

ANNUAL REPORT
DES MOINES COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT
STATE OF IOWA

Period Ending December 31, 1951

The Des Moines County Soil Conservation District has enjoyed its busiest year since its organization six years ago. It has been cooperating with many agencies and groups during the year.

The cooperation with PMA has also been increased because of the action of the Secretary of Agriculture in his Memorandum 1278. In so doing a joint plan of operations has been developed and we trust will be put in operation in 1952. This hasn't changed things much from the way we had been operating except it has thrown more work on the technicians which the Secretary had assigned thru the Soil Conservation Service to help along the district's conservation program. This means that they have less time for our district work.

The district has initiated a conservation program in cooperation with the Army on the farm lands within the Iowa Ordnance Plant. When complete this will affect about 4,000 acres of cropland and have some influence on an equal acreage of pasture lands controlled by the Army.

Considerable gain has been made in working with rural schools thru discussions, meetings and furnishing of materials to teachers. Considerable activity continues in the Vocational Agricultural classes and with the Veterans classes.

Working with the Conservation Commission the district has carried out additional work in the watershed draining into the large artificial lake in Geode State Park. More work is contemplated in this area next year thru the development of many basic plans with owners and operators.

In reviewing progress we feel that our program has had some definite influence on the thinking of farmers in the use of forages, particularly grasses. In addition there is a greater use of some of the newer legumes such as ladino clover and birdsfoot trefoil.

It is interesting to notice that farmers are developing a pride in their seedings. Where they used to brag about their yields of wheat and corn you find a lot of cases where they brag about the carrying capacity of their brome-alfalfa pastures for cattle and their ladino clover pasture for hogs. They are definitely awakening to the value of forages and to the better use they can make of forages.

Another observation is that farmers are establishing more grassed waterways and that they are leaving them wide enough. Many more pastures are being reseeded. Some of these are by plowing up and reseeding to a mixture of grasses and legumes; others by the seeding of mixed legumes in the existing grasses. The results the farmers obtain from following the plans and suggestions advanced by the SCS cannot all be observed the first year they are under the complete farm plan.

1951 was a wet year, but it was a good year to reflect the benefit of good land use. Corn yields on land that had not been over-cropped were generally far above the normal yields while the depleted or over-cropped lands had production that in many cases was not over 25 to 30 bushels per acre. Similar comparisons were true on other grain crops. The extra moisture made it a big meadow year but because of rain much of the hay could not be harvested. Quite a number of farmers resorted to piling up chopped green hay or to storing it in silos.

Farm planning is getting a good start in the bottomlands adjacent to the Mississippi River where most of the contribution of the technicians is with the farmers' rotations.

The district again cooperated with the Burlington Chamber of Commerce on its annual Conservation Contest. This is a fine activity which brings farmers and businessmen into a friendly relation as the merchants judge progress in conservation practices on the land of competing farmers. It is closed with a program of interest to farmers and a recognition dinner to which about 150 farm folks are invited. The Chamber furnishes prizes and recognition plaques. The district supplements this with small prizes to each of the winners. This year the additional prize was a small bag of ladino clover. Last year we used hand levels.

In addition to the conservation phases recognition is given to top men in a 10 acre corn yield contest. This year out of 25 entries 20 made 100 bushels per acre or more with a top of 132.2 bushels.

Several of the top men in the 10 acre corn yield contest were farmers that have had farm plans no less than four years. These high yields were produced on acres that 5 to 7 years ago would not have produced over 50 bushels of corn per acre. This was particularly noticeable on the farm of John Geiger who made a showing of 126.4 bushels per acre to place third from the top. John signed his farm plan in November 1947. During the intervening years it has blossomed out under proper land use.

A brief rundown of statistics shows 1755 acres contoured, 8 miles of terraces and diversions built, 29 farm ponds constructed, 9 erosion control structures, nearly seven miles of tile laid, along with 275 acres of pas-

ture renovation. The commissioners did not hold their meetings very regularly but the conservation work moved along quite well under the district policies and thru the work of the technicians of the Soil Conservation Service.

The present interest of farmers seems to indicate that progress could be speeded up with more help on application. Heavy employment at the Iowa Ordnance Plant makes it difficult to find available help.

The commissioners recognize the assistance of many people and organizations who are helping along on the conservation program. These include the Des Moines County Farm Bureau, the Extension Service, Production and Marketing Administration, County Superintendent of Schools, the consolidated schools of the county, the Burlington Chamber of Commerce, the farm forester, the Burlington Hawkeye Gazette, radio station KBUR and many others. We extend our appreciation to these and all other persons who are helping to maintain the productivity of our soil, reduce loss by erosion, and bring about the maximum production of needed food and materials consistent with proper land use.

The present staff consists of
Howard Gieselman, Chairman
Kenneth Redfern
Hugh Jamison
Horace Sutton, Jr., Treasurer
James Hodges, Secretary *
Raymond Audsley, Planner
Arthur G. Stevenson, Aid
F. S. Yetter, District Conservationist

*Walter Eyre resigned August 1st.

Respectfully submitted,

Des Moines County Soil Conservation District

By: Howard Gieselman, Chairman