

Serious Water Shortage on Hundreds of Southern Iowa Farms

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By Glenn Cunningham
(Register Staff Writer)

BLOOMFIELD, IA. — The water shortage is serious on hundreds of farms throughout southern Iowa — particularly in the south central and southeastern areas — with wells and ponds dry-



ing up and farmers hauling water.

Verle M. Arnold, Bloomfield, and Clarence H. Ford, Osceola, work unit conservationists for the Davis and Clarke County Soil Conservation Districts respectively, said water is short over a wide area. While there seems to be a moisture shortage in many areas of the state, it

is especially severe here.

The water shortage is blamed on the dry fall weather, lack of customary fall rains, depletion of subsoil moisture reserves, and little precipitation in the form of snow this winter.

The SCS employees agreed that it will take a lot of snow or rain to get water flowing into wells, restore subsoil reserves and provide water needed for good crop yields in 1964.

"We hope for a lot of early spring rains," said Ford. "A lot of farmers are hauling water from Osceola. Four have installed tanks on their trucks and are doing custom hauling."

Ford said the water got so low in ponds last fall (down to three or four feet), that many froze dry later on. A lot of fish perished. Even the larger ponds have water levels quite low, he said.

Arnold said many ponds in Davis County are quite low or dry and that there is little or no water in the 60 farm ponds built in Davis County last year. He said U. S. cost-share is sought on 68 requests now pending.

Farmers want bigger ponds built, Arnold said, so they will have a larger water supply to carry them through dry periods.

Gene Duffield, Bloomfield, has been hauling water to farms within a 20-mile radius. He charges \$6.50 for 1,500 gallons on a 5-mile haul.

"What makes it worse is that many farmers have a lot of livestock up around the buildings where it is easier to care for them," he said. "This requires a large volume of water from wells."

Arnold said precipitation in Bloomfield totaled 25.24 inches last year, almost 9 inches below normal, and there also had been a deficiency of about 4 inches the year before.

"If it stays this way another month," he said, "there should be quite an increase in the percentage of cropland farmers divert to grass under the feed grain program."

WILLIAM BYERS, Davis County extension director, said 1963 was the second driest in 29 years in Davis County and that 1964 is continuing the dry trend.

He said normally there is 8 to 10 inches of moisture in the top 5 feet of soil in the spring, but now there is only an inch or less and that's near the surface.

"Even with 5 inches of subsoil moisture," he said, "we would have to have an almost perfect moisture distribution



REGISTER PHOTOS BY MAURICE HORNER

Arnold stands beside an upturned boat at the former water level of a pond near Bloomfield. Water level is about 8 feet below the spillway level.

pattern during the growing season to produce corn yields of 80 to 100 bushels per acre."

The water shortage persists on farms in north central Missouri, too, it was reported by Harry Campbell, superintendent of the light and water plant at Princeton.

He said Princeton sold 2.3 million gallons of water to farmers in 1963. Sales increased during the fall and winter. Water haulers pay \$1.50 per 1,000 gallons and deliver to farmers and small towns over a 25-mile radius.

Campbell said 1963 water sales to farmers and rural areas outside Princeton exceeded the 2,079,000 gallons in the drought year of 1953.

He said the City of Princeton was faced with a water shortage itself last summer when at one time the water tower could not be filled. An additional well, put into use in July, solved the problem.



Duffield fills tank with water to haul to a farm livestock.