

Tama County Soil & Water Conservation District 2018 Annual Report

State Cost-share Programs and Accomplishments

Tama Soil & Water Conservation District

Iowa Financial Incentive Program: Cost Share	
SPY 17 Obligated Carryover	\$31,342.02
SPY18 Allocation	\$31,987.00
Recalled	\$61,967.42
Spent/Obligated	\$41,361.60
Balance as of June 30, 2018	\$ 0.00

Resource Enhancement and Protection Program: Forestry/Native Grasses	
SPY 17 Obligated Carryover	\$3,000.00
SPY18 Allocation	\$2,424.87
Recalled	\$2,424.87
Spent/Obligated	\$2,000.00
Balance as of June 30, 2018	\$ 0.00

Resource Enhancement and Protection Program: Practices	
SPY 17 Obligated Carryover	\$1,220.00
SPY18 Allocation	\$7,274.59
Transferred/Recalled	\$16,994.59
Spent/Obligated	\$1,500.00
Balance as of June 30, 2018	\$ 0.00

Cost-share expended also included state-controlled funding: \$26,848.70 of Water Quality Initiative-Statewide, \$7,996.25 of Buffer Initiative Grazing, and \$29,918.89 of Water Quality Initiative-Demonstration Projects.

Practices Applied to the Land from All Cost-share Sources	
Cover Crop	2,241.75 ac
Grassed Waterway	3.1 ac
Grazing Fence	6,000 ft
Grazing Pipeline	325 ft
Grazing Rural Water Hook-up	2 no
Mulch Till	103.98 ac
Nitrogen Spring Pro-Plant	67.91 ac
Nitrogen Inhibitor	496.9 ac
No-till/Strip Till	998.26 ac
Pasture & Hayland Planting	13 ac
Terraces	2,450 ft
Water & Sediment Control Basin	2 no
Windbreak	2 ac

A Year in Review

By Jack Boyer, Chair, Tama Soil & Water Conservation District

Upon reviewing the accomplishments of the Tama Soil & Water Conservation District over the last year, I hope you will agree that much has been done. However, much is left to be done.

The District has been actively promoting conservation practices to the young and the not-so-young alike. There have been numerous activities to educate the public, both farmers and urban dwellers. One of the favorites is the 5th Grade Outdoor Classroom held each May for all 5th graders in the county. In this all-day learning opportunity, the students learn about soils, water quality, wildlife and plant species in a natural environment held at the Otter Creek Lake & Park near Toledo.

Some of the adult learning opportunities were held by the Women, Land, & Legacy project, which conducted educational events throughout the year to inform women and men in the county on many agricultural subjects.

There were also two soil health events held this year to provide a better understanding of the benefits of soil health. Some of the principles discussed to assist

in improving soil health are: Limit Disturbance (minimize tillage). Provide Armor for the soil (cover crops and crop residue left on the soil to protect it). Build Diversity (increase the number of species in the crop rotation by adding additional crops in rotation or diverse cover crop species between cash crops), keep Living Roots in the soil (this promotes diversity in the underground microbial community, and in turn they will help provide nutrients to the crops), and Integrate Livestock into the system. Keith Berns of Green Cover Seeds in Bladen, NE was the featured instructor in the July 2018 event, and Ray Archuleta of Underground Ag in Seymour, MO was the featured instructor for the February 2019 event.

As you review the accomplishments of the district, I hope that you will take the time to see how you might implement some of the practices on your farm or in your lawn or garden.

If you have suggestions for the Tama Soil & Water Conservation District, please call 641-484-2702, Ext. 3 or stop in or write to the District office at 102 Business Hwy 30W in Toledo. Learn more about Tama SWCD at www.facebook.com/TamaSWCD/. Find Tama County Women, Land & Legacy at: www.facebook.com/womenlandandlegacytamacounty/



Tama SWCD Jack Boyer with evidence of improved soil structure and living organisms in his farming operation in Grant Township.

ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT Tama Soil & Water Conservation District State Fiscal Year July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018

Revolving Fund	
Balance on hand July 1, 2017	\$127,834.32
Receipts	\$98,898.62
Expenditures	\$98,509.35
Balance on hand June 30, 2018	\$128,223.59
District Employee Fund	
Balance on hand July 1, 2017	\$11,634.87
Receipts	\$11,469.33
Expenditures	\$13,901.05
Balance on hand June 30, 2018	\$9,203.15
Certificates of Deposit	
Balance on hand July 1, 2017	\$18,410.50
Interest Accrued	\$98.51
Expenditures	\$0.00
Value June 30, 2018	\$18,509.01

Soil Health, Because It's More Than Dirt

By Adam Nechanicky
Commissioner

As a family farming operation in Tama County since 1902, our family farming operation is looking for ways to improve productivity and efficiency so that the farm can continue for generations to come. One of the biggest factors in improving the farm as a whole has been to focus on soil health. "Despite all our achievements we owe our existence to a six-inch layer of topsoil and the fact that it rains" -Farm Equipment Association of Minnesota and South Dakota.

What are we doing to not just maintain that 6 inches of topsoil, but improve it? We are working to implement the five soil health principles: 1-soil armor, 2-minimizing soil disturbance, 3-plant diversity, 4-continuous live plant roots, and 5-livestock integration.

We have been no-tilling/strip-tilling for ten years and have been implementing cover crops for five years. We have reduced our fertilizer inputs, reduced our fuel bill and have seen continual increase in yield and ultimately increased ROI. By minimizing tillage and having growing plants on the soil year-round we have seen a reduction in soil erosion. As the soil health improves, it infiltrates water better, reducing surface run off. With improved soil health the soil structure improves, along with improved water infiltration, meaning we can get in the field sooner after a rain event. The growing plants also scavenge nutrients that would normally erode with the soil or leach away with the



A younger member of the Nechanicky farming operation in Geneseo Township supervises planting in green winter rye. Photo provided by Adam Nechanicky

water. If we can get a really good cover crop established, we have seen improved weed control, which reduces herbicide use. We have been harvesting cereal rye for cattle feed, then are able to double crop soybeans. We are working to be able to graze a cover crop before and after a cash crop, increasing the diversity in the field and allowing us to grow our cow herd.

Implementing soil health

principles isn't just another step to add to your farming operation, it is a change in mindset and management. Just like farming has been, it takes dynamic decision making to work with Mother Nature. We are working on different methods to make sure there is always a living plant in the soil, so with weather conditions like the fall of 2018, we don't have the six inches of topsoil running down the river.

and farm transition planning and a garden tour with Ken and Carolyn Adolphs.

The annual distribution of tree seedlings to sixth grade students began in 1981. Last spring, Norway spruce seedlings were presented to over 300 sixth graders in six local school districts, and another 120 seedlings were donated to the Tama County Conservation Board for use in its recreation areas throughout the county.

The District's 1971 commissioners and county Conservation Education Committee held a teacher workshop, educating the county's educators in many outdoor topics. This event morphed into the district's 5th Grade Outdoor Classroom, which has been held nearly each spring, beginning in 1974, and serving thousands of Tama County students throughout the years. Tama SWCD hosted 110 students from four participating school districts in 2018. The kids spent the day rotating through

Otter Creek Lake has served the people of Tama County as a popular recreation venue since it was built in 1970. Continuing problems with incoming sediment and its accompanying phosphorus has prompted renewed focus on the lake's watershed. Existing retention structures have been beefed up and new ones have been installed within the park. The lake's long-awaited Water Quality Improvement Plan and a watershed management plan have opened doors to potential lake restoration efforts. Special funding was secured recently to install grassed waterways, pasture fencing and grade stabilization structures with livestock watering systems on private land adjoining the park. Additional conservation practices are slated for 2019 construction. Renewed focus by Tama SWCD, Tama County, watershed stakeholders and park users will help to ensure Otter Creek Lake continues to be a great place to make memories well into the future.

The Middle Cedar River

Watershed Management Authority is a group of cities, counties, soil and water conservation districts and private citizens. It hopes to facilitate cooperative watershed planning and management in the middle section of the Cedar River watershed, which includes the northern quarter of Tama County. \$11.2 million are dedicated to the Middle Cedar Watershed. Two main goals are to develop a comprehensive watershed management plan (now completed) and to implement conservation practices. Landowners in the targeted watersheds are eligible to receive cost-share to construct structural conservation practices that reduce flood risk and improve water quality.

The northeastern portion of Tama County's Geneseo Township lies within the Miller Creek Watershed, which is also part of the Middle Cedar River Watershed. The project works with producers to install conservation practices for water quality improvement in Miller Creek and for educational purposes and offers opportunities for hands-on and peer-to-peer learning.

The Benton/Tama Nutrient Reduction Demonstration Project includes the Rock and lower Wolf Creek watersheds in northeastern Tama County. Its primary objective is to demonstrate and implement nutrient reduction practices on cropland acres. Phase II of the project is now underway and focusing on implementing the area's Watershed Improvement. The project cooperates efforts with partnerships within the Middle Cedar Watershed to improve water quality through efficient nutrient management, use of cropland cover, better soil health and use of edge-of-field practices to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus from non-point sources.

For information on any of Tama County's priority watershed projects, contact the Tama SWCD office at 641-484-2702 ext. 3 or stop in 102 Business Hwy 30W in Toledo, across from Murph's Creamery & Grill.

RIGHT- Commissioner Jan Wobser was honored in 2018 as Iowa Conservation Woman of the Year. She became a District Assistant Commissioner in 2005 and served as a publicly-elected District Commissioner 2007-2018. Her District activities have included financial management, water quality sampling, and outreach facilitation. Jan leads by example by planting trees, managing Conservation Reserve Program and crop production acres and maintaining extensive perennial pollinator beds on her personal properties. Jan is shown here with Tama SWCD Chair Jack Boyer.



Tama SWCD Outreach

Since 1942, Tama Soil & Water Conservation District has been dedicated to the conservation of soil and protection of water quality in Tama County. One way to accomplish this is through educational outreach and scholarships.

Each year, Tama SWCD conducts 4-H and FFA fair projects in agriculture and natural resources to encourage a younger generation to become active in these fields. Ten youth were honored by the District in 2018 for their 13 Tama County Fair projects in farmstead landscaping, pollinators, farm conservation planning, commodity profitability, ethanol, cover crops, wetlands and national parks.

Tama SWCD sponsors a grocery sack contest for grades 3-5 each April which helps the county's schoolchildren spread the message of Soil & Water Stewardship Week. The year's

2018 theme was "Watersheds: Our Water, Our Home," which stressed that clean water is important to everyone. We all live, work and play in a watershed, and we can all pitch in and make a difference. The District commissioners judged entries created by 271 students and chose the county's overall winner, Caden Sorensen, who was a fourth grader at Union's Dysart-Geneseo Elementary. Tama SWCD thanks Terry's Food Center in Dysart, Trunk's in Reinbeck, Traer Supermarket in Traer, and Fareway in Toledo for making this activity such a success.

Tama County's Women, Land, & Legacy project began in 2007 and has served well over 300 individual women and men. A total of 83 people attended the project's three FY2018 events with topics of incorporating conservation practices in a land lease, estate

20-minute sessions on benthic macroinvertebrates, nature walk, forestry, animal tracking, soils, wildlife, water quality, wildlife population dynamics, and fishing and boating safety.

Districtwide conservation award winners recognized in 2018 were Bill and Janet Wilson of rural Clutier, New Windbreak Award; Craig and Lindsey Kaier of rural Toledo, Established Windbreak Award; Rod Earth Gardens of the Meskwaki Nation, Local Production Award; Vernon and Wilma Parizek and Randy and Lisa Parizek of rural Elberon, Soil Health Award; Mark and Joleen Nechanicky and Adam and Lindsey Nechanicky of rural Blackhawk, Farmer Operator Award; and Dean McKenna of rural Dysart, Friend of Conservation Award. Thank you to all our award winners for leading by example! Photos may be found on the District's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/TamaSWCD/.



Soil & Water Stewardship Week was celebrated April 29-May 6, 2018. The theme was "Watersheds: Our Water, Our Home," which stressed that clean water is important to everyone. We all live, work and play in a watershed, and we can all pitch in and make a difference. The District commissioners judged entries created by 271 students and chose the county's overall winner, Caden Sorensen, who was a fourth grader at Union's Dysart-Geneseo Elementary.