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Fayette SWCD Annual Report

Nelsons are State Owner/Operators of the Year

In the rolling hills north of Clermont, soil conservation is a not only something to work toward – it is a necessity. Preventing soil erosion is a task that the Mark and Denise Nelson family has taken to heart.

The Nelsons recently learned they were named the State Owner/Operators of the Year – an honor given by the Soil Water Conservation District Commissioners of Iowa in Des Moines. After winning district and regional awards, Mark and Denise earned the honor after implementing a six-part conservation plan which includes contour farming, terracing, grass buffer strips along waterways, conservation tillage, crop rotation, and forestry work.

Third-generation conservation farmers, the Nelsons started farming in the Clermont area in 1977. With three children, (two girls and one boy) the Nelsons own or rent 2,400 acres in Fayette and Clayton Counties. In addition, the Nelsons operate a 1,300 sow farrow to finish operation with over 25,000 pigs finished each year. The Nelsons employ five full-time employees to assist them with the operation of their farm.

Mark's grandfather, Millard Nelson, Sr. started farming on land he rented in the Clermont area in the 1940s when soil conservation was virtually nonexistent. Watching the topsoil disappear by tons in the hilly area, he was one of the first farmers in the area to implement contour farming.

In the 1960s Mark's father, Millard Jr., continued the conservation effort by building terraces that acted like dirt dams to stop

erosion and rotated hay with row crops on the steeper ground. He bought the farm that Mark now lives on and later bought the farm that Mark's grandfather rented which former Governor Larrabee had once owned. Mark said his dad logged trees needed for new construction but then replaced the harvested trees with seedlings in following years.

Once Mark bought the land in 1977, he added contour buffer strips on the steeper ground and continued to build grassback terraces 5 to 15 feet wide each year. Because of the width of the terraces, Mark is able to plow on their top sides though the construction is costly – at a \$1.50 to \$2 per foot. Last year Nelson constructed \$11,000 in terraces while utilizing a 50% cost share from the Natural Resources Conservation Service as much as possible.

With 11 acres of grass buffer strips along streams and rivers, Nelson hopes to keep soil particles -- and with them pollutants -- from reaching water. The grass buffer strips, including 13 acres of field borders, range from 20 to 40 feet wide with brome grass about 3 to 4 feet tall.

Nelson uses his most highly erodible land for timber which has strong tree roots keeping the land in place that would erode if row crops were planted. Managing 200 acres of timber, Mark has begun direct seeding nuts on land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program. While conceding that tree planting requires a little luck, Nelson said that he has been impressed with the growth of his most recently planted timber.

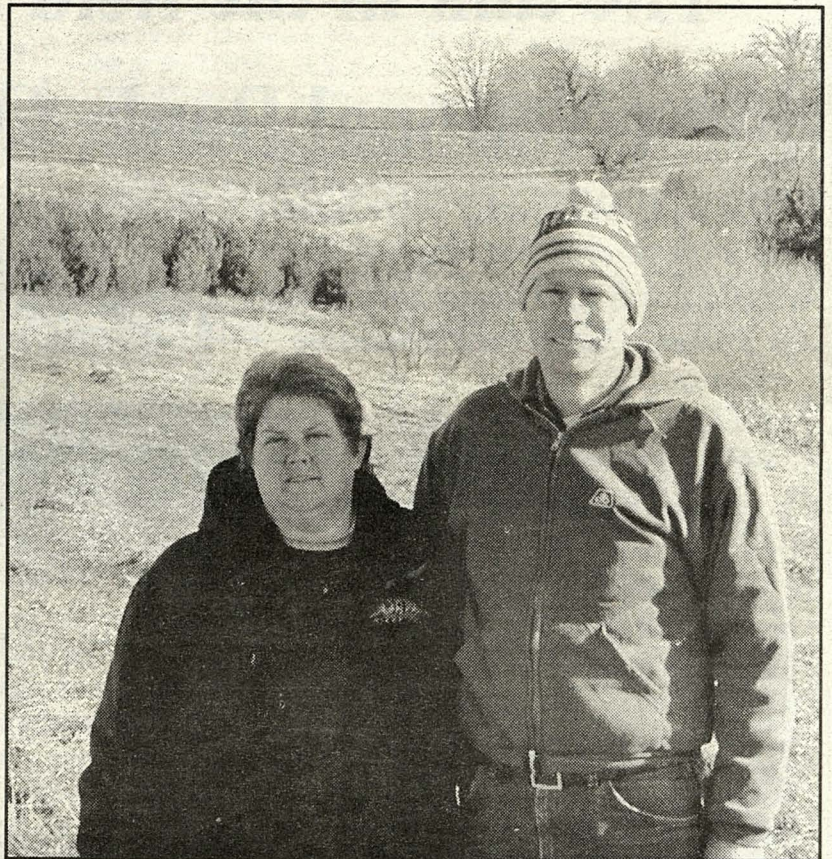
Over the past couple years, Nelson has taken cropland out of production with a 15 year CRP contract and planted trees. He said the land was difficult to farm with steep, short rows and that aesthetics played a role in his decision to plant timber. A variety of trees have been planted on the Nelson property including walnut, white pine, ash, hard maple, red oak, and other species.

Timber is only one of six parts of Nelson's conservation plan which has a corn, corn on bean, crop rotation. He no-tills after beans, no-tills corn after corn, and minimal-tills after corn stalks going into beans. Every third year he injects liquid hog manure using a nutrition management plan for his fertilizer requirements. Approved by the Iowa DNR, Nelson's nutrition management plan relies on testing the soil using a grid system to better determine application amounts.

Nelson's conservation tillage of the land leaves crop residue on the field and helps minimize wind erosion. Some land is continuous corn and beans are not planted on steeper slopes. While soil compaction is a problem, Nelson sees it as a tradeoff as more tillage leads to increased erosion.

The hilly land around Clermont is naturally high in phosphorous because land that was formerly timber has more phosphorus than land that was previously prairie, he explains. Nelson said he has an ongoing battle to keep phosphorous levels under control.

"It's a real concern," he noted stating that most of the pollution from phosphate is a result of soil



Denise & Mark Nelson, rural Clermont, were not only district and regional conservation award winners, but state honors too as Owner/Operators of the Year.

particles getting into the water which he is trying to prevent with a number of initiatives.

Nelson has begun adding the enzyme phytase to hog feed to help the pigs utilize more of the phosphorous in corn leading to less put back into the soil when it is used as fertilizer. He noticed a 25 percent reduction in phosphorous since he started using the enzyme. The increased amount of phosphorous utilized by the hogs has

led to a decreased need for the addition of dicalcium phosphate to rations.

With a myriad of conservation techniques, the Nelsons believe they have achieved a 5 ton per acre loss rate which is sustainable because land regenerates itself. The Nelsons have also been honored with several other awards the past year including the Fayette County Tree Farmer Award and the Young Lutheran Farmer Award.



Employees at the SCS office in West Union are pictured at left. From left- Tom Sperfslage, LaVonne Koch, Jerry Muff, Angie Freiling, Mike Henderson, Lori Kohlmeier, Al Crowe, Josh Gruber and Joe Wingert.

The talk in the field is the First National Bank, Oelwein.

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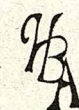
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Slope length critical to erosion levels

In Fayette County, common slope lengths are anywhere from 200 - 400', with a good number longer than 600'. Long slope lengths allow for water to "get up to speed" and start cutting and eroding. Increased speed means increased energy, which means increased erosion potential.

Breaking slope length into manageable pieces is important. 120 - 180' is a good distance to break slopes into as after that erosion is much more likely. Contouring breaks slope length into manageable pieces. Contouring as a land management practice saves significant amounts of soil

as the examples below will describe.

Examples:

Corn - bean rotation, up and down the hill farming (400' slope length @ 3% slope), leaving 30% residue after planting each crop erosion = 3 tons/acre/year erosion @ 600' slope length = 3.4 tons/acre/year

Corn - bean rotation, contoured, (150' slope length @ 3% slope), same residue as above erosion = 1.7 tons/acre/year

Corn - bean rotation, contoured with 30" grass bufferstrips (120' slope length @ 3% slope), same residue as above erosion = 1.3

tons/acre/year

Based on the examples above, if the typical 160 acre farm was switched into a contour row pattern with grass bufferstrips, soil erosion could be reduced by 272 tons per year for a 57% reduction in soil loss. We would all notice 272 tons of soil if it was annually dumped in our front yard.

Top soil is the "wealth" of our economy. Saving it and keeping it on the hillsides is essential to long and short term productivity.



Fayette County Farm gets conservation treatment

Located between Fayette and West Union, the approximately 400-acre county farm is shown above. For the past several years, the farm has had very little conservation applied. County supervisor Richard Jensen states, "One of the reasons the farm was neglected is that it was designated as not highly erodible by the USDA - SCS, for conservation compliance, roughly 10 years ago. Unfortunately, the farm has experienced several severe storms which stripped the topsoil." Last year the farm received a conservation facelift. Contour buffer strips were applied over much of the farm, shown on the aerial as light lines. Grassed waterways were also constructed, and are shown as dark lines. Jensen notes, "Even though much of the work is completed, there are areas that need to get more attention. We credit the farm tenant, Richard Lockard, for his cooperation in applying the CRP practices to the farm."

Report from NACD

By Bill Bennett - NACD director

In 2001 the NACD (National Association of Conservation Districts) board of directors met three times, in Fort Worth, Texas, in Washington, D.C. and in Salt Lake, Utah to discuss issues related to the wise use of the nations resources. The executive board of NACD met several times with the Clinton and then the Bush administration on the conservation issues. In addition, the house and

senate agriculture committees requested that NACD give testimony before them in the farm bill.

Both the house and senate versions of the new farm bill include many more conservation measures. This due to the fact that the wise use of resources in the key to a strong and viable nation. Nacd is happy to see that congress is looking to reward and assist people that are doing a good job of protecting and using our natural resources.

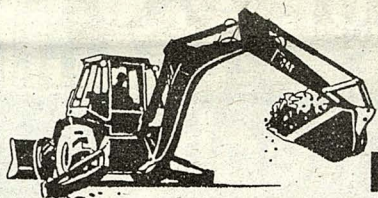
IDENTIFICATION STATEMENT

The Fayette Soil & Water Conservation District's Annual Report Published by the Fayette SWCD, Hwy. 150, 120 N. Industrial Pkwy., West Union, Ia. 52175

Issue No. 4

Published February 2001

Statement of Frequency: Annually



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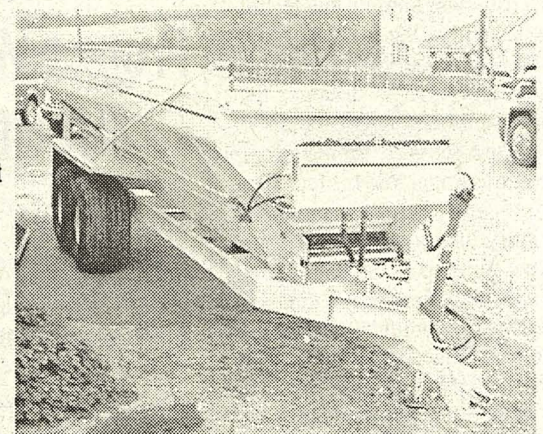


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Brenda Meyers recipient of Soil Water Conservation District \$500 scholarship

A freshman at Iowa State University, Brenda Meyers was the recipient of a \$500 Soil Water Conservation District scholarship for Spring 2002.

Heavily involved in both FFA and 4-H, Brenda hopes to obtain her master's degree and work for a company involved with agriculture. Majoring in agricultural business and minoring in accounting, she said she is a "capable, determined, and hard-working person."

At North Fayette High School, Brenda repeatedly made the honor roll and became a member of the NF Honor Society in 2001. Involved in both British and German Clubs, Brenda earned a place in Who's Who in Foreign Language and traveled abroad in the British exchange in June 2000.

Brenda was also involved in speech, track and volleyball and was entered into Who's Who in American High School Students.

While at North Fayette, Brenda held several offices in FFA and participated in several activities earning



Brenda Meyers

her numerous awards.

A member of 4-H from 1993 to present, she has served as the president of the Diligent Dover's 4-H Club, vice president of the Fayette County 4-H Council, and was involved in the Northeast Area 4-H Council and State 4-H Council. While serving in 4-H at varying levels, Brenda earned many volunteer and leadership awards.

Brenda worked as a waitress at Pizza Palace and served as an assistant Sunday school teacher while living in West Union.



Fayette SWCD commissioners are pictured above. Seated, from left- Dick Jensen, Bill Bennett and Deb Dessel. In back- Joyce Trotter, Joe Wingert, Judy Bennett, Will Ogle and John Grafenberg.

Report from CDI

By William Bennett, President of CDI

The year 2001 was a year of accomplishments and disappointments for the Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI). CDI gave training for new commissioners across the state early in the year so newly elected commissioners and others who wished to attend had more knowledge of the powers and responsibilities. CDI worked very hard to help the Iowa legislature find ways to help protect our natural resources. Thanks to everyone's efforts, we were able to retain cost-share funding and technical assistance in the budget. However, commissioners across the state were disappointed to discover that funds to reimburse them for out of pocket expenses were cut in half. As one commissioner told his representatives and state senators, "Commissioners would not mind working for no pay and paying half their expense, if everyone that was elected to office would do the same." As the year passed and state revenue fell short, CDI lost some of the technical support that was needed to get conservation on the land.

CDI had several things important to Iowans adopted as policy by the National Association of Conservation District (NACD) at the annual meeting as resolutions were discussed and voted on. CDI was called to give testimony as US Senators held hearings on the farm bill legislation and CDI members served on US Congress farm bill advisory committees.

Working with their core partners

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Iowa Department of Agriculture (IDALS), CDI helped to develop a six module-training program for commissioners. This will help commissioners to meet their responsibilities and better serve the needs of the conservation effort. This training will be given in 2002.

In December, Bernie Bolton of Oakland was elected president to replace William Bennett of Elgin and Gail (Butch) Neumeyer of Walker was elected vice-president of CDI.



Hansen Farm

156.15 acres, Union twp., building site w/grain bins & machine shed.

Downs Dairy Acreage

Acreage & Dairy setup, Dover twp.

Bertch Farm

Illyria twp., 223.89 acres, 175.7 acres in timber reserve, building site with some improvements

Downs (Meyer) Farm

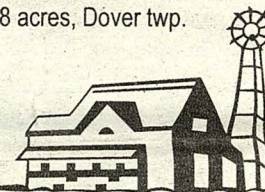
130 acres, Dover twp.

Langerman Farm

Westfield twp., 195 acres.

Baumler Farm

128.8 acres, Dover twp.



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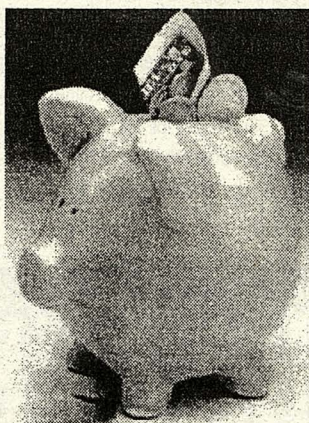
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Sound conservation management needed on Iowa farms

By Leroy Brown, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Iowa

What comes to mind when you hear the words "An Iowa Farm?" You may envision corn, beans, cattle and hogs, many of the traditional agricultural products. Iowa is one of the most agriculturally productive states in the nation. Iowa has 95,000 farms from which \$13 billion in cash farm incomes is realized. In addition to these products, Iowa's farms also produce much more - perhaps some things that you don't think about every day.

With sound conservation management, Iowa's farms can also produce healthy natural resources - soil, water, animals, plants, and air. Conservation minded farmers use their productive soils to grow a quality and plentiful supply of food and encourage a diversity of healthy plants, including crops, trees, and wildflowers. Privately owned land is the basis for healthy and abundant wildlife that the rest of the population watches, hunts, and fishes. Finally, conservation practices help make cleaner air for everyone to breathe.

Every time you buy a loaf of bread, have a drink of water, or watch a flock of geese head south in the fall, you are reaping the benefits of healthy natural resources on private lands. Many other products that we enjoy daily also began on privately owned land, including clothes, shoes, paper, and much more.

We all have a lot riding on healthy natural resources - and it's critical that we care for them, for today and for the future.

Often when people think of natural conservation they think of our national parks. But the truth of the matter is, the majority of land in the United States is privately owned. In fact, in Iowa, more than 95 percent of the land is privately owned. The success of America's environmental efforts depends on individual voluntary decisions made by millions of private landowners across the country.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is an agency in the U.S. Department of Agriculture that works with landowners to protect and improve natural resources on private lands. NRCS provides technical assis-

tance and outreach to all private landowners and landusers through local Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Working together, Iowa farmers and the conservation community have achieved a great deal in conservation. Iowa is a national leader in establishing conservation buffers, restoring wetlands, and using conservation tillage methods.

Today there is more talk and action than ever on conservation issues. I am optimistic about the future of conservation, here in Iowa and across the nation.

With new opportunities also come new challenges, and the Iowa NRCS is ready for both. First, we are completing a planning certification process to ensure our employees have the knowledge and tools needed to help farmers plan for soil protection, water quality, and other resource concerns. Secondly, we are continuing to work closely with our partners at the state and local level. Effective locally-led conservation will continue to be the key in implementing conservation practices and systems that meet local needs. Thirdly, we are continuing to cultivate new relationships with people that share out interest and goals. Many people are interested in conservation - and we are working to find common ground and work together.

I am proud of the conservation achievements Iowans have made in the past. Iowa landowners have shown that they are committed to, and capable of caring for our re-

sources. The future of conservation here in Iowa looks very bright, and the NRCS is ready to work hard, work smart, and work together, to help Iowans take more steps forward.

New soil conservationist named for Fayette County

Angie Freilinger has filled the vacancy for a soil conservationist for Fayette County. Freilinger, originally from Monona, graduated from Iowa State University in 2001 with a B.S. degree in Agronomy. After spending her high school years working on her uncle's farm and being acquainted with her father's contracting business she decided to pursue a career in the conservation field.

During college Freilinger spent her summer internships working for local cooperatives in the Monona, Waukon and Postville areas. After graduating from Iowa State University in May of 2001 she accepted a temporary position with the Resource Conservation and Development, RC&D, office in Postville. Freilinger worked as the Geographic Information Systems, GIS, assistant and aided the Up-



Angie Freilinger

per Iowa River Watershed Project in analyzing information about water quality and erosion issues occurring within the watershed boundaries.

Freilinger then accepted a temporary position with the Allamakee County Soil and Water Conservation District, SWCD, as the project coordinator for the Big Paint Creek Watershed Project. While employed at the Allamakee SWCD Freilinger then accepted a permanent position with the Natural Resources Conservation Service working as the soil conservationist for Fayette County.

Freilinger spends her spare time outdoors. She enjoys hunting, fishing, and other outside activities. Freilinger is looking forward to working with the landowners in Fayette County.

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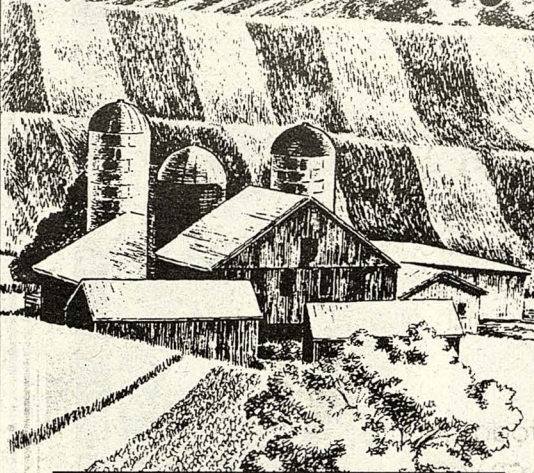
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Lansings complete bank stabilization project on Turkey River

By Josh Gruber

Everyone remembers the flood of 1999, especially the Lansing family because that was when the Turkey River began the process of stealing one-tenth their field.

The high water washed out the earthen dike that had kept the river in check since the early 70s. The dike was reinforced in 1993. After the dike was washed out and an island of sediment formed in the old river channel, the continuous flow of water began to cut a new channel from the Lansing's field. The channel encroached twenty feet into the cropland. Then it began to erode throughout the length of the field, which extends to 300 feet, washing hundreds of tons of sediment down the Turkey River. Actions needed to be taken before the river eroded the remaining field.

Neil began looking at his options by talking to Jerry Muff, Dis-

trict Conservationist, Neil Struthers, Area Engineer, and Bill Kalishek, DNR Fisheries Biologist. Neil had limited options and it was clear that the best choice would be to stabilize the bank with riprap, and then add a CRP riparian buffer strip on the fields along the river. After intensive planning, the project was under construction. The riprap project required roughly 1400 tons of large rocks and boulders. They were placed on the outside bend of the riverbank for stabilization. The rock bank is now approximately 650ft long, 8 ft. high and 2 ft. thick. The five foot dike that had been washed out was also rebuilt and lined up with the neighbor's dike. To establish a root system in the soil behind the riprap a riparian buffer strip was established. The entire riverbank, over 2,000 feet, now has a 60-foot wide CRP filter strip along the edge of Lansing's cropland. The

filter strip was seeded with variety of native grasses. Then over 1300 mixed oaks, ash, maples, and willow trees were planted to establish a deep root system in the soil. Once established the vegetation will not only hold the soil in place. It will also begin to filter the runoff that goes into the river, which will help improve quality of the water in the Turkey River.

Special thanks should be given to the Lansing family for completing and environmental project of this significance. The Lansings completed this project with no cost-share assistance.

According to Neil and his mother the total expense of the project was near the price that the Lansing family paid for the farm back in the early 60s. Again a spe-

cial thanks should be given to the Lansing family for showing their

concern for conservation.



In the spring of 2001 after the construction was completed the water began to rise as usual but not to record levels. Neil said, "Not a stone was moved and the riprap prevent any further erosion."

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First National Bank's Ag Officers, front from left: Mark Moser and Brian Reichter; back - Shari Lauer, Jill Koepfel and Barn Lauer.



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Water quality monitoring results in the Upper Maquoketa River watershed

By Tom Sperflage, Environmental Specialist II Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship

The Upper Maquoketa River Water Quality Project (UMRWQP) is entering its second year of efforts to help landowners in the southeast part of the county get better control of erosion and nutrient loss. The UMRWQP falls in parts of four soil and water conservation districts in Fayette, Clayton, Delaware, and Buchanan; and in total, contains over 40,000 acres. There are many sponsors of the project, and include the SWCDs, IDALS-DSC, IDNR, EPA, ISU, Headwaters Council, USDA-NRCS and FSA.

So far, landowners in the watershed have done an excellent job with improving land and nutrient management. There have been over 25 miles of waterways and 15 miles of filterstrips installed. Headway is being made into contour farming

and wetland construction. Farmers are also learning how to refine nutrient and manure use so that optimum yield are maintained, while limiting the negative impacts of over-application.

All of these practices improve water quality. But how and when will we know that? In order to know the value of what is being done now, we needed to collect information on what was "historically" happening. The following is real-world sampling information. It is based on daily sampling events with analysis being completed in labs at Iowa State University. This data represents a monitoring station just north of Backbone Lake, on the Upper Maquoketa River for the year of 2000, as we are still waiting for 2001 data to be returned. The drainage area feeding this sampling station is just over 40,000 acres.

For the year 2000, each acre in the watershed contributed, on average, 1,099# of sediment to the river.

For the watershed, this amounts to a total of 44,000,000# of sediment transported through the river. Erosion on the landscape was more—this figure is just the amount carried in the river. Much of the transported sediment is likely now in the bottom of Backbone Lake.

Additionally, each acre contributed, on average, 62.6# of Nitrogen and 1.3# of Phosphorus. This amounts to 2,504,000# N and 52,000# P being carried through the river system. These losses are dramatic, and pose real threats to the bottom line and environment. All sediment, N and P figures are about twice what 1999 data yielded.

There are many opportunities to help protect the farm and the environment, both of which we cherish. Take advantage of these opportunities while they last—every acre and every landowner makes a difference.

UPPER MAQUOKETA RIVER WATER QUALITY PROJECT

Project Coordinator - Tom Sperflage John Rodecap and Chad Ingels

Iowa Department of Agriculture - DSC Iowa State University-Extension

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The Upper Maquoketa River Water Quality project is supported in part or in total by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation, through funds of the Water Protection Fund and, by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Fed-

eral Nonpoint Source Management Program (Section 319 to the Clean Water Act). Technical assistance is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. All programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.

Plant your own prairie

By Richard Jensen

A growing number of people want their own patch of prairie. They have a desire to create a landscape that looks like it did when their grandparents came here. Many of our farmers use a native grass and forbes seed mix in their newly enrolled CRP seeding plan. You will want to start by purchasing a good prairie mix that contains at least forbs and grasses. You might even jump-start this new prairie by buying the natives that are already started and then set them out. However you decided to get started be sure you buy from a reputable source. It is quite expensive initially but will provide years of living history and beauty. Select the right combination of seed or plants that are native to our area and specific soil type. There are several sources of these seeds and plants in our area that will provide you with proper guidance. This wild creation will provide colorful blooms for you and attract various birds, butterflies and insects to enjoy.

After you have selected the site and have been advised of the seed or plants that are specifically adapted for patch it is now time to get to work. As soon as the weeds get four inches tall in the spring hit them with your sprayer with Roundup. Follow label instructions on the container. Shortly before May you may need to spray another time. Until your plants get established weeds need to be controlled.

By the middle of May you should very lightly till the soil, just enough to get a very shallow bed for the seeds to root into. This seed only requires 1/8 inch soil cover to germinate. Any deeper and you will not get the result you desire.

Several times during the summer you should clip the patch to control weed growth. Do not anticipate the same results as you would with radishes and onions. This "crop" takes a lot of time to yield its fruit, years in fact! You might clip the weeds for several years after the planting year.

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From left: Jerry Burrack, Glenda Koehn, and C.J. Lensing

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FINANCIAL STATEMENT
JULY 1, 2000 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2001

IM BUDGET	Allocation	\$ 3,000.00
	Supplemental	1,185.00
	Total Allocation	4,185.00
	Commissioner Expenses	1,786.45
	Office Supplies & Expenses	\$ 2,438.90

3M BUDGET COST-SHARE PROGRAM

	2000-2001 Allocation	\$ 43,663.00
	Spent	8,750.35
Obligated		30,361.50
Unobligated		\$ 4,551.15

	1999-2000 Allocation	\$ 43,663.00
Spent		37,199.00
Obligated		5,631.50
Unobligated		\$832.50

	1998-1999 Allocation	\$ 37,842.00
Spent		34,898.83
Returned to State		\$ 2,943.17

	REAP Practices Allocation	\$ 22,093.00
	Supplemental Allocation	10,275.00
	Total Allocation	32,368.00
Spent		12,551.00
Reallocated under 2002 Funds		19,517.00
Returned to State		\$ 300.00

	REAP Forestry Allocation	\$ 7,549.00
	Supplemental Allocation	6,538.00
	Total Allocation	14,087.00
Spent		12,190.00
Reallocated under 2002 Funds		\$ 1,897.00

Revolving Fund

Beginning Balance on 07-01-00	\$ 507.91
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Income

IM Reimbursement	2,605.44
Fabric Income	2,668.48
Money Market Transfers to Checking	55,200.00
Regional Meeting	10.95
Supporter Club	1,553.00
Tree Sales	4,585.80
Upper Maquoketa Reimbursement	2,193.48
Wildflowers	595.70
Total Income	\$69,412.85

Expenses

ATV	267.72
Bank Charges	60.04
Commissioner Expenses	889.80
Donations	250.00
Education	880.57
Fabric Machine Expenses	8,126.19
Gifts Given	22.20
GPS	258.20
Grain Drill Expenses	17,970.41
Grannis Creek Grant Funds	0,000.00
Houg Education Farm	8,825.57
Memorials	34.44
Miscellaneous	75.00
Office Supplies	4,999.55
Payroll	1,500.00
Sales Tax	902.41
SWCD Buffer Initiative	5,000.00
Trees	5,623.12
Upper Maquoketa Expense	2,696.19
Wildflowers	476.40
Total Expenses	\$68,857.81

Ending Balance on 06-30-01	\$555.04
Savings	
Beginning Balance on 07-01-00	\$ 647.04
Interest Earned	14.33
Ending Balance on 06-30-01	\$661.37

ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2001

Practice	Number	Acres/Feet
Clients Receiving Assistance	1,557	
Conservation Plans Completed		9,828 ac.
Conservation Reserve Program	1,601	22,961 ac.
Contour Buffers Strips	40	369 ac.(2,181 ac. benefited)
Field Windbreak	4	21 ac.
Filter Strips		616 ac.
Grassed Waterways		352 ac.
Riparian Forest Buffers		244 ac.
Shallow Water Structures	7	35 ac.
Conservation Tillage		2,561 ac.
Contour Farming		2,222 ac.
Contour Stripcropping		41 ac.
Cropland Benefited		7,763 ac.
Grade Stabilization Structure	1	
Manure Storage Structure	1	
Nutrient Management Applied		2,155 ac.
Pasture Management		366 ac.
Streambank Protection		700 ft.
Terraces		13,080 ft.
Timber Stand Improvement		189 ac.
Trees & Shrub Plantings		414 ac.
Wetlands Created or Restored		457 ac.
Wildlife Habitat Mangement		3,152 ac.

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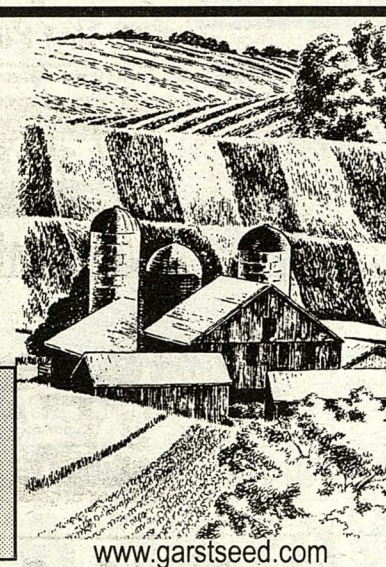
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Grannis Creek Watershed project detailed

By Michael Henderson

As environmental awareness increases across the country, water quality is one of the main topics of discussion. This concern is warranted in many cases. As a case in point, would you drink water out of any stream today without being concerned of what might be in the water?

When this area was first settled there was little concern about the purity of the water in the local streams. Over time with the increase in production agriculture, sediment, nutrients, pesticides, and animal waste contamination have deteriorated the water quality to a point it has to be purified for human consumption. The regulatory agencies site that other industries have already complied with regulatory guidelines, therefore, agriculture is the remaining major contributor of this pollution.

The Fayette SWCD feels voluntary efforts to improve conservation practices will delay or prevent regulations from being passed. In an effort to assist producers in this issue, Fayette County has been proactive in requesting additional funding for special watershed projects.

This year the district was awarded funding for a three-year project on

Grannis Creek. Michael Henderson has been hired as coordinator for the project which is supported by Fayette SWCD, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS), Division of Soil Conservation (DSC), Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), USDA-NRCS, and FSA.

Grannis Creek Watershed is located between Fayette and Wadena and drains to the Volga River. The watershed contains approximately 3794 acres (5.9 square miles). It is a cold water, high quality recreational stream. This stream is stocked from April until October by the Big Springs Trout Hatchery and is managed for Put and Take fishing. The IDNR currently considers Grannis Creek as a valuable and highly utilized trout stream. The 1996 Trout Angler Survey estimates 9076 angler visits per year to Grannis Creek. Based on estimates from the American Sport fishing Association's Economic Impact of Sport fishing in Iowa this equates to about \$435,000 in expenditures per year.

The long-range goal of the district is to have Grannis Creek support a viable, productive, and naturally re-

producing population of brown and possibly rainbow trout. IDNR Fisheries Biologist, Bill Kalishek, stated there is currently limited reproduction of brown trout in Grannis Creek. With this information and the success of other watershed management projects completed in Northeast Iowa, the district feels that this goal is realistic. Based on evaluation of the stream, sedimentation is having the greatest negative impact toward this goal.

Sediment contributes to filling of deep holes and covering the gravel spawning beds, which are both critical for trout survival. Suspended solids in the water reduce the visibility for sight seeing trout to feed and has a tendency to irritate their gills. This combination of effects reduces the vigor of the trout population making them more susceptible to disease.

Sedimentation also contributes to the warming of streams above the 75-degree limit tolerated by trout. This warming is caused by the filling of

the stream channel with sediment, creating wide, shallow, slow moving streams that are easily warmed by the sun and air.

The primary focus of this project is to reduce sediment delivery to the stream. Practices installed through this program will be provided 75% cost share. The practices will be prioritized based on reduction of sediment delivery to the stream. Incentives for pasture management, alternative watering systems, exclusion fencing, nutrient management and structural practices will be included. Structural practices will primarily include terraces, water and sediment control basins, grade stabilization structures, waterway re-establishment, and constructed wetland.

Practices installed to date are 4200 feet of terraces. These terraces are estimated to prevent 82 ton of soil per year from entering the upper reaches of the intermittent part of the stream. Several other projects have

been approved for cost share for construction during the spring and summer months.

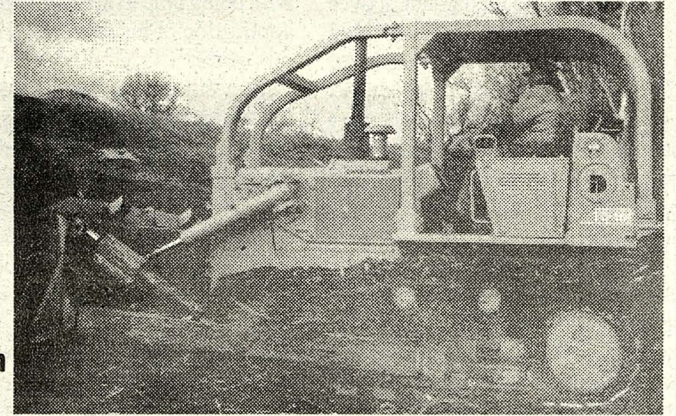
Through out this project we encourage all members of the community to get involved. The farmers that are changing the way they farm the ground need to be recognized for their efforts. Many of these changes that benefit the environment come at an initial cost to the farmer in both money and time. Conservation does not happen passively, it takes constant vigilance to make a difference.

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Mike Puff implements CRP buffer strips, grassed waterways

By Josh Gruber

Mike Puff is a local farmer and veterinarian in Oelwein. He currently farms 200 acres east of Oelwein. Before last year Mike didn't have any extensive conservation practices on his farm, although he was concise about the conservation practices that were out there. Mike had noticed visible soil erosion throughout his fields. To prevent further erosion he contacted Jerry Muff, the District Conservationist.

Muff brought some facts to Mike's attention he did not realize. Muff presented Mike with information on the soil loss using various conservation alternatives. With Mike's current practices planting straight rows on a corn/soybean rotation leaving 20% residue on the surface after planting corn into soybean residue and 30% residue left

on the surface after planting soybeans into corn his current soil loss is 4 tons per acre per year. Using the same crop rotation and tillage, but farming with rows on the contour laid out by the NRCS would reduce Mike's soil loss to 2.4 tons per acre. But Mike chose to take another step in the direction of conservation.

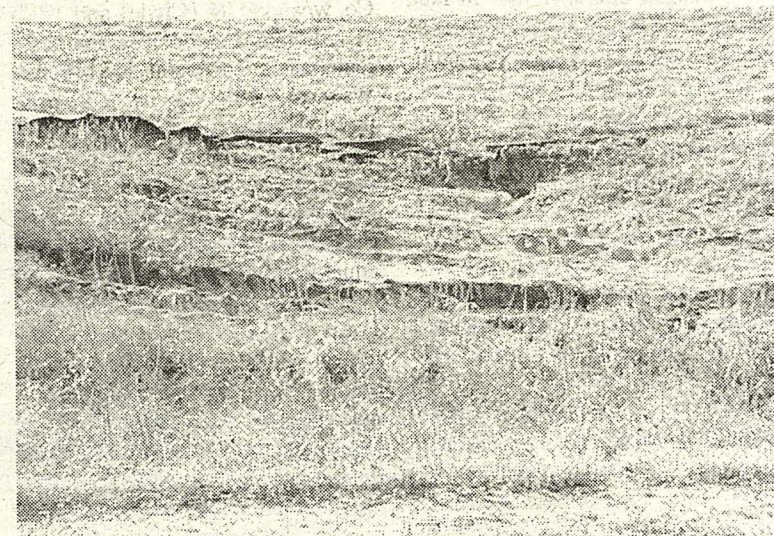
He chose to continue his tillage practices and have the NRCS lay out contour buffer strips with grassed waterways. Implementing these practices into Mike's ground reduces the soil loss down to 1.7 tons per acre. Best stated by Mike, "It doesn't take a genius to see that you can make a big difference by adding these buffer strips." Not only is Mike decreasing amounts of soil he loses from his field the buffer strips are also filtering the

runoff of chemicals and pollutants.

Another bit of advice Mike is willing to give other farmers is the benefit of fabric strips on newly constructed waterways because waterways are vulnerable to rill erosion until grass cover is established. The fabric strips are knifed 18 inches into the soil and the other 18 inches of the width is laid on the soil surface. The length of the strips are dependent on the waterway width but are usually about 20 feet wide and placed about every hundred feet up the waterway. The fabric strips

slow down the flow of water on the vulnerable waterway. Mike said, "I spent about \$1500 on the strips and that is the best money I spent." Mike was partially reimbursed for this cost. The strips prevented the newly constructed waterways from being gullied by the heavy spring rains that the surrounding communities received.

Overall Mike is pleased with the implement of the new practices on his farm. He says, "Someone is coming after me and I had better leave some soil for them."



Pictured above are the fabric strips on the Mike Puff farm.

Getting started with zone tilling

By Angie Freilinger

Louis Becker grew up in the West Union area working on the family farm. Most of his farming career consisted of a more intensive cropping system. For years Becker has been chisel plowing corn on corn acres with some acres of alfalfa. With the change in farming management over the past several years Becker decided to lean towards implementing more conservation on his farm. Becker had been playing with the idea of implementing zone tillage with a corn/soybean rotation on his farm for a few years before actually converting to such a system.

New to the system Becker only has experienced 3 years of zone-tilling soybeans and 1 year of zone-tilling corn. "I think zone-till is a good deal, but time will tell." Becker along with most first time zone-tillers had his doubts about the system. He stated that his initial concern was that zone-tilling would not work in this area. Becker also noted that he was worried about getting his fertilizer applied when utilizing zone-till.

Even though Becker has only been implementing zone-till for a short time, he feels that so far his system is working successfully. He has not had any specific problems yet, but is aware that he may find some down the road. Even after a short period of utilizing such a system Becker has noticed some benefits. He stated that there are a lot less hours involved when using zone-till. Becker noted that fewer trips are required over the field, which saves on compaction among other things. He stated that less manpower is needed, less fuel is required, along with wear and tear being saved on his tractor. Becker noted that at least 200 hours are saved on his tractor with such a system.

Becker is a firm believer in implementing deep ripping in his

zone-till system. "I wouldn't zone-till without deep ripping." He feels that deep ripping is the key to his success with zone-tilling so far. His doubts about zone tilling prior were diminished when he began using a deep ripper. With deep ripping he is able to make zone-till work in this area along with being able to achieve successful application of his fertilizer. He deep rips about 14'-15' into the ground. Becker utilizes the deep ripper in the fall and spring to combat compaction. His deep ripper has triple coulters on the front and cover-up disks on the back. Becker is very happy with this type of a deep ripper. He feels that the cover up disks are excellent at covering up the trench that is often left open from the coulters. Becker found that applying anhydrous with the deep ripper was an efficient way to reduce compaction. He noted that the cover up disks on the deep ripper creates ridges that he intern tries to plant on.

His zone-till system consists of planting his beans in 38-inch rows and corn in 38-inch rows. He plants roundup ready soybeans and some round up ready corn. He uses a John Deere 7200 planter with ripple coulters on it to apply dry fertilizer and row cleaners. Becker applies almost all of his own pesticides. On his conventional corn acres Becker does some burn down with the planter and then applies a second application of herbicide to combat any late emerging weed species. He noted that he has experienced excellent weed control.

Currently Becker is extremely happy with his zone-till system. "I am happy with zone-till right now" He stated that overall he is pleased with this corn and soybean yields. He readily admits that he is new to the zone-till system and has a lot of experiences to come.

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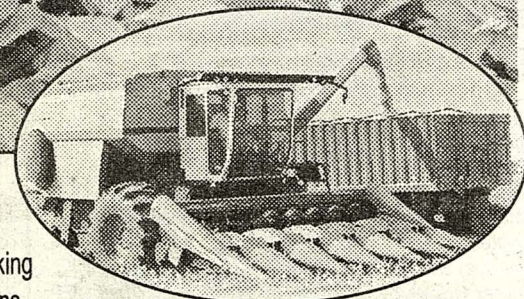
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Continuous CRP waterway program becoming popular

By Alan Crowe, State Technician

After the heavy spring rains of 1999 many area farmers began to realize just how important grassed waterways are in reducing or preventing gully erosion.

When the continuous CRP began back in 1997, only a handful of producers showed interest in the w/w (waterway) program. However, that has changed dramatically. In fact, since August of 2000, the FSA office has received in excess of 170 applications for waterways.

Part of the reason for this is the additional incentives that are now available. One of these is called SIP (signing incentive payment.) This is an up front payment of \$10/ac./contract year. CRP w/w contracts are for 10 years, so for each acre under contract you receive \$100. Participants MAY also qualify for PIP (practice incentive payment,) subject to remaining funds available. This amounts to

a one time payment equal to 40% of the total eligible cost of installing the practice. Combine this with the 50% cost share in the CRP contract, a producer could conceivably receive 90% cost share for the establishment of a waterway. You can't beat that with a stick!

The contract rental rate is determined by the soil types within the w/w area. Common soil types in Fayette Co. w/ws are 84 {Clyde} and 391B {Clyde-Floyd complex}. The basic rental rate on these soils is \$144. W/Ws receive an additional 20% incentive { $\$144 + 20\% = \172.80 } and a \$5 maintenance payment = \$177.80 per acre. That's not too shabby either! Also a producer may, if he or she wishes, enroll into the CRP an area equal to two times the design width of the w/w, not to exceed 100 feet. For example say the design width is 40 feet, a producer can seed down an additional 20' wide strip along each side of the constructed w/w, thereby

doubling the amount of acres on the CRP contract.

I've explained a few of the appealing aspects of the program but I also need to mention a few things that you must consider. Not every w/w project is going to be eligible. Existing w/ws are NOT eligible because they don't meet FSA crop history requirements. Some won't be eligible because NRCS requires "upland treatment" on at least 75% of the producers cropland that lies within the drainage area of the proposed w/w. Basically, upland treatment means the producer is currently implementing conservation practices which reduce soil loss levels down to "T," which usually is 5 ton/ac./yr. If the grade of the proposed w/w is quite flat or less than 1%, it may be impractical to design &/or construct, especially if there is tile within 2 or 3 feet of the surface. Also, the w/w must have a stable outlet. We can't end a w/w at the beginning of an

active gully, nor can we end a w/w where there is more than 1 1/2 or 2 feet of overfall.

It is very important to know that a producer has only 12 months from the time the CRP contract is approved to construct and seed the w/w. If the project is not completed by then, the producer will be required to pay back all money received plus interest, and pay liquidated damages which amounts to 25% of the annual payment. Also he or she will not be allowed to apply on these acres again at a later date.

With that in mind, I would HIGHLY suggest those of you with an approved contract make an effort to obtain a commitment from your contractor to complete the work within the time allowed. It may be necessary to seed a temporary cover crop so that your contractor can shape your w/w in the summer or early fall. You should probably seed an area at least twice as large as the design width to allow room for construction without damaging crops.

Bear in mind ALL CRP w/ws

must be shaped and seeded to NRCS specifications. Most w/ws will need to be surveyed before a final design can be figured. All waterways will be surveyed after construction is completed. Any w/w that does not have the required design shape, width, and depth will need to be re-shaped until the design standards are met.

All in all, I feel that the continuous CRP w/w program is an excellent opportunity for landowners to apply conservation to their land and simultaneously reap a good profit. However, it will take careful planning on your behalf as well as ours to make it all happen.

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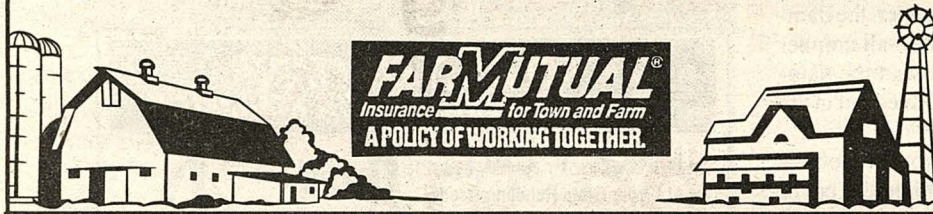
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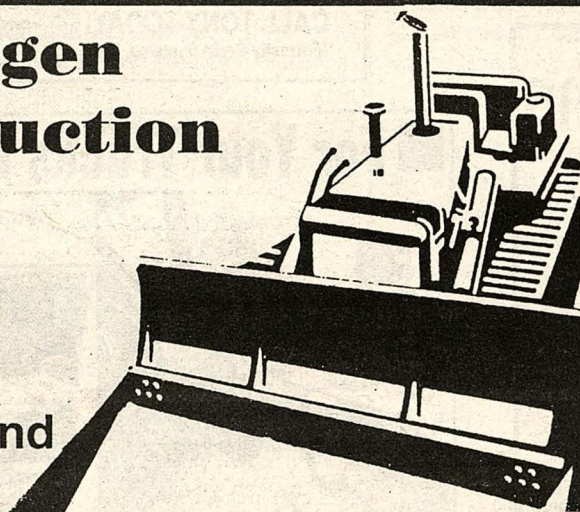


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Mike Thoma recipient of windbreak award

By Jeremy Varner
NewsWriter

After purchasing a property east of Oelwein, Mike Thoma planted a large grove of trees and moved a house to the location. The acreage had 49 old black hills spruce trees before hundreds of various types of trees were planted in two separate windbreaks.

The Fayette County Soil and Water Conservation District awarded Thoma with the Izaak Walton Windbreak Award for his efforts.

Thoma said he became interested in constructing the wildlife windbreak in 1991 when Jim Kelly recalled pheasants lived in the area when the cover was better. The cost of the windbreak construction was shared with Thoma paying 12.5%, pheasants forever 12.5%, and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources funding the remaining 75%.

Many clumps of trees and bushes were removed with a bulldozer and the windbreak was planted on April 2, 1992 by Jon Steege and the Fayette County Conservation Department.

"This part of the project worked very well," Thoma said, adding several varieties were planted including: ninebark, American cranberry highbrush, black cherry, siberian crabapple, white spruce, and techny arbor vitae.

The first few weeks were difficult for the trees because of hot and dry weather. Thoma became worried his trees were in trouble until his neighbor, Larry Stohr, offered the use of a large wagon-mounted water tank. The watering during the spring and summer helped the young trees off to a good start.

In August Thoma moved a house onto the property. The building had sat beside the clinic in Oelwein and used to be a convent for nuns at Mercy Hospital. After it was moved, Mike and Jenny Thoma began to turn



Mike and Jenny Thoma standing in their award winning windbreak outside of Oelwein. Behind them are several rows of white spruce trees.

the building into a home.

Mike Thoma said the first few years were uneventful; the trees were spared from the pests and harsh weather that would follow.

Despite several years of good growth and development, the winter of 1995-96 ravaged the white spruce trees. Thoma noted several warm spells started the trees to grow and in March several weeks of sudden sub-zero temperatures damaged the trees. Between the dry fall of 1995 and following winter, Thoma lost 25 of the white spruce trees. In the spring these trees were replanted and have done well ever since.

Weather was not the only force damaging the windbreak, in the winter of 1999-00 rabbits began to overrun the windbreak stripping nearly all the bark off the trunks of the cherry and crabapple trees. Thoma spent several weeks during the following spring applying a covering

agent to protect the damaged trees.

"It apparently worked as we never lost a tree," Thoma said.

The next summer brought several wind storms and one late summer wind storm broke almost every top leader off the white spruce trees. Thoma noted the situation does not seem to be serious and after trimming the damaged trees new leaders were started.

The following winter the rabbits returned though due to the consistent five to eight foot depth of the snow through most of the winter, the damage was confined to a small number of tree branches. Most of the damaged branches were pruned out in the spring of 2001.

Last winter also brought snow — enough to almost completely cover the ninebark trees. The snow caused some plants to lose much of their foliage. Currently he is waiting to see how they turn out this year. He

hopes the foliage improves and the plants recover.

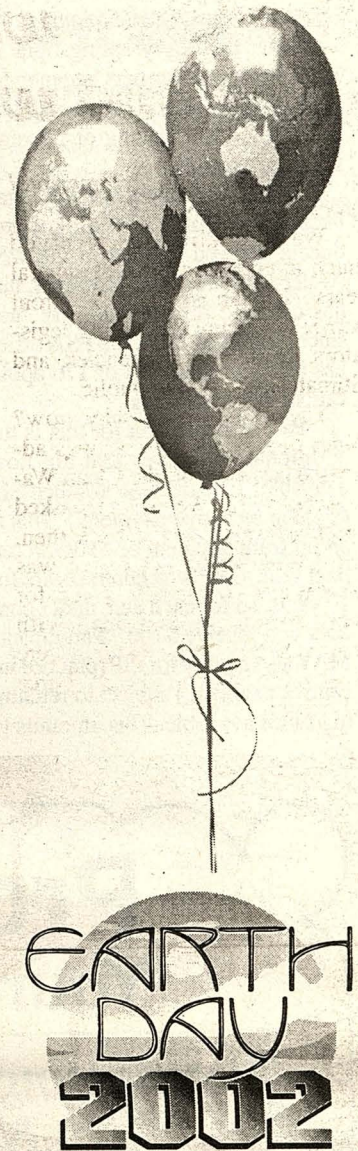
The winter took its toll on the pheasants as well, Thoma noted. He said he used to see them on the property often but this year he yet to see any.

Thoma suggested some animals, however, have increasingly been a cause for concern. Deer rubs occasionally cause some damage and gophers and moles have begun to show up. In addition, he had to spray for web worms several times last year.

While the newer trees have dealt with a harsh environment, Thoma suggested they have done fairly well. The older trees, however, have not fared as well. Of the original 49 black hills spruce that cut across the property, only 11 remain because of old age and wind storms. Thoma said the older grove is slowly dying and will need to be removed to prevent any from falling on the house.

Thoma plans to plant more trees in the back part of the acreage at a later date. Currently the windbreak has 113 ninebark, 50 American cranberry highbrush, 40 black cherry, 40 siberian crabapple, 85 white spruce, 15 techny arbor vitae, and 11 black hills spruce.

"We have enjoyed watching the growth and change in appearance of the grove, not to mention all of the different varieties of birds that we see frequenting the area," Thoma said, "it's hard to believe how much [the trees] have grown."



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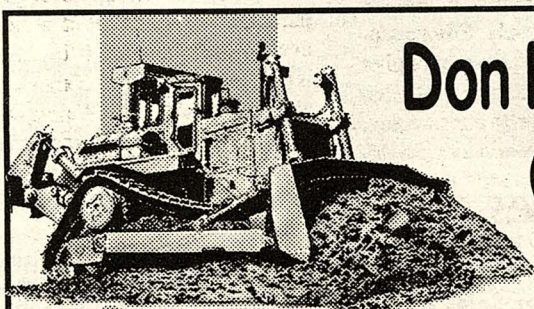
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Quality – where is all this coming from and where is it going?

By Tom Sperflage, Environmental Specialist, IDALS-DCS

Water quality has received much attention in the last several years. It is an issue on the "front burner" of many, including legislators, conservation agencies, and ultimately, the voting public.

The question is, why now? Water quality as an issue, was addressed by law with the Clean Water Act of 1972. We as voters asked for clean water – even back then. The Clean Water Act's goal was fishable and swimmable waters for every American, and dealt with many concerns. Among them were point source and non-point source pollution.

Point source pollution is traceable to an outlet pipe, and is generally easy to identify. Industrial plants, sewage treatment plants (and the like) that discharge to a river or watercourse are typical examples of point source pollution.

Non-point source pollution is very difficult to trace and often comes from a large area, that may or may not be definable. Non-point source pollution is usually associated with watersheds, land-use, and agriculture.

When the Clean Water Act was first enacted, legislators and the public looked for quick action. Point source pollution was given much attention, as the sites were numerous and highly visible. Through the

1970s and early '80s many of the point source sites were cleaned up and substantial progress was made in cleaning up the nation's waters.

In the '90s the pendulum shifted to non-point source pollution and drinking water supplies as environmental groups and lawyers started suing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). These groups and lawyers felt that public health and the environment was in jeopardy because EPA wasn't doing enough to prevent the degradation of our water resources.

In response to this attention, the EPA and other natural resource agencies participated in studies to determine the causes of water impairment (see Table 1).

With this and other information in hand, and to recognize the 25th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act, President Clinton and Vice-President Gore announced the Clean Water Action Plan in early 1998.

The Clean Water Action Plan defines 111 new goals to work towards for clean water through a watershed approach. The Plan also describes funding requirements necessary to successfully implement the plan. The watershed approach was chosen because nearly 70% of the United States, not including Alaska, is owned by private individuals (The Clean Water Action Plan, 14 February 1998). And so, most of the rain falls on private lands before it runs off into lakes, streams, rivers or other waterbodies. We all have a role to shoulder when it comes to land and water stewardship.

In Iowa, the idea of water quality will be with us for some time, especially for drinking water supply watersheds. Continued attention will also be given to ag drainage wells, sink-holes, cold water trout streams, and other water resources including reservoirs or streams/small rivers of local importance. Financial incentives are available to complete water quality work. For the present time, water quality work is on a voluntary basis. EPA (as sometimes delegated to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources) does have the authority to enforce or regulate certain efforts if the voluntary approach fails.

Table 1.

Rank	Rivers	Lakes	Estuaries
1	Siltation	Nutrients	Nutrients
2	Nutrients	Metals	Bacteria
3	Bacteria	Siltation	Toxic Organic Chemicals
4	Oxygen depleting substances	Oxygen depleting substances	Oxygen depleting substances
5	Pesticides	Noxious Aquatic Plants	Oil and Grease

Source: 1996 National Water Quality Inventory and Clean Water Action Plan

In addition to the causes of water impairment, these studies also indicated leading sources or contributors (see Table 2).

Table 2.

Rank	Rivers	Lakes	Estuaries
1	Agriculture	Agriculture	Industrial Discharges
2	Municipal Point Sources	Unspecified Non-point Sources	Urban Runoff/Storm Sewers
3	Hydrologic Modification	Atmospheric Deposition	Municipal Point Sources
4	Habitat Modification	Urban Runoff/Storm Sewers	Upstream Sources
5	Resource Extraction	Municipal Point Sources	Agriculture

Source: 1996 National Water Quality Inventory and Clean Water Action Plan

Water quality monitoring will increase in importance to both measure progress and to educate the public. There are many volunteer monitoring groups throughout the State, monitoring everything from pH to aquatic invertebrates (bugs). Water quality assessments will be written to "formalize" the characteristics of a watershed, the potential threats facing it, and any control measures planned for.

Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) will be adopted that describe the total amount of material (phosphorus, a herbicide, harmful bacteria, etc.) a waterbody can receive in any given day. Nutrient application rates and methods will be looked at much more closely, and may be "budgeted" or even regulated. Animal manure will continue to be regulated closely. Private septic systems will likely see tougher standards and limitations as the issue is human to human transmission. Limiting excessive soil loss is as always, very important. Programs promoting bufferstrips and wetlands will be common and well funded.

The urban sector will face new issues as well. Storm drains/storm sewers are likely to be changed at some point so that the runoff goes through a constructed wetland or treatment plant to reduce contaminant levels. Urban conservation will be the focus of zoning and ordinances, to both increase the amount of "open space" in a planned area and to decrease the amounts of sediment, nutrients, oils, etc., that reach watercourses. In fact, there are "conservation developments" already being built in the State that sell lots at a premium to the market. These developments incorporate water, open space, and natural areas to protect the environment and limit degradation due to urban development. This trend is expected to continue.

Public and private landowner participation is critical to limit or even avoid regulation. Clean water is integral to individual, community, and ecological health. We live in an age of litigation if we like to sue each other for everything. We need to take this "bull" by the horns and do what we can to make it all work.

This project is supported in part or in total by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation, through funds of the Water Protection Fund or the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Technical assistance is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. All programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.



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Water quality monitoring of Grannis & Mink Creeks detailed

By Michael Henderson

Dr. Rick Klann, Upper Iowa University, needs to be recognized for the work he has performed for the Fayette SWCD. This past year he volunteered his time and resources to pull and analyze water samples from Grannis and Mink Creeks. This test-

ing is intended to give baseline measurements, so improvement or degradation over time can be evaluated.

The monitoring activities included measurements of both physical and chemical parameters. He pulled samples from one location in

each stream monthly from April until November with two more samples being pulled at each site after a significant rain event. In addition to this benthic invertebrates were collected and identified at each location. These are the primary food source for trout

and also give a good indication of the water quality. The information gained by this monitoring will be added to the state-wide database to track the condition of Iowa's water courses.

Funding for the costs associated with lab analysis for nutrients was

paid for by a watershed development grant from Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) and Division of Soil Conservation (DSC).

Stop soil erosion

By LaVonne Koch

Soil Conservation Technician

"We need to stop the soil erosion so my children and grandchildren have soil left to farm," remarked Alan and Doris Boess who farm west of Hawkeye in Bethel Township.

In 1976, Alan & Doris started farming with Alan's dad and brother. At that time Alan's dad had done conservation work on his farm. Alan saw how these practices are working for his dad and this inspired Alan to do the same.

Alan remarks, "the surface water is killing us!" He means the surface water running down the waterways is causing soil build up in the center, washing along both sides and water running down the crop rows causing soil erosion. Alan felt he needed terraces to stop the erosion and keep the soil from leaving his land.

With the Boess's land determined as not highly erodible, he claims he loses more soil because of the longer slopes than farms he knows that are determined highly erodible. Terraces

are one practice that can reduce slope length, reduce erosion, reduce sediment content in runoff water, improve water quality, intercept and conduct surface runoff at non-erosive velocity to a stable outlet, retain runoff from moisture conservation, prevent gully development, reform the land surface, improve farmability and reduce flooding. Alan believes the advantages in terraces more than outweigh the disadvantages. The greatest advantage is the soil not leaving their farm.

Alan states "maintenance is the key to keeping terraces functioning." He cleans around the intakes and distributes the sediment to build-up the terraces so the lowest point is in the channel, keeps the intakes free from weeds, trees and removes trash from around them. He does not chisel plow the tops of the broadbase terraces because he wants to maintain the terrace capacity, storage, and ridge height. Alan understands that terraces cannot be built for heavy rains. He is amazed at how the terraces slowed the water down.

The only problem was the heavy crop residue collecting around the intake before the crop plant was above six inches in height. Over the 32 years of farming terraces, Alan has experienced very little crop loss around the intake area.

This past year, Alan has constructed broadbase terraces with two-inch orifices installed in the intakes. He is not sure what the outcome of the orifices will be but was willing to try. The orifice is meant to restrict the flow of water running through the intake.

A disadvantage Alan sees in terraces is the cost per acre to construct them. He feels if the farmer would receive more money for his product, more conservation work would be done without cost-share funds.

Alan and Doris Boess have two sons and two grandchildren. He is now operating a feeder calf and row crop operation. Currently, they feed out 115 calves a year and plant 300 acres of corn and beans and have 20 acres of hay.

The Boess's strongly believe in keeping their soil on their land.

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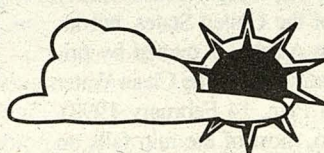
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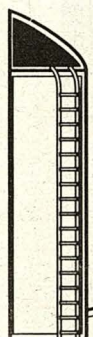
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Results of well water testing in the Upper Maquoketa watershed

By Tom Sperfslage, Environmental Specialist II

Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship – Division of Soil Conservation

Quality drinking water is a need we all have. Clean, safe drinking water is more important than all of life's other essential needs except one - oxygen. Medical research indicates the average person can survive for about 14 days without food, about 3 days without water, and just minutes without oxygen.

Water quality is an issue we all have to work on. It affects our family health, our business, and our community...it permeates everything we do. Across the State of Iowa water quality projects are addressing water and water contamination. Here in northeast Iowa, several water quality projects are working to improve cold water trout streams.

Locally, the Upper Maquoketa River Water Quality Project is assisting watershed residents and landown-

ers through education, incentives and cost-share to improve the quality of water that runs off their properties. Eventually, this runoff water reaches the Maquoketa River, Bruce Creek, Fenchel Creek or infiltrates through the soil profile to the ground water aquifer.

Ground water is an important resource for Iowa, particularly northeast Iowa. Recent estimates show that nearly 75% of Iowa's population receives its drinking water from ground water aquifers. Even though the soil profile has a certain capacity to filter and degrade contaminants, this ability can be limited when the soil layer is thin or other special conditions exist like sink holes, fractured bedrock, and "contamination overload." Unfortunately, many of these conditions exist in northeast Iowa, and can make our ground water vulnerable. When the aquifer becomes contaminated, it is very difficult and expensive (if even possible) to make it safe again.

Potential sources of groundwater

contamination: excessive nitrogen, Storage tanks, i.e. gasoline or oil, Septic systems, Landfill or buried materials, Livestock manure, Herbicides (farm and urban derived), Insecticides (farm and urban derived), Hazardous material spills

In the spring of 1999, staff from Iowa State University Extension tested 85 wells in the Upper Maquoketa River watershed. Wells were sampled for nitrates and coliform. Nitrate nitrogen is a common contaminate found in Iowa ground water. It gets into the aquifer by leaching (typically) through the soil profile. Sources of nitrate contamination are numerous, with cropland fertilization being one of the leaders. Excessive concentrations of nitrate in drinking water can make life difficult for younger and older members of the family. Babies can develop "Blue Baby Syndrome" if too many nitrates are in the water for too long of a period. Boiling nitrate contaminated water only makes the problem worse.

Coliforms are bacteria that can cause dysentery and other maladies when ingested in the human body. Again, the younger and older family members can be most affected. Coliforms can get into the aquifer through leaking manure structures, improper manure disposal, septic systems and fields, and open well pits. Boiling coliform contaminated water may kill the coliforms, but it is not an effective method of treating the hundreds of gallons necessary to supply a home on a daily basis. Clearly, prevention is the key.

Results of the testing are graphed below. Generally speaking, Iowa State University Extension staff did not identify very many potentially unsafe wells. Concentrations of unsafe nitrate levels increased with shallow wells in which would be expected. Shallow wells are extremely vulnerable to any contamination source.

Potential sources of groundwater contamination

Excessive nitrogen	Storage tanks, i.e. gasoline or oil	Septic systems	Landfill or buried materials
Livestock manure	Herbicides (farm and urban derived)	Insecticides (farm and urban derived)	Hazardous material spills

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Refined manure management returns crop production profits

Ten Maquoketa Watershed farmers have hosted on-farm manure management demonstrations during the last two crop seasons. Their average corn income when manure was the only nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) fertilizer source, compared with the zero check, resulted in increased gross corn income of \$39 per acre when corn was valued at \$2.00 a bushel and N at 20 cents a pound.

At \$2.40 per bushel corn, the improved yields from manure application resulted in \$47 per acre increased gross income, as shown in figure 1.

The average first-year crop-available N credits from manure averaged 150 pounds per acre for the 10 demonstrations.

Because all demonstration farms had high or very high P tests on the manure demonstration sites, there was not a consistent yield response to the 214 pounds average per acre of P added in the manure resource, as shown in figure 2.

This result was expected due to the high to very high pre-demonstration soil tests for P. Thus, adding P fertilizer to these fields resulted in a net loss of income.

The manure N contribution was calculated using adjustment factors of field manure history and N loss from surface application versus manure incorporation.

Replicated treatments of commercial N applied at the first year crop available N rate (contribution) from the manure (MN rate) was applied randomly within each manure demonstration site. The equivalent N application resulted in an average corn yield of 157 bushels per acre from the manure N source and 158 bushels per acre from the commercial N application, as shown in figure 3.

The addition of 50 pounds of N to the manure application resulted in the highest average yield of 165 bushels of corn per acre. The response to the additional N was most evident in the demonstrations where the manure N contribution was less than 100 pounds per acre. The higher N contribution from swine finishing manure applied in excess of 3,000 gallons per acre demonstrated no benefit from the addi-

tional N.

On average, when 100 pounds of N was added to the manure application, bringing the average N available to 250 pounds per acre, there was a loss in yield of 3 bushels per acre versus the 50 pounds per acre additional commercial N treatment.

The end-of-season cornstalk nitrate N (residual N in the corn plant at maturity) was higher, 2,479 parts per million (ppm) nitrate N (NO₃-N) with the 250 pounds N per acre, as shown in figure 4.

The optimum range for cornstalk NO₃-n is 700 to 2,000 ppm, with analyses over 2,000 ppm indicating a high probability that the N application rate exceeded the N requirement of the crop.

These demonstrations indicate that manure is a significant N and P resource for crop production.

The type of manure applied, amount, method and uniformity of application are all factors that need to be considered when determining whether to supplement a manure application with additional N. The demonstrations show that applying more than 50 pounds per acre of N isn't justified when using typical manure application rates.

There is a need for adequate additional N from commercial fertilizer when insufficient amounts of manure are applied.

Maquoketa Watershed Project staff express their appreciation to the following manure management field demonstration cooperators in the Maquoketa headwaters area: Darrell Rosburg, Arlington; David Moorman, Strawberry Point; David and Richard Venteicher, Strawberry Point; Marvin Heims, Strawberry Point; Randy and Rodney Hamlett, Lamont; C&J Farms, Lamont; NICC, Calmar; Verle Jones, Lamont; Bill Hayes, Arlington; and Keith Bumgartner and Sons, Strawberry Point. Due to unusual agronomic conditions during the growing season, data from the following sites were not used in this summary analysis: Tom Hayes, Lamont; Don Thole, Arlington; Tim and Jim Recker, Arlington; Jim Grimes, West Union; and Bob Recker, Strawberry Point.

Camera ready graphics ----- manure

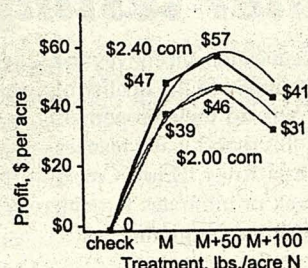


Figure 1. Profitability of additional N (N at \$0.20 per pound and corn at \$2.00 and \$2.40 a bushel).

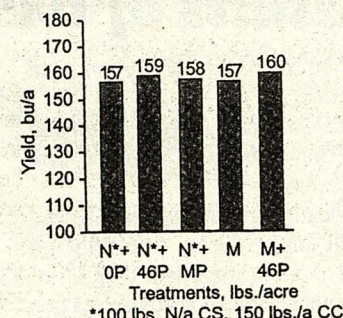


Figure 2. Ten-site average corn yields, manure and phosphorus demonstrations, crop years 2000-01.

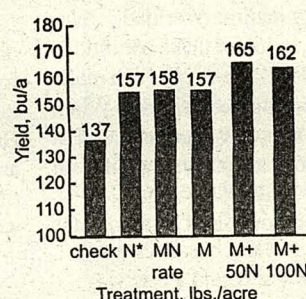


Figure 3. Ten-site average corn yields, manure and nitrogen demonstrations, crop years 2000-01.

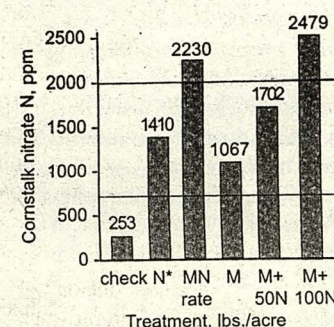
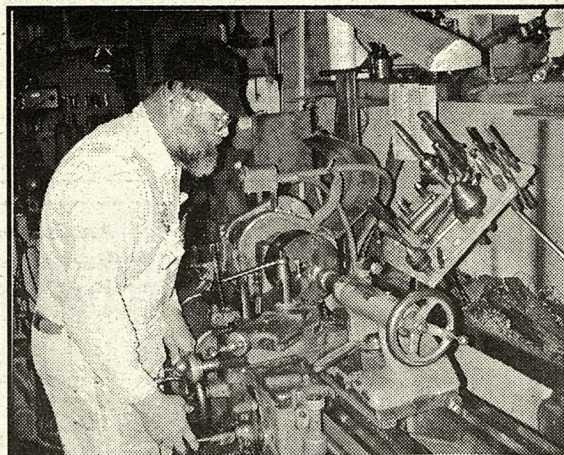


Figure 4. Ten-site average cornstalk nitrate N, manure demonstration sites, crop years 2000-01. Lines indicate optimum range of 700-2,000 ppm.



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Fayette SWCD invests in the future of Conservation

By Michael Henderson

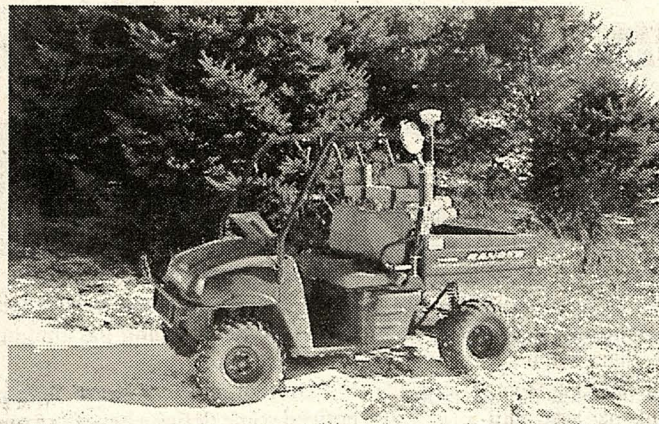
Farmers and sportsmen to businesses and city folk all have many new options in gizmos and gadgets to make their life simpler (or more complex). Industry continues to develop new devices to improve how we navigate through our life or job. This past year the Fayette SWCD has invested in some equipment that fits the needs of the NRCS Field Office staff. They purchased a Polaris Ranger ATV and GPS mapping equipment. Each of these pieces of equipment will fill a niche for improving the service provided to farmers and landowner requesting assistance from the NRCS and Fayette SWCD. The District received a 50% cost share grant from the Iowa Department of Land Stewardship's "Iowa Water Quality Initiative" Buffer Initiative Program to help defray the costs. This grant is designed to aid local Districts in promoting the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP).

The Polaris will be used alone or in combination with the GPS to provide quick access to remote locations in the field. This unit will leave less of a track in the field allowing for use in wetter conditions. Previously many operations had to be completed on foot which took more time to complete while increasing staff fatigue. New accessories for the unit are being added to provide more specific

solutions to repetitive tasks. Even though this ATV was purchased late in the summer, dramatic benefits have been reaped through the Fall layout season.

The GPS mapping equipment is part of a revolution, which is changing the face of agriculture. This system utilizes the GPS satellite system developed by the U.S. military and offers the ability to generate accurate location coordinates. Once a position has been obtained, information can be tied to that location. Producers can generate yield maps with the combination of a GPS unit and a yield monitor. Site specific soil sampling can be done and variable rate application of lime and fertilizer can also be made. The District felt that the real time mapping utility would be of great benefit. The District borrowed a GPS unit this last spring to evaluate the potential application to our mapping needs. Based on the value seen, the District purchased a full GPS system.

The GPS system has been utilized for mapping wetland areas, waterways, contour buffer strips, stream bank surveys and flood plain surveys. Additional uses are continuously being evaluated to maximize use of the



GPS equipped ATV

equipment. All of the contour buffer strip layouts that were laid out this Fall were mapped with the GPS. These narrow strips of CCRP have presented a challenge to provide accurate acres and maps quickly and efficiently. Many times these strips cannot be seen in the first year on FSA aerial slides. This delays accurate measurement of these strips until the second year. With an increase in rented ground and custom application, accurate acres are needed quickly after the practice is laid out. The GPS equipment has allowed the staff to provide this information to the farmers in a very timely fashion. The District and NRCS staff feel that the addition of the field GPS system has been worth the investment.

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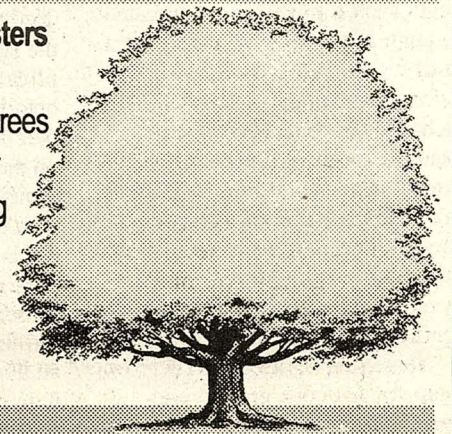
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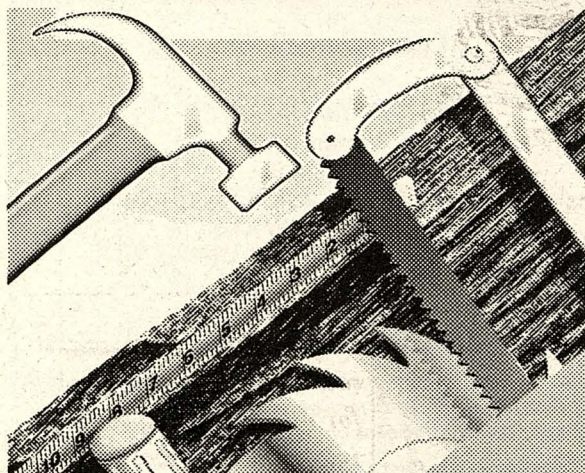
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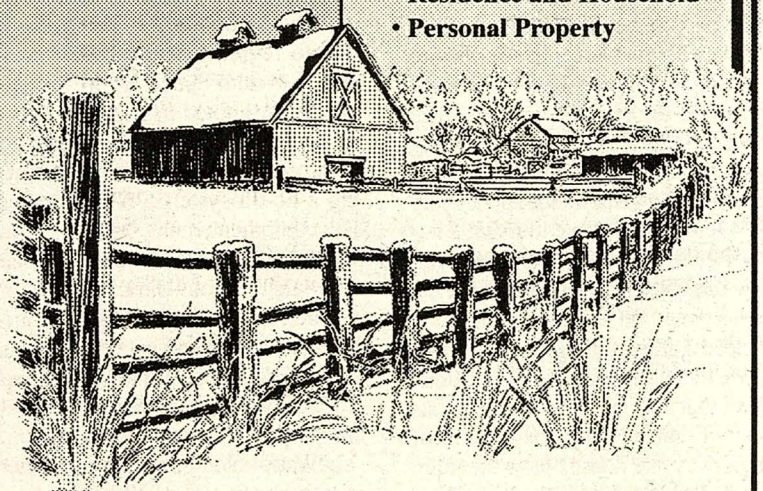
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Successful no-tilling on the Collin Jensen farm

By Angie Freilinger

Collin Jensen has been living in the West Union area his entire life. Jensen grew up on the family farm, which has been passed down through family generations for approximately 135 years. With different management through out the years the Jensen farm has seen some definite changes. Recent changes include the conversion of a conservation tillage system to a no-tillage system. Conservation has been a part of the Jensen farm for sometime now. Not only is Jensen implementing a no-till system, but he also is conserving the land through terraces and Conservation Reserve Programs.

Jensen has been utilizing a no-till system since 1985. The urge to begin such a practice was initiated through a neighbor who had been utilizing no-till. Jensen stated that before converting to a no-till system he had his doubts. He had seen and heard the positive aspects of no-till beans, but no-till corn was a different story. He was particularly concerned about making the corn on corn no-till system successful. He felt that toxicity problems might occur along with conflicts in trying to apply nitrogen.

Jensen utilizes a 3 coulters per row setup for his corn ground and a 1 coulters per row splitter on his soybean ground. His row spacing consists of 36 inches in corn and 18 inches in soybeans. He noted that with narrower soybean rows you get some yield punch and canopy benefits. Jensen stated that he feels there are no more disease problems with the no-till system at his row spacings than other tillage systems.

Jensen is a part-rate user when it comes to the application of pesticides. He stated that he rarely uses a full-rate of any kind of pesticide. The key to being a part-rate user is applying pesticides when the weeds are small and actively growing. He split applies his chemicals by applying a burn down with the planter and following up with an early post emergence application on the corn ground. His soybean ground is a round up ready system. Jensen stated that he does most of his own pesticide application.

Jensen stated that to make a no-till system successful in this area you have to install waterways where the water runs. Other systems can fill in eroded gullies through tillage practices, but in a no-till system you don't have that option. His experience has shown that with the installation of waterways he doesn't have the gully erosion that occurs with other tillage systems. As long as the waterways are strategically placed gully erosion isn't a problem. Another management factor Jensen pointed out is wet spots

in a field have to be managed. He manages this conflict through spot tiling only the wet areas in the field. These areas then dry out faster without the requirement for tillage. Jensen stated that once he spot tilled these areas there was no longer a requirement for additional management inputs.

Jensen found that through proper management toxicity in a corn on corn no-till system wasn't as big of a problem as he initially thought. He feels that in order to manage toxicity in corn you have to work a zone up by running coulters 5 inches deep bringing up fresh soil and aerating the zone. Jensen found that he could manage his nitrogen application by spreading nitrogen in the fall and injecting additional liquid nitrogen in the spring as needed. Nitrogen application in the fall consisted of broadcasting chicken manure over part of the corn on corn ground and on part of the bean stubble. Anhydrous was applied on the rest of the corn ground. Bulk spreading in the fall is also used to satisfy phosphorous and potassium requirements. Jensen stated that the only time he fertilizes in the spring is when the additional input of liquid nitrogen is required.

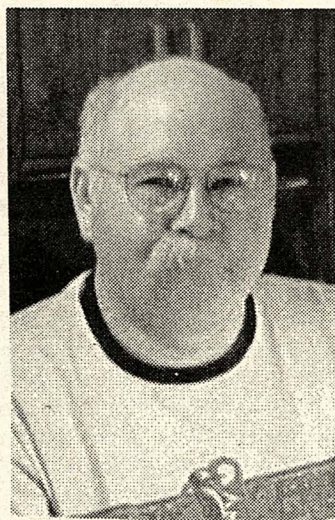
Jensen pointed out that reducing compaction is a key to a successful no-till system. He utilizes liquid nitrogen instead of anhydrous because of the reduction in compaction. He stated that deep ripping is not a requirement for his no-till system to be successful. Jensen reduces compaction by having specific traffic areas throughout his fields. Once these designated areas experience compaction problems he utilizes a chisel plow or disk to work up those specific areas eliminating the requirement for deep ripping in no-till systems.

After years of utilizing no-till on all of his ground Jensen has disproved his doubts about the system. There are no regrets from implementing such a system due to all of the benefits he has noted from no-till. One of the many benefits he has noticed is the cost savings from implementing a no-till system. "No-till takes less equipment, man power, and fuel which holds down our costs." Jensen noted that his total diesel bill is a of a gallon per acre excluding the combine during fall harvest. Not only is there a reduction in man power and tractors but, soil erosion is minimal in a properly managed no-till system.

Water holding capacity is another positive aspect of no-till that he has noticed. Jensen states that during rain showers there is better infiltration in a no-till system than a tillage system. He has visually noted that no-till

fields hold a lot more water during rain showers than fields that have been tilled. No-till fields have a higher water holding capacity due to the porosity of the field. Earthworms, root channels, insect tunnels and other such things allow water to infiltrate better reducing the amount of surface runoff.

During the 1999 storm Jensen noticed some definite benefits from utilizing a no-till system. After the storm Jensen visually noted that several fields in the surrounding area suffered from severe gully and rill erosion. He stated that local fields had gullies that were approximately 2 feet wide and 1 foot deep. His no-till fields also sustained some rill erosion, but these rills were only about 3 inches deep. Jensen feels that the no-till system prevented serious erosion on his farm because of two main reasons. One reason



"Any tillage done before planting soybeans is recreational tillage, because there is no economic yield loss from no-till soybeans." - Collin Jensen

was that the trash created mini dams that held water instead of allowing it to escape as surface runoff. The other reason was because of the higher infiltration rates of a no-till system due to porosity.

Jensen is the first to admit that in order to make a no-till system work you have to be dedicated to management. "Successful no-till just doesn't happen it takes a lot of work. You have to be particular in every aspect of farming such as pesticide choice, land use, and other such things."

Collin Jensen is extremely happy with no-till and will continue utilizing such a system.



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Trees are sold by the bundle(25 trees), except for the evergreen, nut, shade, wildlife shrub packages, and potted trees. There is no guarantee on stock sold at these prices. **Cut off date for orders will be April 1, 2002. No orders will be accepted after this date.** We will notify you in late April when your order can be picked up. Supplies are limited so order early. Check must accompany your order payable to Fayette SWCD.

Species	Price Per Bundle	Number of Bundles	Total Cost
American Arborvitae (12-18")	\$35.00	x _____ =	_____
Black Cherry (12-18")	\$30.00	x _____ =	_____
Black Hills Spruce (12-18")	\$35.00	x _____ =	_____
Black Walnut (2-3')	\$35.00	x _____ =	_____
Blue Spruce (12-18")	\$35.00	x _____ =	_____
American Cranberry (5-12")	\$30.00	x _____ =	_____
Lilac Common (8-24")	\$30.00	x _____ =	_____
Norway Spruce (12-18")	\$35.00	x _____ =	_____
Red Oak (2-3')	\$35.00	x _____ =	_____
Red Osier Dogwood (8-24")	\$30.00	x _____ =	_____
Scotch Pine (6-18")	\$30.00	x _____ =	_____
Sugar Maple (12-24")	\$35.00	x _____ =	_____
White Oak (12-18")	\$30.00	x _____ =	_____
Evergreen Package			
5 White Pine 12-18"; 5 Blue Spruce 12-18"; 5 Norway Spruce 12-18"	\$45.00	x _____ =	_____
Nut Tree Package			
3 Northern Pecan 8-18"; 3 American Chestnut 6-18"; 3 Hazelnut 6-18"; 3 Walnut 2-3'; 3 Butternut 12-18"	\$55.00	x _____ =	_____
Shade Tree Package			
3 Chinkapin Oak 2-3'; 3 Pin Oak 2-3'; 3 Red Oak 2-3'; 3 Bur Oak 2-3'; 3 Swamp White Oak 2-3'	\$55.00	x _____ =	_____
Wildlife Shrub Package			
3 Serviceberry 6-18"; 3 Hazelnut 6-18"; 3 American Plum 2-3'; 3 Red Osier Dogwood 2-3'; 3 Nanking Cherry 8-24"	\$40.00	x _____ =	_____
Potted 1 Gallon Trees			
American Arborvitae (12-15")	\$ 8.00	x _____ =	_____
Colorado Spruce (12-15")	\$ 8.00	x _____ =	_____
Norway Spruce (15-18")	\$ 8.00	x _____ =	_____
Total of Above			
Add 6% Sales Tax			
Total Payment Due			

Fayette SWCD takes takes third place on statewide conservation buffers contest

The Fayette SWCD has been very successful in the utilization of the Continuous CRP (CCRP), also known as buffer strip CRP. Because of this success, the Commissioners have nominated the Fayette SWCD for the 2000 Buffer Achievement Awards Program which offered cash prizes for the top three entries. Fayette won third place, for which the district received \$500.

The Fayette SWCD has taken many steps over the past few years to assist the staff in promoting and applying this great water quality and erosion control program.

A few of the items listed in the nomination form submitted were:

Fayette SWCD has consistently ranked within the top 10% of total CCRP contracts and last year Fayette Co. was listed as leading the state.

With the help of various grants, the SWCD purchased several items to assist the staff in the application of the CCRP. Such items included a new 10 ft. no-till native prairie drill, an ATV to assist staff in the layout of practices and GPS equipment for accurate and timely information of acreages and location of CCRP practices. Through partnering with other groups

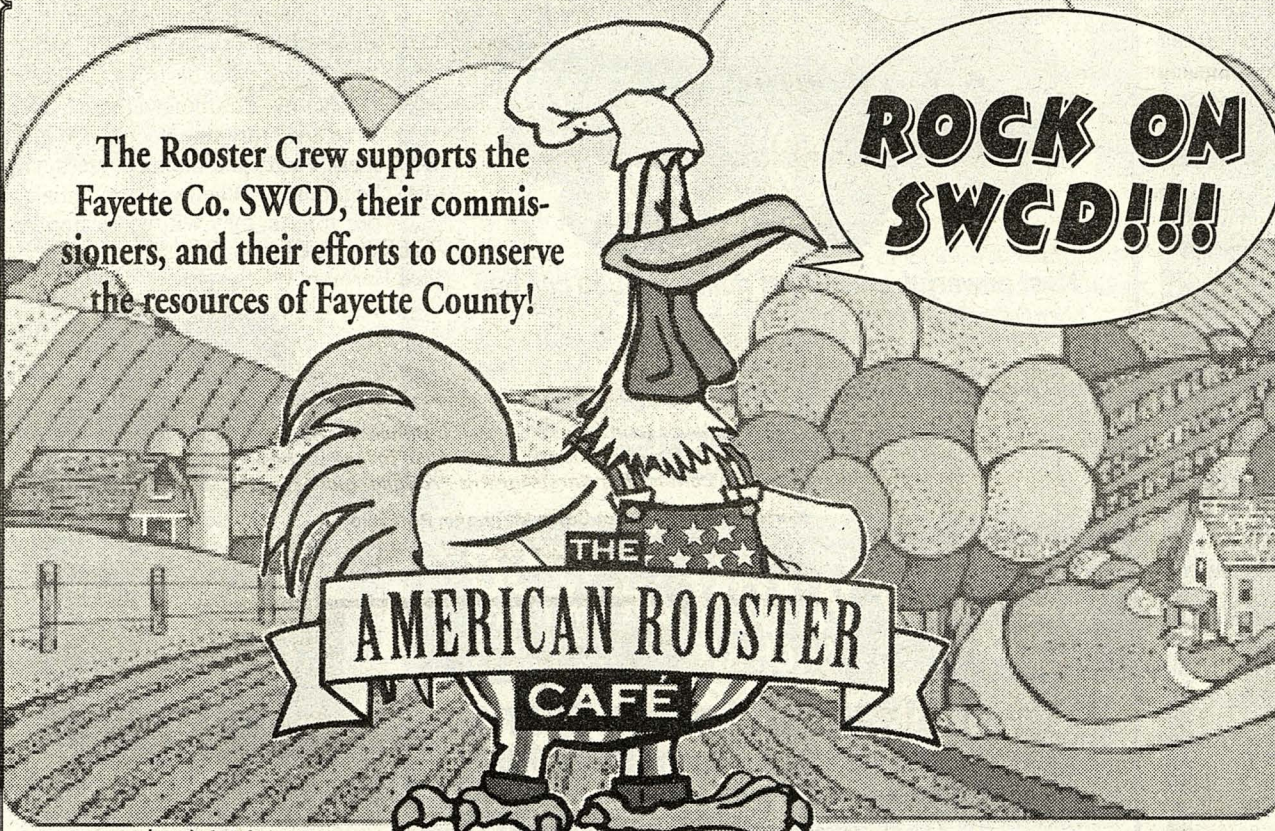
and agencies, the SWCD was able to hire extra staff for layout, promotion and administration of the CCRP.

The Fayette SWCD purchased a grassed waterway fabric machine which helps to protect the waterways from gully erosion during the early non-vegetated state after construction. Most of the waterway fabric installed last year, was done by Bill Bennett, as a volunteer.

Strong local partners have played a major part in the overall success of the CCRP in the county. The Fayette County FSA staff and County Committee, the Fayette County Conservation Board, and the Fayette County Pheasants Forever were the primary partners that are heavily relied upon for their help. The Fayette County Extension also provided assistance with ongoing educational support.

The Fayette SWCD and local NRCS staff would like to thank these and others for their assistance in carrying out one of the best conservation and water quality programs ever.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to all the Fayette County CCRP participants who have cooperated with us to actually get this program applied to their land.



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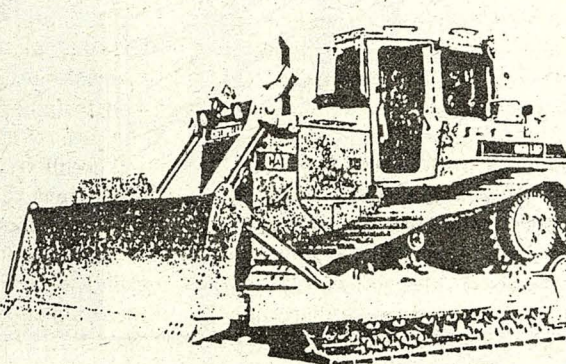
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Terry Szabo, President

Harvest to 'preserve' the forests as renewable resource

By Gary Beyer, District Forester

Don't cut trees. Cutting trees destroys the forest and disrupts nature. Save our forests by protecting them from man. These sentiments appear to be growing in our society. How did we get to this point?

Maybe we are influenced early in our lives. One night I was cooking dinner for the kids because my wife was working late. Because I love to do dishes, we were using paper plates. My daughter explained to me that we should not use paper plates because her teacher said that destroyed trees. The next morning I called my daughter's third grade teacher. I asked her how many people would buy land, pay prop-

erty taxes, and care for a property that had no potential return. Normally people that are opposed to forest management do not own forest land. If you want to encourage the planting of trees and the care of our forests, use more wood products, not less. The surest way to destroy our woodlands to make them useless to the people who own them.

This nation was built with wood. From the first railroads, homes, barns, fences, and firewood, wood has been the backbone of our country. The very people who criticize cutting trees are living in homes larger than ever, using more wood than ever for furniture, cabinets, flooring, and trim. Where is this wood to

come from?

Wood is one of the most unique, renewable resources on earth. Treated properly, wood products can last for generations. A fine oak table or walnut desk can be passed down through the family for years. The tree that produced this product can be grown in 70-80 years. That's close to a lifetime for us, but when compared with petroleum used to make plastics, it is an eye blink.

Timber management involves harvesting trees to provide space and sunlight for younger trees. This keeps the forest diverse and healthy. Young trees have fewer disease problems, produce more oxygen, and tie up more carbon than older, slow growing trees. If the trees are harvested under a forest management plan, steps are taken to insure that the older trees are replaced. We need mature forests for certain species of wildlife, wildflowers, and forbs. But we need mature forests for certain species of wildlife, wildflowers, and forbs. But we also need young forests to replace the older forests in the future. Trees all die

at some time. They have a finite life span and we need to plan for their replacement. The only way a tree can be preserved is in a wood product.

The hills in northeast Iowa were formed 10,000 years ago when the last glaciers receded. The unique woodland we have today is a result of many years of heavy disturbance such as fire, harvesting, and grazing. Many species of trees, shrubs, and forbs respond to disturbance, which adds diversity to our woodlands. Oak and walnut require fall sunlight to grow and will not grow in shade. Without harvesting, we will eventually lose these species in our forests. Harvesting trees impacts the area for 15-20 years. The major change in the forest is that large trees are removed to make room for smaller trees, but the forest is certainly not destroyed. The forest ecosystem is still in tact and functioning. Clearing with a dozer, housing developments, grazing, and harvesting without a forest management plan destroy the forest, not proper harvesting.

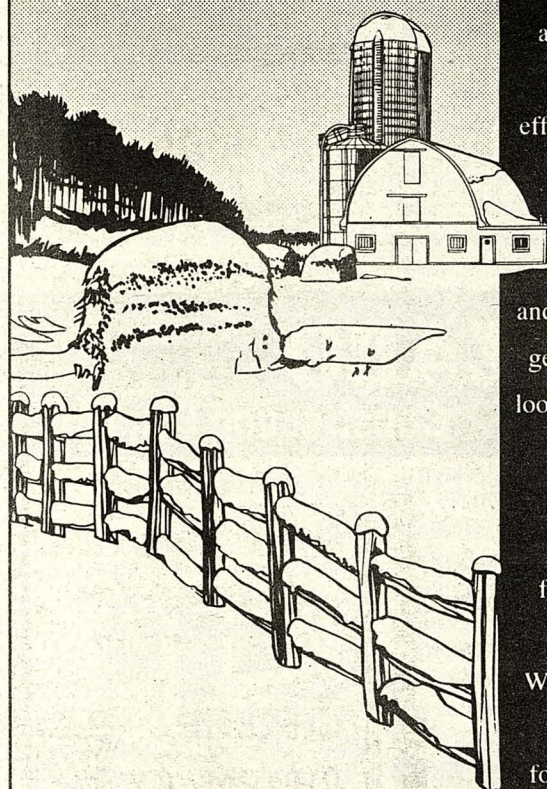
The better the forest is managed, the more unique plants, wildlife, and beautiful trees the forest will have. The film, "The Last of the Mohicans" was filmed on a tree farm in North Carolina, because it was the most pristine setting they could find to shoot the film. Many people also believe that harvesting destroys the understory plants such as wild flowers. Last summer, the foresters inventoried several sites and recorded the species and abundance of understory plants. We found the same plants in 20 year old clearcuts that we found in the mature woods. The harvest did not destroy these plants forever. When conditions became suitable such as the right amount of shade, the plants returned from seed in the soil, or seed from surrounding areas.

Iowa's 2 million acres of woodland are owned by 56,000 landowners (2% of the population). 92% of the timber in Iowa is privately owned. The decisions that these landowners make with their woodland affects every Iowan. The woodland in Iowa filters water in our streams and lakes, provides habitat for a wide variety of wildlife, controls soil erosion, and provides employment for over 7,000 people in the wood industry.

Iowa is one of the largest exporters of walnut veneer in the nation. Northeast Iowa grows the finest oak, walnut, hard maple, and ash in the world. Timber is a renewable crop that benefits society and provides a good return for the landowner. High quality woodlands provide an excellent IRA for the family and will gain value faster than money in the bank. People who own the timber land will grow value for their family and provide society with a multitude of benefits.

Cutting trees destroys the forest. Not hardly. The more value that trees have, the more care people will give their woods and the more trees will be planted. When we stop utilizing our forests, they will be cleared for some other use.

Planning for Tomorrow, Today



We're proud to support area farmers and conservationists and recognize their efforts in soil & water conservation. In order to keep Iowa beautiful and thriving for future generations, we must look to conserve those precious resources that are abundant today: clean water, fertile soil, fresh air, and lush forests. We salute your labors today, and look forward to seeing the fruits of that labor tomorrow.

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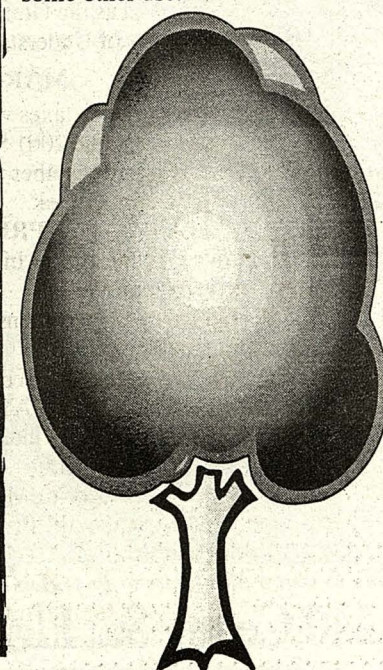
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District Activities JULY

SWCD purchased a fabric-laying machine.
\$ 23,440.13 was received for the Iowa Financial Incentive Program (IFIP).
The 2001 IM Budget & Spending Plan was approved.
The SWCD accepted the resignation as commissioner from Jodi Jeanes.
97 contracts for 4,007 acres were approved for the CRP 20th general sign-up.
12 EQIP contracts were approved.
Project Agreement for Upper Maquoketa Watershed was approved.

AUGUST

Joyce Trotter, Oran, was appointed commissioner to fill the vacancy of Jodie Jeanes.
\$ 7,288.00 in REAP Practices and \$1,849.00 in REAP Forestry were received.
Will Ogle was selected as the State of Iowa Woodland Owner of the Year.
Paul Nuss was appointed as co-treasurer.
Project Agreement for Engish Hollow II Project was approved.
Houg Education Farm property taxes were paid.

SEPTEMBER

The Annual Education Field Day for 413 third grade students was held at the Richard Jensen farm.
Will Ogle and Joe Wingert were appointed as Assistant Commissioners.
William Bennett attended the Annual Conference in Des Moines.
3 EQIP contracts were approved.
SWCD supported one teacher from Fayette County to attend the Food, Land, & People Workshop.
SWCD sent notices to Fayette County newspapers to accept bids for the construction of a pond on the Houg Education Farm.
Annual Farm Bureau Awards Banquet was held in Fayette.

OCTOBER

Grannis and Mink Creeks were submitted for grant applications.
SWCD submitted two grants for the Buffer Initiative Program.

NOVEMBER

\$ 1,185.00 in IM supplemental funds was received.
\$ 10,275.00 in REAP Practices and \$6,538.00 in REAP Forestry supplemental funds was received.
NRCS received \$ 4,000 for the cooperative agreement to fund the District Employee.

DECEMBER

SWCD purchased a Truax Grain Drill
Fall Regional meeting was held in Dyersville.
Fayette SWCD was approved for \$10,000 to write grants for Grannis and Mink Creeks.
The SWCD approved the conservation easement for the Steege farm.

JANUARY

New commissioner training was held in West Union.
Election of Officers, appointment of Treasurer, and the appointment of Assistant Commissioners were held. Annual Plan of work was reviewed.
Legislators were invited to the Legislative Luncheon in Des Moines.
CDI and NACD dues were paid.

FEBRUARY

Soil and Water Stewardship materials were ordered.
\$ 500.00 in IM supplemental funds was received.
Mike Henderson was hired as the Grannis Creek Watershed Coordinator.
Muff reviewed the Memos of Understanding, EEO, and Civil Rights with the SWCD.

MARCH

Houg Education Farm property taxes were paid.
Brenda Myers was chosen at the 2001 SWCD scholarship winner of \$500.
Henderson and Muff worked together to submit a pre-proposal for stream bank stabilization on Grannis Creek.

APRIL

SWCD was approved for the Buffer Initiative Option 2.
7 EQIP contracts were approved.
Pheasants Forever/Fayette County Conservation Board/SWCD Grain Drill Operator Agreement was approved.
86 tax exemption forms were approved for 1,662.22 acres.

MAY

Nominations for owner/operator, windbreak, woodland owner, and watershed were submitted to the SWCD.
SWCD approved the Forest Service Memo of Understanding.
Amendment and Supplement to the Project Agreement for Ensign Hollow II Watershed was approved.

JUNE

SWCD received grant funds for the Buffers IV program through Pheasants Forever. These funds will be used for the District Employee.

Keeping You In Touch!



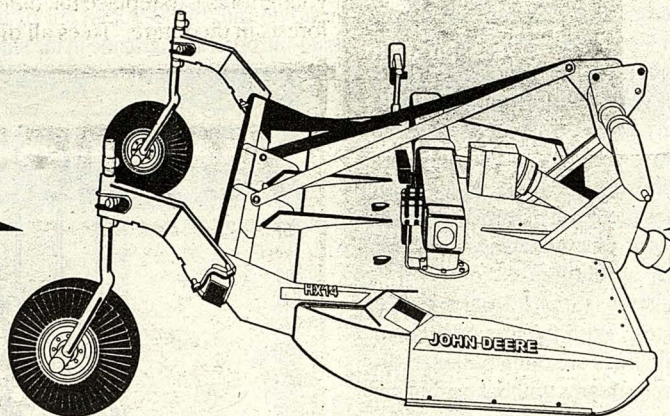
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In a sense, water quality should be considered as one of our commodity crops, just the same as corn, beans, or livestock.

Water quality involves a cost, be that erosion on a field (yield loss), dredging Backbone Lake, potential regulatory cost due to consistent poor water quality, lack of tourism, and loss of profit due to wasted and lost nutrients.

We can "harvest" benefits from better water quality. If more soil is left on the field, yields are better, longer. If more soil is left on the field, our property value should be better. Would you pay premium rent or purchase dollar for an eroded farm?? If nutrients are used appropriately, profits increase. If water quality improves regulatory costs may not be necessary.

Water quality is a commodity crop that is raised every day of the year.

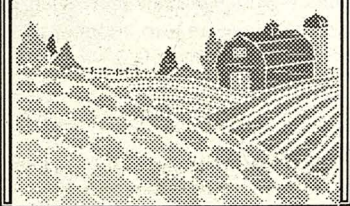
The Upper Maquoketa River Water Quality project is supported in part or in total by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation.

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Water quality benefits of buffers

By Angie Freiling

From tiny creeks to major rivers all courses have a riparian zone commonly known as the floodplain. The riparian zone stretches along each waterway as wide as annual or periodic flooding occurs. The riparian zone is the waterway's buffer. Under normal conditions, the natural vegetation growing on this land traps sediments from upslope erosion, and filters out fertilizers and pesticides used on adjacent farmland. This area may thrive as a very wet area that supports trees, shrubs, grasses, cat-tails, and other species, or be occasionally wet and support species that can grow under variable conditions. In the Midwest, riparian zones support well-know trees such as willow, silvermaple, cottonwood, green ash, black walnut, and river birch; shrubs such as serviceberry and dogwoods; and grasses such as prairie sloughgrass and reeds canarygrass.

Under natural conditions riparian zones provide a network of vegetation vital to the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. These areas are "living filters" for both surface and subsurface water. They trap soil sediment and modify agricultural chemicals including nitrates, phosphates, herbicides, and insecticides before these pollutants can enter streams. Riparian buffers also stabilize streambanks by reducing bank erosion thereby slowing stream meandering across pasture and row crop fields. They increase the water-holding capacity of soil, which moderates flooding and recharges groundwater supplies. Riparian zones are important for terrestrial wildlife habitat and control the aquatic ecosystem of small-to mid-sized streams.

Within the last 50 years the natural vegetation of most Midwestern riparian zones has been cleared and replaced by row crops or converted to grazed pastures. Stream channels have been straightened and deepened allowing field tiles that carry agricultural chemicals such as nitrogen and atrazine, to drain directly into streams. These modifications reduce the length of time that water stays in the soil, where it can be cleaned by the "living filter" of plants and microbes. Overall, these changes have dramatically increased the quantity and speed of water moving in stream channels, which provide more energy for erosion and, in turn, reduces wa-

ter quality. Stream channels that are cut deeper also have a greater likelihood for streambank erosion.

The disappearance of natural riparian zones has resulted in an increase of non-point source (NPS) pollution of surface and ground water. NPS pollution does not come from a specific source such as a sewage lagoon outlet pipe or a smokestack. Instead, NPS pollution is a general presence of pollutants such as sediment, fertilizers, insecticides, and herbicides whose specific source is difficult to pinpoint. Studies have shown that more than 60 percent of the Nations water contamination is attributed to NPS pollution. Estimates may be even higher in the Midwest due to its largely rural population and few heavy industries. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 64% of sediment found in streams is from crop and rangeland.

1992 data collected in Iowa for the National Resources Inventory (NRI) show the statewide average soil erosion loss still exceeds 6 tons per acre per year, and many areas have loss rates as high as 25 tons per acre per year. These same soils would lose only 200 to 400 pounds per acre per year if covered with natural forest or prairie vegetation. In the Midwest, it is common to have more than 90 percent of a watershed used for row crop agriculture.

Field tile lines are a major source of nitrates. With the loss of riparian areas tile lines are often outletted directly into streams without having the opportunity to first filter through a riparian buffer, and so allow nitrates direct access to surface water. When dissolved in drinking water, nitrate is converted to nitrite, which make hemoglobin cells in the blood unable to carry oxygen causing brain damage and suffocation to newborn babies and livestock. The Environmental Protection Agency has established 10 parts per million (ppm) the allowable limit for nitrates in drinking water. Field tile lines often have nitrate concentrations of 15-25 ppm with 80-90 ppm common during the growing season.

Many insecticides and herbicides are chemically bound to soil particles. During heavy rains these particles are eroded from fields directly entering and polluting streams contaminating surface and ground water. With the loss of riparian areas that trap sediments before entering streams insecticide and herbicide residuals are in-

creasingly becoming a health concern. A 1985 study found eight pesticides in ground water that supplies public wells in 31 Iowa counties. Another survey showed 53% of Iowa wells had detectable pesticide residues.

While restoration of all natural riparian zones may not be economically or socially flexible, the recreation of streamside buffer systems along many miles in the riparian zone is possible. Buffer systems can be established in areas along streams that have been cleared of native vegetation and are no longer functioning properly. This system consists of 66-to 100-ft wide buffer strips planted to trees, shrubs, and perennial prairie grasses. Buffer systems can also consist of just a grass/legume mixture. With the recreation of buffer systems, streambanks are stabilized and may better filter tile line flow from agricultural fields. A restored riparian buffer system being evaluated in central Iowa on Bear Creek has shown a removal rate of 80-90percent of nitrate-nitrogen and atrazine in the shallow groundwater prior to entering the

stream.

Soil and water quality benefits are tremendous through the implementation of a buffer system. Below ground roots improve soil porosity that allows more surface runoff to soak into the soil. Native trees, shrubs, and prairie grasses develop significantly deeper and greater root masses than crop plants and cool-season grasses. Flood damage can also be reduced through a riparian buffer system. Heavy riparian zones can reduce the severity of flooding during heavy rains in three main ways. 1. The stream's natural characteristics are preserved. 2. Native trees, shrubs, and grasses route water under ground. 3. Transpiration of plants reduces water in the soil. Plants use several thousand gallons per acre of water each day, thereby drying the soil and making more room in the "soil sponge" for floodwater. Riparian areas also provide numerous wildlife habitat benefits.

The recreation of a buffer system

not only benefits the environment, but also benefits individual landowners and society in general. The landowner benefits from improved fishing, hunting, and wildlife habitat. Benefits may also be derived from the production of biomass for forage, energy, timber, native prairie seeds, or berries and nuts from trees and shrubs. All residents in a watershed and society in general benefit from improved water quality, lower costs of cleaning sediment from major reservoirs and rivers, and increased diversity for wildlife.

Restoration and management of existing vegetated areas can lessen, and perhaps reverse many water quality and environmental problems and, at the same time, increase the quality of life for humans and wildlife. For more information pertaining to the implementation of a buffer system please contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service.

This article is a revision of the Iowa State University Extension bulletin Pm-1626b.

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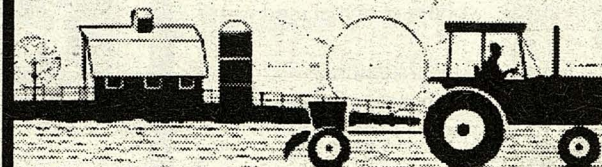
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Fayette SWCD 2001 accomplishments

By William Bennett, SWCD Chairman

In 2001, the Fayette Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) did their best to serve everyone in the county. The SWCD hired two part-time employees, Joe Wingert and Don Durscher. They mainly worked on CRP, but also helped with field layout. In the spring with the help of a grant from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, the SWCD hired Mike Henderson to write a grant application for the Grannis Creek watershed. The watershed and an EQIP application were approved. Mike was then hired full-time as the watershed coordinator.

The SWCD purchased a Truax native grass drill. This was done in cooperation with the Fayette County Conservation Board, Iowa Department of Agriculture (IDALS), and Fayette County Pheasants Forever.

A fabric machine was also purchased. This lays fabric across waterways to help protect the new waterway until the seeding can be established. The machine was also used in some adjoining counties. Fayette

SWCD won an award for the most CRP waterways and buffers in 2001.

Work continued on the Ralph Houg Conservation Education Farm as two types of wetlands were developed. People will be able to see what the different types of wetlands look like. A driveway and parking area have been developed for various education activities. The 2002 Fayette County Forestry Field Day will be held here in April. The SWCD worked with the Iowa DNR on a deer fencing project last fall to see if it prevents damage to oak trees. Tentative plans are to have the 2002 Third Grade Education Field Day here also.

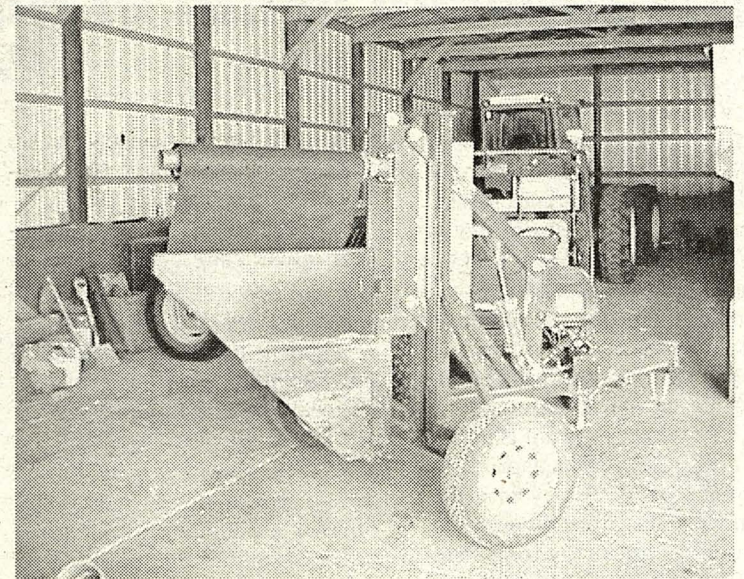
The 10th annual Education Field Day was in September at the Richard Jensen farm. The SWCD had the cooperation of many people, organizations, and businesses: Easton's Culligan Water Conditioning, Fayette County Pork Producers, One Stop Forestry, Fayette County Conservation Board, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Iowa Department of Agriculture (IDALS), newspapers, and other individuals. We take this time to thank those who assisted us in anyway for another successful year.

The Fayette SWCD with the help of the Maquoketa Headwaters Council continued to administrate the Upper Maquoketa River Watershed Project. This is a four county project involving Buchanan, Clayton, Delaware, and Fayette counties. The SWCD is also involved in the Ensign Hollow II project that is administered through Clayton county.

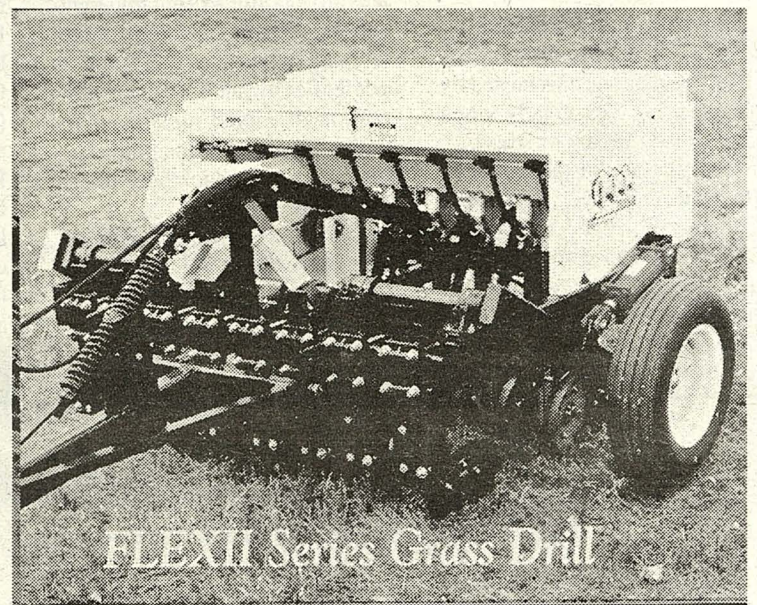
The four northeast Iowa counties (Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, and Winneshiek) also worked on two EQIP projects. The main project involved forestry.

The SWCD has been an active part of the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) for the last fifteen years. The Fayette SWCD and Fayette County Board of Supervisors were among the five counties that formed the RC&D that now includes six counties.

The SWCD commissioners and assistants attend regional, state, and national meeting to exchange ideas and learn how to better serve the district. They also administer the state cost-share programs, set priorities for federal and state work, and investigate any soil loss complaints.



Fabric machine used for laying installing fabric in waterways.



This is a picture of a Truax grain drill, similar to the one purchased by the district.

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The soybean aphid in Northeast Iowa

By Dan Burkhart, Fayette County Extension Education Director

During the 2000 season, the soybean aphid (*Aphis glycines Matsumura*) was found in the Midwest for the first time. Heaviest infestations were found in Wisconsin and northern Illinois. In 2001 heavy infestations occurred in drought affected areas of Allamakee and Winnebago Counties, and in portions of Minnesota and Wisconsin.

The soybean aphid is native to the Far East (China, Japan, Philippines, etc.). Entry into the United States probably occurred because of egg infested ornamental Buckthorn plants imported into the Milwaukee or Chicago area.

Soybean aphid concerns include:

1. Yield reductions due caused by aphid feeding - especially when the soybeans are under stress.
2. Transmission of the Soybean Mosaic Virus (SMV). "If carried by the aphid, SMV may cause yield reduction and potential dockage due to seed staining. This is a special concern for specialty soybean producers.

Soybean aphids are small (1/

16 inch) yellow aphids with a pair of black tubes ("tailpipes") on the back of the abdomen.

The soybean aphid life cycle is thought to be limited to two plants. Aphids live on soybeans (*Glycine max*) in the summer and eggs over winter on buckthorn (*Rhamnus* species) in the winter. Aphids hatch in the spring, produce two wingless generations, and then produce a winged generation that migrates to soybeans. The aphids can produce up to 15 generations before they migrate back to buckthorn in the fall. The summer generations are all females capable of producing additional generations of females about every two weeks. This creates an opportunity for rapid logarithmic growth capable of infestations peaking at over 200 aphids per leaflet by late July. One generation of mixed males and females occurs prior to aphids laying eggs on the buckthorn plants in the fall.

The only information available on soybean aphid management is some limited research from China and a few field demonstration trails conducted in the

Midwest in 2001. No research based pest management recommendations exist for this pest. As more is learned about this pest, sound recommendations will be developed.

Last year in northeast Iowa, aphids appeared in some soybean fields by mid-June as spotty infestations of a few aphids per plant. In these fields, aphids spread to most of the plants by late June (~100 aphids per plant). And by mid-July, in the worst fields, the population reached nearly 100 aphids per leaflet. By late July, the populations in these fields peaked at over 200 aphids per leaflet. After mid-August, aphid populations dropped off rapidly as their life cycle switched from the soybean host to the buckthorn host. Where initial infestations began at a later date (~late June), populations peaked at a later date (~early August). In most cases, where infestations began even later (~early July or later), populations did not reach damaging levels, i.e. staying below 50 aphids per leaflet. But in all cases, aphid populations naturally dropped off by late August.

Insecticides provided temporary control of aphids. Their ability to rapidly repopulate suggests that treating too early will not be as effective as waiting later into the season (mid to late July) for the application. In a field strip trial in 2001, a positive economic response was achieved with two sequential applications to heavy aphid infestations. The 2001 field trials seemed to provide the most consistent responses with the insecticides Warrior and Lorsban.

Populations of natural predators like lady beetles also increased in infested fields. However, in most cases the aphid's ability to reproduce exceeded the lady beetle's ability to control the aphids.

There is no research on variety tolerance to aphids, however, a variety strip trial in 2001 showed different yield responses between check and treated varieties. This suggests varietal tolerance to aphids.

Data from all of the aphid trials was collected by Brian Lang, ISU Extension Crop Specialist of Northeast Iowa and John

Rodecap, Winneshiek County farmer and Coordinator of the Upper Maquoketa Watershed Project. Several agribusinesses; and cooperatives in Winneshiek and Allamakee County cooperated and networked with the project. Without these special efforts and personal contributions (un-reimbursed crop losses and many donated hours), no Iowa information would be available.

If you would like more yield trial information, please contact me at the Fayette County Extension Office in Fayette at 563-425-3331 or e-mail at dburk@iastate.edu. You may also subscribe to a free electronic Crop Notes newsletter written by Brian Lang by e-mailing him at

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Streambank protection halts erosion, improves trout habitat

By Tom Sperfslage

This summer, Mace and Kristin Klingman completed a unique streambank protection project on their property. In addition to stabilizing over 200 feet of eroding streambank, they installed a series of seven lunkers (artificial habitat structures) to improve the available cover for trout in Hewett Creek.

The habitat that trout require is fragile. They find safety in pools more than two feet deep and in areas that provide a break from the current. Overhead cover provided by root wads, logs, boulders, and long stemmed grasses protects trout from predators like herons and mink. Lunkers provide additional habitat for trout when the natural cover is lacking. The Klingmans' property is just downstream from the state owned portion of Hewett Creek. From 1990 through 1992, nearly 95 lunkers were installed on 15 sites along the state property by the Department of Natural Resources and the Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association. Installation of the lunkers contributed to a significant increase in the trout population. In one particular stretch of stream, trout population estimates increased from 1 in 1991, to 302 in 1999.

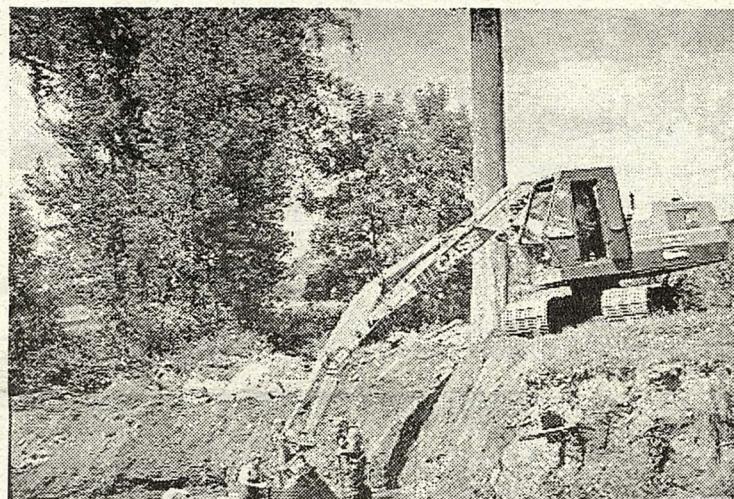
Streambank erosion was a very visible problem for the Klingmans following the heavy rainstorms that flooded the Volga area in the spring of 1999. High winds that had toppled buildings during the fall had also felled many of the trees that had helped to keep the stream channel stable. When the creek waters rose, a bank near a new fence began to slough. As the bank eroded, both the fence and some very productive land in an adjacent crop field were threatened. IDNR Fisheries Biologist Bryan Hayes viewed the Klingmans' site shortly after the storms. The damage from the storms was obvious, but Hayes also noted there were several deep pools and good sites for habitat improvement.

The Ensign Hollow Watershed Project, through the guidance of the Clayton & Fayette Soil and Water Conservation Districts, provided funding for a portion of the cost of the project. While the watershed project is primarily focussed on controlling soil erosion in the upland portion of the 6,000-acre watershed, the potential for a direct reduction in sediment delivered to Hewett Creek by stabilizing the eroding streambank was obvious.

Brehme Construction, Wadena, completed the project during the last week of August. The eroding



The project site before shaping and placement of rip-rap.



DNR Fisheries personnel install one of the lunkers while Kurt Brehme holds it in place with the track hoe.

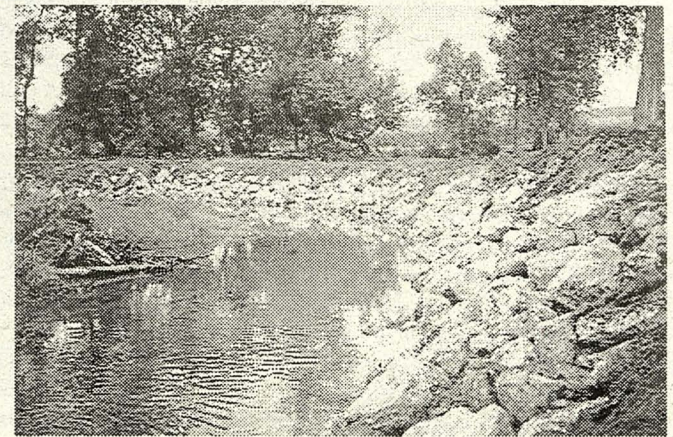
streambanks were reshaped to a 2:1 slope to spread out the force of the flowing water, and were then armored with the placement of rock rip-rap. IDNR Fisheries personnel installed the lunkers as the heavy construction work progressed. In addition to the habitat improvement, the inclusion of the lunkers also reduced the amount of rock required for the project. The Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association contributed to the effort by purchasing the oak lumber that was used to construct the structures.

Parker **

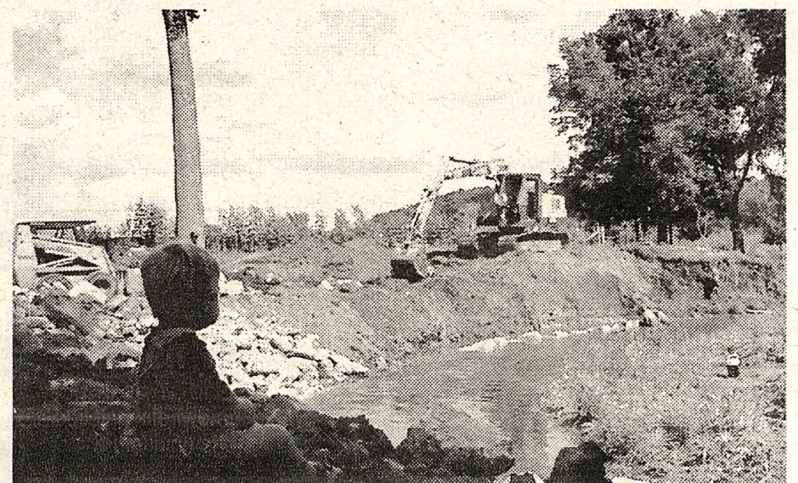
The benefits of the streambank protection project will be long term. The sloughing that had threatened the new fence and the cropland has been eliminated, and it is estimated that sediment delivery to Hewett Creek will be reduced by nearly 38 tons per year. DNR Fisheries personnel plan to document in-stream improvements that occur by sampling and measuring trout numbers and sizes.

The unique coldwater stream resources that are found in northeast Iowa are limited in number and worthy of our protection. There is a delicate balance between crop and live-

stock production and the effects on our natural resources. The cooperation demonstrated by the individuals and groups involved with the Klingmans' project provides an excellent example of what is necessary to achieve long term water quality improvements in the Ensign Hollow watershed.



The project site following construction.



Siltrack - Parker Klingman supervises the work. Photo by Kristin Klingman.

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Passion for forestry results in woodland improvements

Jeremy Varner
Newswriter

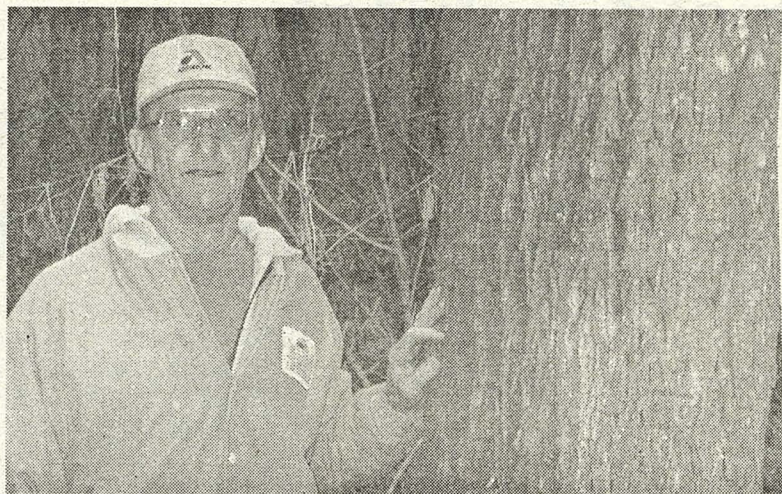
"Land-users need to understand the economic, environmental, recreational, and aesthetic benefits of forests," said Richard Jensen, SWCD Woodland Owner of the Year for Forest District 2. Jensen has a passion for forestry and the outdoors that would rival any naturalist.

Living on a farm between West Union and Elgin on Golden Road, Jensen owns 204 acres of woodland and two ponds. He has been involved with timber stand improvement, 174 acres improved already, and employs a number of forestry conservation techniques.

He has removed all livestock from the woods on his property which has resulted in excellent habitat for turkey and deer. He is not fond of pastured forest adding the "educated forest owner realizes that pasturing forest is not economically viable."

Over the past twenty years, Jensen has been active in planting a variety of new trees on his property. His largest forestry emphasis, however, has been to naturally regenerate areas that are already woodland. He hires a individual with forestry education or training to eliminate undesirable or "weed" trees and purchases seedlings that are planted in their place.

Oak regeneration is difficult to manage, however, because the trees



Richard Jensen standing next to a large walnut tree. Jensen, the recipient of the Woodland Owner of the Year Award for Forest District 2, has been active in forestry for many years.

grow slowly and take a large amount of care to survive. Jensen said that the much of the problem regenerating oak forest comes from the booming deer population though even turkey and rabbits take a toll.

Because of the damage that seedlings have taken, Jensen has begun to use the fairly new concept of direct seeding areas where he wants trees to be planted. Instead of planting a seedling, the ground is saturated with acorns, walnuts, or other nut seeds. This puts so many trees on the ground that deer can not damage them all. The poorer trees are eliminated as they grow allowing the strongest trees to survive creating a healthy forest.

"It's a wise man who plants trees knowing that he won't sit in their shade," Jensen said suggesting that land-users should leave forests the way they were discovered and avoid "spending your inheritance."

The SWCD Commissioner and Fayette County Supervisor, Jensen promotes forestry education through a plethora of mediums. The highlight of his year, despite the myriad of other activities he is involved with, is the SWCD field day where he has the opportunity to teach the value of nature to area youth.

Each year all of the third grade classes in Fayette County spend a day at his farm learning about forestry management, pond management,

pasture care, erosion control practices, recycling, and area wildlife. The children move between different stations, each one concerned with a particular category of conservation. The event has been running for ten years and hosts about 500 children during the three-day event.

"We must instill [in the children] a spiritual and emotional connection

with the Earth" Jensen said, adding that if children are not taught to respect the Earth — they will not take care of it.

Despite all the budget cuts the SWCD field day has remained; a testimony to its value. "The kids love it," Jensen said, adding that the trip is not only educational but also fun and interesting.



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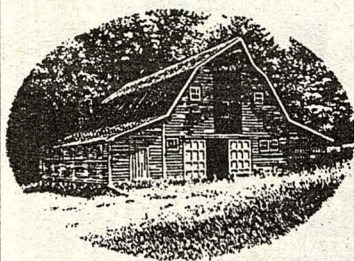
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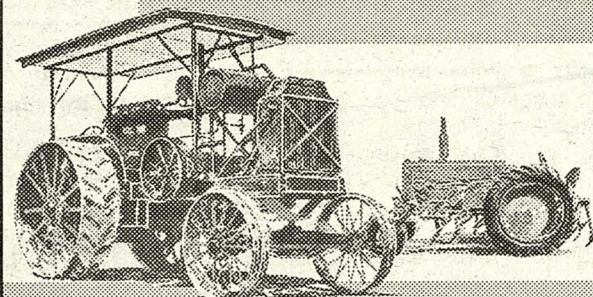
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Conservation planning emphasis is on whole farm and multiple resources

By Jerry Muff,
District Conservationist NRCS

A service offered to landusers, which in the past received little attention, is the development of conservation plans. A conservation plan takes a systematic approach to treating resource concerns or problems. For example in conservation planning, conservationists will promote a combination of conservation practices, (or conservation systems) rather than single practice. Conservation planning also helps the co-operator determine priorities resource needs, economics, etc.

Recently, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), has been making major efforts to change the way conservationists provide planning assistance to clientele or landusers. For the past decade most efforts in conservation planning was for conservation compliance, which only addressed soil as the primary resource. Conservation compliance plans developed for producers on highly erodible land (HEL) were not required to have the erosion rates to sustainable levels. These plans were only for cropland. Producers were required to follow their compliance plans or an acceptable conservation system to receive their farm program payments administered through the Farm Service Agency, (FSA). Conservation Plans of Operations were also developed for specific programs such as for CRP projects, which only addressed the establish-

ment, operation and maintenance of that particular project.

The new emphasis is to address all major natural resources in conservation planning, such as soil, water, air, plants and animals. The conservationist follows a prescribed nine step planning process in working with the decision maker of the land to result in a conservation plan which has the resources planned to sustainable levels. The conservation plan contains many items, primarily the plan map, soils map, list of co-operator decisions and alternatives, plus additional supporting information which will help the cooperator implement the conservation plan or continue to make decisions regarding his or her land. Conservation planners are also addressing all major land uses on the property such

as pastureland, woodland, farmsteads and wildlife areas.

All conservationists assigned planning as part of their duties are required to become certified as conservation planners. In doing so, NRCS has developed an intensive program designed to train and evaluate conservation planners to ensure sound technical assistance is being provided to cooperators through planning. Required courses such as Water Quality, Conservation Planning, Nutrient and Pest Management have been provided or are in the process of being taken by planners.

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Are wetlands really important?

By Alan Crowe, State Technician

I often hear the questions — are wetlands really important? Do they really provide a useful function to us? Are wetlands really worth saving?

I suppose the answer depends upon your own personal values and what's important to you. But personally, wetlands are very important to me!

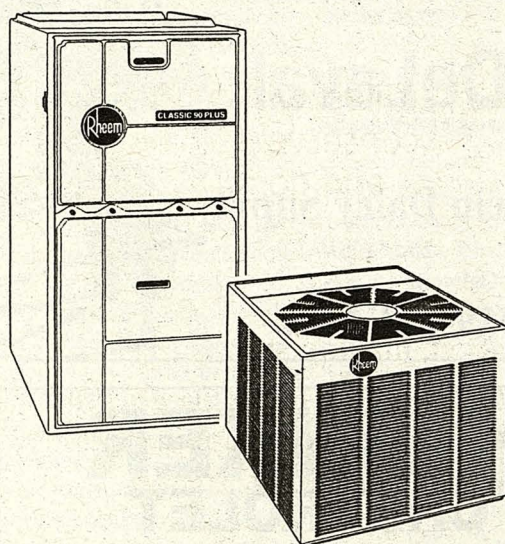
Why??? Well for one, I love water. Clean, clear, pretty, good tasting water. Wetlands are very efficient in maintaining & improving water quality. Wetlands provide natural pollution control by removing agricultural chemicals such as pesticides and excess fertilizers from surface waters. How? Wetlands filter and collect sediment from runoff water which reduces the amount of pathogens and sediment attached substances, such as phosphorus and potassium, which would otherwise be carried into downstream surface waters.

Another reason wetlands are important to me is because I enjoy watching wildlife! Wetlands provide ideal habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals. Studies have shown that throughout the United States, wetlands support about 190 species of amphibians, 5000 plant species, and 1/3 of all native bird species. Considering how few wetlands actually remain, that's a lot of wildlife.

Wetlands help our environment in other ways too. Wetlands reduce soil erosion along water courses by slowing down the overland flow of water. Also they help prevent floods or at least reduce the damage of flooding by reducing peak water flow after storms.

Are wetlands REALLY important? I sure think so!!

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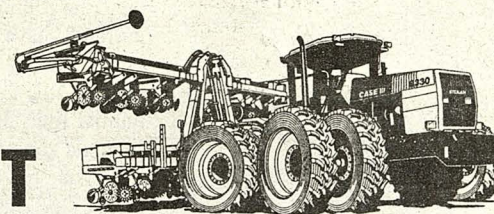
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What's up with watersheds?

By Michael Henderson

You may wonder why we are seeing so many "watershed" projects over the past few years. These projects are part of current government policy to curb non-point source contamination of surface and ground water. Before we go any further we need to understand what a watershed is, what non-point source contamination is and why we should care. A watershed is an area of land that all drains into the same water body. Non-point source contamination refers to the influx of contaminants from a broad unconfined area. We care because good water quality is critical for long term sustainability of this country.

Good water quality is important for the water we drink. It is also important to fish and other organisms living within it. Within the Mississippi River watershed there are thousands of smaller watersheds. Each of these watersheds contributes water to the Mississippi. The better the water quality of all small watersheds - The bet-

ter the water quality of the Mississippi. Again it might be asked how the water quality of the Mississippi affects agriculture in this area. The answer to this is both ethical and regulatory.

From the ethical side, protecting our environment is vital to long term sustainability of the population on this planet. Examples of severe environmental decay are evident in other areas of the world that have been under intensive agriculture for centuries before U.S. soil was turned over from the native condition. A report from the World Resources Institute (1992) stated "over the past 45 years, about 11 percent of the Earth's vegetated soils became degraded to the point that their original biotic functions are damaged, and reclamation may be costly or in some cases impossible." We are all part of the problem and solution. Our responsibility to the next generation is real. Think of the changes on the landscape over the past couple of decades. It will not take long to picture in your mind fields or areas that used to be much more productive than they are now. These areas are a sign of things to come if we do not take steps to curb the further loss of our topsoil.

From the regulatory side, water quality of the Mississippi River is vital to the continued freedoms that we currently have on how we farm our land. There is an area in the Gulf of Mexico that has little to no plant or animal life. This area is called the hypoxic zone or "Dead Zone". The dead zone has created a flurry of scientific studies and theories on why it is happening. The most common theory lays responsibility with mid-western agriculture. The need for additional scientific data in combination

with political lobbying by farm groups lead to the decision by the EPA not to initiate strict regulations. The EPA called for continued support for current incentive-based voluntary programs and vowed to lobby for additional funding. Agriculture ducked the bullet this time, but do not think that this issue is done. If the size of the Dead Zone has not been reduced by the end of 2005, the EPA will reassess the policy and determine if it needs to be revised to accomplish the goal. Most groups feel that if the policy is revised, it will include regulations on the quantity and timing of nutrient application.

Water quality, soil conservation and nutrient and pest management are all interrelated. Governmental incentives for soil conservation and water quality have been increasing over the past decades but so have the stakes for getting results from how this money is spent. The Mississippi River watershed is too immense of an area to effectively target limited funds on a widespread (non-targeted) approach. This has lead to smaller watershed projects which have to compete for funding. This competition forces the hosting entity (usually the Soil and Water District) to become more efficient (and targeted) in meeting the goals of the funding agency.

Once enough of these small watershed projects are completed the water quality of the larger watersheds should reflect the improvements made within the sub-watersheds.

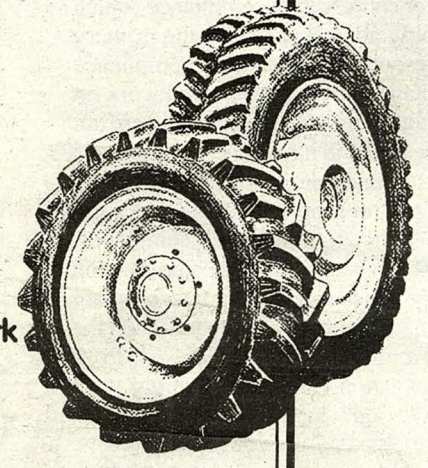
The question might arise as to how you can help get a watershed project near you. Involvement is crucial for this to happen. As more people and SWCDs become aware of the success these projects have had over the past few years, the more competi-

tive new grants become. One of the greatest assets a grant application has is the ability to show local support from the community as well as the farmers and landowners of the watershed. The Fayette SWCD is actively looking to write more of these grant applications, and we need to know that you are interested. Each of these applications takes a considerable

amount of time and effort to research and write. We encourage everyone to get active in the watersheds that we have going on right now. Please contact the NRCS office if you would like to be put on the mailing list for one or more of the watersheds so you can become part of the new age of water quality.

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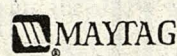
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