

CDI News

Volume 15, Issue 1

January, 2010

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Our Mission: *“CDI informs, educates and leads Iowans through our local districts to promote conservation of natural resources.”*

President Palmer

This past December, scores of commissioners enjoyed the 63rd Annual Conference. Using the strengths of the conservation partnership, the program was not only timely and informative, but also involved the commissioners as part of the program. During the commissioner speak out, many points were brought out that were turned into goals for the Districts.

One of the highlights of the Conference is the awards that are passed out. The recipients show passion for protecting their property and the sincere reactions to these awards as they are given are heartwarming. The continued collaboration on these awards from IDALS-DSC, Wallaces Farmer Magazine, Farm Bureau, Iowa DNR, and the Izaak Walton League prove that there are many supporters of our efforts. You will be glad to know that support is high for the Auxiliary Scholarship Program. The live and silent auctions raised over \$7000 to help future young conservationists with their educations.

There were many fine things donated by Districts across the state and nice donations from other supporters of continued education. Many thanks to the conference

planning team for the fine effort and for the support of the exhibitors. Special thanks to Secretary Northey for opening remarks and to Dr. Elwin Taylor for his noon luncheon prose. I hope that you commissioners that weren't able to attend will take time to discuss this year's presentations with your representatives that did.

We are rapidly approaching the next legislative session. During this budget crisis, it is necessary for our voices to not only be heard, but adamant that funding cuts to conservation will have long-term effects on the infrastructure and economy of our state. Please respond with fervency when asked. Attendees to conference signed flyers and addressed envelopes to their respective legislators. When you get the flyers, please complete that task. Our day on the hill will be based on those flyers and the effects of funding on the economic and environmental health of the state.

See you on the Hill!

Tim Palmer, President

Visit our website
often for events and
other information at:
www.cdiowa.org

Vacant, Executive Director

Latisha Cunningham, Administrative Assistant latishacunningham@cdiowa.org

Hilary Markin, Envirothon Coordinator envirothon@cdiowa.org

Executive Director Search

As you all know, we have been moving along since late September without an Executive Director. At that time, offers of help and support came from all our partners. Since then, the competence of administrative assistant Latisha Cunningham and the help of the staff at DSC have allowed us to continue to function. Nearly all of the agenda for the next few months has been finalized.

At the board meeting on December 1, the

decision was made to hire an interim ED with the goal of hiring a full-time ED as soon as possible. Your CDI Board has stepped up to ensure that our meetings and obligations will continue to be met. Please be certain that your Regional Directors are aware of what is going on in your counties and we will do our best to see to your needs.

The full job description can be found on our website www.cdiowa.org. We will be accepting resumes through January 22, 2010.

Conservation Partners in Action

The articles in this newsletter, authored by individuals from many of our conservation partner organizations, are another demonstration of the Iowa conservation partnership at work. While none of these articles are intended to supply individual commissioners with a final product, one-size-fits-all solution to ongoing conservation challenges, the variety of partner possibilities deserves continual emphasis. The recently completed annual conference on Dec 2 & 3, 2009, provided those in attendance with a multitude of possibilities for enhancing local conservation efforts. Any commissioner not at the past conference can easily review the conservation partnership with fellow commissioners at their local meetings.

While the routine functioning of any Soil and Water Conservation District may not involve more than our core partners; NRCS, DSC, and local SWCDs, we must be ready to involve any/all conservation partners when needed or possible. That involvement may never be more valuable than in this time of declining budgets. The furthering of conservation efforts is always more challenging as resources decline. Do not miss opportunities to highlight the past improvements from ongoing conservation

activity.

Part of the conservation education mission of the local SWCDs includes legislator education. It is imperative that our state legislators are familiar with the 70+ years of conservation enhancement from our partnership activities. Every commissioner can provide individual communication at any time, but our annual Conservation Day at the Capitol is equally important. Please consider participation in the 2010 Conservation Partnership Day on Jan 27th.

Jim Gevock

CDI Region 9 Director

Did you miss the 63rd Annual SWCD Commissioners' Conference? Many presentations from conference are available in handout format at:
www.cdiowa.org/AnnualConf2009.html

Annual Conference - *Guest Impressions*

The first day started out with presentations by Iowa's Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey and a partnership forum which included Chuck Gipp, IDALS-DSC, Rich Sims, USDA-NRCS, Pat Brody, IDNR, Jerry Miller, ISU Extension, and moderated by Duane Sand, SSCC. The summary of them all could be described as follows: As we form our partnerships, we will need to do more with less in the succeeding years. Variations of this theme were heard over and over during this conference.

Chad Ingels, ISU Extension Watershed Specialist told us about developing and implementing performance based incentives. We need to have citizen participation in this to be aware, evaluate, find tools that work, targeting (is P or N the main problem according to the soil conditioning index?). We need to fix workable goals. One thing that has been shown is that just by no-tilling soybeans into standing corn stalks we can improve The Soil Conditioning Index by 134%. We always hear about how Farm Bureau is the organization of big uncaring farmers, but that organization has put some real money where their mouth is (\$90,000) in order to find out what may or may not work in the real world. So often what may work in a 10' X 10' plot isn't workable on a real farm.

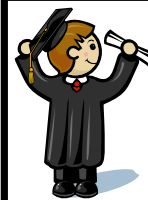
Tim O'Connor, NRCS, Dean Lemke, IDALS-DSC and Steve Hopkins, DNR had some interesting facts and views to throw at us: Drainage mains are becoming old and unusable in some cases and will possibly need to be replaced by 2050. Replaced by what? On the gulf hypoxia issue, a startling fact was that though the N load was reduced by 32% to the gulf in the years 2001 thru 2005, there was on corresponding change in the hypoxia zone size. So there again, are our policies being formed by what is really happening, or by what some think could happen? The goals of 45% n and 45% P reduction of loads down to the gulf are not workable, but that does not seem to be a problem with some of these policy makers. Since targeting problems does not seem to be a solution, we need to hyper-target areas of concern.

Jacqueline Comito and Matt Helmers from the Iowa Learning Farm/ISU asked some tough questions: Are you explaining or defending? There is ambiguity in that there is no near term panic about water quality. How DO people change to a Culture of Conservation in this transitional period? We need to listen to all stakeholders and then understand that the world may be different than we believe it to be, then build solutions from that new collective perspective.

We are facing a decline in tech assistance and money and a lack of cooperation in maintaining conservation practices, and mainly just seem to be preaching to the choir? One goal could be to increase the number of no-till acres by 10% every year. Another is to improve communication internally between partners. And we need to recruit and nurture members that are more representative of actual landowners.

Some of my comments may not make points with some of your readers, but I've never seen the good in just hearing what we want to hear, either. All in all, it was a very interesting conference, with lots of opportunity for networking and learning. And it all goes back to we need to do more with less.

Vance Hjelm
State Soil Conservation Committee Member



**Live and Silent Auction Supporters:
THANK YOU!**

**During conference, we raised over
\$7,400 to enable our high school scholarship program to continue.**

**Scholarship application forms can be downloaded
at www.cdiowa.org/awards.html**

Annual Conference - *Guest Impressions*

Iowa Soil Water Conservation District Commissioners 63rd Annual Conference had for its theme "Practices Makes Perfect." Iowa State Secretary of Agriculture, Bill Northey, summed up his priorities with a seriously reduced budget; a fairly equal distribution of funds shared by regulatory agencies and conservation districts. Nationally, the state's rating is 48 in revenue funds for natural resource conservation. Our mission of clean water and soil conservation in this state is more than a simple challenge. It may require the reduction of even more staff and limitations on soil and water conservation financial incentives.

Two noteworthy sessions were the presentations by several commissioners active in education and fundraising in their communities. Field trips for grade and high school students, sale of rain barrels, and other innovative programs gave new incentive for achieving future goals. The second most promising was the Natural Resource Trust Fund. The vote to approve is strongly supported by CDI. Iowans vote in November 2010 to establish the Trust Fund. If passed, this will insure a 3/8-cent sales tax revenue once the sales tax is again raised. It is constitutionally protected and will hopefully prevent economic hardships.

With fervent hope and promise of active support of the trust fund, the meeting ended on an upbeat note. The future protection of

Iowa's Natural Resources potentially rest with the approval of the trust fund since limited alternatives are currently available.

Jo Sutter
Appanoose SWCD Commissioner

I look forward to CDI's Annual Conference every year. The Conference re-enforces my relationship with the Soil and Water Conservation District(s) and the passion we share for conservation. I value networking with other Commissioners and DCs. We always find common concerns to discuss and new innovative ways to address them. Each District has a special connection to their community. I enjoy hearing stories of how our relationship with them enhances lives in neighborhoods and communities throughout Iowa. In return their support for our mission means so much to my staff and I. As scheduling permits I hope to attend every year.

Wayne Shafer

District Conservationist- Winterset

The CDI annual conference held December 2, and 3 was well presented and very enjoyable. The highlight of the conference to me was a breakout session presented by Jim and Jody Kerns on "Teaching Conservation to Kids". The Kerns have done an absolutely outstanding job using their resources to encourage and educate young people in the importance of conservation. We are extremely fortunate to have people like Jody and Jim helping to educate and encourage young people in the importance of conservation.

Harold Whipple
Commissioner Warren SWCD

Annual Conference - *Guest Impressions*

Challenges and Opportunities presented at the CDI Conference

Every challenge holds an opportunity! Changes in the economy, weather patterns and land ownership are creating a new image of Iowa's future. These changes can be seen as threats to our vision of a healthy, viable agricultural system, or they can be seen as new opportunities to realize our vision.

Each of the government agencies presenting at the annual CDI conference reported that with shrinking budgets, important work was going to have to be done with less money and less personnel. Yes, that is a challenge! But it also offers the opportunity to prioritize, to look critically at those programs that may have worked in the past but are no longer relevant in today's world. It presents the opportunity to work together to accomplish important goals that are held by all of the agencies. Pat Boddy, DNR Assistant Director, vowed that the DNR would "not waste this crisis." She believes this is the time to develop a shared vision of a sustainable agriculture that all agencies can work toward and support. A shared vision would provide partnering opportunities, including working together on the Mississippi watershed proposals. She then listed what the DNR can offer in partnership: monitoring, mapping and modeling. The DNR has a vision of working on a "landscape laboratory scale" transcending political boundaries.

"Transcending Boundaries" would make a great theme for 2010, for the old boundaries are disappearing and new alliances are forming. Two of the critical questions that were asked by commissioners in the wrap-up session at the conference were "How can we get urban and rural people working together?" and "How do we get Mr. Big to stop tilling?" Another way to ask these questions is "What compelling message do we have that speaks to both urban people and big landowners?" How do we transcend the traditional boundaries of our own story and translate it into a story for all Iowans?

The Iowa Learning Farm will be focusing on this challenge and opportunity in 2010. With the debut of the Conservation Station, the Iowa Learning Farm will deliver a cohesive, coherent conservation message to both urban and rural audiences. The Iowa Learning Farm's ability to transcend boundaries grows directly from its conception as a partnership between government agencies, farmers and other entities that promote conservation in Iowa. The Iowa Learning Farm is a successful example of how challenges can become opportunities by transcending boundaries.

By Mary Swalla Holmes with the Iowa Learning Farm



Educational exhibits and speakers were a great learning opportunity during annual conference.

Resolutions

Three resolutions were brought to the CDI Business meeting in December for further discussion and vote. The results were as follows:

Resolution	YES	NO	Percentage	Pass/Fail
Streambank Stabilization with REAP Funds	124	108	53%	Failed
Cost Share Tile on Continuous No-Till Farmland	County not present to represent- Failed			
Update Iowa Code for Watershed Operation	207	29	87%	Passed

For full descriptions of all resolutions passed in 2009 by CDI membership and where they go now please visit our website www.cdiowa.org/resources.html

OFFICERS ELECTED:

During the business meeting in December, Tim Palmer of Madison SWCD was unanimously elected President of CDI; and Jim



Frederick of Sac SWCD was unanimously elected Vice President

of CDI.



The ability to network and interact with other commissioners during conference is invaluable.

State Revolving Fund (SRF)

In 2005 the State Revolving Fund began offering low interest loans for non point source water quality projects through two programs – the Local Water Protection Program and the Livestock Water Quality Facilities Program. Since that time, SWCD offices have been instrumental to the success of these programs. As of October, over \$42 million has been loaned through these programs – which has enabled more conservation to be put on the ground, at less cost to the landowner and in a shorter amount of time.

Most districts have used the program and all should be commended for their promotion and use of the loan programs. Based on the number of loan applications and dollars loaned, six districts were recognized at the CDI Annual Conference in December. Those districts that were recognized include:

SWCD	Applicants	Dollars Loaned (Plus work in progress)
Adams	65	\$1,011,531.88
Keokuk	79	\$1,109,033.63
Montgomery	63	\$1,109,842.86
Union	62	\$1,256,002.53
Taylor	68	\$1,965,017.91
Page	106	\$2,635,897.18

*By Tony Toigo
IDALS-DSC*

Plan to Attend Your Spring Regional Meeting



Region	Date	Host SWCD
1	March 10	Woodbury
2	March 11	Calhoun
3	March 12	Franklin
4	March 18	Jackson
5	March 4	Adair
6	March 16	Marion
7	March 17	Clinton
8	March 3	Union/Ringgold
9	March 2	Appanoose

Visit www.cdiowa.org/events.html for more details as they become available.



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Dates to Remember

January 27

Conservation Partnership Day– Des Moines Capitol

January 31-February 3

NACD Annual Conference, Orlando, FL

March 8-9

Iowa Water Conference, Ames, IA

June 14-16

Annual SSCC/CDI Tour– Burlington, IA area