



# Monroe County SWCD News



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## District Commissioners

Mervin Mc Danel

Donald Niebuhr

Robert Scott

Marvin Wirtjes

Joe Pyle

Chairman

Vice Chairman

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

## Assistant Commissioners:

Colleen Putnam

Jim Nelson

## The Ruth Wagner Award Winner is....

The Ruth Wagner Award is an award started in 2001 to honor Soil and Water Conservation District Assistant Commissioners. Johnson SWCD gives the award in memory and honor of Ruth Wagner, who served the Johnson SWCD for 53 years. Colleen Putnam, one of our very own Assistant Commissioners was awarded this honor on September 11, 2018 at the Annual Conference for the Conservation Districts of Iowa. In a gracious speech, Colleen stated:

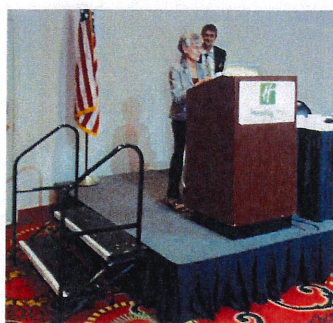
*I am honored to be associated with a group whose mission is informing, educating, and leading Iowans through local Soil and Water Conservation Districts to promote the conservation of natural resources.*

*My greatest pride is in our local conservation office and the individuals who work there. They amaze me with their dedication, talents, and task commitment. But above all, is their cooperation in working together for the greater good. I can't remember a board meeting where a senior technician did not praise a conservation technician assistant or intern for their skill in performing a specific task.*

*I have no reason not to believe this is happening all over the state of Iowa! I am grateful for the privilege of being a small part of this vital mission.*

*Thank you!*

Colleen's first encounter with the Monroe SWCD was in 1990 when District Conservationist John Frieden asked that she take first-graders on field trip to the Lake Miami wetland. She welcomed teaching her students about conservation on the land and the importance of our plants and animals. Aside from learning of wetland benefits, the children planted trees and stocked the wetland with fish. Colleen was sold on the idea of working within the conservation community and joined the SWCD as an Assistant Commissioner. She is very active on our education committee, and encourages participation in the poster contest and scholarship programs. Colleen attends informational meetings in the Region and is a reliable source in bringing information to the Commissioners. We are thankful to have her as part of our dedicated group of Commissioners!



## The Buzz on Pollinators

Did you know, that honey bees are not the only type of animal that pollinates plants? Bumblebees, bats, beetles, birds and butterflies are all other types of pollinators. Could you live in a world without flowers, coffee or fruit? To put things in perspective 75% of the world's flowering plants and 35% of food crops depend on pollinators. 90% of vitamin C sources come from insect pollinated plants as well! Along with edible plants, pollinators allow transfer of pollen to plants that increase carbon sequestration, provide oil and fiber, improve water quality and prevent soil erosion. To put a value on the work that pollinators do, annually, their ecological service is estimated at \$200 billion. How does pollination work? Pollinators visit flowers in their search for food (nectar and pollen). During a flower visit, a pollinator may accidentally brush against the flower's reproductive parts, unknowingly depositing pollen from a different flower. The plant then uses the pollen to produce a fruit or seed. Many plants cannot reproduce without pollen carried to them by foraging pollinators. Habitat loss, disease, parasites, and environmental contaminants have all contributed to the decline of many species of pollinators. Education, conservation practice implementation, and outreach are all important in the protection of our pollinating species.

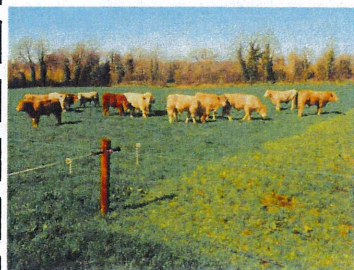


Monroe & Appanoose SWCDs offered an educational event for area children focused on pollinators, plants and bee-keeping.



## Rotational Grazing and Soil Health

Have you ever thought about how soil health is related to carrying capacity of your pasture? Did you know that to have a healthy and productive pasture, soil health is just as important as plant health? Four basic tips to manage grazing are to balance stocking rate with forage production, increase livestock rotation, improve utilization rate, and lengthen the rest and recovery time for plants. This type of system helps for increase nutrition benefits for a high performance as a lower cost to the producer. Calculating available forage is important in determining stocking rate because there needs to be a balance between number of animals and feed available for them in a paddock. Overgrazing effects soil health, pasture condition, yields and profitability. Livestock rotation comprises three main management principles: when you graze, how long you graze, and how long the grazed area can rest before another grazing event. Rotation of livestock helps to manage the tendency of livestock to selectively graze and not utilize all that a paddock has to offer as a food source as well as reducing the amount of fertilizers and interseeding costs in the long run. When it comes to utilization rate, the rule of thumb is to leave 50% of leaf material when utilizing. Using a high stocking density and implementing rotation to "take half, leave half" of the leaves will provide for a more even utilization rate in throughout a pasture. After grazing, cool season pastures should receive a rest period of at least 30 day rest period, and sometimes more depending on the species that comprise your pasture seeding. To manage pasture, practicing high density, short period grazing with long rest periods, there are many things to consider. Are there ways that you could make a few small changes to your management system to better consider the four keys to grazing management listed above? To implement a grazing system, or answer more questions about rotational or prescribed grazing on your farm. call the Albia NRCS Field Office at (641) 932-5144 ext. 3.



## Monroe County Residents Making Their Mark!

2018 has been a big year for the Monroe County SWCD! Carson Rankin, 1st of three Monroe County Poster Contest winners, was also chosen as the Region 9 winner for this spring's poster contest in his age division. The other county level winners were Jayci Brand (2nd place) and Abby George (3rd place). Tyler Stringfellow and Logan Hatfield both received scholarships from the Monroe County SWCD. Joe Beary's application was forwarded to Regional level and he received the CDI Region 9 Scholarship! As well, the district awarded two Soil and Water Conservation Achievement Awards this year to very deserving people, Paul Loucks and Charles and Rosemary Scott. Loucks is an innovative producer, always looking for ways to better the soil health, and water quality on his farm on both crop and pasture land uses. Paul has implemented many structural practices as well as cover crops, no-till and systems to better grazing for livestock productivity and sustainability of the land. Charles and Rosemary have implemented cover crops on their farm since the 1970's, long before cost-share was available. They also continue to install erosion control practices such as basins, and implement management practices, such as no-till, that reduce erosion and improve water quality. We are very proud of all the winners in our county, and look forward to seeing how they progress in their educations, careers, and their agricultural endeavors!

## Pictures



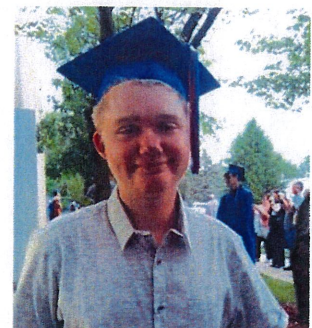
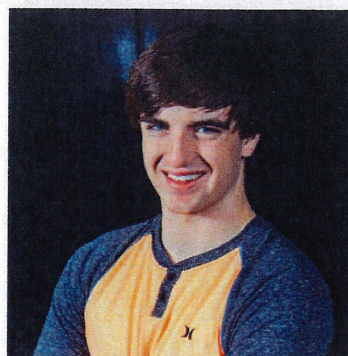
Chairperson, Mervin McDanel & Paul Loucks, Soil and Water Conservation Award Winner  
(Above)  
and  
Tyler Stringfellow, 2018 Monroe SWCD Scholarship Recipient



Asst. Commissioner, Colleen Putnam & Kim George with 2018 Poster Contest Winners, Carson Rankin (also pictured as Region 9 winner), Jayci Brand, and Abby George (Above)  
and  
Joe Beary, 2018 Monroe SWCD & Region 9 Scholarship Recipient (Below)



Chairperson & Commissioner with Charles & Rosemary Scott, Soil and Water Conservation Award Winners  
(Above)  
and  
Logan Hatfield, 2018 Monroe SWCD Scholarship Recipient (Below)



## The Buzz on Pollinators

Do you have CRP mid-contract management (MCM) scheduled for the spring? If so, now is the time to start planning, if you haven't already started to do so. Start by looking at your management practice. Look at your CRP conservation plan for MCM options available for your specific CRP practice. Popular MCM options include prescribed fire, disking, and spraying. Then, scout the CRP fields to determine what practice is best suited for your management goals and objectives. All options are geared towards creating early successional habitat by creating open ground and adding diversity back to the grass stand. For this article I will focus on prescribed burning reminders.

When handled properly and safely, fire is a powerful tool used to remove built-up litter and set back encroaching cool season grasses and woody vegetation while reinvigorating native grasses and forbs. Properly preparing for a prescribed fire drastically reduces chances of escaped fires. Now is time to prepare firebreaks. Mow 30' firebreaks around the perimeter of the field(s) to be burned in the fall. If planning to hire it out, the winter months are a great time to contact local contractors to line someone up before their busy spring season. Your local NRCS office has a list of contractors available for hire. If you are planning to do the work yourself contact Shane Weinberg, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist, for a burn plan that outlines the proper wind speeds and direction, temperature ranges, and equipment needed to safely conduct a prescribed fire.

Shane Weinberg – Pheasants Forever – 641-856-3893 ext. 3 or [sweinberg@pheasantsforever.org](mailto:sweinberg@pheasantsforever.org)

### Monroe County SWCD

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#### District Personnel

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Brooke Bodkins— Conservation Technical Assistant

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Mary Yager—Clerical Specialist

#### IDALS-DSC Personnel

Diana Williams—State Conservation Assistant

Ronald Peterson—State Soil Conservation Technician

#### USDA-NRCS Staff:

Margaret Cope—District Conservationist

Hannah Grimm—Soil Conservationist

Michael Gibbs—Federal Soil Conservation Technician

#### Pheasants Forever Staff:

Shane Weinberg—Farm Bill Biologist

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