

State of Iowa

1953

Soil Conservation Districts



All inquiries should be addressed to the Secretary, State Soil Conservation Committee,
State House, Des Moines 19, Iowa

SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Are Organized For:

1. CONSERVATION of Iowa's remaining soil and water resources.
2. DEVELOPMENT of our land to meet ever-increasing demand.
3. SELF-GOVERNMENT by the farmers of our state.

SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS REPRESENT
PEOPLE IN ACTION!



Sac County Soil Conservation District technicians checking tile grade before tile was covered.

MEMBERS OF THE

State Soil Conservation Committee

Kenneth M. Wagner, West Liberty, Iowa

Chris H. Jensen, Audubon, Iowa

James W. Foster, Albia, Iowa

J. Fred Ingels, Maynard, Iowa

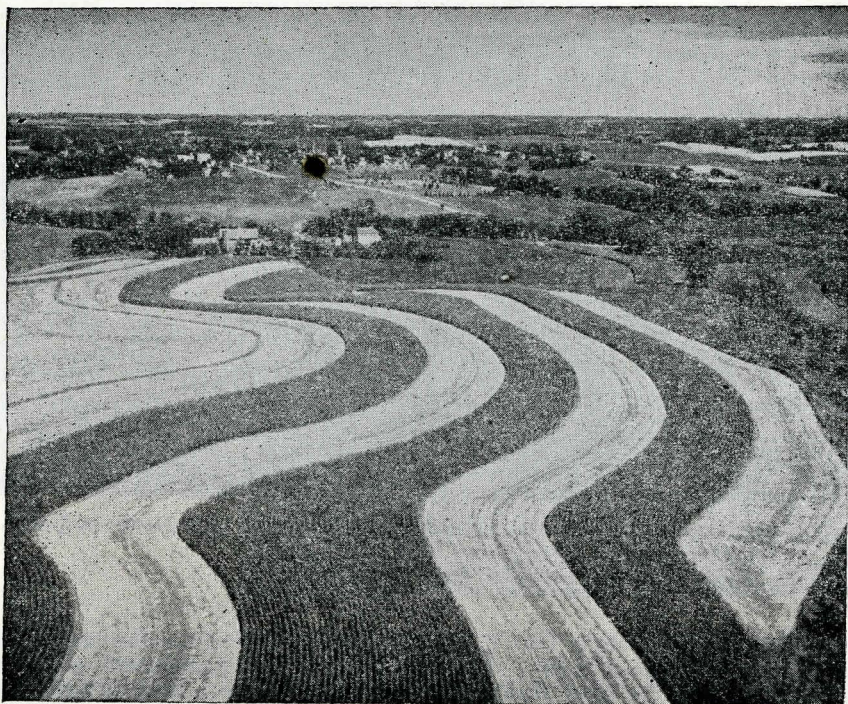
L. L. Garton, Alta, Iowa

Dean Floyd Andre, Director of Extension, Ames, Iowa

Clyde Spry, Secretary of Agriculture, Des Moines, Iowa

Frank H. Mendell, State Conservationist, Soil Conservation Service, Advisor to the State Committee, Des Moines, Iowa

Othie R. McMurry, Executive Secretary to the State Committee, State House, Des Moines, Iowa



Typical strip cropping scene in Iowa showing corn, oats, and meadow.

INTRODUCTION

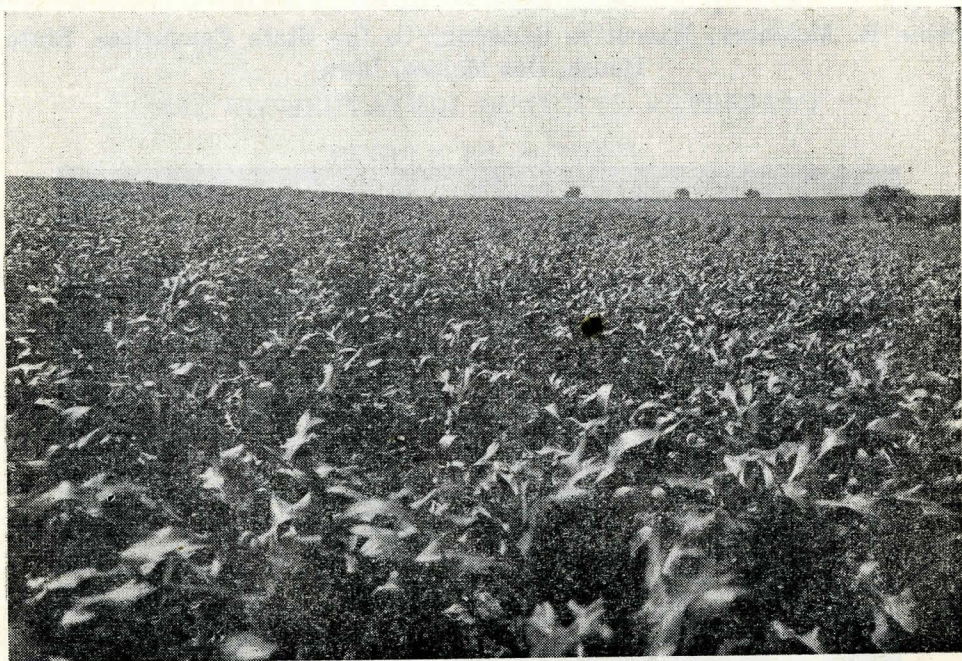
This bulletin is produced by the Iowa State Soil Conservation Committee in response to requests for a clear, short explanation of the Soil Conservation District Program and the laws governing it. It is designed to state the purposes, functions, and other pertinent information about the program.

This publication would have been impossible without the wholehearted co-operation of many state and federal agencies and others. They furnished information, materials, and advice to show you the size and extent of the Soil Conservation Program in Iowa. You may obtain additional copies of this bulletin from the State Soil Conservation Committee, State House, Des Moines, Iowa.

WHY WERE DISTRICTS FORMED?

Soil Conservation Districts enable farmers to band together on their own initiative to control soil and water conservation problems in community-wide action suited to local conditions. Iowans recognize that conservation problems extend beyond the boundaries of individual farms.

Soil and water conservation problems have been carefully studied in many Iowa



Contoured field of corn on the Elmer Evans farm one mile North of Early, Iowa Highway 71.

counties. These studies show that if these problems are uncontrolled they generally result in low farm family income, decline in business, and curtailment of community activities. It has become clear that such soil conservation problems can best be solved by farmers working together in organized groups. This was the logic behind the act enabling farmers to establish soil conservation districts in Iowa.

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IOWA LAW AUTHORIZES DISTRICTS

The 48th General Assembly of Iowa in 1939 passed the law under which local soil conservation districts are organized. These districts are legal segments of the state government. Their purpose is to take care of soil and water conservation problems in Iowa; and the State Soil Conservation Committee administers the law under which they operate.

The Federal Soil Conservation Act in 1935 suggested that soil conservation districts be formed as local subdivisions of state governments. The main purpose of these districts, as suggested in the federal law, was to help farmers make general use of soil and water conservation practices that would prevent erosion and maintain or increase crop production. The Iowa law was based on a suggested law drawn up by the United States Department of Agriculture and submitted to all states. This law was reviewed and revised to meet Iowa conditions before it was adopted.

ENTIRE STATE ORGANIZED

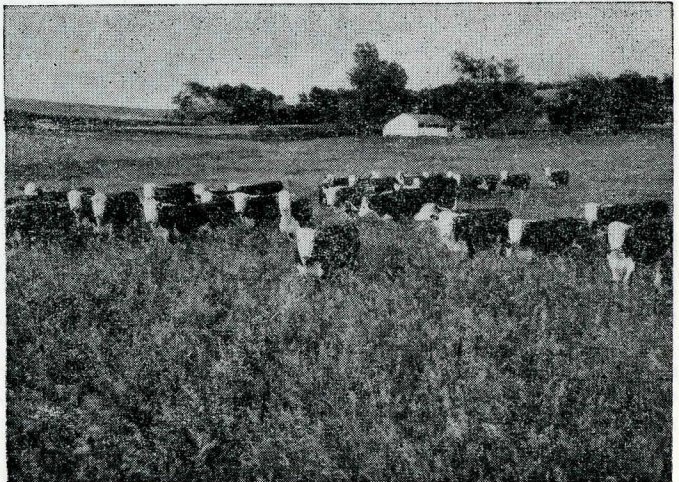
In April, 1940, the first Iowa Soil Conservation District was organized. The last Iowa Soil Conservation District was organized in February, 1952. This completed a blanket of 100 soil conservation districts over the state from border to border, exclusive of towns and cities. In 12 years the organization job had been completed. Each district was organized on a county boundary basis, with the exception of Pottawattamie County, which was divided into two districts because of other subdivisions of government being set up on the East and West Pottawattamie County basis.

The yearly rate at which districts were organized follows:

1940— 8	1941— 9	1942—13	1943— 4
1944—12	1945—15	1946—21	1947— 7
1948— 3	1949— 4	1950— 3	1952— 1

PROCEDURE USED TO ORGANIZE A DISTRICT

The organization of each district was initiated by the farmers in the area. They petitioned the State Soil Conservation Committee to hold a hearing in their area.



Feeder cattle on brome alfalfa pasture.

At least 20 per cent of the landowners within the area were required to sign the petition. After receiving petitions from the landowners, the State Soil Conservation Committee conducted a hearing where pros and cons of the needs for district organization were discussed. If the committee determined that it was practical and feasible to form a soil conservation district, the Committee arranged for a referendum and

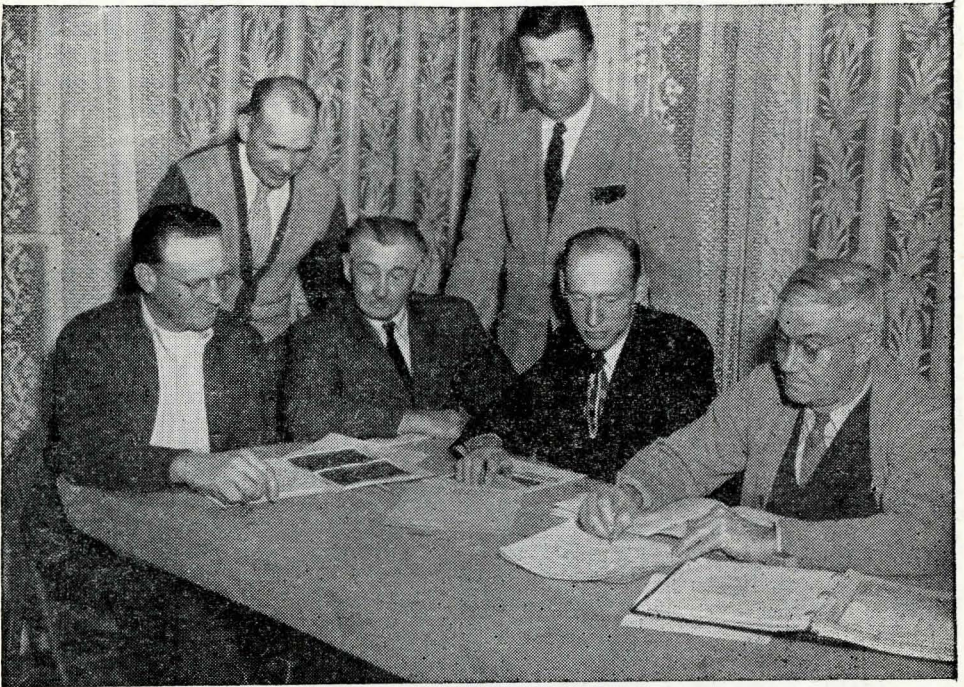
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election. It was necessary that 65 per cent of the landowners voting be in favor before a district could be organized.

ELECTION OF DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS

There are three soil conservation district commissioners in a district. The district commissioners are elected at the time of the referendum and election. They form the governing body of the district and serve for terms of two, four, and six years determined by the number of votes each receives. All elections, following the first election, are for a term of six years. A new commissioner is elected at the end of each two-year period, with the exception of a vacancy created by death or resignation.

Before the election date, petitions are circulated for the nomination of individuals for the office of commissioner. Twenty-five signatures of landowners and operators in the district must appear on this nominating petition for each candidate. The commissioners must reside within the boundaries of the district, or within cities and towns lying within the boundaries of the district. The 55th General Assembly (1953) of Iowa passed a bill authorizing farm operators, as well as landowners, to sign nominating petitions and to vote in district elections for soil conservation district commissioners.



Mitchell District Governing Body in action. From left to right, Edgar Darrow, Co. Extension Director and Secretary, Aaron Hanson, Work Unit Conservationist, Charles Burtch, District Commissioner, Kermit Hansen, District Conservationist, Lawrence Dieterich, District Commissioner, and Lloyd Reuhlow, District Commissioner.

THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS JOB

The duties, authorities, and responsibilities of the district commissioners are too numerous to be completely summarized in this bulletin. However, his main objectives are to conduct surveys, investigations, demonstrations, and help to determine research needs relating to soil and water problems; to cooperate with other agencies, governmental or otherwise, and with owners or occupiers of the land; to promote the development of comprehensive programs of planning, application, and maintenance of necessary erosion control and conservation measures; to enter into agree-

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ments with individuals, landowners, and operators; to promote and establish sound soil and water conservation practices. His activities are intended to benefit the people of the district, and also the public in general. He is primarily responsible for conducting the affairs of the district.

DISTRICT COOPERATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

Soil conservation district commissioners are authorized by law to ask for help from all groups and agencies which may help in anyway to accomplish the soil and water conservation job. Many are local or county groups. Others are state and federal groups. A more detailed explanation of this appears later in this bulletin.

STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

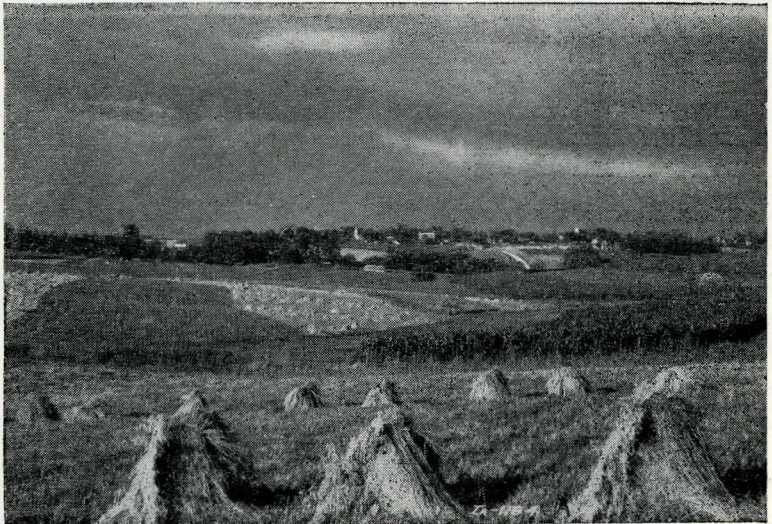
The State Soil Conservation Committee is provided for in Chapter 467A-4 of the Soil Conservation Districts Law, Code of Iowa, 1950. This law states in part that a State Soil Conservation Committee is established to serve as an agency of the state, and to perform the functions conferred upon it in the Soil Conservation Districts Law together with such other functions as may be hereafter assigned to it from time to time by act of the State Legislature.

The Committee consists of seven members and an advisory member. They are: five bona fide farmer members, living on farms, appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate; the Dean of Agriculture, Iowa State College, and the State Secretary of Agriculture or a member designated by him. The advisory member is the State Conservationist of the Federal Soil Conservation Service. An executive secretary is employed by the committee to carry out policies and administrative actions prescribed by the Committee.

STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS

The law intrusts the Committee with the responsibility of making rules and regulations, conducting hearings, and otherwise directing the organization of soil conservation districts and assisting district commissioners in developing and establishing

Corn, Oats,
and meadow
strips on the
contour.



policies which affect district operation. It also has the following duties and responsibilities:

1. To offer such assistance as may be appropriate to the commissioners of soil conservation districts in carrying out any of their duties and responsibilities.

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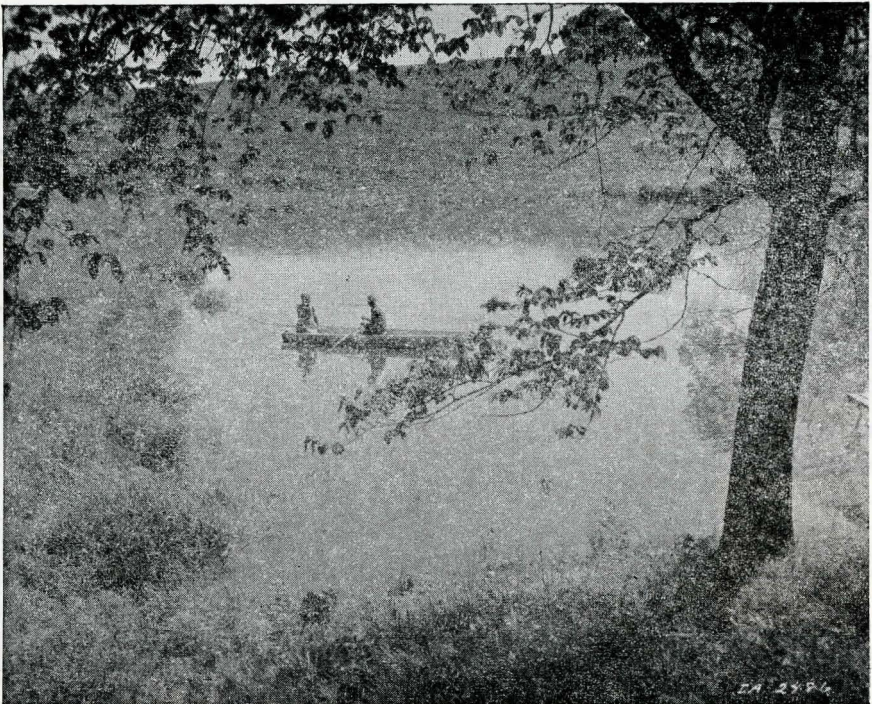
2. To keep the commissioners of each district informed of the activities and experiences of the other districts, and to facilitate and interchange ideas and experiences between districts and cooperation between them.
3. To aid in coordinating the programs in soil conservation districts.
4. To secure the cooperation and assistance of the United States and the State of Iowa and any of its agencies in carrying on the work of soil conservation districts.
5. To disseminate information throughout the state concerning the activities and programs of the soil conservation districts.
6. To render financial aid and assistance to soil conservation districts as provided by law.
7. To call upon the Attorney General of the State of Iowa for such legal advice and services as it may require.

STATE APPROPRIATIONS

Funds are provided by the General Assembly of Iowa to carry out the functions of the State Soil Conservation Committee and to assist soil conservation districts in their local programs. Neither the Committee, nor the local district, has the authority to levy a tax on any property, persons, or any other taxing sources for the purpose of carrying out the program.

FINANCIAL AID TO DISTRICTS

The 53rd General Assembly of Iowa made the first appropriation available for district use in 1949. This was \$250,000 annually and was raised to \$300,000 annually



A typical farm pond scene showing recreational facilities as well as water supply provided by farm ponds.

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by the 54th General Assembly. The 55th General Assembly raised the appropriation to \$350,000 annually effective July 1, 1953 and terminating June 30, 1955. These funds are allotted to districts by the State Committee on the basis of the actual need in each soil conservation district. The funds allotted on a need basis are used for employing additional personnel to help in the district program. This is true with the exception of \$50,000 which is appropriated at the rate of \$500 per district for the payment of commissioner's mileage and expenses when on official business, and for other items used in promoting soil conservation within the district.

STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE APPROPRIATION

The State Soil Conservation Committee has received an appropriation since its organization in 1939. At the present time the appropriation is \$28,610 per year for the biennium. This is used for salaries of the state office personnel, per diem, and travel of State Committee members, and other necessary expenditures for administering this program.

FARM OPERATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

A farmer applies to the district for assistance. The amount of assistance he receives depends a great deal on the amount of interest shown by the farmer and his intentions of developing, or working, into a farm conservation plan. When the farmer



Cattle pastured on strips after oat harvest, on Harvey Wirkler farm $\frac{1}{2}$ mile west of Garnavillo, Iowa.

is ready to agree to use his land within its capabilities, to treat it according to its needs, and to work toward the development of a basic conservation plan for his farm, he may sign an agreement with the soil conservation district. The speed with which he develops this plan depends on the facilities he has available. He will find the district most cooperative to assist him in his plans and provide as much technical assistance as possible in order to develop his farm plan and apply conservation measures on his land.

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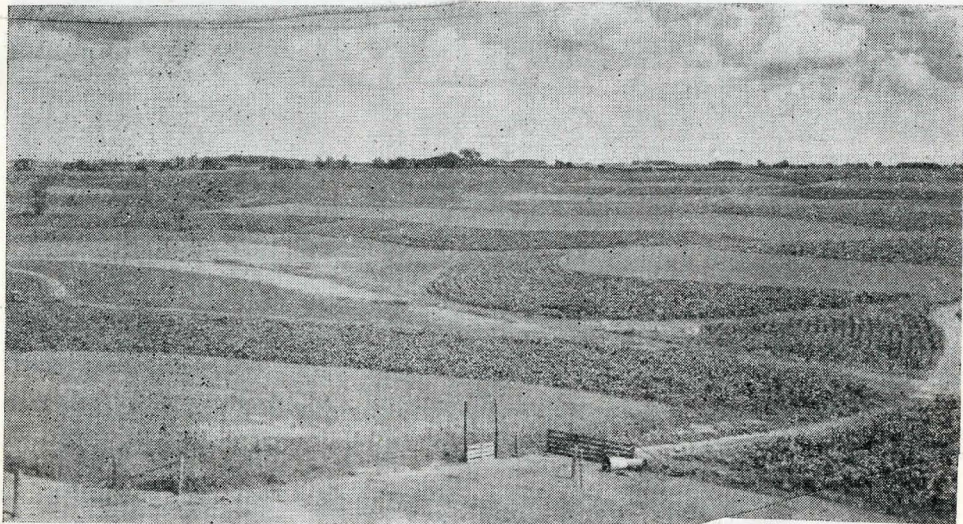
INFORMATION AND EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

The Extension Service of Iowa State College entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with each district as provided by State Law. It is responsible for the educational phase of the district programs through facilities such as county extension personnel, and the state specialist staff. The county extension program planning committees develop the county extension educational program in agriculture. Most of these committees have special subcommittees to set forth the yearly educational activities of extension personnel in soil and water conservation. In most counties at least one district commissioner serves as a member of this subcommittee.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Technical assistance is assigned to each individual soil conservation district in Iowa in line with Memorandum of Understanding between districts and the U. S. Soil Conservation Service. It consists of at least two men who work as a conservation planning team under the direction of the soil conservation district commissioners. The farm planner, or work unit conservationist, and other employees help farmers plan and apply their farm conservation programs. The conservation aid works as an assistant to the farm planner. He assumes a major part of the work in helping farmers lay out and establish the practices in their farm conservation plans. In addition, soil and engineering specialists are assigned to districts to make surveys and provide engineering assistance as needed.

As the district work expands and many farmers request help to put their farm conservation plans in operation, additional personnel may be added to the district staff. These men, working under the supervision of the farm planner, help farmers to adjust and improve their farm conservation plans. They also provide additional help for layout work. These additional workers are called aids and clerical assistants. They are provided either from state funds administered by the State Soil Conservation Committee, or from funds available to the U. S. Soil Conservation Service.



The Myron Roseland farm, District Commissioner of the Marshall Co. Soil Conservation District located nine miles south and seven miles east of Marshalltown, Iowa. Contour strip cropping of corn and meadow, with terraces in the upper background of picture.

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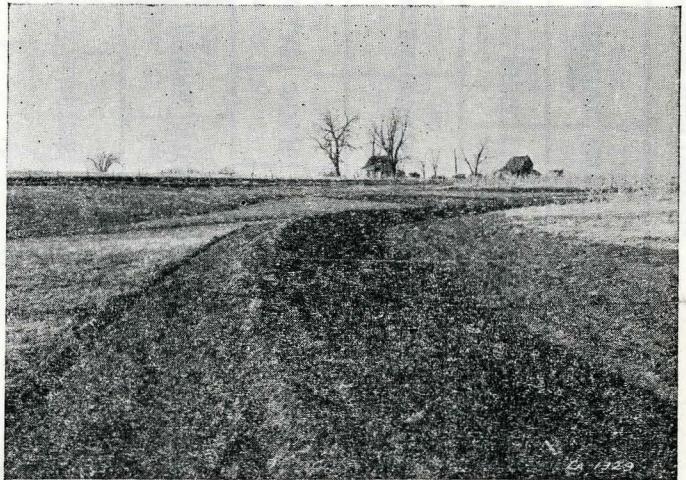
WHAT DOES IT COST THE FARMER?

The technical services offered through state and federal employees by the district are free. According to law there cannot be any charge to farmers for the services offered by such an employee. The soil conservation district, however, may accept contributions for "services rendered" under certain provisions as stated in the Iowa Soil Conservation Districts Law. The district may also accept funds as a contribution to be used in furthering the soil conservation program. If materials are furnished by the district in the form of seed, lath, etc., a charge may be made for such material. When such transactions take place, it is usually by a special agreement between the cooperator and the district. Under no conditions are any charges mandatory unless an agreement exists between the district and the other party involved.

WHERE TO OBTAIN ASSISTANCE FROM YOUR DISTRICT

A farmer desiring assistance for developing and carrying out a soil and water conservation program on his farm applies for assistance from the soil conservation district. There is a district office in each of the 100 soil conservation districts and it is usually located in the county seat. The farmer should become acquainted with the policies developed by the district commissioners for giving assistance to the farmer.

Terrace constructed on gently rolling land by a farm operator using a tractor and mold-board plow.

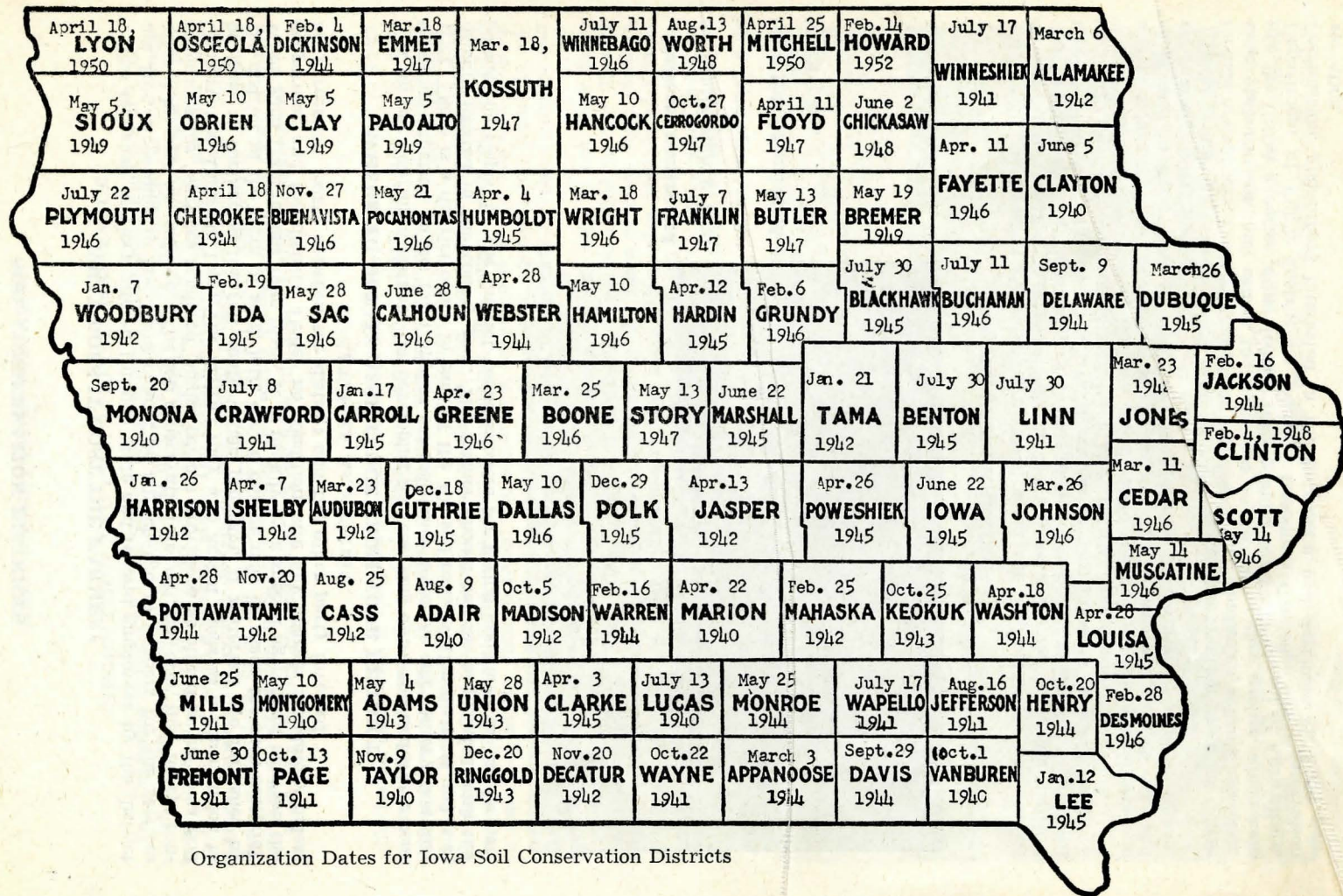


COOPERATING AGENCIES

The soil conservation districts have called upon the Federal Soil Conservation Service to furnish technical assistance in the way of personnel after the districts were organized. A Memorandum of Understanding has been completed to allow this type of procedure. The U. S. Soil Conservation Service provides personnel to work under the policies and supervision of the local district commissioners.

The Extension Service has also been called upon to furnish the educational program and to take part in other matters of the district. It also provides research data and cooperates in every way possible. This development is covered by another Memorandum of Understanding.

Local groups have been called upon to assist in the conservation program. These include newspapers, radio stations, farm organizations, businessmen, schools, churches, civic organizations, and others too numerous to mention. Other groups which help are the USDA agencies, other federal farm groups, Iowa Department of Agriculture, Department of Public Instruction, Natural Resources Council, Soil Conservation Commission, and others interested in the promotion and development of conservation.



Organization Dates for Iowa Soil Conservation Districts