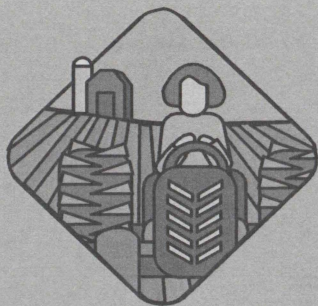




Soil & Water Conservation Update

Dickinson SWCD ~ Spirit Lake, IA

712-336-3782 Ext. 4

June 2000

Phosphorous

by Carroll Oskvig
District Conservationist

Phosphorous is essential for crop growth, but excess amounts can adversely affect water quality. Water quality for drinking water, recreation and industry can be diminished due to algae blooms which are quite often linked to excess phosphorous levels in water bodies. Most phosphorous is transported to water bodies through soil erosion, but it can move in sub-surface flow if phosphorous levels are at a high level.

Phosphorous runoff into water bodies can be reduced by watching feed inputs of phosphorous to animal requirements which reduces the amount of phosphorous in manure.

Soil tests can be very helpful in ensuring that phosphorous levels in soil do not exceed crop or lawn needs.

Leaving more crop residues on the soil surface after planting reduces the amount of soil erosion on cropland. Grass buffer strips can be planted along water bodies to filter sediment before it enters a water body.

Terraces reduce soil erosion by slowing runoff water on cropland. Sediment is deposited in terrace channels rather than in water bodies.

Phosphorous-free lawn fertilizers offer a good way to reduce phosphorous levels in water bodies.

Please contact the USDA-NRCS in Spirit Lake at 712-336-3782 for more information on the effect of phosphorous on water bodies.

Wetland Reserve Program

by Carroll Oskvig
District Conservationist

The Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) is a USDA program which provides easements or agreements to landowners which:

- Improve water quality
- Enhance wildlife habitat
- Reduce soil erosion
- Reduce flooding

WRP offers the following benefits to landowners:

- Payments based on the agricultural value for wetlands that have been previously drained and converted to agricultural uses
- Up to 100% reimbursement for wetland restoration costs and upland buffer seeding costs
- Continued control of the access of the land
- Continued ownership and responsibility of the land including property taxes based on reassessed value as wetland or non-agricultural land
- Option to sell the land to another buyer

Eligibility requirements for WRP include:

District Commissioners

Mark Ingwersen — Chairperson
Chris Hoffman — Vice Chair
Keith VanKleek — Secretary
Orville Berg — Treasurer
Bill Northey — Commissioner
Tom Koster — Assistant Commissioner

District Mission Statement

The Dickinson SWCD will serve it's customers and the needs of the District's natural resources through education, promotion, and demonstration.

WRP offers 30 year easements, permanent easements and 10 year restoration cost-share agreements.

Permanent WRP easements offer payments of 100% for the cost of restoration and legal costs to establish the easements. In addition, the landowner receives a payment for permanent easements which will be the lesser of:

- The appraised agricultural value of the land, or
- An amount offered by the landowner, or
- The geographical area rate cap for WRP

30 year easement payments are 75% of what would be paid for a permanent easement and 75% of the wetland and upland buffer restoration costs. USDA pays for legal costs associated with establishing the easement.

10 year restoration cost-share agreements pay landowners 75% of the cost of restoring wetlands and associated upland habitat. No easement or other land incentive payments are offered with the 10 year agreement.

Landowners can find out more about WRP by calling the USDA Service Center in Spirit Lake at 712-336-3782.

How Wetlands Affect Us

by Tim Terrill
Environmental Specialist

Wetlands in Dickinson County are a natural part of our scenery. We respect wetlands here and our wildlife reflects it. To the average person, a wetland means we will have more ducks and geese on our land; will provide more habitat for wildlife; and better water quality which leads to more game fish production. Wetlands filter water as it moves from the land to streams and lakes. Flooding is also reduced because wetlands act as "sponges" to store runoff. But, did you know that Iowa has lost more than 99% of our wetlands? Of the 1% left, some of these wetlands cannot perform properly. Some of the reasons are because of human intervention.

One of the major causes that affect wetlands is the increase of urban cities. When it rains, major pollutants carried with the dirt cause problems. Road salts, bacteria and phosphorous are some pollutants that degrade water quality. Because of our roads, there is no place for the water to slow down when it rains. The high velocity of water starts

Volunteers:

Troylene Cooper, Clarence Call, Keith Van Kleek, Maurice Dougal, Robert Warrick, Tom Koster, Robert Herbert, Leon Goodell, Don Goodell.
We thank you for your help!

to cause erosion. The cement also causes an increase in temperature. When the cements gets hot and it rains, the water warms up and causes the amount of dissolved oxygen to decrease. When the dissolved oxygen in the water decreases, game fish start losing their habitat and the fish begin to die. Increased temperatures in our cities also causes harmful chemicals to be changed to a soluble form. When the harmful chemicals change form, it can be detrimental to our lakes by causing algae blooms.

Obviously we won't destroy cities just to improve water



quality so we must utilize good conservation practices. By constructing or enhancing wetlands, we can help save our lake. Land abuse equals lake abuse.

Another practice that affects wetlands is agriculture. Currently there are laws in place that restrict a producer from draining wetlands to be used for farming. Before 1985 no such laws were in place and that is why Iowa only has 1% of its wetlands left. We must be considerate though, after all; our farmers don't just feed us anymore, they feed the world! Through soil protection programs like the buffer initiative, integrated crop management and grassed waterways, farmers are becoming more environmentally conscious about what they are doing with their land.

One way to ensure that our area is protected is by using wetland easements. Easements help save our wetlands. Permanent easements retain the ownership of the land to the landowner, while giving the landowner a payment. Most costs for wetland restorations and prairie seedings are offset by a cost-share program.

All landowners interested in wetland easements may contact the Dickinson Soil & Water Conservation District at the USDA Service Center in Spirit Lake at 712-336-3782, Ext. 3, for more information.

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