

ATTAINING SOIL CONSERVATION THROUGH NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS

Prepared jointly by the Iowa Extension Service and
The Soil Conservation Service.

Feb. 15, 1943

FOREWORD

The Soil Conservation Service and the Iowa Extension Service recommend the use of the neighborhood approach as outlined herein. It is suggested that the contributions and assistance of Neighborhood Leaders (Educational Cooperators), AAA Committeemen, County Farm Bureau Directors, F.S.A. Council Members and other farm leaders in the county be worked out locally.

The experience of field personnel indicates that neighborhood group action is most successful when:

1. People are well informed on the policy of working with groups and the reason for same, particularly when one or more local "neighborhood representative" is well informed and understands the problems involved.
2. The "neighborhood representative or representatives" take the initiative in forming and bringing together the individuals who make up the neighborhood group.
3. A well planned and organized program is presented that attracts the interest and attention of each member of the group when they get together.

The development of and carrying out of the soil conservation program through neighborhood groups may follow these steps.

1. Carry through several education programs.
2. Planning and adoption of "starting" practices.
3. Development of a detailed farm plan.
4. Execution of plan.
5. Follow-up.

It is recognized that this brief outline does not include all of the factors that determine the size, location and composition of neighborhood groups and the success or failure of conducting the Conservation Program through neighborhood groups.

SOIL CONSERVATION THROUGH NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS 1/

- A. The neighborhood is a basic unit for organized activity in soil conservation.^{2/}
- B. Experience has shown that best results in soil conservation are obtained when neighborhood groups have an active, well-informed neighborhood representative. Therefore, each neighborhood needs one or more well-informed, properly selected farmer representative to help organize and guide the neighborhood activities in soil conservation. The proper procedure for the selection and training of the representative is very essential to the success of the program in each neighborhood. Some of the desirable qualities of a neighborhood representative are:
1. They should be willing to establish conservation practices on their farms if they are to serve as leaders.
 2. They should be willing to assist in conservation farm planning and application on neighborhood farms.
 3. They should be willing to arrange for and assist in establishing conservation demonstrations on neighborhood farms.
 4. They should be capable of recognizing that soil conservation is a long-time program.

1/ A neighborhood group is defined as a number of farmers who in the past have worked together in--

1. Exchange of farm work
2. Social activities
3. School activities

or who have conditions in common such as (1) physical soil conditions, (2) size of farm, (3) type of farming, (4) tenure arrangements, (5) nationality, (6) church affiliations, and are willing to work together.

2/ In soil conservation districts the neighborhood approach should be organized and conducted as a part of the district program. In counties without districts, the activities may be carried on through the present county soils committee or through other appropriate groups in the county.

C. The scope of the neighborhood activity may include all stages of soil conservation:

1. Extensive
 - a. General education
 - b. Education on and application of simple practices. (Those that will increase production are most important at this time.)
2. Intensive
 - a. Farm conservation planning
 - b. Execution of farm plans
 - c. Maintenance of farm plans

D. Activities involved under C are as follows:

1. Extensive
 - a. (General education) The neighborhood representative (s) can assist in general education by distributing information to neighbors, calling meetings of them to receive information on local erosion conditions, need for and methods of control, and assisting them in organizing a neighborhood program for their group.

- b. (Education on and application of simple practices to increase production.)

A neighborhood representative can assist in education on and application of simpler soil conservation practices by demonstrating them on his farm. He can also assist by providing each neighbor with job sheets for one or more practices and, where possible, assist them in application. He can assist in disseminating printed materials of an informative and instructive nature to stimulate interest in and provide instructions on simple practices.

2. Intensive

a. Conservation farm planning

(1) The neighborhood representative can assist in the development of farm conservation plans by:

(a) Interesting his neighbors in farm planning

(b) Informing his neighbors that farm planning and the execution of farm plans can be carried out most effectively by working with farmers in neighborhood groups; neighborhood action provides for the most effective use of available facilities; group planning can be carried on most effectively with units of four to fifteen farmers (6 to 8 farmers in each group is

most desirable); and the leadership in soil conserva-

tion activities should originate with one or more

farmers in each neighborhood or watershed group.

(c) Arranging for group planning meetings

b. Execution of farm plans

1. The neighborhood representative can:

(a) Arrange for group participation in applying the farm plans.

(b) Assist in preparing a schedule for needed assistance.

(c) Arrange for needed assistance, use of equipment, technical, and other.

(d) Assist in follow up work and reports of work accomplished.

The neighborhood representative as set forth in this outline might well be any one of the following:

- a. Educational cooperators
- b. AAA committeemen
- c. Farmers who are now using soil conservation practices
- d. Directors of farm organizations - County Farm Bureau, Grange and Farmers Union
- e. Farmers with particular interest in soil conservation
- f. FSA cooperators - particularly tenant purchase borrowers
- g. Leaders or representatives of (1) young peoples groups, (2) 4-H Clubs, (3) Future Farmers of America.

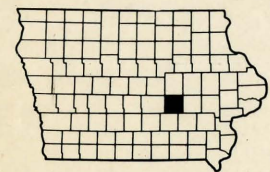
Because of the war emergency a neighborhood leader called the "Educational Cooperator" has been set up for each four square mile area in Iowa.

Since this system has been set up we recommend that the Educational Cooperator (or an assistant cooperator to be selected for this job) in each school district assist in furthering soil conservation through the neighborhood group approach as outlined above in the following ways:

1. Serve as the neighborhood representative in disseminating printed material on soil conservation and advising of assistance available.
2. Inform group on how soil conservation contributes to increased production and its importance in the war effort.
3. Report interest in soil conservation in his group to the county extension director or other appropriate party.
4. Select one or more conservation practices and apply them on their farms.
5. Point out and make use of demonstrations and cooperators now using soil conservation practices on their farms.

6. Inform the group of procedure necessary to secure assistance in complete farm planning through the neighborhood group approach.
7. In soil conservation districts inform his group of the purpose and objectives of the district and the plans the district commissioners have developed for carrying out the soil conservation program.

Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, R. K. Bliss,
Director, Extension Service, Ames, Iowa. Cooperative Agricultural
Extension Work. Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914.



LOCATION IN IOWA

Total acreage approximate 361,963

 EXCLUDED AREA

POWESHIEK COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The District includes all of Poweshiek County
exclusive of incorporated cities and towns.

Scale in miles

