

Emergency Conservation funds available

The Hardin County Farm Service Agency (FSA) has been approved for the Emergency Conservation Program, reports County Executive Director JoAnn Carter.

The Emergency Conservation Program, or ECP, is a program that provides emergency funding to farmers. These funds are available from the FSA to enable farmers to repair farmland damaged by wind erosion, floods or other natural disasters, as well as help them carry out emergency water conservation measures during severe droughts.

The Hardin County FSA can cost-share with farmers who had land damaged by heavy spring rains at cost-share levels of up to 64 percent. Farmers can apply to receive ECP funds through October 8.

"Producers need to apply for cost-share

assistance as soon as damage is discovered, before repair has begun," Carter said. Although the last day to apply is October 8, she says that farmers can still apply after the deadline.

"Some damage may not be discovered until harvest, but producers should file an application even if it is after the October 8 deadline."

In order to qualify, the damage must impair or endanger the land, affect the productive capacity of the land and be unusual and not likely to recur frequently in the same area. In addition, the damage must be so costly to repair that Federal assistance is required to return the land to productive agricultural use.

The eligibility of a piece of farmland for ECP funding will be determined by the

County Committee based on on-site inspections of the land by the FSA prior to the start of any repair. Funding may be allocated for debris removal, fence restoration, grading and shaping of farmland and restoring structures.

Funds will not be given for land subject to frequent damage, rehabilitation of stream banks, channels, levees and dikes or removing debris that does not interfere with farming operations. If approved, cost-sharing by the Hardin County FSA is limited to restoring land to the pre-disaster condition.

Persons are encouraged to contact the Hardin County USDA Service Center, Farm Service Agency Suite 1, 840 Brooks Rd., Iowa Falls, IA 50126 or call (515) 648-2533 for additional information.



Cost-share funds for spring flooded lands

Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) funds are now available to Hardin county farmers who had land damaged by heavy spring rains, as shown in the above field. Under the program, Hardin County Farm Service Agency (FSA) will administer the cost-share funds. In order to qualify, the damage must impair or endanger the land, affect the productive capacity of the land and be unusual and not likely to occur again in the same area. If approved, cost-sharing by the Hardin County FSA is limited to restoring local land to its pre-disaster condition.

The value of trees in the home landscape

Trees add so much to the home landscape. They provide shade, habitat for wildlife, value to your property, and even memories.

If your yard does not have any trees at the moment, you may want to consider planting some. Studies have shown that trees and landscaping add value to your home. Even if you have no intentions of moving, trees will provide you with years of enjoyment. If you have existing trees check to see that they are healthy. If they are nearing their life expectancy or show signs of decline, you may want to plant some new trees that will become established before the old trees eventually need to be removed.

Properly located and planted trees can help control energy costs. A large shade tree planted on the south west side of your house can provide cooling shade in the summer, helping to reduce your air conditioning costs. Once the leaves drop in the fall, the winter sun is free to warm your

house on cold winter days. Evergreen trees, planted so as to help block cold winters, can help reduce winter heating bills. Have you ever wondered what you could do to reduce greenhouse gases and ease concerns over global warming? Well planting trees will help! One of the greenhouse gases causing the most concern is carbon dioxide. This is the gas that plants take out of the air and use in the process of photosynthesis. Carbon is stored in the living tissues of the trees. When leaves fall and are composted, carbon is also added to the soil, improving the soil for plant growth and storing more of the carbon in the form of soil organic matter. By planting trees in your yard, you can help to reduce greenhouse gases.

Trees also provide shelter and food for a variety of wildlife species. While installing bird feeders will help to encourage birds into your yard, providing them with nearby trees and shrubs in which to escape das-

ger, will be even more encouraging. Squirrels and other small mammals also use trees for nesting sites and food sources. When selecting trees, consider what food value they may offer to the wildlife species in your area.

Trees can provide you with years of enjoyment. Planting trees and watching them grow can be a part of your family's memories. Consider planting a tree to commemorate a milestone in your family's life. While raking leaves may seem like a chore as you get older, jumping in piles of leaves can be a treat for children. Hanging a swing, building a tree house or simply relaxing under the shade of a tree on a hot summer day can be a memorable experience.

For information on making the best of your backyard, call your local conservation district. Or, check out backyard conservation on the Internet at <http://www.nacdn.org> or <http://www.nrc.usda.gov>



Doug Bleeker participates in his own waterway construction

Farm owner Doug Bleeker constructed part of his own waterway on land in Clay Township. Soil Conservation Technician Kent Holmgard is pictured in the three and one-half acre waterway designed to control erosion. Since it was previously cropland, a portion of the waterway qualifies for CRP payments.

Make your backyard...

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provide a source of water for wildlife in the summer and if fitted with a small pump, can provide you with the pleasing sound of running water.

If you don't have a yard, or are unsure that gardening is for you, consider planting some large flowerpots or hanging baskets on your porch or deck. You can plant these with a variety of flowers, vegetables and herbs that will be attractive to birds and butterflies. Parsley and dill will provide the caterpillars of the Swallowtail Butterfly with its necessary food.

Annual flowers, those that bloom and die in one growing season, can be easily grown in pots and can be attractive to birds. Pansies and hanging baskets of fuchsia attract hummingbirds.

Even if you decide that this is enough gardening for you, you will be helping to improve wildlife habitat in your neighborhood.

For information on making the best of your backyard, call your local conservation district. Or, check out backyard conservation on the Internet at <http://www.nacdn.org> or <http://www.nrc.usda.gov>



Cost share available for conservation practices

Cost share funds for fiscal year 2000 are available for allocation by the Hardin Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Iowa Financial Incentive Program (IFIP) funds are available through conservation districts to assist landowners and operators in applying conservation practices.

IFIP funds can be used for practices such as terraces, grassed waterways, pasture and hayland plantings, water and sediment control basins, diversions, critical area plantings, grade stabilization structures and windbreaks. Eligible persons and practices can receive up to 50% cost share upon

completion. Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) funds are for the purpose of establishing native grass plantings, farm or field windbreak tree planting, crop area seedings, pasture management, and plantings, and timber stand improvements. REAP will fund up to 75% of the cost within set limits on the cost of seed, trees, shrubs and fencing, to establish these practices.

For information on obtaining cost share funds, and related technical assistance contact the Hardin SWCD at 515-648-3463.

The Earth Team invites you to join a professional conservation team

The Earth Team is a group of concerned citizens, like you, who are interested in learning more about our nation's soil and water resources and how to help conserve them.

This nationwide volunteer service group is sponsored by the USDA Soil Conservation Service and local Conservation Dis-

tricts through more than 3,000 locations across the country. Volunteers must be 18 years of age to join. All volunteers receive a permanent work record of their service as well as liability protection.

Right now our professional conservationists are working to develop conservation plans for farmers and ranchers across the country and skilled volunteers are needed to help. There are dozens of jobs you may be qualified to do!

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8-Hardin County Index, Friday, Sept. 24, 1999

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