will follow, and Leaders is hopeful.

"There are some developers in the area currently going beyond what is required already," he said. "They're not being congratulated right now, but more people are interested in environmentally friendly subdivisions."

Thursday's workshop will be at Iowa Western Community College. For more information, go to www.pottswcd.org.

Omaha World
Herald

March 4, 2012

planned

Levees won't be fixed before spring

CHAD NATION

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The odds are against the levee system being repaired north of Council Bluffs before this spring. In fact, one Pottawattamie County Supervisor said there was "no way."

The Board of Supervisors discussed what is being done with the levee system Tuesday. Supervisor Scott Belt said there is "no way we will get them fixed before the spring."

County Engineer John Rasmussen had been leading the repair effort. He said the Federal Emer-

Knauss: FEMA gave us wrong impression

gency Management Agency has informed him that in order for the county to receive reimbursement for repairs, the county must prove ownership of the levees or show a record of maintenance, neither of which can be done.

Rasmussen was working with consultants to develop a request for proposals to repair 12 breaches in the levee system. After finding out the county would not be reimbursed for those activities, Rasmussen said he would scrap that process.

Supervisor Loren Knauss said FEMA gave the county the impression there was a loophole that they could use to repair the structures even without having ownership.

"Unfortunately, there is not, and we spent the last two months wasting precious time," he said.

Now the county will turn its

attention to developing a levee district to deal with repairs.

However, Belt pointed out it will likely not help anything this spring.

"I'm confident they will not be fixed by spring, so we need to know at what point water will come over our county roads and cause them to close again," he said. "Is it 21 feet or 25 feet? What is the number?"

Belt said the Sheriff's Office and Emergency Management Agency need to know those numbers to be

LEVEES/See Page 2A

Levees won't be fixed before spring

LEVEES/From Page 1A

able to inform citizens.

Rasmussen said the county kept track of data as the river rose in the summer of 2011, but with 11 or 12 breaches in the levee, that data is useless.

"With those numbers, we were dealing with a levee system in place, so they're not relevant," he said.

Belt said the issue must be kept "in front" of state

and federal legislators because the flooding affects more than just citizens, it also affects commerce.

"If a company comes in and sees that our interstates are closed for two summers in a row, they are not going to move here," he said.

Knauss said he would discuss forming a levee district with a levee attorney this week and report back to the board next week.

Council Bluffs
Daily Nonpareil

January 18, 2012

Shelby County Conservation Report Feb. 24, 2012

Save The Date:
No-Till Field Day
TUESDAY,
JUNE 12, 2012



The Western Iowa No-Tillers (WIN) is planning their 5th Annual Demonstration Field Day on Tuesday, June 12, 2012, at the Carstens 1880 Farmstead near Shelby, Iowa. Watch for more detailed information soon.

4th Annual Western Iowa No-till (WIN) Field Day Held

The 4th Annual WIN Demonstration Field Day was held on June 14, 2011 at the Carstens 1880 Farmstead just south of Shelby, Iowa. This year's field day had almost 200 ag producers and ag professionals attend the event to listen to a variety of speakers, visit informational displays and vendor exhibits and chat with fellow producers. The goal of the field day is to promote soil stewardship on

the working lands of southwest Iowa, by engaging farmers in education and discussion to encourage awareness and conscientious management of farmed lands.

Topics at the field day included creating an effective weed management program for no-till, an overview of emerging technology in no-till equipment, planter settings and an update on grain marketing.



Eric Nelson, a no-till farmer from Merville, delivered a keynote address highlighting lessons learned from his long-term no-till operation. The afternoon also included a special feature on precision agriculture equipment and data utilization, as well as a weather outlook from Elwynn Taylor. The East Pottawattamie County Cattlemen served up grilled steak sandwiches to all in attendance.

This annual event is a cooperative effort of the NRCS, ISU Extension and the Soil and Water Conservation

Districts (SWCD) in Harrison, Pottawattamie and Shelby Counties. Sponsors for the day included Farm Bureau, Iowa Corn Growers Association, Farmers & Merchants State Bank, Shelby County State Bank, Brokaw Supply Company, United Bank of Iowa, the Iowa Soybean Association, A&M Green Power, Titan Machinery, K & K Enterprises, The Farm Service Company, Heartland Technology Solutions, Sorensen Equipment Company and Heartland Ag.

Rainscaping: the practice of landscaping and design while effectively handling and utilizing stormwater runoff.

Rainwater Harvesting

Rainwater Harvesting is the practice of capturing and storing rainwater for reuse before it reaches storm drains and natural waterways. Rainwater harvesting is a way to conserve treated drinking water. In the past many homes had a rainwater cistern to utilize rainfall for household uses. Concerns over safe drinking water lead to less use of this practice, using captured rainwater for non drinking purposes is gaining attention as part of Americas "Going Green" Boom. For smaller volumes of runoff such as from single family homes or small businesses "Rain Barrels" are a good fit. Rain barrel water can easily be used to water lawns and gardens and for washing autos and pets. Larger Volumes of rainwater must be captured in more elaborate systems such as an underground cistern and tanks or bladders installed in the lower levels of larger and commercial type buildings. More elaborate systems



including filters, pipes and pumps can supplement non potable (non-drinking) water uses such as toilet flushing, cooling systems and laundry.



Bioswales/ Bioretention Cells

Bioswales are storm water runoff conveyance systems that provide an alternative to storm sewers. They can absorb flows or carry runoff from heavy rains to storm sewer inlets or directly to surface waters. Bioswales improve water quality by infiltrating the first flush of storm water runoff and filtering the large storm flows they convey. The majority of annual precipitation comes from frequent, small rain events. Much of the value of bioswales comes from infiltrating and filtering nearly all of this water. Native plants are most desirable within the bioswales as their thick, heavy cover best filters out contaminants.

70th Annual Shelby
County Soil &
Water Conservation
Report

Feb. 24, 2012

Soil Conservation Report

Shelby County

Rainscaping Iowa

Feb. 24, 2012

Rain Gardens

Gardens that are designed to handle a specific amount of rainwater runoff from impervious surfaces are termed "rain gardens". Rain gardens appear to the casual observer as a garden which is slightly sunken into the ground and will pond water for up to, but not more than a few days. Rain gardens provide several benefits: increased infiltration, reduced erosion, improved water quality, wildlife habitat and beauty. Rain Gardens are placed to capture stormwater and slowly infiltrate during and after a storm event. The stormwater is then filtered through the soil matrix allowing it to be cooled and cleaned



to reduce pollutants and erosion and to recharge the groundwater below the surface. Rain garden designs are sized to capture the water quality volume of 1.25 inches of rain from all impervious surfaces draining into the area.

Rainscaping Series – Free classes

Thanks to a grant from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources – REAP Conservation Education Project, the West Pottawattamie Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) is partnering with Iowa Western Community College (IWCC) to present Rainscaping Loess Soils. The free Intro to Rainscaping classes will be presented at the IWCC Campus Centers in Council Bluffs, Harlan, Atlantic, Clarinda and Shenandoah. Rainscaping Loess Soils is a series of workshops to educate the public in what rainscaping is and how landowners can plan and install conservation best management practices in their sites landscape. Workshops will cover topics such as rain gardens, rain barrels, composting and soil quality restoration.

For class dates and times and to register for the free classes go to <http://www.iwcc.edu/ce/classes/GoGreen.asp>

For more information about the classes call the Shelby SWCD office at (712) 755-2417, ext. 3.

SHARE THE LAND



Environmentalists, farmers can work together

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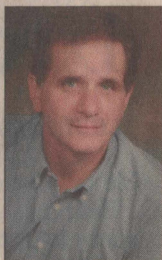
TREYNOR – Large-scale farmers and environmentalists need not be enemies, according to Bob Vincent.

Vincent, executive director of Montana-based Provider Pals, said too often a battle is waged between traditional corn and soybean farmers and those who say their practices are detrimental to the land.

“And when there’s a fight, there’s a false choice,” he said. “Do you want to have clean water or have agriculture? A false choice. People shouldn’t have to choose between



Henderson



Vincent



Environmentalists, farmers can work together

LAND/From Page 1A

clean water and agriculture. You can have both."

Solutions and leadership, he said, are the keys to helping both sides find common ground.

Vincent will deliver a keynote address about forward-thinking stewardship and rural leadership at the 10th-annual TS Bank Ag Summit on Jan. 27.

The summit works to help agriculture producers, business leaders and advocates face the ever-changing future of agriculture while maintaining traditions of the past, according to a release from TS Bank.

"We like to arm others with

information and education that may be helpful in their decision making for their business, their family and themselves," Kelsey Stupfell, vice president of business development for the bank, said in an email.

The event usually draws about 120-140 people, according to Jenna McClure, business development assistant at TS Bank.

Jason Henderson, vice president of the Omaha branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, will discuss the impact of interest rates and corn prices on the value of land, while two TS Bank representatives – Josh Gutttau, president and CFO, and

Kevin Forristall, risk analysis manager – will present information on the economic landscape and risk management in agriculture.

Vincent said the conservation practices of farmers in Iowa and throughout the country have come a long way in 30 years. He noted he'd encourage farmers to either continue and build on or begin those practices.

About the aforementioned "false choice," he said, "a farmer has to make sure that everything that can be done – soil nutrient management, mitigate runoff and more – is done when planting. (Farmers need to) do their part in soil management,

by using the best available technology to avoid runoff, which could cause problems in the water and be a burden to the farmer."

"It's about developing and furthering best practices," he said.

And they must do this, he said, while at the same time still feeding people.

Vincent said he'd encourage farmers to embrace and celebrate Earth Day.

"Agriculture has come a long ways on conservation," he said. "They should engage the public and talk about how far we've come and also talk about the challenges we face so the public

understands."

His company, Provider Pals, works to that end, connecting school classrooms across the country with farmers, ranchers and anyone else who works the land.

"There's a huge disconnect between consumer and producer," he said. "We're trying to change that."

The free Ag Summit will run from 8:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. at the Treynor Community Center on Iowa Highway 92. Registration is due by Jan. 20. For more information, call (712) 487-3000. Seating is limited, the release said. A complimentary lunch will be provided.

Council Bluffs Daily Nonpareil

January 18, 2012

Can Social Media Rescue Iowa Levee?

By BEN KESLING

HAMBURG, Iowa — When floodwaters threatened this farming community last year, the federal government spent a little more than \$4 million to shore up its levee, saving many local businesses.

Now, the town of about 1,100 must come up with as much as \$5.6 million to inspect and repair the levee and keep those businesses from suffering—and maybe being forced to flee.

So residents took to the Internet to ask for donations, designing a folksy website including a video of citizens dancing on Main Street to the classic rock song “Proud Mary.”

The town is asking for donations of \$3, telling prospective donors: “For less than a latte, you can save a town.”

“Do you think the video can go viral?” wondered Mayor Cathy Crane, a Hamburg native who spent 20 years working in advertising in Chicago, as she checked for hits to the website, hamburglevee.com. “I don’t know what I’m doing with this stuff, but I’m willing to learn.”

Last year, heavy winter snows and spring rains set the stage for a historic flood on the Mis-

souri River. In June, a levee breached about five miles outside Hamburg, sending water across farm fields toward the town and a secondary levee that wasn’t tall enough to handle it.

With an annual budget of about \$1.2 million a year, Hamburg was forced to take on about \$800,000 in debt to pay for everything from heavy equipment rental to sandbags to build up the levee.

“The entire town helped out,” said Mayor Crane. “Older ladies from the town made food and it was delivered to the levee. Everybody chipped in.”

More help came when the Army Corps of Engineers led a project adding eight feet of dirt to the existing 11-foot levee. Floodwaters came within two feet of overflowing the improved structure, but the levee held throughout the summer, saving the entire southern half of the town, including Hamburg’s industrial park and its grain silos.

Heroes at the time, Corps officials have told the town it must conduct studies of the levee and the soils beneath it—and complete any necessary repairs—before the levee can be certified to withstand the next flood. In the worst case scenario, the bill

could reach \$5.6 million.

“Our No. 1 priority is life safety,” said Kim Thomas, chief of emergency management for the Corps in Omaha. “Now that the water level’s down, you can’t see any of the problems. That’s why all this engineering has to be done.”

If the levee isn’t certified, flood insurance will skyrocket and loans for development on low ground will become more expensive. Most importantly, the Corps will only provide emergency assistance to barriers that have their official seal of approval, meaning next time there is a flood there is no guarantee of outside help unless the levee is certified.

On Thursday afternoon at the Blue Moon Bar, a group of retirees, mostly farmers, sat in the back room under a Bud Light sign, drinking iced tea and playing their daily game of Huckle-buck, a card game a little like poker. “If it hadn’t been for that levee, we’d be nothing now,” said Dick Workman, an 80-year-old retired farm manager and lifelong Hamburg resident.

In late June, the town board, led by Mayor Crane, was trying to come up with a way to raise some money for the levee proj-

ect. Out of ideas, town councilman Kent Benefiel threw out the crazy idea to just ask for donations by dancing in the streets and posting, using social media. “We see the Twitter and the Facebook happening, and we said ‘Why not?’” said local corn and soybean farmer Glen Stenzel, 67.

Town officials put the project together in less than a week, spending \$550, with most of that going to setting up a website and paying royalties to use “Proud Mary.”

On a Monday morning at the end of June, well over a hundred people came out in the sweltering heat to be a part of the dance that was choreographed by the high-school music teacher, Teri Emberton. “We didn’t count how many people there were, because we were all dancing,” Mayor Crane said.

In the week or so that the website has been up, the town has raised about \$13,000. Mayor Crane is confident that the town can reach its goal, if the campaign can just get enough exposure. Still, there are many who resent the fact this small town has been stuck with such a big bill in the first place.

Sen. Chuck Grassley (D., Iowa)



Ben Kesling/The Wall Street Journal

Farmer Glen Stenzel stands on the levee outside Hamburg, Iowa, and explains how it saved half the town from record flooding last year.

said in an interview that he is appalled that the Corps would require tests to check the levee’s strength. “It was tested” by a monthslong flood, he said. “You’ll never get a test like that again!”

There is always a chance that once testing gets under way, Hamburg’s levee will be found to be structurally sound, and that the town won’t have such a big bill. But they still are planning for the worst-case scenario.

