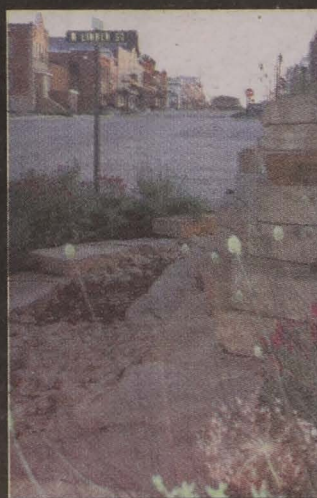


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# ANNUAL REPORT



# SWCD continues to team with landowners along Otter Creek Watershed

By Mike Van Sickle

Fayette County producers and/or landowners are strongly encouraged to begin or continue providing input on how funding for the ongoing Otter Creek Watershed Project could be utilized on their property or within the local watershed.

Fayette County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) watershed coordinator Adam Grim and other staff members continue to talk to local residents to find out what type of practices/projects they wish to partake. Additional input is also welcome in regard to any watershed issues, problems, and/or solutions the landowners wish to share.

While the ongoing project was officially approved in January 2013, the local NRCS/SWCD office had to await the approval of additional funding resources.

The Otter Creek Watershed consists of crop, pasture, timber and urban areas. Located from west of West Union to its confluence with the Turkey River in Elgin, Otter Creek is classified as a high quality, cold-water stream.

The proposed Otter Creek Watershed projects will be related to water retention structures and infiltration practices.

"A handful of conservation plans and practices have been tackled and are in the developmental stage," NRCS District Conservationist Aaron Anderson recently reported. "They (landowners/producers) have selected practices from the toolbox, and the available funding will help them offset their expenses."

"The landowners don't have to participate in this actual project,"

stressed newly hired SWCD watershed coordinator Adam Grim. "As always, we certainly welcome any conservation practices they would wish to develop on their own. That remains a great concept."



Adam Grim

"The available Otter Creek funding resources just allow a majority of the participants to maximize the implementation of their respective projects," he explained.

Anderson noted that oftentimes many of the proposed projects will take over a year to complete.

"The producers are provided the flexibility in how the plan is carried out. We want them to quarterback their projects," he added.

While local SWCD officials have previously observed that flood prevention starts "at the top of the hill," Grim said the current focus of the Otter Creek Watershed Project is west of Echo Valley State Park near West Union.

At the same time, he reminded area landowners/producers that current plans are for the project to proceed downstream.

"Now is also the time for those individuals and families to begin discussing plans, so we can tackle the issue of available funding down the road," he further emphasized. "We need as much planning ahead of time as possible from everyone."

While a majority of the Otter Creek Watershed Project funding was secured through an Iowa Flood Center-sponsored grant,



Anderson reiterated that those monies are just "one sliver of the pie." A wide selection of other resources remains available such as state cost-share programs, Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG), etc.

Fayette County SWCD began working on watershed projects in 1989 for Glovers Creek. Additional area watershed projects include Nutting, Upper Maquoketa, Grannis Creek, Ensign Hollow, and Mink Creek.

"Everyone in the cities and rural communities and from the public and private sectors within all the watersheds are responsible for caring for the future of our environment," said Anderson. "The success stories come directly from the input provided by each of us (the

public). Designing the plans and projects solidifies the effort and helps steer everyone in the right direction."

Grim explained that all watershed projects help landowners use conservation practices to retain soil in the fields and keep

soil, nutrients and bacteria out of the waterways, benefitting people, wildlife, and the environment as a whole.

"During my short time here,

**OTTER CREEK**  
See Page 13

## Identification Statement The Fayette County Soil & Water Conservation District's Annual Report

Published by the Fayette SWCD,  
Hwy. 150, 120 N. Industrial Pkwy.,  
West Union, IA 52175.  
Issue No. 15

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# Grim to serve as watershed coordinator

By Mike Van Sickle

An Ames native assumed his duties on Friday, Jan. 31, as the new Fayette County Soil and Water Conservation District watershed coordinator.

Adam Grim, 23, said his main interest in the position was his desire to play an active role in helping improve the natural resources of northeast Iowa and improving water quality in Fayette County and the entire area.

"I want to get people excited about watershed issues and provide an increased awareness of all environmental issues surrounding each and every one of us," he added.

A 2013 Luther graduate majoring in environmental studies, Grim was previously employed with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources on a seasonal basis at Decorah Fisheries and in Guttenberg. He replaces Carrie Davis, who was recently hired as the new Fayette County Economic Development/Tourism marketing/communications program

manager.

While attending Luther, Grim noted that the West Union "Greenscape" (Green Pilot Streetscape) served as a portion of his senior project. He explained that the study included comparing the feasibility of formulating a districtwide geothermal system in Decorah.

"I look forward to getting to better know the area and the local landowners," added the 2009 Ballard High School graduate. "I am equally excited to review the current projects, seeing additional proposals come into the office, and then witnessing their implementation and the future results."

At the same time, Grim admits he is still learning his new role in the Fayette County area.

"My long-term goal is to help improve the water quality in the Otter Creek Watershed while educating the public and raising water quality awareness," he closed. "I welcome the concerns of the entire community to deal with this common issue."

Grim can be contacted at the local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Office at (563) 422-3868, Ext. 3.



NRCS District conservationist Aaron Anderson (left) promptly began updating newly hired Fayette County Soil and Water Conservation District watershed coordinator Adam Grim on the local Otter Creek watershed Project. (Mike Van Sickle photo)

## Emerald Ash Borer monitoring concludes



Richard Kittelson recently completed the last Emerald Ash Borer monitoring that will occur in eastern Iowa. Although his report documents no new infestations, other reports of EAB in eastern Iowa were not so favorable. As a result, the DNR has placed a ban on wood movement throughout Eastern Iowa and will no longer monitor for EAB. The RC&D Board of Directors will need to consider what this means for Northeast Iowa and if our organization should take action.

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| <u>Butikofer Insurance, LLC</u><br>Elgin, Iowa<br>563-425-5306       | <u>Independence Insurance Services</u><br>Independence, Iowa<br>563-334-4991    | <u>Doug Beier</u><br>Independence, Iowa<br>319-334-6066            |
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| <u>Smith Insurance, LLC</u><br>Lamont, Iowa<br>563-382-3627          | <u>Smith-D&amp;L Insurance</u><br>Independence, Iowa<br>563-334-6066            | <u>Sorg Insurance Agency</u><br>Independence, Iowa<br>563-334-7089 |
| <u>Steve Brentner</u><br>Rowley, Iowa<br>563-938-2262                | <u>Vogel Insurance Agency</u><br>Oelwein, Iowa<br>319-283-1836                  | <u>Wegner Insurance</u><br>Sumner, Iowa<br>563-578-8076            |

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## Water quality demonstration applications available

Iowa Secretary of Agriculture  
Bill Northey announced



Bill Northey

Wednesday, Feb. 5, that the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) has issued a request for applications for targeted watershed demonstration projects.

Projects focused on water quality. Potential projects have until 5 p.m. Monday, March 31, to apply for the funds.

"These demonstration projects allow farmers to see how water quality practices can work on farms in their area and help us make an impact on water quality," Northey said. "We are excited to get some additional demonstration projects up and running to start working with farmers this summer and fall."

Projects must be within the nine large priority watersheds that have been identified by the Iowa Water Resources Coordinating Council (WRCC). The nine priority watersheds are the Turkey, Floyd, West Nishnabotna, East Nishnabotna, North Raccoon, Boone, South Skunk, Skunk, and Middle Cedar.

These nine large watersheds, also known as HUC8 watersheds, include 429 subwatersheds, or HUC12 watersheds. Applications will be accepted for projects focused on a single subwatershed within the priority watersheds, or for projects that group multiple subwatersheds into a single application.

Projects will include concentrated efforts to demonstrate conservation practices paired with strong outreach/education components to disseminate information on these practices in order to promote increased awareness and adoption of available practices and technologies for achieving reductions in nutrient loads to surface waters.

Successful projects will serve as local and regional hubs for demonstrating practices and providing practice information to farmers, peer networks, and local communities.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts, watershed groups and other nongovernmental organizations are eligible to submit applications. Projects will be allowed up to three years for initial project duration with the possibility of future extensions depending on future funding availability and project performance.

The Department will make available up to \$2.5 million to support demonstration projects over their initial duration period not to exceed three years.

Applications will be reviewed by a committee including representatives from the Department, Iowa State University, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the University of Northern Iowa, and the University of Iowa.

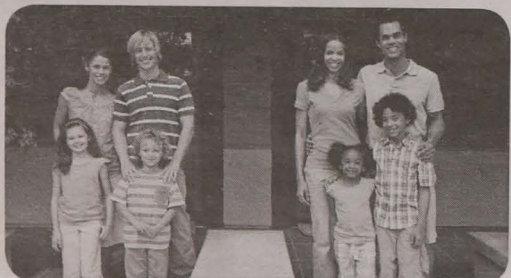
Recommendations from the committee will be utilized to advise the selections made by IDALS.

Project applications, which include a map of priority watersheds, can be found on the Department's website at [www.IowaAgriculture.gov](http://www.IowaAgriculture.gov), under "Hot Topics" or can be requested by contacting the Department's Division of Soil Conservation at (515) 281-5851.

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### FAYETTE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT JULY 1, 2012 through JUNE 30, 2013

|                                                 |                     |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Watershed Account</b>                        |                     |
| Beginning Balance                               | \$ 2,181.26         |
| <b>Receipts</b>                                 |                     |
| <b>Money Market Transfers</b>                   |                     |
| Nutting Creek Section 319 Funding               | \$ 9,300.00         |
| Nutting Creek SWCD Funds                        | 4,000.00            |
| Upper Otter Creek WIRB Funds                    | 15,875.00           |
| Upper Otter Creek SWCD Funds                    | 9,000.00            |
| Total Receipts                                  | \$ 38,175.00        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                    | <b>\$ 40,356.26</b> |
| <b>Expenses</b>                                 |                     |
| <b>Nutting Creek</b>                            |                     |
| Accounting Services                             | \$ 50.00            |
| Checks Printed                                  | 11.55               |
| Federal Taxes                                   | 486.23              |
| Health                                          | 320.50              |
| IPERS                                           | 358.77              |
| Payroll                                         | 7,580.00            |
| Service Charge                                  | 8.56                |
| State Unemployment Tax                          | 7.56                |
| Transfer to Money Market                        | 4,000.00            |
| Transfers to Payroll Savings                    |                     |
| Federal Taxes                                   | 970.51              |
| IPERS                                           | 1,009.02            |
| State Taxes                                     | 244.00              |
| Unused Nutting Creek 4 <sup>th</sup> Year Funds | 443.12              |
| <b>Upper Otter Creek - WIRB</b>                 |                     |
| Accounting Services                             | 125.00              |
| Payroll                                         | 9,570.00            |
| Transfers to Payroll Savings                    |                     |
| Federal Taxes                                   | 2,388.45            |
| IPERS                                           | 1,747.48            |
| State Taxes                                     | 361.00              |
| Total Expenses                                  | \$ 29,681.75        |
| Ending Balance 6/30/13                          | \$ 10,674.51        |

### FAYETTE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT JULY 1, 2012 through JUNE 30, 2013

|                              |                  |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>CD 4</b>                  |                  |
| Beginning Balance            | \$ 25,404.76     |
| <b>Receipts</b>              |                  |
| Interest                     | 267.94           |
| Total Receipts               | \$ 267.94        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                 | <b>25,672.70</b> |
| <b>Expenses</b>              |                  |
| CD Closed to SWCD Foundation | 25,672.70        |
| Total Expenses               | \$ 25,672.70     |
| Ending Balance 6/30/13       | \$ 0.00          |
| <b>CD 5</b>                  |                  |
| Beginning Balance            | \$ 25,415.06     |
| <b>Receipts</b>              |                  |
| Interest                     | 268.05           |
| Total Receipts               | \$ 268.05        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                 | <b>25,683.11</b> |
| <b>Expenses</b>              |                  |
| CD Closed to SWCD Foundation | 25,683.11        |
| Total Expenses               | \$ 25,683.11     |
| Ending Balance 6/30/13       | \$ 0.00          |

## CRP UPDATES

Submitted by FSA  
(Farm Service Agency)

The Fayette County FSA office is in the process of mailing out mid contract management packets to all producers who are scheduled for 2014 activities. With spring right around the corner it is critical you start the planning process early.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will help you with any questions you may have about the options acceptable for your CRP practice. If you have not decided which MCM activity to complete, please set up a time to review your plan with NRCS immediately.

Spring burning has become a popular MCM choice, but planning an alternative MCM activity is a must in case Mother Nature does not allow you to burn, or a contractor cannot get the job completed. **Extensions are discouraged and will not be addressed until all planning options have been exhausted.**

Please make the necessary arrangements to get your practice completed **BEFORE May 15 or AFTER August 1.** Absolutely no MCM activities are to be completed during the primary nesting season.

**Failure to perform planned management activities according to a conservation plan will result in a determination of non-compliance.**

## Farm Record Changes

Submitted by FSA  
(Farm Service Agency)

In anticipation of a new Farm Bill the Fayette County FSA office is encouraging producers to report their farm changes for the upcoming year. This includes but is not limited to recently purchased land, newly rented land that will be brought into the farming operation, changes in farm ownership to an Entity/ Trust/or Corporation, and recently created Estates.

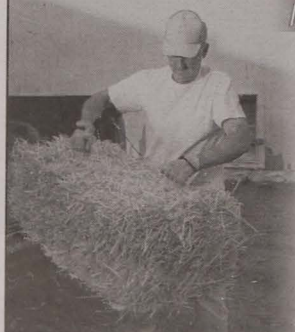
It is very important that your farm records reflect accurate information to retain full eligibility for future FSA/NRCS programs. Making these necessary record changes now will save you time this spring and will allow your local FSA Office to make these changes in an efficient manner.

Please contact the Fayette County FSA office with any questions (563)-422-5770, Ext. 2.

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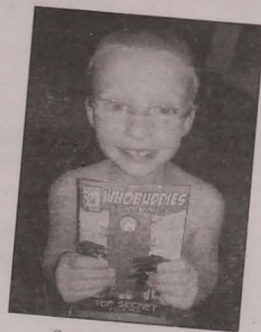
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# Educational Field Day

by Tamara Buitenwerf, Soil Conservationist

As a soil conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservationist, one of my favorite activities is attending the District's annual 3<sup>rd</sup> grade field day. When the field day rolled around this year, I took the day off of work and participated in the field day as a mom, not a professional. Knowing that I've written about the field day in recent years, my third grader asked if he could write the article this year. As my

Valley 3<sup>rd</sup> grader, Scott Buitenwerf, talks, I type his account of the day... We rode the bus to the farm this morning. We got off the bus and rode in the hay rack down to our first station. We learned about fish and their habitats. The leader let us touch the fish and some of my friends that like to fish like me were able to answer questions they asked us. At the tree station we learned



Scott Buitenwerf

about trees. They're kind of like fish - you can tell how old they are by the rings they have. If you have to pick up nuts, you should use that cool rolling-thing. I think it was called a nut gatherer, that picks up the nuts so you don't have to bend over. We also planted a tree while in the open area. I hope it gets enough sunlight to grow. We walked through the trees as part of the wildlife station. There were some cool stuffed animals - they were real but not alive - throughout the area that we looked for. It was fun trying to make different animal sounds. Remember Mr. Duren mom? He was really good at making animal sounds. I'm good at making some of the sounds. At the bee station, we learned that spraying can hurt bees. We should be careful about what we spray. Sarah and I were lucky and we got to try on the bee keeper's hat and veil that they use so they don't get stung. Did you know that boy bees are lazy? Lunch was my favorite. I got to see some of my friends from North that I play soccer with. Plus you brought me a desert for my lunch and I liked that. At the soil station that guy showed us soils the size of a volleyball, and golf ball, and one more. They represented sand, silt, and clay. The pieces were so small we couldn't see each individual part of soil. That's what grows our food and we need to take care of it. They made a cool maze in the field and we walked through the corn to the next station. Mr. Jensen was silly

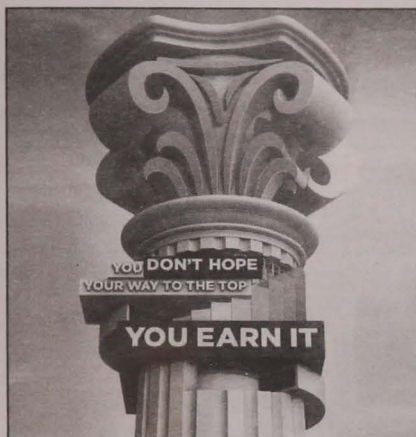


Returning volunteer Bob Fassbinder once again educated the children on bees and beekeeping during the 2013 Educational Field Day.

mom. I hope he didn't really think that coconut was an egg. My class was really smart and we could answer the questions easy! He thought our teacher prepared us beforehand but we're just smart students. Did you know that Mrs. [Amber] Linderbaum went to the field day when she was in third grade? Rachel was eroding the soil with water and wasn't supposed to smile and be happy about it but she kept smiling. When the water hit the soil, it ran off and some of the soil ran off with it. That happens when we have heavy rain and nothing growing to cover it, right? It was really, really fun when we chased the tire down the hill. The tire was soil and we were eroding right down the hill with it. When I

got back to school my teacher gave me a Whobuddies comic book and some trading cards. Whobuddies are owls that care about their environment. I had a fun day today. I wish that all parents could join their third grader next year. I bet they would like it too.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> grade educational field day is an annual event hosted by the Fayette County Soil & Water Conservation District. In its 21<sup>st</sup> year, the educational field day hosted 13 schools and 461 students. The District is grateful for the many hands that make this event possible each year.



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With the help of the participating students, Fayette County SWCD Commissioner Richard Jensen discussed erosion as part of the annual Educational Field Day.

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**FINANCIAL REPORT  
OF STATE FUNDS  
July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013**

|                                                |                     |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| IM Budget Allocation                           | \$ 2,000.00         |
| Supplemental Allocation                        | \$ 800.00           |
| Commissioner Expenses                          | \$ 2,116.21         |
| Office Expenses                                | \$ 683.79           |
| <b>FY 2012</b>                                 |                     |
| State Cost-Share Allocation                    | \$ 31,543.00        |
| Supplemental                                   | \$ 12,057.54        |
| Obligated                                      | \$ 16,544.40        |
| Spent                                          | \$ 27,038.61        |
| Balance                                        | \$ 17.53            |
| <b>REAP Forestry/Native Grasses Allocation</b> | <b>\$ 13,500.00</b> |
| Obligated                                      | \$ 6,488.29         |
| Spent                                          | \$ 5,853.00         |
| Balance                                        | \$ 1,158.71         |
| <b>REAP Practices Allocation</b>               | <b>\$ 6,653.13</b>  |
| Obligated                                      | \$ 2,364.00         |
| Spent                                          | \$ 4,230.00         |
| Balance                                        | \$ 59.13            |
| <b>Otter Creek WIRB</b>                        |                     |
| Obligated                                      | \$ 100,000.00       |
| Spent                                          | \$ 29,962.63        |
| Balance                                        | \$ 70,037.37        |

### SWCD scholarship winner

Anthony "Tony" Moellers, son of Jason and Lori Moellers of rural West Union, is the 2013 Fayette County Soil & Conservation District Scholarship Award winner.

Tony has chosen to continue his education in Iowa State University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. While pursuing a BS degree in agronomy and agricultural business, he plans to start a career with a seed company or ag financial institution.

He hopes to one day own an acreage and continue the family tradition in agriculture. "I believe in the future of agriculture" is the opening line to the FFA Creed, which I have lived by for the past four years," noted Moellers in his scholarship application. "To some, these words mean nothing. To me, these words mean everything."

"Being a farmer and an active FFA member, I am aware of the many issues we face today. World hunger is a problem that needs to be solved. I want to make a difference in agriculture today, for I truly believe in the future of this industry," he closed.

A 2013 North Fayette graduate, Tony was active in FFA, Student Council, Peer Helpers, National Honor Society, speech, drama, choir, and Danceline.

Outside of school, he participated in American Legion Boys State, the Alzheimer's Memory Walk, Fayette County Fair, Bushels for Scholars, Washington Leadership Conference, various church activities, the Good Samaritan Society's Belgian Waffle Supper, painting a school in Costa Rica, and packing meals for people of Haiti.

**FAYETTE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT  
JULY 1, 2012 through JUNE 30, 2013**

#### District Revolving Fund

Beginning Balance \$ 781.80

#### **Receipts**

Money Market Transfers – IM Funds \$ 2,800.00  
Money Market Transfers 16,371.47

Total Receipts \$ 19,171.47

TOTAL \$ 19,953.27

#### **Expenses**

Ameri Corp Agreement \$ 2,812.50  
ATV 330.65  
Computer 533.89  
Developmental Grant 874.70  
Donations 2,550.00  
Education 4,554.91  
Fayette SWCD Foundation Legal Fees 384.00  
Houg Expense 204.00  
IM Commissioner 2,116.21  
IM Office 683.79  
Meeting Expense 203.12  
Office Supplies 985.13  
Postage Meter 177.36  
Tree Expense 25.00  
Unused Water Quality Funds 1,500.00  
Water Quality Monitoring 500.00

Total Expenses \$ 18,435.26

Ending Balance 6/30/13 \$ 1,518.01

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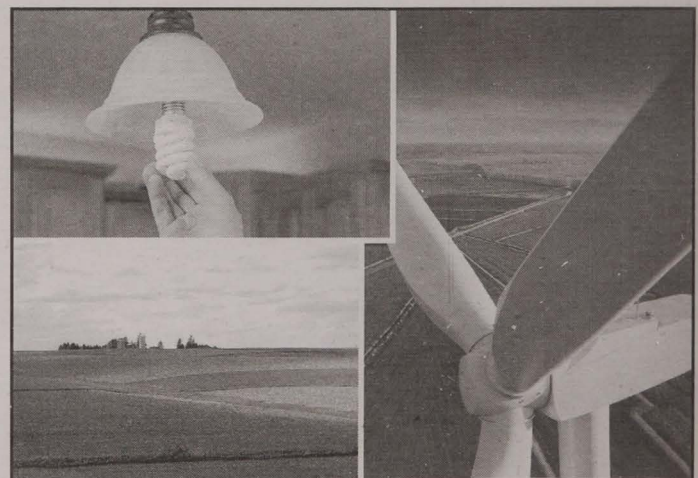
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| Summary Conservation Practices                                            | Planned | Applied |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Access Control (472) (ac)                                                 | 510     | 145     |
| Brush Management (314) (ac)                                               |         | 1       |
| Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan - Written (102) (no)               | 2       |         |
| Conservation Cover (327) (ac)                                             | 253     | 113     |
| Conservation Crop Rotation (328) (ac)                                     | 7,728   | 6,423   |
| Contour Buffer Strips (332) (ac)                                          | 3       | 27      |
| Contour Farming (330) (ac)                                                | 1,891   | 192     |
| Cover Crop (340) (ac)                                                     | 308     | 501     |
| Critical Area Planting (342) (ac)                                         | 423     | 4       |
| Early Successional Habitat Development/Management (647) (ac)              | 13      | 24      |
| Farmstead Energy Improvement (374) (no)                                   | 6       | 1       |
| Fence (382) (ft)                                                          | 20,435  | 16,645  |
| Field Border (386) (ac)                                                   | 337     |         |
| Filter Strip (393) (ac)                                                   | 70      | 32      |
| Firebreak (394) (ft)                                                      | 1,733   |         |
| Forage and Biomass Planting (512) (ac)                                    | 234     | 117     |
| Forest Management Plan - Written (106) (no)                               |         | 2       |
| Forest Stand Improvement (666) (ac)                                       | 7       | 19      |
| Grade Stabilization Structure (410) (no)                                  | 1       |         |
| Grassed Waterway (412) (ac)                                               | 279     | 20      |
| Heavy Use Area Protection (561) (ac)                                      | 2       | 0       |
| Herbaceous Weed Control (315) (ac)                                        | 480     |         |
| Integrated Pest Management (IPM) (595) (ac)                               | 796     | 16      |
| Livestock Pipeline (516) (ft)                                             | 3,177   |         |
| Nutrient Management (590) (ac)                                            | 830     | 162     |
| Prescribed Burning (338) (ac)                                             | 63      | 11      |
| Prescribed Grazing (528) (ac)                                             | 57      | 109     |
| Pumping Plant (533) (no)                                                  | 1       |         |
| Residue and Tillage Management, Mulch Till (345) (ac)                     | 3,394   | 1,333   |
| Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till/Strip Till/Direct Seed (329) (ac) | 7,043   | 5,377   |
| Residue Management, Mulch Till (329B) (ac)                                |         | 37      |
| Riparian Forest Buffer (391) (ac)                                         | 7       |         |
| Roof Runoff Structure (558) (no)                                          | 1       | 2       |
| Stripcropping (585) (ac)                                                  | 143     | 143     |
| Subsurface Drain (606) (ft)                                               | 7,080   |         |
| Terrace (600) (ft)                                                        | 47,556  | 5,225   |
| Tree/Shrub Establishment (612) (ac)                                       | 59      | 60      |
| Tree/Shrub Site Preparation (490) (ac)                                    |         | 76      |
| Underground Outlet (620) (ft)                                             | 5,813   | 6,986   |
| Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) (ac)                             | 1,306   | 1,097   |
| Waste Storage Facility (313) (no)                                         | 2       | 2       |
| Waste Transfer (634) (no)                                                 | 1       |         |
| Water and Sediment Control Basin (638) (no)                               |         | 1       |
| Watering Facility (614) (no)                                              | 2       |         |
| Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (644) (ac)                            | 30      |         |
| Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment (380) (ft)                            | 630     | 1,970   |
| Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation (650) (ft)                               |         | 460     |
| Conservation System Plans (no)                                            | 162     | 159     |
| Conservation System Acres (ac)                                            | 13,787  | 13,185  |

FAYETTE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT  
JULY 1, 2012 through JUNE 30, 2013

Money Market Savings

Beginning Balance \$ 56,232.44

Receipts

|                                   |             |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| Farm Bill 12 Funds - CDI          | \$ 3,478.50 |
| Farm Bill 12 Amend Funds - IDALS  | 561.15      |
| Farm Bill 13 Funds - IDALS        | 1,809.00    |
| IM Allocation & Supplemental      | 2,800.00    |
| Interest                          | 435.36      |
| Nutting Advance Funds             | 9,300.00    |
| Supporter Club                    | 185.00      |
| Transfers from Technical Account  | 1,000.00    |
| Transfers from Watershed Account  | 4,000.00    |
| UIU Unused Water Monitoring Funds | 250.00      |
| Upper Otter Creek - WIRB Funds    | 15,875.00   |
| Water Quality Monitoring Funds    | 1,500.00    |

Total Receipts \$ 41,194.01

TOTAL

\$ 97,426.45

Expenses

|                                |             |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| IM Transfers to Checking       | \$ 2,800.00 |
| Transfers to Checking          | 16,371.47   |
| Transfers to Payroll Savings   | 299.94      |
| Transfers to Technical Account | 9,687.15    |
| Transfers to Watershed Account | 38,175.00   |

Total Expenses \$ 67,333.56

Ending Balance 6/30/13

\$ 30,092.89

FAYETTE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT  
JULY 1, 2012 through JUNE 30, 2013

Technical Account

Beginning Balance \$ 1,403.13

Receipts

|                                  |             |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Farm Bill 12 Funds - CDI         | \$ 3,478.50 |
| Farm Bill 12 Funds - IDALS       | 3,838.50    |
| Farm Bill 12 Amend Funds - IDALS | 561.15      |
| Farm Bill 13 Funds - IDALS       | 1,809.00    |

Total Receipts \$ 9,687.15

TOTAL

\$ 11,090.28

Expenses

|                                   |           |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Accounting Services               | \$ 150.00 |
| Payroll                           | 4,331.19  |
| Transfers to Money Market Savings | 1,000.00  |
| Transfers to Payroll Savings      |           |
| Federal Taxes                     | 907.10    |
| IPERS                             | 331.42    |
| State Taxes                       | 85.00     |
| Unused Farm Bill 12 Funds         | 360.00    |

Total Expenses \$ 7,164.71

Ending Balance 6/30/13

3,925.57

Dollars Obligated

|                                                               |    |           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----------|
| New Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contracts          | 1  | \$14,956  |
| New Environmental Quality Incentives Program Contracts (EQIP) | 14 | \$197,630 |

FAYETTE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT  
JULY 1, 2012 through JUNE 30, 2013

## Payroll Savings Account

Beginning Balance \$ 3.20

## Receipts

Interest .90  
Transfers from Money Market Savings \$ 299.94  
Transfers from Technical Account 1,034.74  
Transfers from Watershed Account 7,009.24

Total Receipts \$ 8,344.82

TOTAL \$ 8,348.02

## Expenses

Federal Taxes 4,566.00  
IPERS 3,087.92  
State Taxes 690.00

Total Expenses \$ 8,343.92

Ending Balance 6/30/13 \$ 4.10

FAYETTE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT  
JULY 1, 2012 through JUNE 30, 2013

## CD 6

Beginning Balance \$ 4,245.59

## Receipts

Interest 38.35

Total Receipts \$ 38.35

TOTAL \$ 4,283.94

## Expenses

CD Closed to SWCD Foundation 4,283.94

Total Expenses \$ 4,283.94

Ending Balance 6/30/13 \$ 0.00

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## A HISTORY LESSON ON SOIL CONSERVATION

By Vince Sitzmann

Hugh Hammond Bennett, otherwise known as the "father of soil conservation" was a soil surveyor with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). In 1928 Bennett co-wrote a publication, titled, "Soil Erosion: A National Menace" which helped establish scientific credibility about the repercussions of erosion and inspired others to take initiative on the erosion problems within the United States.

In 1937, Bennett was presenting to a congressional subcommittee in Washington D.C. and timed his presentation to coincide perfectly with the arrival of a severe dust storm. As Bennett flung open the window he shouted "Gentleman, get ready because here comes Oklahoma" so the story goes. Soon thereafter the Soil Conservation Service was established as a permanent agency within USDA, with Bennett as its director. This was the first constitutional act in the history of this or any other nation that sought to control and prevent soil erosion, flooding, and other threats to our natural resources. Not long after, President Franklin D. Roosevelt sent a letter to all the governors recommending that each state adopt their own laws. Iowa's Governor Wilson adopted the law and by 1940 Iowa's first Soil and Water District was formed by three townships in Marion County.

Today we have 100 SWCDs in 99 counties, that are represented by 500 Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners. Five non-partisan Commissioners are elected from each district and are entrusted with many responsibilities including the prevention of excessive soil erosion and conservation of our soil resources. No small task considering Iowa has 36 million acres, 92,300 farms and 25 million acres of crop land. Iowa also ranks number one nationally in the production of corn, soybeans, pork and chicken.

In 1973, the Iowa legislature enacted the cost share program for to help promote conservation. Throughout the past 40 years, over 254 million dollars have been leveraged with funds from private landowners and farmers through the SWCDs to conserve and protect our soil resources. Hundreds of thousands of acres are now protected with no-till and strip till, terraces, waterways, grade stabilization structures, buffers, cover crops, and other practices that save millions of tons of soil from washing off our fields and into our waterways.

Who could have imagined that one man's passion for soil conservation, along with a little dust in the wind in the 1930's, could have spurred a conservation ethic that spans the world and touches each and every acre of our farms?

## Riparian Buffers

*Improved Water Quality for Iowa  
and  
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Conservation Reserve Programs (CRP) are targeting one of our most valuable resources – water. Riparian buffers are a fancy name for trees planted along a stream. In most areas of Iowa, the natural buffers of grasses and trees that would filter the water have been removed to create more cropland. Farming next to the stream results in a direct route for soil, nutrients and herbicides to reach the stream. Water sources in the ground can be destroyed in a very short time, but may take hundreds or thousands of years to restore. Riparian buffers put the natural vegetation back in place to filter out the soil, nutrients, and herbicides. Planting trees also improves wildlife cover, natural beauty of Iowa and can qualify you for property tax exemptions after your CRP contract expires.

The state of Iowa is the big winner in this program, but landowners can also increase income from their land by planting riparian buffers. The Riparian Buffer Program, or CP22 Practice, is a continuous signup program to establish cover on some of our most fragile areas. You can walk into the NRCS and FSA offices anytime and apply, and the NRCS office will determine what land is eligible. If you have pasture land or crop land that has a creek running through it, you will likely have land that qualifies.

The CP22 practice involves planting trees on an area 180 ft. wide on both sides of the stream. The program will pay 50% of the costs of planting trees, and if funding is available you are eligible for an additional 40% cost sharing, bringing the total to 90%. The average cost of tree planting is \$600 per acre. You will be required to maintain the trees, which involves spraying herbicides for weed control and mowing, until the trees are established. As with most CRP practices, the Riparian Buffer program pays an annual rental payment to the landowner. Today's rental rates average \$80/acre on marginal pastureland, which is quite comparable to the average cattle grazing lease. Cropland rental rates can often times be much higher.

If you have already sold the livestock, are thinking about selling the livestock, or are tired of fixing fence every time it rains, you should check into this program. Your pasture land may be more valuable than you think, and you will be helping to improve water quality, wildlife habitat, and the quality of Iowa for everyone.

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## Continuing need for lifetime stewards

By Richard Jensen

Being a conservation farmer isn't that hard. It is difficult to understand why everybody wouldn't be one. Having one gully less than that guy down the road doesn't mean you are a steward of the land or a conservation farmer.

We who recognize the landscape as often being abused and misused are alarmed. Far too many acres of the land are operated by producers who are detached from any obligation or responsibility toward the health of their land. As commissioners and conservation farmers we are dedicated to replace this reckless behavior with a more responsible, sustainable approach. After many years of advocating more ethical land treatment, I see myself as a watch dog with laryngitis...I'm not heard, but I'm still on duty.

As food producers, American farmers have no equal. They have proven themselves over and over again by responding to the call for more and more food and fiber. Blessed with fertile soil and good weather, these willing producers are the source of life for millions of hungry families around the world. With the use of the latest inventions and the newest technology, the crop is planted, cared for, harvested and marketed with meticulous attention to the details. Every purchase, every decision and every marketing move is based on how it will affect their profit- and loss-statement. The net-worth statement can rapidly erode if unforeseen problems lower yields.

Unfortunately, less consideration is given to the integrity of the living soil that enabled all the other inputs to successfully produce the crop. Healthy soil is as important to the crop as air pressure is to a tire. Neglecting maintenance on either will lead to failure and ruin. The tire is easily replaced; however, the soil is destroyed forever.

The amazing marvels of modern technology that farmers utilize in their fields to grow food is minute compared to the complexity of the soil-root relationship. Being apathetic about the two most important elements that sustain all life, soil and water, is unacceptable. Join with us, along with many other stewards of the land, and care for your land as though your life depended upon it. In the end, it does.

We look forward to visiting with you on your farm or at the NRCS office. If the response is great enough, I might not have to write another article.

## Thank You

By William Bennett

The Fayette Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and Fayette SWCD Foundation would like to thank all of the people who have contributed to the Fayette SWCD Foundation supporter club.

Because of you, the SWCD has been able to accomplish many things that would not have been done without your support. With your support, the SWCD was able to provide additional staff for the office, transportation fees for all Fayette county schools to attend the education field day for third grade students, provide a scholarship for a high school student attending college in an ag related field, monetary awards for poster contest winners in K-12 in all Fayette county schools, equipment for field layout of practices, and working with Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) in helping small businesses start or grow.

The SWCD would also like to thank the Fayette County Supervisors for the continued support of the SWCD and Northeast Iowa RC & D.

## That Lovely Homely Brush

By Paul Hoeger

As we hunker down this winter with bi-weekly snowstorms and day after day of sub zero temperatures, the disagreeable weather should serve as a reminder of the hardships Iowa wildlife endures in order to survive every year.

When the wind howls and the sleet and snow are blowing horizontally across the landscape, pheasants, grouse, quail and other wildlife benefit greatly from scrub trees and brush in un-farmable areas. This is especially true for the land along creeks and streams where the brush does double duty in stabilizing the creek or stream bank while providing wildlife habitat.

During the last couple of years I have seen many stream banks being severely manicured and clear cut in order to farm closer to the waterway. It seems to me that this practice provides minimum return at a great loss to wildlife and an increased threat for soil erosion. A few extra feet of corn or soybeans along a stream offer little return even at the recent year's inflated grain prices.

What is worth more, a couple of bushels of grain or a sanctuary for wildlife and tons of fertile soil? The answer is obvious. Heavy equipment can destroy in minutes what would take years to reestablish. Trees require decades to grow, and the soil lost to erosion is irreplaceable. Extreme rainfall that occurs in a short time has taken a ter-

rible toll in soil lost over the last decades. Even with conservation practices that have been implemented the damage done to fields and stream banks is unacceptable if we want to maintain and preserve the land and resources we have been charged with managing.

Imagine how much worse this decimation and scarring of the land would be without the efforts of conservation minded people.

I understand the need and desire to clean fence lines of equipment snagging trees and of course we are required to keep buffer strips clear of parasitical trees and bushes but there are many places where a couple of trees or a stand of dogwood are inoffensive and beneficial.

The next time you look at some crooked old willows or a clump of brush in the corner of a field or along a stream don't think how ugly it appears, but how it adds to the landscape providing shelter for wildlife and stabilization for the soil. This is one of the rare times when doing nothing may be the best thing. Leave what nature has created.

Clean the weeds and brush from farm yards, manicure your lawn, although a rain garden can be attractive and functional, clean brush from fence lines if you must but leave trees and brush along creeks, streams and rivers to protect the banks, provide shelter for wildlife and preserve the landscape for future generations.



## USDA Report Shows Iowa Near Top in Conservation Program Enrollments

by Jason Johnson,

Public Affairs Specialist, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Des Moines

Iowa ranks among national leaders in Farm Bill contracts awarded to farmers and landowners, according to a recent report released by U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. The report highlights the value of public-private conservation efforts and record conservation results achieved by farmers, private landowners and USDA since 2009.

"This report demonstrates the commitment of Iowa producers to conserve the natural resources on their farms," says Jay Mar, state conservationist for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). "With pressures growing to produce more crops on the same or fewer acres, we need to emphasize sustainable agriculture for future generations."

### EQUIP

From 2009 to 2012 Iowa ranked fourth nationally for number of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contracts, with 5,364. During that span, NRCS helped farmers treat about 440,000 acres with conservation practices such as cover crops, nutrient management, livestock waste facilities, terraces, grassed waterways, and rotational grazing systems. Iowa NRCS provided nearly \$92 million in financial assistance to farmers to plan and install these practices. Only Texas, California and Mississippi awarded more EQIP contracts during that time span than Iowa.

NRCS offers financial and technical assistance to install or implement structural, vegetative and management practices on eligible agricultural land through EQIP -

the nation's most popular conservation program.

### CSP

NRCS began accepting applications for the Conservation Stewardship (CSP) in 2010, awarding farmers for existing conservation success and encouraging additional conservation performance through practice enhancements. Since the program's inception, Iowa ranks third in the nation for the number of CSP contracts with 2,745 - trailing only Minnesota and Missouri. In fact, these three states each awarded more CSP contracts than the lowest 21 states combined.

Through CSP, Iowans treated nearly 1.5 million acres with conservation practices such as no-till to reduce soil erosion, cover crops to scavenge residual nitrogen, and split nitrogen applications to reduce nutrient runoff. Iowa NRCS obligated more than \$38 million to farmers from 2010 to 2012 through CSP.

### CRP

Between 2009 and 2012, Iowa ranked first in the nation for the number of contracts through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Administered by the USDA's Farm Service Agency, Iowa landowners signed 39,148 CRP contracts covering 549,729 acres. This program pays landowners an annual rental payment for agreeing to remove sensitive land from agricultural production and planting species that improve environmental health and quality.

Contracts for land en-

rolled in CRP are 10-15 years. Practices could include planting native vegetation throughout an entire field, installing a filter strip to buffer cropland from a stream, or installing a wetland or pond for environmental protection.

### WRP

Iowa ranked ninth for the most new wetland easement contracts in the same four-year span, with 169, through the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). Private landowners restore, protect and/or enhance

wetlands on their property through WRP. The new wetland easements cover 15,710 acres at a federal cost of nearly \$59 million.

Wetlands provide wildlife habitat, improve water quality, reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, and protect biological diversity. WRP can often relieve the burden of trying to farm marginal lands, providing an economic gain through a conservation easement.

### GRP

With 27 contracts, Iowa ranked

fifth in the nation for number of new Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) contracts between 2009 and 2012. Through GRP, landowners voluntarily use a rental contract or conservation easement to protect working grasslands, including hayland, pastureland, or native grasslands.

For information about conservation programs in Iowa, visit the NRCS website at [www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov).



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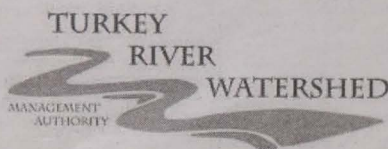
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# TRWMA Update

January 2014

2013 marked the one-year anniversary of the formation of the Turkey River Watershed Management Authority (TRWMA). The TRWMA was established under a 28E agreement by 7 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, 23 communities, and 5 counties with the intent of reducing flooding and improving water quality in the Turkey River Watershed. The TRWMA holds quarterly public meetings. The meetings include presentations from various experts, information sharing regarding ongoing projects in the watershed, and facilitated planning discussions. The TRWMA has enlisted the help of Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) over the next few years to develop a comprehensive plan for flood control and water quality improvement.

Successful development and implementation of large scale plans such as those in the Turkey River Watershed require collaboration from many different partners. The TRWMA would like input from everyone in the watershed that is willing to engage in the discussion. They have held public



meetings, encouraged on-line input and recently completed a survey of 1,500 watershed residents. Several committees are also working to provide input to the TRWMA Board regarding which strategies to incorporate into their Plan and how to expand partnerships. Collaborating partners include County Engineers, County Supervisors, SWCD Commissioners, TRW Communities, Iowa Corn Growers, the Iowa Flood Center, and the TRW Alliance. Collaboration from so many partners provides unique opportunities to work across political boundaries and increases the likelihood the collective efforts will succeed.

A number of projects in the Turkey River Watershed have already been funded as a result of the TRWMA's work. The Iowa Flood Center selected Otter Creek as one of only four watersheds to install watershed improvement projects and model the effects on flood

reduction. Clayton County and Winneshiek County SWCD's recently received grants as part of Iowa's Nutrient Reduction Strategy to work in sub-watersheds of the Turkey River Watershed in their respective counties. The head of the Iowa Flood Center, Larry Weber, noted at a recent meeting that the Clayton and Winneshiek County projects were funded in large part because of their participation in the TRWMA. Communities in the Turkey River Watershed are also taking action. West Union, Elgin, Fayette, Calmar, Monona, and Clermont have begun work or completed projects, many others are planning for how they can participate.

Work in the Turkey River Watershed is far from complete but the TRWMA is driving in the direction of improvement. Local participation and input is a valued part of any successful plan. To find out more about

public meetings, updates, and information about the Turkey River Watershed, visit <http://turkeyriver.org/> or call Northeast Iowa RC&D at 563-864-7112

## What does it mean to put conservation on your land?

By Jim Gillespie

I believe that we have some of the best farmers and ranchers in the world right here in Iowa. We also have some of the best soils that make Iowa an agricultural leader. These two things are very important to Iowans and people worldwide. We need to continue to work together to help preserve them.

When using the land for agricultural production, we must have a plan to protect the resources needed to make the operation successful and the land sustainable. When conservation practices are needed, we are here to provide the best technical assistance and financial assistance if available, to put them in place. This will insure that the soil stays healthy and productive and our waters are protected for use by crops, livestock and people. We need to protect the soil from erosion and degradation and prevent sediment and nutrients from reaching the water.

Exemplified by the progress shown at the local, state and federal levels, Iowa has always been a leader in conservation efforts. Now our challenge is that we need to do more. With agriculture always changing, we need to be willing to change with it. Putting conservation on the land should always be one of our biggest priorities as we go forward. We should all be the best stewards of the land and resources that we can be. Conservation should be part of everyone's farm or business plan and we should work together to implement that plan.

Many have heard the new buzz phrase, "CONSERVATION MAY BE VOLUNTARY, BUT IT IS NOT OPTIONAL". I believe that we can achieve soil quality, safe food and clean water by working together voluntarily to put the best conservation practices on the land. For the best assistance in continuing conservation implementation, please contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District.

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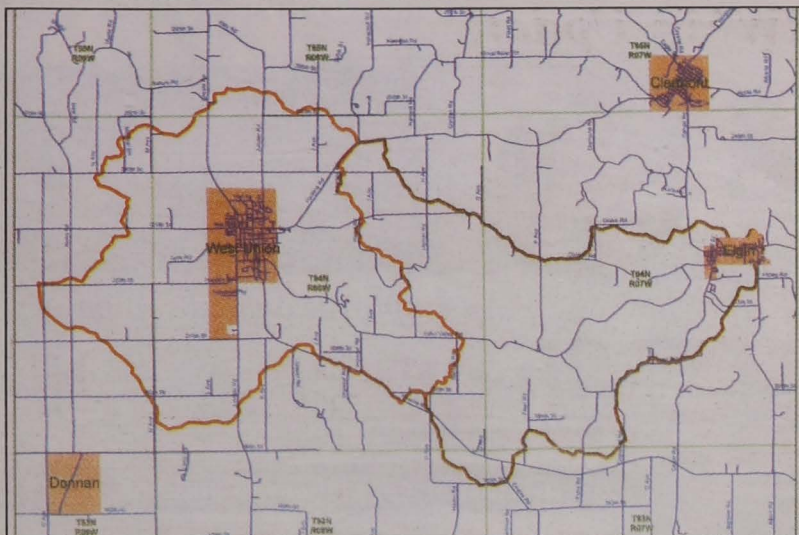
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## OTTER CREEK Continued

I have already met a handful of producers that share my excitement in being a part of this movement from the ground up," said Grim. "I am scheduled to meet more in the coming weeks, and once this cold spell breaks, I look forward to personally visiting landowners in the Otter Creek Watershed.

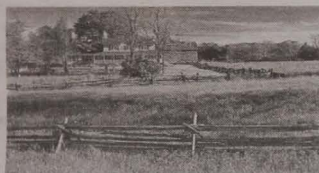
"We want the dialogue to be led by the landowners and producers themselves. Have them share their concerns and dictate the direction that they wish to go in the future," he closed. "When asked, I will sincerely welcome the opportunity to help them carry out and witness those positive changes."

Anyone interested in participating in the Otter Creek Watershed model project or any other conservation practice should stop in or contact Grim at the Natural Resources Conservation Service Office in rural West Union at (563) 422-3868 Ext. 3. Office hours are from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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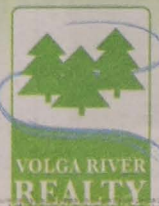


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# West Union conservation project culminates with a 'Green' celebration

By Janell Bradley

It was a beautiful day to celebrate a "green" event, said Jim Collins of Alliant Energy, as sunny skies prevailed for the ribbon-cutting and grand opening marking the completion of the Green Pilot Streetscape Project in West Union in July.

The \$10 million streetscape project – one of just two in the state – was designed to serve as a model across the nation. The construction of permeable pavement and sidewalks, rain gardens, energy-efficient lighting, and installation of a districtwide geothermal heating and cooling system was made possible through numerous grants, including a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant from the state of Iowa.

The project developed after city leaders in 2008 committed to not only replacing aging water, storm and sanitary sewer infrastructure, but were later convinced to do so with environmentally friendly initiatives.

As one of the keynote speakers, Collins noted that through the company's Branching Out program, communities like West Union save energy by shading buildings and creating windbreaks.

In more than 20 years, Branching Out has helped see that 1.4 million trees were planted. Those trees mean a savings of more than 14 million kilowatt hours, enough energy to power 1,400 homes.

Patty Peterson with Trees



With a large crowd gathered around them, former West Union mayor Merlin Dunt (center, left) and current Mayor Kent Halverson (next to Dunt) joined together on Thursday, July 11, to cut the ribbon to officially mark the grand opening of the Green Pilot Streetscape Project.

Forever said an oak tree planted on the courthouse lawn will have an eventual value of \$80,000. As the temperature warmed to 82 degrees, she noted that the difference in temperature from a concrete area to a shaded area, was 30 degrees, on this day.

Fayette County Supervisor Vicki Rowland noted Thursday that the recently completed Green Pilot Project would be part of the legacy left by the current generation. Rowland said that as a baby boomer, she's noticed that Fayette County has inherited much in the

way of beauty and historic structures.

"What will our legacy be to future generations?" she asked. A historic courthouse of marble and granite built in 1924 serves as a centerpiece to the downtown business district. While its \$275,000

price tag was controversial at the time, she said it continues to serve the community beyond the 50-year life suggested for a \$100,000 structure.

**CONSERVATION PROJECT**  
See page 17

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**CONSERVATION PROJECT** Continued

Now that once-controversial courthouse construction has a value of \$7 million, she said, and still serves us well. The pilot project is not just a pretty street project, she said, but an effort in water conservation and reduction of storm water runoff.

Upper Explorerland's Rachel Howe echoed those sentiments when she said, "We're only as good as our projects, and today we're excellent."

David Yocca of Conservation Design Forum described the project as one of the most complete applications of "green" designs. "It's a new paradigm for a city streetscape, like none before," he stated.

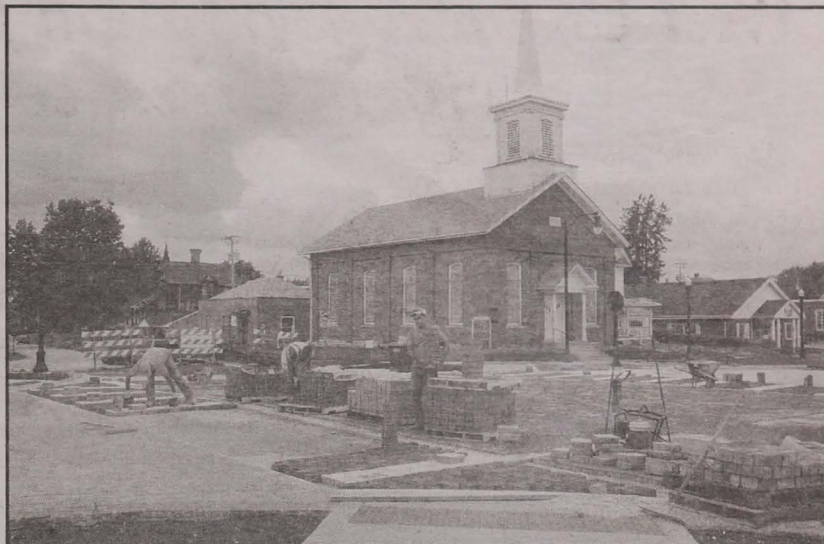
Yocca said West Union's Streetscape design and features have been reviewed by the Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, D.C.

While participants in Thursday's program admired the rain gardens and permeable pavers in the sidewalks and streets, a less obvious feature is the 132,300-ft.-deep geothermal wells that were drilled on the courthouse lawn. Individual businesses have the opportunity to hook on to a districtwide geothermal system for heating and cooling.

The grand opening event was emceed by Dean Pedersen, former resident and city council member. As part of his comments, he noted that city resident Jim Boelman recently visited more than 200 businesses in the city. From his efforts, he determined there are 1,575 full-time and more than 175 part-time jobs in West Union. That doesn't include home-based businesses, farmers or volunteers.

"We have been able to show others what can be accomplished when we work together for a strong foundation for generations to come. To the citizens of West Union, we truly appreciate your patience as streets were closed," Pedersen said. He also thanked Blazek Corporation for keeping storefronts open and for their cooperation and efforts to accommodate community members throughout the project.

Following the presentation, the public was invited to take part in a ribbon-cutting at the intersection of Elm and Vine streets. Tours of the streetscape project were also available. The festivities concluded with music by Fusion in the summer's first concert in the "Playin' on the Plaza" series.



Contractors are pictured installing porous pavers on N. Vine Street in downtown West Union in June 2013. The \$10 million streetscape project – one of just two in the state – was designed to serve as a model across the nation. The project includes the construction of permeable streets and sidewalks, rain gardens, energy-efficient lighting, and installation of a districtwide geothermal heating and cooling system.



Local officials led public tours of the West Union Green Pilot Streetscape Project during the grand opening celebration in July 2013. Among the many features are the porous pavers installed in the community's downtown sidewalks (pictured) and streets.



With a banner featuring the project's funding partners, including Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship, pictured nearby, Rachel Howe, Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission executive director, praised the vision of community leaders in their commitment to the West Union Green Pilot Streetscape Project.

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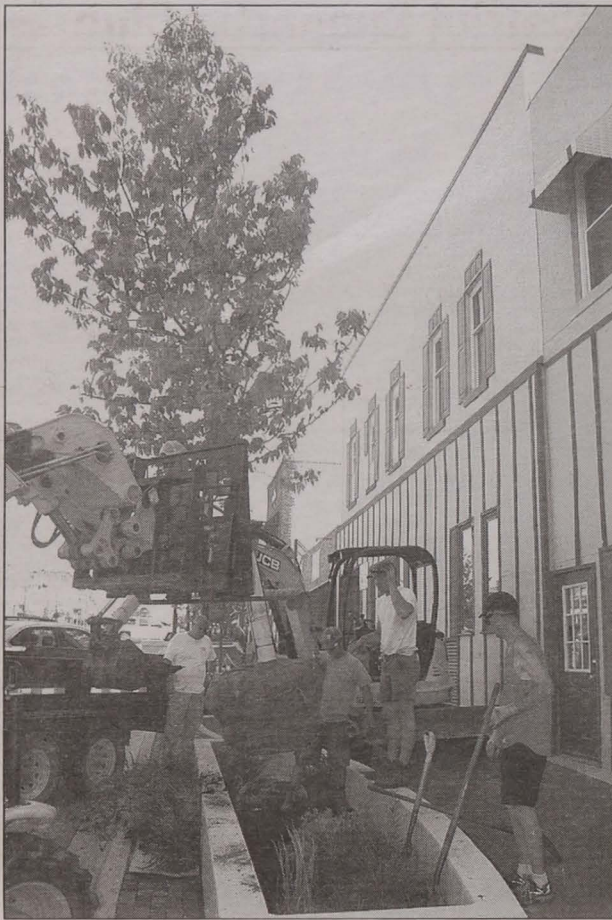
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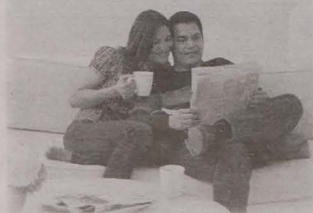
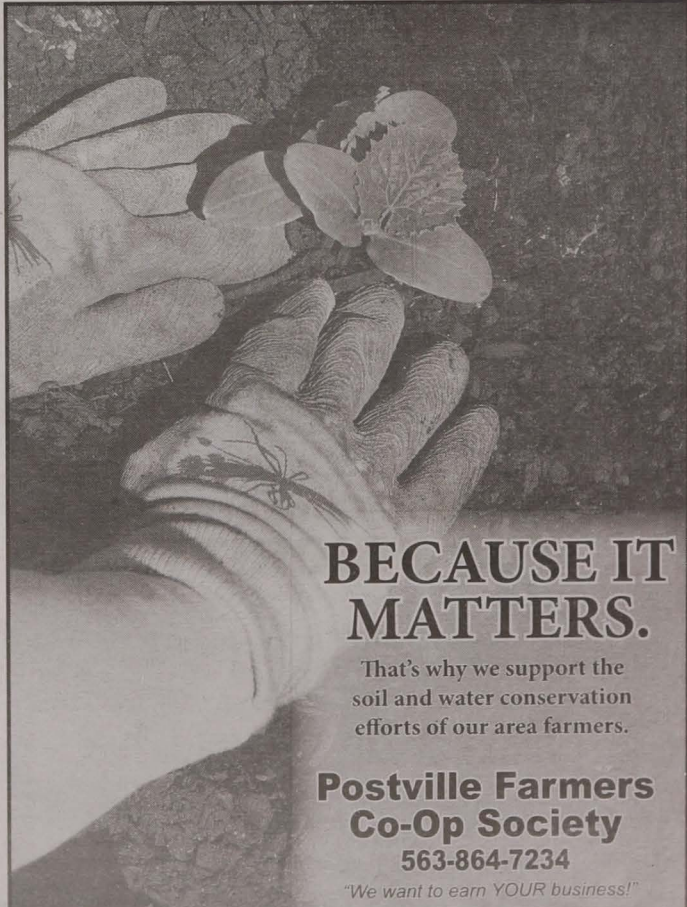
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- Grassed waterways reduce gully erosion using grass channels to convey water to a stable outlet at a non-erosive velocity.
- Field borders are bands of vegetation around perimeter of a field that provide a turning area for farm equipment. They eliminate the planting of end rows up and down hills.

To learn more about standards for these and other conservation practices, visit the Iowa NRCS website at [www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov) and click on "Iowa Conservation Practice Standards."

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## Termination Time for Cover Crops

by Jason Johnson, Public Affairs Specialist, USDA-NRCS

Many of Iowa's popular winter hardy cover crops like cereal rye, wheat and clover, need to be terminated at least two weeks prior to planting corn and soybeans to minimize yield loss risk.

As beneficial as cover crops are, killing them is critical, says Barb Stewart, state agronomist with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). "Killing cover crops as late as feasible will maximize plant growth and residual nutrient accumulation," she said.

Stewart says, however, to be sure and allow at least two weeks for cover crops to decompose, release nutrients, and recharge soil moisture.

If spring is exceptionally dry, or if the long-range forecast predicts dry conditions, Stewart recommends terminating cover crops when they are six to eight inches tall.

She says small grain cover crops can reduce corn yields similar to the effects of continuous corn. "Plant chemicals called allelochemicals released into the soil can inhibit corn growth," says Stewart. "This is why terminating the small grain cover crops at least two weeks prior to corn planting is necessary."

Some cover crop species, such as oats, spring wheat, and annual ryegrass, typically do not survive Iowa winters. Brassica cover crops, such as radishes or turnips, should also winter

kill in Iowa.

However, Stewart says these plants produce hard seeds that can stay viable in the soil for years. "Scout each year in fields where you have grown brassicas," she said. "Hard seeds may germinate the next spring. Watch these areas for seed germination, and if there is significant germination from hard seed you may need to terminate them."

Producers can terminate cover crops with herbicides that are compatible with the spring-planted crop. Harvesting, crimping, or mowing can be used only if the cover crop is mature.

To maximize soil health benefits from cover crops, Stewart recommends terminating them without tilling the soil. "Cover crops improve overall soil health by adding living roots to the soil during more months of the year and increasing organic matter in the soil," she says. "Tillage destroys all of those natural benefits."

Farmers should not plant corn or soybeans into a living cover crop, or risk losing out on crop insurance benefits.

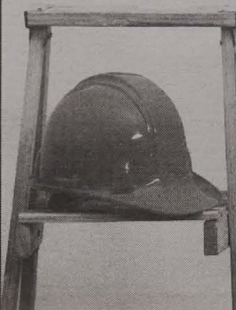
Cover crops are helpful in limiting nitrogen leaching, reducing soil erosion, suppressing weeds, improving soil health, feeding livestock, among other benefits.

For more information about cover crop termination, visit your local NRCS office.



Soybeans grow through a terminated cereal rye cover crop. (Photo by Laura Crowell, USDA-NRCS)

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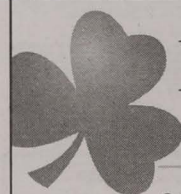
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## Timing of Herbicide Application Is Critical for Pasture Thistles

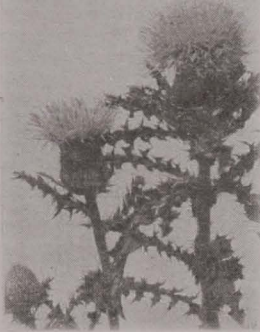
As spring approaches, it is important to think about how best to manage weed pressure in pastures. While pest management practices are applied throughout the entire growing season, fall herbicide application can actually provide multiple paybacks. While daytime temperatures are still in the 60s and 70s, and plants are actively growing, is the best time to apply herbicides to control pasture thistles, according to your local county USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office.

Fall herbicide application offers several benefits over spring application. These include:

- Herbicides move readily from the foliage to the roots with the sugars because thistles are building up root reserves in the fall. In the spring, carbohydrates move from the roots to the leaves so less downward herbicide movement would occur.
- Biennial thistles will be controlled because any shoots present in the fall are in the rosette stage and thus are very susceptible to herbicides. Even if the herbicide does not totally kill the plants, winter weather will finish what the herbicide starts.
- Land managers may have more time to treat infested sites in the fall than during the rush of spring and early summer field activities.
- Finally, with fall treatment there are fewer risks that herbicide drift will injure nearby sensitive crops like soybeans as these have already matured.

Pasture weed control is an important management consideration as thistles compete with desirable grass and legume species as well as contribute to under-utilized areas of pastures when livestock avoid the spiny plants.

All herbicide applicators are responsible for using herbicides in full compliance with the current product label. For more information, please visit your local NRCS office.



## Completion of the Local Foods Expansion Plan is the Beginning of the Northeast Iowa Farmers Market Advisory Committee

RC&D employees Josh Dansill and Mallory Marlatt completed and published the Northeast Iowa Local Foods Expansion Plan. This Plan was submitted with nine others from across Iowa as part of an Iowa League of RC&Ds Local Foods Expansion Initiative. It included recommendations related to growing, branding, moving, selling and recycling food in Northeast Iowa.

Amanda Streeper presented the Plan to attendees of the RCD Farmers Market Meeting, along with promotional material she recently designed using photographs taken by RCD photographer Jessica Rilling. The photos and promotional materials were paid for through the Iowa League by a FMPP grant. The meeting resulted in the formation



The Luke Cline family participates in the Foods Expansion Plan.

of the Northeast Iowa Farmers Market Advisory Council, which will provide producer/manager

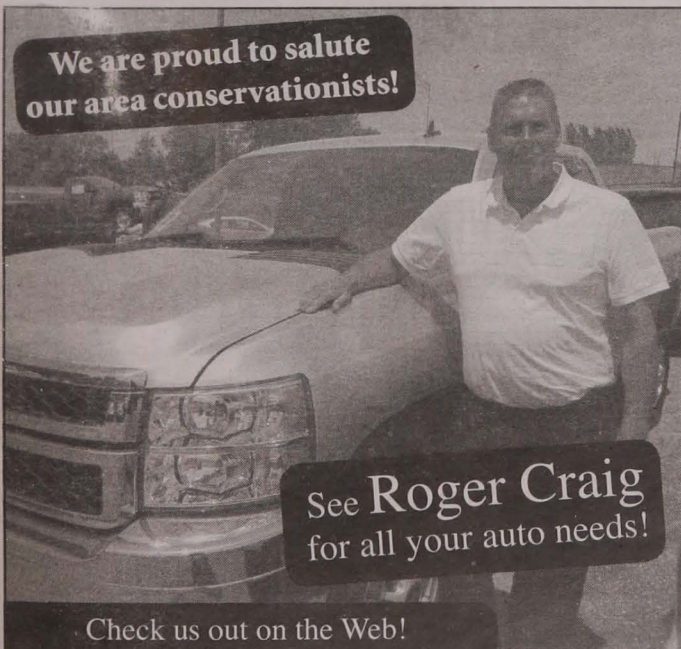
education, collaborative marketing, and an increased awareness of area-wide scheduling.



Watch for postcards, photographs, posters and other promotional materials featuring our producers this spring and summer. Proceeds from sales of these products will go toward further promotion of Northeast Iowa's Farmers Markets.



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## IOWA WATER QUALITY INITIATIVE

2014 Legislative Report

## Statewide Practices Cost-Share

In August of 2013, \$2.8 million was made available through all 100 Soil and Water Conservation Districts to help implement conservation practices through the Water Quality Initiative (WQI). After an initial \$1.8 million was offered and subsequently obligated in less than a week, a supplement of \$1 million was added to the fund and this additional funding spoken for within another week.

The strong level of commitment showcased by Iowa farmers volunteering to try something new on their farms to help water quality is a testament to the level of engagement farmers are ready to take on these issues. Over 1,000 farmers committed an additional \$2.8 million in landowner match to help implement these practices. Each landowner or farmer could apply for up to 160 acres of cost-shared practice. Some of the applicants used the practice on more acres than they applied for cost-share.

## Practice Info

The practices offered through the WQI Statewide initiative were selected because of their ability to be implemented in a short time frame and thereby providing a water quality benefit in 2013. The statewide approach gave farmers an opportunity to try these practices for the first time.

Offering a portion of WQI funding statewide allowed each county to participate. This funding, along with a targeted approach, engaged more farmers and landowners in the process.

Year-end totals of fall established practices through the WQI Statewide cost-share program was over 88,000 acres of cover crops and over 2,000 acres of N inhibitor.

Practices Offered Through Statewide WQI Funding in 2013



No-Till



Strip-Till



Cover Crops



Nitrification Inhibitor

## Iowa Leaders in Conservation:

Six years of no-till proved its value in a 48-hour time span last spring for Hawarden farmer Nate Ronsiek. A pounding 3-inch rainstorm, followed by a 5-inch downpour the next day, washed away topsoil and created rills and gullies in some area farm fields. But the soil in Ronsiek's no-till fields held firm.

"I didn't have a single gully wash out," he said. "It takes a long time to build that soil back up. Anything you can do to save any of that, it's huge. Just seeing what happened after 8 inches of rain in two nights makes a big difference. There's no way I'd go back to conventional tillage."

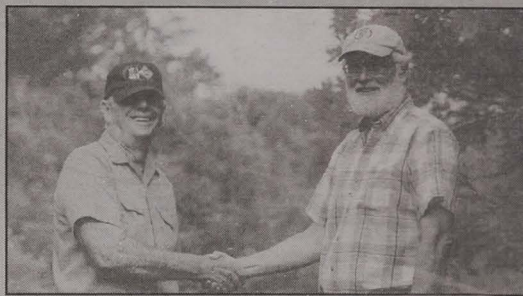
-Nate Ronsiek No-till Farmer, Sioux County

Find out about more Iowa Leaders in Conservation at [CleanWaterIowa.org](http://CleanWaterIowa.org)

## RCD Forest Stewardship Project Proves Outreach Is Effective

With the help of three different evaluation techniques, the RC&D's Forest Stewardship Project proved that a multi-dimensional media blitz that includes one-on-one outreach is more effective than traditional outreach at convincing landowners enrolled in the Forest Reserve Program to take action. RCD employees Richard Kittelson and Jerry Muff, who conducted the one-on-one outreach, were pleased with the findings. The Project Report for this two and a half year project, which ended in the summer of 2013, was recently submitted to the Iowa DNR Forestry Bureau who will forward it on to the US Forest Service. The multi-dimensional media blitz conducted by the RC&D through the project included television, billboard, radio and newspaper advertisements. Not only did the percentage of requests for assistance to the Iowa DNR Foresters that were 'related to project outreach' increase each year of the project, 11%, 21% and 32%, but those that did contact our regional foresters were more likely to develop Forest Stewardship Plans and more likely to implement actions recommended in those plans than other woodland owners.

A copy of the report is available at the RCD or on-line at [www.northeastiowarc.org](http://www.northeastiowarc.org).



Landowner and board member, Bill Bennett and RCD employee Richard Kittelson



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## Fayette County Soil and Water Commissioners and Staff



Fayette County's SWCD Commissioners are (front, l-r) Paul Hoeger of Maynard, Bill Bennett of Elgin, Richard Jensen of Elgin; (back) Rozann Dalenbach of Arlington, Rod Marlatt of Elgin, Eric Boehm of Wadena, and Dave Drilling of Waucoma.



Assisting the public on a daily basis at the Fayette County SWCD field office are (l-r) Aaron Anderson, NRCS district conservationist; Lori Kohlmeier, IDALS state secretary; Adam Grim, district watershed coordinator; Ray Drelow, NRCS technician; Tamara Buitenwerf, NRCS soil conservationist.

## NEW PHEASANT RECOVERY PROGRAM

By Greg Schmitt

Pheasants and other grassland wildlife need a lot of help these days. Mother Nature has not been kind with her heavy snows and wetter-than-normal springs. High commodity prices are also putting a lot of pressure on land managers to try and squeeze in row crops wherever they can. Many times this is at the cost of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and pasture lands.

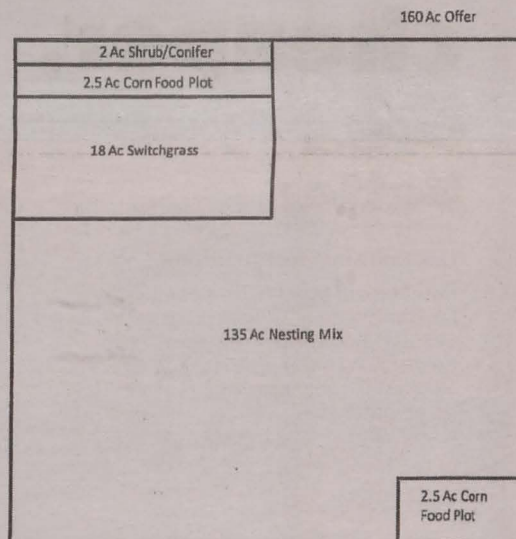
Fortunately there is a new opportunity to help pheasants and the farmer's bottom line. Now that the new Farm Bill has been signed, CRP sign-up will once again resume. The new Pheasant Recovery CRP program is targeted directly at helping grassland birds and, more specifically, the habitat needs of the ring-necked pheasant. This program can be used on marginal crop ground that doesn't yield as well as other more productive soil types, increasing the overall economic benefits to landowners. All habitats are not created equal when it comes to pheasants. Just planting a mix of native grasses and flowers and calling it good won't cut the mustard for pheasants. Thick winter cover that stands up to snow and wind is essential to carry birds through the winter, and the new CRP program addresses this by requiring a square-shaped planting of switchgrass. Since Iowa doesn't have a cattail slough in almost every section like the prime pheasant lands in South Dakota, switch grass is our next-best option for cover that stands up to a Midwestern winter.

Switchgrass is not very good nesting and brood-rearing cover for pheasants though. The new CRP takes this into consideration by requiring a different block of nesting habitat. This is where the traditional native prairie mix of Big Bluestem and Indian grass comes into play. Mixes that have a lot of wildflowers are best because that is what draws in insects that the young pheasants need in the first few weeks of their lives. Grain food plots of corn or sorghum are another requirement for this new CRP application. Pheasants don't usually starve in the winter, but they do get exposed to predators if they have to go very far from their winter cover to feed.

With less and less grass cover on the landscape, we need to maximize the existing habitat we have for pheasants. This new pheasant CRP initiative is a great tool to assist landowners in meeting that goal.

Other requirements include a minimum of 20 acres to be enrolled and a cropping history. Shrub plantings can also be integrated into the habitat plan.

More information can be obtained from your local NRCS and FSA office.



20 to 160 acres can be enrolled in the Pheasant Recovery CRP. This is an example of potential arrangement. The Switchgrass, Nesting Mix and Food Plots are required. The shrub planting is optional. Contact Information: Greg Schmitt, Iowa DNR Private Lands Biologist, 563-422-6201.

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## Izaak Walton League Windbreak Award

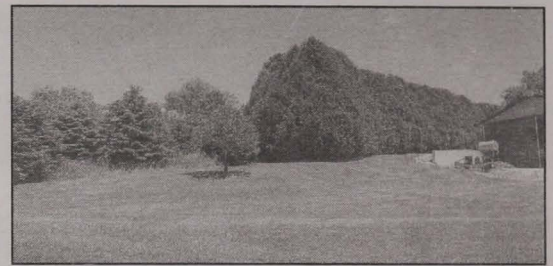
Carol Langerman-Aten is the recipient of the Izaak Walton League Windbreak Award for her seven-row windbreak that consists of arborvitae and Black Hills spruce.

Along her rural Fayette home's driveway are two rows of arborvitae trees that have served as a windbreak for the homestead for over 30 years. Nine years ago, Langerman-Aten added five rows of Black Hills spruce to provide protection from the elements as well as enhance wildlife habitat at

the site.

In addition to the windbreak deciduous trees, native plantings and a pond provide ample and diverse habitat for wildlife. Over the years, trees have been replaced as needed due to death or damage.

To maintain the large windbreak, Langerman-Aten mows periodically to control the weeds without utilizing chemicals. Other maintenance practices include trimming wild grape vines and other invasive vegetative species.



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## Water Quality Monitoring on Otter and Glovers Creeks

Submitted by Rick Klann  
Upper Iowa University

From March through August in 2013, Upper Iowa University conducted water quality monitoring on Otter and Glovers Creeks. This was part of a Fayette SWCD project to improve the water quality in the watershed, as well as an effort to evaluate the effectiveness of the West Union downtown renovation project at reducing the impact of runoff from downtown into Otter Creek. Samples were collected every other week from three sites along Otter Creek, one site along Glovers Creek, and from a manhole with access to runoff from downtown West Union.

A total of 12 samples were collected throughout the season. Each sample was analyzed for the following physical and chemical parameters of water quality: temperature, pH, conductivity, dissolved oxygen, chloride and turbidity were measured on site; while samples returned to the lab were analyzed for suspended solids, fecal coliform bacteria, total nitrogen and total phosphorus. Otter and Glovers are both stocked with trout by the DNR and managed as put and take fisheries, in which the trout

stocked are expected to be harvested by anglers. Trout typically are unable to survive year-round in these streams because summer water temperatures are often too warm, and during these periods stocking is suspended. One factor that contributes to water temperature is warm runoff from pavement and concrete surfaces that immediately enters the stream, as opposed to water that percolates through the ground and enters the stream from springs and seeps at a much cooler temperature.

Samples collected from Otter Creek above and below the entrance of runoff from downtown West Union were very similar with respect to physical and chemical parameters of water quality, indicating that runoff from downtown is not negatively impacting the stream. The downtown renovation project was successful in converting what was formerly a large pulse of runoff following a rain event into a gradual release of water that had percolated through the permeable paving. This allowed the water to be both cooled and filtered.

Many Iowa streams suffer from runoff carrying nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment into the stream, and Otter and Glov-

ers are no different. However, comparing 2013 data to that from previous years identifies some interesting trends.

On the one hand, measures of turbidity, suspended solids, total phosphorus and fecal coliform bacteria were lower in 2013. In fact, values for turbidity and suspended solids were remarkably low throughout the sampling season, and this is despite the fact that many samples were collected immediately following rain events. This indicates that progress is being made in reducing the amount of sediment and manure that is washed into these streams. On the other hand, total nitrogen levels were higher in 2013. This is a trend that has been detected in other watersheds, and is probably linked to the patterns of extreme climate that Iowa has experienced. Since 2012 was extremely dry, more nitrogen from fertilizer application was retained in the soil. The very wet spring experienced in 2013 released that into the stream.

On the whole, the water quality of Otter and Glovers appears to be improving, indicating that efforts to improve land-use practices within the watershed are having the desired effect.

## Woodland Owners of the Year

By Becky Walz

The Fayette County Soil & Water Conservation Woodland Owners of the Year are Jim and Nina Beeghly of Fayette.

The Beeghlys, who own 41 acres of woodland, began their conservation efforts in 2009 with weed tree removal on 13 acres.

A large portion of the Beeghlys' farm is in the CRP program. They have almost 90 acres of land that has been planted to a CP-25 native grass mix, which includes many different varieties of native grasses and forbs.

To maintain these practices, Jim and Nina use fire; each of the stands has been burned at least once and many of them multiple times.

Aside from the native grasses, seven acres of wetlands have been installed on the property for wildlife and are used to filter the water entering and leaving the property.

The Beeghlys have also spent quite a bit of time restoring approximately 20 acres of savanna along the south side of their property.

The restoration process has involved clearing unwanted woody vegetation and repeated burns.

According to the nomination form, the area has been burned at least five times and is turning into a valuable wildlife area.



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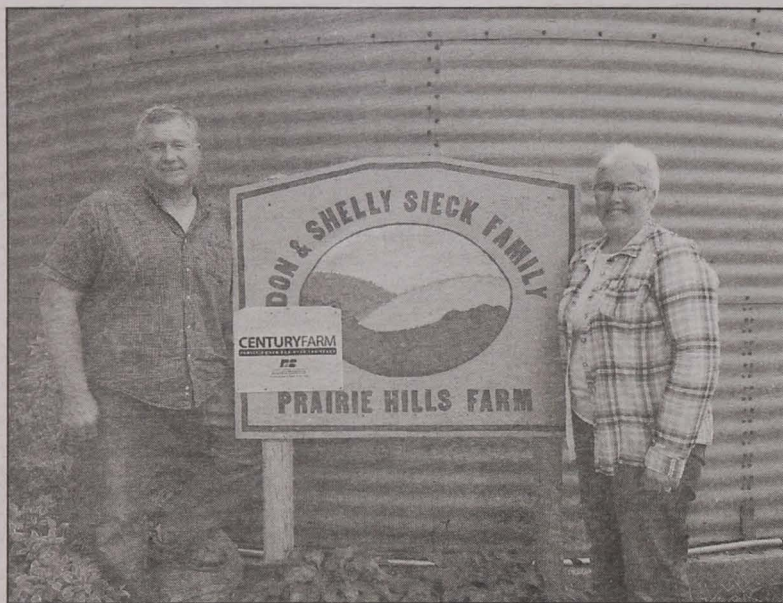
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Don Jr. and Shelly Sieck of rural Fayette use rotation crop farming practices, grassed waterways, and terraces to help soil erosion on their fifth-generation farm. In appreciation of their conscientious effort in preserving the soil, the Fayette County Soil and Water Conservation has named them the Farmers of the Year. (submitted photo)

## Siecks' conservation practices speak volumes

By Becky Walz

Don Jr. and Shelly Sieck have been named the Fayette County Soil & Water Conservation Farmers of the Year.

Along a scenic byway in the rolling hills of northeast Iowa near Fayette, you will find the Sieck farm. Established in 1881, Don is the fifth generation on the 311-acre farm that is host to a variety of conservation practices.

A no-till corn and soybean rotation is grown on 265 acres in conjunction with 12 acres of hay and 23 acres of contour buffer strips. The strips of grain crops and hay are interspersed with grassed waterways.

One such waterway has proven very difficult to establish, and Don continues to work on it year after year.

As part of the nutrient management, Don soil-tests every three years. The hog manure from his farm is also tested before being injected as part of the nutrient application.

The Siecks believe that no-till is beneficial for conserving soil moisture, conserving energy, improving soil organic matter, and holding soil moisture.

There is one corner of the farm without strips, but not without conservation practices. With no-till crops, Don did not like the little bit of washing or erosion he was seeing and subsequently had terraces constructed to control the water flow.

He chose not to convert 15 acres of a former railroad right-of-way into cropland, which has

provided habitat for wildlife year after year. In fact, songbirds can be heard as one ventures throughout the farm.

As one visits with the Siecks, one quickly learns how important conservation is to the couple as they wish to pass the farm on to their children in better shape than when they purchased it.

Today Don continues to research and ask questions about cover crops as the Siecks continue to make improvements on their farm.

Recently Don brought his son into the farming operation, mentoring and working alongside him to teach him the details of the operation, including the family's conservation ethics.

A third-grade teacher at North Fayette Elementary, Shelly is involved in a variety of school activities, including the promotion of the school district's Conservation Field Day.

A recent addition to Shelly's involvement is the addition of a greenhouse on the elementary school campus, which will provide mentoring opportunities for young students as they begin to learn the basics of conservation, environment, and agriculture.

Due to Don's hearing impairment, a vast majority of his involvement in conservation is done via the computer.

However, without speaking a word, the conservation practices implemented on the Siecks' farm speak volumes and are presented with pride to those who pass by the farm.

## Agriculture Secretary announces \$3 million for a new program to improve pollinator health

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will provide close to \$3 million in technical and financial assistance for interested farmers and ranchers to help improve the health of bees, which play an important role in crop production. The funding is a focused investment to improve pollinator health and will be targeted in five Midwestern states, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

"Honey bee pollination supports an estimated \$15 billion worth of agricultural production, including more than 130 fruits and vegetables that are the foundation of a nutritious diet. The future security of America's food supply depends on healthy honey bees," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Expanded support for research, combined with USDA's other efforts to improve honey bee health, should help America's beekeepers combat the current, unprecedented loss of honey bee hives each year."

Funding will be provided through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to promote conservation practices that will provide honey bees with nutritious pollen and nectar while providing benefits to the environment. Recent studies have shown that beekeepers are losing approximately 30 percent of their honey bee colonies each year, up from historical norms of 10-15 percent overwintering losses experienced prior to 2006.

This assistance will provide guidance and support to farmers and ranchers to implement conservation practices that will provide safe and diverse food sources for honey bees. For example, appropriate cover crops or rangeland and pasture management may provide a benefit to producers by reducing erosion, increasing the health of their soil, inhibiting invasive species, providing quality forage and habitat for honey bees and other pollinators, as well as habitat for other wildlife.

Midwestern states were chosen because from June to September the region is the resting ground for over 65 percent of the commercially managed honey bees in the country. It is a critical time when bees require abundant and diverse forage across broad landscapes to build up hive strength for the winter.

### Applications are due March 21, 2014

Since 2006, when heightened numbers of honey bee colony losses were first reported, significant progress has been made in our understanding of the factors that are associated with Colony Collapse Disorder and the overall health of honey bees. The USDA is actively pursuing solutions to the multiple problems affecting honey bee health. The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) maintains four laboratories across the country conducting research into all aspects of bee genetics, breeding, biology and physiology, with special focus on bee nutrition, control of pathogens and parasites, the effects of pesticide exposure and the interactions between each of these factors. The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) supports bee research efforts in Land Grant Universities. The Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) conducts national honey bee pest and disease surveys and provides border inspections to prevent new invasive bee pests from entering the U.S. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) and NRCS work on improved forage and habitat for bees through programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and EQIP. Additionally, the Economic Research Service (ERS) is currently examining the direct economic costs of the pollinator problem and the associated indirect economic impacts, and the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) conducts limited surveys of honey production, number of colonies, price, and value of production which provide some data essential for research by the other agencies.

Learn more by visiting a local USDA service center.



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We can meet all  
your bedding and  
landscaping needs!  
• Sawdust • Mulch

# GREEN PLAN<sup>TM</sup>

## SOLUTIONS

Enhanced  
Farm  
Profitability

Trusted  
Team

Agronomic  
Expertise

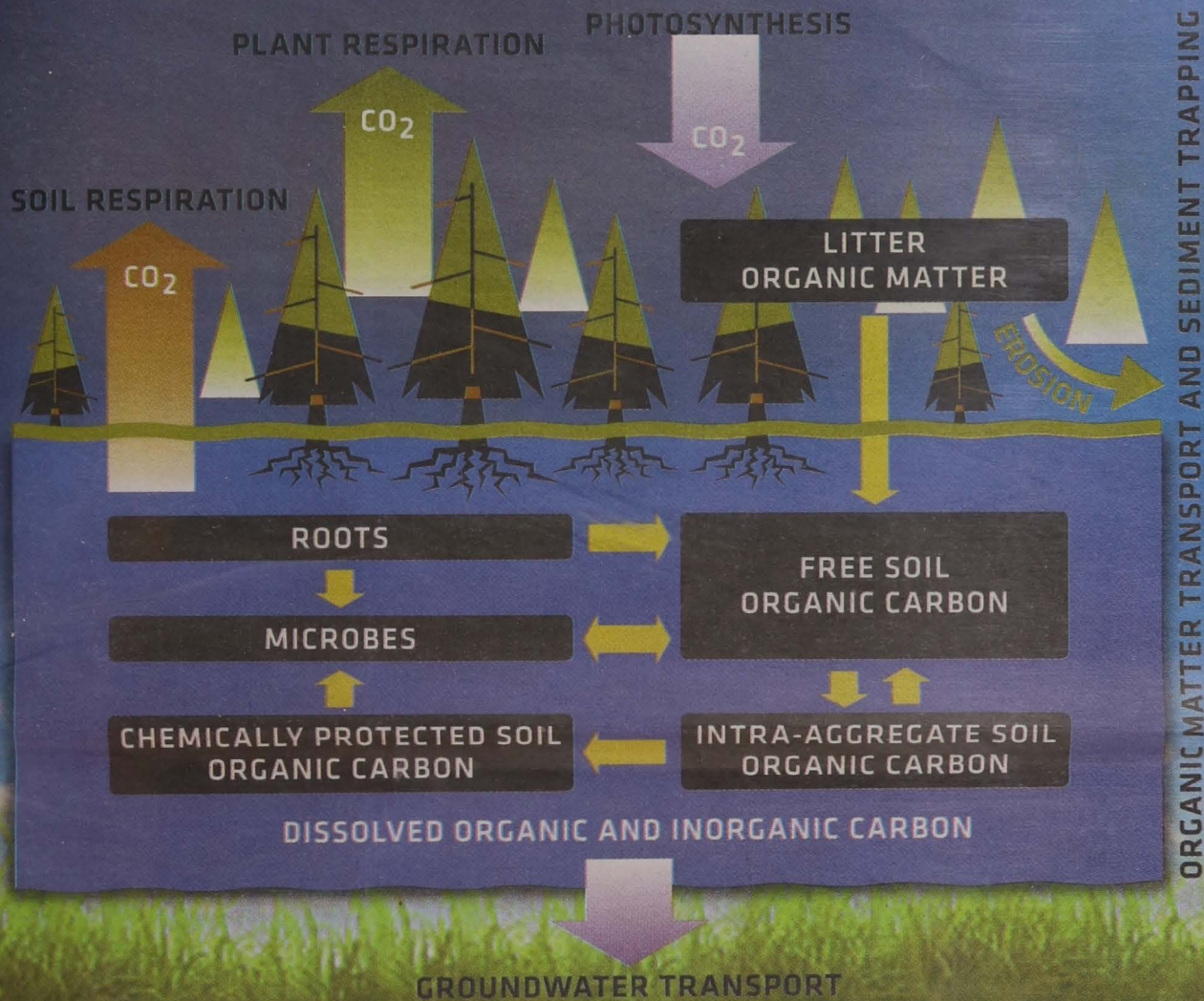
Local  
Information  
Based  
Solutions

## AgVantage FS

**563-422-6023**  
300 West Franklin, West Union

# Conservation Effects us all...

## Soil Conservation



We are proud to support the conservation efforts of area farmers and land owners. Your hard work will help benefit our agricultural community, while preserving Iowa's unique ecological heritage.

Our team of employees is specialized to meet the needs of our customers and provide expert advice on products, services and trends throughout our

**Agronomy • Energy  
Feed & Grain Divisions**

  
**Viafield**  
Growing Opportunity

[www.viafield.com](http://www.viafield.com)

# We Do it all...

Keeping your  
*Lawn and  
Landscaping  
beautiful &  
ecofriendly!*

## Recycled Patio

Al Enyart - West Union

Bricks are from  
West Union's  
Main Street  
project

## Lawn care Services

- Broad leaf control (spring & fall)
- 4-step fertilization program
- Safe for kids and pets
- Discounted rates for multiple applications
- Dethatching
- Weekly Mowing
- Aerating

## Landscaping Services

- Landscape Mulch
- Landscape Lighting
- Weekly Mowing
- Shrub & Tree Trimming
- Landscape Edging
- Vinyl Fencing
- Rock & Trucking
- D3 Dozer Work
- Retaining Walls
- Landscape Rock
- Power Broom Service
- Complete Landscaping

*Call Tony today!*



West Union, IA

## Accepting New Customers!

Commercial - Residential - Industrial - Cemeteries

# SMUNDSON

PROFESSIONAL LAWN CARE SERVICE

*& Landscaping*

563.380.2740

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