

ANNUAL REPORT

DES MOINES COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Period Ending Dec. 31, 1948

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The Des Moines County Soil Conservation District has enjoyed a good year. X
We may be a little optimistic but we feel that the tide has begun to roll in.
After a couple of years when progress seemed slow and interest rather low, we
believe that the program of the district is getting a good foothold and will
move ahead more rapidly. The number of inquiries and the general interest in
what we are attempting to do has been increasing very much lately. gnd to note X

The district working with many groups, agencies and business concerns has
carried on a broad educational program. This started off last January with a
conservation short course for fifty farm leaders in the county. This was a
two-day event, starting at 10 a.m. and carrying thru to 3:30. Technical sub-
ject material was presented by employees of the Soil Conservation Service with
pointed discussion from the audience. We believe that this short course fur-
nished the stimulus for other events of the year. A large percentage of the
group attending indicated a desire to see some of the conservation measures in
operation, so the district working with the extension director, set up a tour
in June. Although there was a serious down pour of rain for an hour just after
the tour started, the group sat in their cars in a meadow and after the rain,
carried on and completed the inspection, hampered only slightly by the mud and
water. Short Course

Probably the major event of the year was a demonstration and field day
held on the farms of John Blaul, Kenneth Redfern and Plon Oberman. Here in
one day we demonstrated most of the conservation measures that could be shown
at that time of year. This included construction of diversions and terraces
using four different kinds of equipment, filling gullies and building water-
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courses with heavy equipment and with regular farm equipment an old bluegrass pasture was prepared for reseeding. Also demonstrated was the spraying of weeds and shrubs in pasture clearing. A contour plowing contest was held as a part of the day's activities. There were observational plots of various forage plants and areas of pasture renovation, some new and others of various ages to demonstrate the value of improved bluegrass pasture. Although it was necessary to postpone the event a day because of rain, there was an attendance of approximately 4,000 people. This field day was held in cooperation with the Louisa County Soil Conservation District who together with the Burlington Hawk-Eye Gazette were the co-sponsors. Much credit must go to this newspaper, local contractors, equipment dealers, bankers, merchants, Extension Service, Soil Conservation Service and the farm bureau ladies for helping with the arrangements.

Another major event of the past year was the Soil Conservation and Farm Institute sponsored by the Burlington Chamber of Commerce. At this event the Chamber of Commerce announced the winners of the traditional 10-acre corn yield and soil conservation contests with a dinner for contestants and an agricultural program for farmers. The district appreciates the contribution of the Burlington Chamber of Commerce.

We want to acknowledge the cooperation of the farm bureau, Extension Service and local AAA. Demonstration meetings were held with AAA committeemen and as a result, additional contouring was established to neighboring farmers.

The veterans' class has spent considerable time studying soil conservation and proper land use. Mr. Redfern, one of the commissioners, has taken the responsibility of this class for three months and this good work should be increased as a result of his efforts.

*Commissioner
noted*

The Soil Conservation Service has provided a farm planner and an aid during the year along with other technical help making surveys.

The Extension Director has devoted considerable time both as secretary for the district and in directing the various educational programs.

Demonstrational forage plots were seeded during the year, one on the farm of Plon Oberman and the other on farm of Albert Bentley. Also, a seeding of alta fescue was made on the farm of Leland Bozarth which didn't do very well but we hope for a better season next year.

Walter Byre, County Extension Director, carried on a definite program of showing soil conservation films during the winter and spring months. He used them on perhaps 15 to 20 special programs. After the conservation field day, colored slides of the event were shown to several groups of people.

The commissioners have made plans for another conservation short course next month, this one to have Extension specialists as faculty. The general plan used last year will be followed.

Rural schools are showing increased interest as a result of the standard courses. Newspaper publicity has been excellent with coverage of all major events. The local radio station, K.B.U.R. is very cooperative and has helped to tell our story.

An indication of how some people are taking hold is illustrated in the following stories. Mr. John W. Smith of Yarmouth won first prize in the Chamber of Commerce contest. He operates 570 acres of very good land owned by C. J. Arts. During the year these two put into operation many of the accepted conservation practices applicable to this area. The soil was tested for fertilizer and lime needs - 670 tons of limestone and 150 tons of rock phosphate were applied.

They built two drop inlets with earth fills. They sloped in some gullies and reshaped more than a half mile of watercourses. They successfully renovated 20 acres of old pasture and contoured all row crops on sloping fields and left good waterways. They laid 3,000 feet of drain tile. They adopted a rotation with two years of meadow, using alfalfa-brome mixture. This seems to be an all-around complete conservation farm plan. Mr. Artz who is well along in his seventies is keenly interested in two things - making a dollar and building up farm land. He thinks he has found both in the conservation way of farming. At his age he says he can't waste too much time.

Noah Schrock of Huron Township went to work on a piece of poor pasture land which had once been a cropped field. Loss of topsoil and gullies on the long, steep slopes had caused its abandonment. All he had to start with was a poor stand of grass on a badly eroded field. He established grassed waterways on the first year, bulldozed in the gullies, built three terraces along the top of the slope and planted the field to corn on the contour. Incidentally, in this good corn year, Mr. Schrock got a yield of about 65 bushels to the acre. A five inch rain on the night of July 4th caused very little soil movement. Water ran clear in the terrace outlets. No corn was washed out. Terraces and contouring did the job on a field that ordinarily would be considered too steep to farm. Mr. Schrock was so successful that he has purchased another worn out pasture farm which he expects to work on. He figures he can make a good thing of it.

Recently we stopped along the road to talk with Jack Pilling of Yellow Spring Township. He said, "I suppose you noticed that I plowed those fields on the contour. Elmer Mesmer helped me lay them out. We got along all right. After all, contouring is just using common sense".

*field days
improvements*

Here are some comments relative to the conservation field day. We have talked to a great many people who attended our field day and the remarks most often made are that "it was just big enough so that one could see all and could sorta fit some of the jobs into his own particular problems". The proof of this is that several in the neighborhood are filling in their gullies exactly the way it was done on the field day and we think there are others that we haven't seen who are doing the same thing. Also there seems to be a great deal of interest in pasture improvement work. We have been asked many times concerning this type of work.

Another thing that comes up very frequently is that a good many are watching how the work we did that day proves out. That is typical of all us farmers - we would like to see the other guy try it and if it works out, we get interested and want to try it. While this method doesn't swamp us with work, it does prove we are going the right way and in time it will show good results.

One farmer who attended our field day, made the remark that he would run anyone off the place who built any of those new fangled terraces on this place. Well, when he got home he talked it over with his boys and began to think of his own land - how it was getting away and he wasn't doing anything about it. Then his reasoning changed, changed to the point that before the ground froze this fall he had constructed a good many hundred feet of terraces and is anxious to do more.

Last spring a day was spent in training AAA committeemen how to lay out contour lines. One of the fields on which contouring was done was a 14-acre field on the Lester Hamilton farm in Pleasant Grove Township. This field was a rolling piece of land with an average 8% slope of timber land with most of the topsoil eroded off the steeper slopes. After harvest, Mr. Hamilton reported that

the field made an average of 85 bushels per acre with no noticeable loss of soil. He stated that he hadn't expected the field to ever make more than 50 bushels to the acre. The field was broken out of a clover timothy sod this spring. He says that from now on he is going to either contour or terrace all of his farm land. Mr. Hamilton is now in the process of getting his neighbors interested, as he was the first one in doing any conservation work in this neighborhood.

Respectfully submitted,

Des Moines County Soil Conservation District

/s/ John L. Blaul
John L. Blaul, Chairman

Soil Conservation District
ANNUAL REPORT OF EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

DISTRICT Des Moines County Burlington Iowa
(Name) (Headquarters of Dist. Gov. Body) (State)

Period Jan. 1 1948 to Dec. 31 1948

ACTIVITY		This Year	To Date
Educational Meetings	Number	16	50
	Attendance	460	1548
Tours	Number	1	5
	Attendance	150	191
Demonstrations	Number	1	12
	Attendance	4000	4152
Leader Training Meetings	Number	2	2
	Attendance	72	72
Exhibits	Number	-	2
Radio Talks	Number	10	18
News Articles	Number	60	150
Commissioners' Meetings	Number	12	33

~~Applications received - 220 Active applications - 95~~
Conservation plans - 72 on 12,371 acres.
Conservation surveys on 41,820 acres.
* Field day was in cooperation with Louisa County SCD.

Copies of 1948 Annual Report sent to:

C. W. Moody, Editor, Burlington Hawk-eye Gazette

Honorable Thomas E. Martin, House of Representatives, Washington 25, DC.

Honorable W. N. Skourup, State House, Des Moines

Honorable Carl Hoschek, State House, Des Moines

Honorable Guy Gillette, U. S. Senate, Washington 25, D.C.

Honorable Bourke Hickenlooper, U. S. Senate, Washington 25, D.C.