

CDI News

Volume 12, Issue 1

January, 2007

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Our Mission: “CDI supports Iowa’s SWCD Commissioners in protecting our natural resources.”

Fine Times--

As I look back over the history of my county (Taylor) I imagine it is a lot like the beginning in your own county. It all began with county leaders getting together to submit a petition (which had 400 signatures) for organization of the Taylor Soil Conservation District. The petition request was sent to the State Committee on July 16, 1940 and on November 9th, 1940 it was approved. On the 21st day of December of 1940 there was the first election of candidates running for the three supervisor seats. The first election had eight persons running for the three seats and the election result was overseen by the State Committee and certified by the State Committee Chair.

The first meeting of the Taylor County Soil Conservation Supervisors was held on December 28, 1940, at the Farm Bureau office in Bedford. The first order of business was the election of officers. The second order of business was to write a letter to the State Conservation Service requesting that a person be permanently stationed in Taylor County to help formulate the work plan. The second meeting of the Supervisors was held January 4th,

1941, and a program of work was set up with the assistance of an area Conservationist (our first partnership), and the CCC Camp in Taylor County doing most of the work (our second partnership).

The third meeting was held January 27, 1941, at the CCC Camp in Bedford; at this meeting the problems needing to be addressed were listed:

- Education, meetings, tours, publicity
- Farm tenure
- Highway erosion
- Highway facilities
- Contouring
- Rotations
- Gully Control
- Liming and Fertilizing
- Flood Control
- Drainage
- Tree Planting
- Pasture Improvement
- Wildlife Conservation
- Water Supplies-Farm and Town
- Should labor assistance be requested
- Location of County Soil Association

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

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I find it interesting that after 60-plus years we are still addressing fourteen of those first identified problems. At the 12th meeting on July 26th, 1941, the first Soil District agreement was signed (the first cooperator agreement). Those early State and County leaders realized that there was a serious problem; they stepped up to the plate and started a Natural Resources Conservation movement that is still with us today.

This poem was used in our Celebrating 60 Years of Conservation "Putting Conservation on the Land" booklet; I think it says a lot.

Jerry Fine

The Builder
I saw them tearing a building down,
A team of men in my hometown.
With a heave and a ho and a yes, yes yell,
They swung a beam and a sidewall fell.
And I said to the foreman,
"Are these men skilled?
Like the ones you'd use if you had to build?"
And he laughed and said,
"Oh no, indeed ...
The most common labor is all I need,
For I can destroy in a day or two
What takes a builder many years to do."

Author unknown

Help Celebrate Soil and Water Conservation

Join us on January 24, at the Capitol in Des Moines for our annual legislative day. This year, we are hoping at least one person representing each SWCD will participate. We have reserved space in the rotunda for displays. The display area will be set up from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

A premiere of the new video will be shown at 8:30. Governor Robert Ray, Bill Greiner, and Paul John-

son, who participated in the production of this video, are expected to attend.

SWCD Commissioners and others are encouraged to attend anytime throughout the day. Plan to bring with you some highlights of your district accomplishments. We'll have handouts you can use if you choose to. Meet at the CDI display table in the rotunda. CDI will send a letter out to each district with the details of this event.

CRP Rental Payments Subject to Self-Employment Tax, Says IRS

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Conservation Reserve Program rental payments are subject to the self-employment tax, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has ruled.

The agency issued a ruling spelling out that CRP payments from the U.S. Department of Agriculture are includible in net income from self-employment regardless of whether a farmer is actively engaged in the trade or business of farming.

The IRS says participation in a CRP contract itself constitutes a trade or business whether the participant performs the required activities or has a third party conduct them.

Farm Bureau will be submitting comments to the

IRS arguing that the CRP payments are rental income and should not be subject to taxes, regardless of whether the landowner materially participates in the farming operation. Farm Bureau policy is that this income is a return on investment.

Imposing the self-employment tax rate on retired farmers does not make sense, says North Dakota Congressman Earl Pomeroy.

He plans to seek a legislative remedy if the IRS does not alter the ruling. Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley has fought for several years to have the IRS drop the tax from CRP payments received by active farmers.

He contends the tax ignores the intent of Congress and discourages environmentally pro-active measures.

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Sustainable Funding For Conservation

An advisory committee directed by the Iowa Legislature to explore sustainable funding for Iowa's natural resources is nearing completion of its legislative charge and will deliberate final recommendations soon. Legislation during the 2006 session called for creation of the committee. Specifically, the committee was directed to submit a report to the governor and the general assembly by Jan. 10, 2007. This report must contain the following:

- a. Information on what surrounding states have done to provide sustainable funding for natural resource conservation.
- b. Outline of a conservation funding initiative agreed upon by the advisory committee.
- c. Outline of the amount of revenue needed and what would be accomplished if the conservation funding initiative is implemented.
- d. Analysis of Iowans' willingness to pay for identified conservation funding initiative.

The committee is chaired by the Department of Natural Resources. Other committee representatives include members of both houses and both parties of the Iowa Legislature, Conservation Districts of Iowa, Ducks Unlimited, Farmers Union, Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards, Iowa Environmental Council, Iowa Farm Bureau, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Iowa Renewable Fuels Association, Izaak Walton League of Iowa, Pheasants Forever, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, the Sierra Club and The Nature Conservancy.

The members from these Iowa organizations are conscious of Iowa's natural resource needs and bring diverse knowledge and a broad perspective to the process. The full committee has met six times. To date, after reviewing materials, hearing presentations, and deliberating, the committee is nearing the completion of its legislative charge. The members have defined and categorized natural resources, for this task, into three groups:

- 1) fish, wildlife, natural areas
- 2) soil and water
- 3) parks and trails

They have also identified a \$150 million annual need to supplement the inadequate current funding these natural resources are allotted. Possible sustainable funding sources, a.k.a. mechanisms, have been identified and, after in-depth discussion and research, the committee has narrowed down four mechanisms to focus on: gaming or gambling revenue, sales tax increase, sales tax on lottery tickets, and tax incentives/credit for conservation.

The committee has also identified actions that could be accomplished with the additional money made available through sustainable funding to the natural resource categories. Details about this committee's work is posted on the DNR website at: www.iowadnr.com/sustainablefunding/index.html

Goodbye for Now

The CDI Auxiliary had some sad news this year. After many years of service, it was decided that for now the auxiliary should suspend meetings. Volunteers for the officer positions did not come forward at the last meeting. CDI will hold their bank account separate for now, and keep the organization in the policy/by-laws, so in the future if they would like to regroup, it will be an easy start-up. CDI will continue the poster and scholarship contests, with the generous help of volunteers. **THANKS LADIES, FOR ALL YOU'VE DONE!**

Patsy Neumeier, Retiring Auxiliary President

The Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC) makes it easy to stay abreast of the organization's activities. *Partners* magazine, the quarterly on-line publication of CTIC, is FREE in your email! Keep the producers in your district informed of national trends, emerging issues, conservation successes and profitable solutions to improve the relationship between agriculture and the environment. See the current issue at: <http://www.conservationinformation.org/partners> and sign up today at: <http://www.conservationinformation.org/partners/subscribe.asp>.

Proving the Power of Conservation



Power. What does it mean?

In early February, hundreds of conservation leaders from across America will gather in Los Angeles, Ca. to learn about, discuss, participate in and influence the POWER OF CONSERVATION.

NACD's 61st Annual Meeting will be held in sunny LA while many of us are right in the midst of the woes of winter. The heat of the sun won't compare with the energy of the meeting, however.

Power has several different meanings. As a noun, it can refer to the ability or capacity to perform or act effectively. By the time we are gathered in LA, America's agriculture community will be entrenched in the formation of another farm bill. The meeting will feature many opportunities to provide continued input on the association's efforts and direction in shaping the influential legislation.

Power also refers to energy. By definition, it can be electrical, mechanical—any form that replaces human energy. Today's landowners are finding a plethora of ways to produce power using wise conservation techniques and renewable sources. Consider biomass, biofuels, wind...bioenergy. Much of the 2007 Annual Meeting will focus on alternate sources of power that are also alternate sources of income for producers.



There is strength and power in numbers. Help us show the power of conservation through your participation in this key meeting. The choice is yours—we hope you choose to join us in California next year. Be a part of the POWER OF CONSERVATION.

Setting NACD's Policy Priorities for 2007 Your Input Needed

NACD's Legislative Committee is looking for member input on the association's 2007 policy priorities. In 2006, NACD's Board of Directors developed a three tier policy priority list — viewable at <http://nacdnet.org/govtaff/NACDpriorities.htm> — to guide NACD staff and leaders on time and resources to address the priorities. A letter requesting input for next year's priorities has been sent to state associations and NACD Board Members.

The 2007 priority list will be developed by the Legislative Committee and revised and approved by the Board of Directors during the Annual Meeting in February.

If you have not already shared the priorities of your state, please do so by January 10th. For additional information, please contact Keira Franz at keira-franz@nacdnet.org

PL-566 and You

Have you thought about the future of the PL-566 (the federal watershed program) projects in your counties? Did you know that the economic benefits of these projects total more than \$19 million for the state of Iowa? Is your county doing the best it can to secure funding for their continued maintenance and rehabilitation? Do you have a plan for management after the end of your contract with NRCS?

NRCS has initiated a project with the help of Iowa Watersheds to enhance the long-term planning and viability of these structures. Iowa Watersheds staff will work with counties to improve financial planning for rehabilitation and maintenance, easement control issues and to set a course for management of these structures beyond the 50-year contract signed by the sponsors. Emily Piper and Bob Mulqueen are the key principals working with counties on this project.

Our goal is to work with 12 sponsor organizations in 6 counties over the next twelve months to do strategic planning on these and other issues. The outcome will be the development of an action plan for the future as well as assistance in implementing those action plans.

A series of regional meetings will be held in January and February to talk with local sponsors and landowners about the future of PL-566 projects. Plan to attend one of these meetings to find out how we can help you plan for the future. The meetings will run from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. with lunch included and are free of charge to participants. For more information or to register for one of the meetings, please contact Iowa Watersheds at iawatersheds@mchsi.com.

*Emily Piper
Iowa Watersheds*

Meeting Locations and Dates:

Friday, January 19, 2007 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Cass County Community Center
805 W 10th St., Atlantic

Friday, February 2, 2007 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Bass Pro Shops
2901 Bass Pro Drive, Council Bluffs

Friday, February 9, 2007 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Three Mile Lodge
Three Mile Lake, Creston

Federal Government Spending for 2007

The continuing resolution, passed by Congress before adjourning December 9th, funds the majority of the federal government operations through February 15th. The new chairs of the Senate and House Appropriations Committees have issued statements regarding their plans to pass continuing resolution type bills to carry forward from February 15th through the rest of the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007. They do not plan to include earmarks in this long-term funding bill, however have indicated that there will be some funding adjustments made to the continuing resolution passed this month.

Federal agencies confronted with this financial uncertainty are issuing a variety of instructions to deal with the likely federal funding levels. For example the NRCS has instructed all state conservationists to not sign new fund obligating agreements. Many agencies

have issued hiring freezes. Some have limited travel and other options such as scheduled meetings. Many of these instructions will likely be amended as the agencies work through budget numbers and final action by Congress on fiscal year 2007 funding.

Meanwhile the customers or clients that are served by the various federal programs will be learning of the potential impacts on the services they use. It is very important that conservation district leaders in every state keep up with this ongoing effort so that they can help districts in their state plan to minimize negative impacts on the services they provide to farmers, ranchers and other customers.

NACD will be providing information just as soon as it is available.

The Costs and Benefits of Conservation Practices in Iowa

Over the last two decades, conservation on cropland to improve water quality and provide other environmental benefits has been of growing interest. Federal government expenditures on conservation and environmental programs have been 80 percent higher under the current (2002) farm act than under the previous one, and several new programs, including the Conservation Security Program and the Grassland Reserve Program, were also introduced in 2002. As the expiration date for the current act draws near, it is apparent that the total expenditures and priorities of conservation programs will again be at the heart of legislative debates. The likelihood of tight fiscal budgets over the coming years suggests that competition for federal funding of conservation programs will be at least as intense as in the past. Hard questions concerning the impacts of these programs on water quality and the environment will need to be answered if such funding is to be maintained or increased. However, there are currently no easy and clear answers to these questions.

The USDA is undertaking a multi-agency national effort, the Conservation Effects Assessment Project

(CEAP), to quantify the effects of conservation expenditures on the environment. With funding from this project, CARD, in conjunction with a group of interdisciplinary researchers at Iowa State University, is currently working on several detailed watershed studies in Iowa to address these questions. As a complement to these projects, we are also assessing the “state of conservation” on Iowa’s cropland by collecting and analyzing the records of a variety of conservation programs and other data on the use of conservation practices in the state. We report some of the findings from this effort here, as well as some preliminary estimates on the water quality benefits that the current slate of conservation practices is likely to have provided to the state.

To read the full article visit

http://www.card.iastate.edu/iowa_ag_review/fall_06/article5.aspx

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*with Catherine Kling, Philip Gassman, Manoj Jha,
and Joshua Parcel*

The above is the opening statement in an article from the Fall 2006 issue of the IOWA AG REVIEW, the quarterly newsletter of the Center for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) at Iowa State University. The full article is well worth reading, as it relates directly to cost share programs we offer. You’ll find it posted at http://www.card.iastate.edu/iowa_ag_review/fall_06/.

Current News From IMMAG

MANURE APPLICATOR CERTIFICATION: The annual training workshop for commercial manure applicators is scheduled for January 5, 2007 from 9 a.m. to noon and will be offered at 79 locations in Iowa, two in Minnesota, one in Nebraska and one in Wisconsin. All commercial applicators should plan to attend this workshop to meet their required 3 hours of annual training. A brochure with a list of locations and a registration form can be found at:

http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/immag/certification/07comm_macrochure.pdf. There is no registration fee to attend the workshop, however we encourage you to register to ensure that adequate space and handout materials will be available. If you need to meet commercial manure applicator certification requirements in both Iowa and Minnesota, please plan to attend the workshops offered at the Minnesota locations. For more

information on the joint Iowa-Minnesota training, please see: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/news/2006/nov/072903.htm> Additional information and resources regarding the commercial manure applicator certification program can be found at: <http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/immag/maccma.html>

Confinement site manure applicators should also plan to attend a certification workshop. A list of confinement site applicator workshops can be found at: http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/immag/certification/07csma_cbrochure.pdf. For more information regarding certification requirements for confinement site applicators please see <http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/immag/maccsa.html>

Current News page on the IMMAG site is updated weekly; check out: <http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/immag/default.htm>. Please check this site often for the latest news regarding animal feeding operations and manure management issues.

Producer Adds Settling Area to Keep Sand Out of Lagoon

Sand mixing into his waste storage lagoon prompted Sioux County dairy farmer Daryl DeGroot to look for a way to settle out the sand, which comes from bedding he uses for his dairy cows. Sand was causing problems for farmers using the manure slurry for liquid fertilizer. DeGroot, and his wife, Marla, own Donjan Swiss Inc. in Hull, Iowa, a 180-cow dairy operation named for Daryl's parents, Don and Jan.

To find a way to settle out the sand, DeGroot sought assistance from the USDA-NRCS. Gary Reinders, a soil conservation technician with NRCS in Orange City, recommended DeGroot install a concrete solid settling area to keep as much sand out of the lagoon as possible. Before the new settling area was installed, DeGroot pushed all material straight into the lagoon. "It got to the point where liquid manure handlers didn't want to deal with the sand anymore," he said.

To help fund the installation of the concrete solid settling area, DeGroot received an EQIP contract in 2004 that provides 50 percent cost-share. The concrete settling area was completed in 2006, and DeGroot said he is happy with the results. "I don't think the problem is 100 percent cured, but it sure helps," he said.

DeGroot is a 30-year veteran of the dairy cow industry. He and his father used to dump manure out to get rid of it, but now it's more valuable, prompting him to take more care of the storage lagoon. "I can grow 200 bushel corn on beans with just cow manure, if I work it right," he said. "We haul manure two or three miles to some of our crops now." Since DeGroot signed an EQIP contract for a waste storage facility, he was required to develop and implement a Comprehensive Nu-

trient Management Plan (CNMP) to address the management and treatment of nutrients on his property and protect soil and water resources.

The nutrient management portion of the CNMP helps DeGroot manage the amount, form, placement and timing of plant nutrient applications. Soil tests must be completed every three to four years to determine P and K levels, and yield goals are used to determine N levels. The timing of manure and commercial fertilizer applications minimizes the loss of fertilizer through leaching and runoff. In addition to his EQIP contract for a waste storage facility, DeGroot took advantage of EQIP cost-share funds to install 3,250 feet of terraces during the summer of 2006. He received a \$50 per acre oats incentive for planting oats, instead of corn or beans, so terraces could be constructed during the summer. "We've been short on contractors here, so having the summer oats incentive program helped," said Greg Marek, Sioux County District Conservationist. "It spread out the work for them and we were able to get more conservation on the ground in the county because of it."

DeGroot row crops about 700 acres of mostly corn and soybeans, and he typically raises 10 to 15 acres of oats. He seeded 30 acres of oats in 2006. "I chopped the oats. It makes good feed for the heifers," he said. "When the oats incentive came along this summer, I thought I would try a few more acres." In addition to terraces, DeGroot practices conservation crop rotation, conservation tillage, contour farming, and he installed a grassed waterway in 1997—all to reduce soil erosion, prevent flooding and improve water quality. The concrete settling area will settle out solids, including unwanted sand, from the lagoon below.

Article taken from "Showcase Conservation Iowa"

Jason Johnson, Iowa NRCS, November 2006

<ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/IA/news/DeGrootShowcase.pdf>



Iowa Learning Farm Wins Award

The Iowa Learning Farm newsletter received national recognition during the 2006 American Society of Agronomy meeting November 15th in Indianapolis, Indiana. The Iowa newsletter, published by Iowa State University, received the award for "Excellence in Education Materials" in competition with universities and institutions nationwide.

Click here to view the newsletter:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf/ILFnewsletters.htm>

The Iowa Learning Farm project is "farmers learning from farmers". Through the partnership of Iowa State University, IDALS-DSC, NRCS, IDNR, in cooperation with Iowa Farm Bureau Federation and Conservation Districts of Iowa, it promotes efficient agriculture production systems that result in agronomic, economic, and environmental improvements through increased awareness and adoption of conservation systems and ethics.



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Dates to Remember

January 9, 10, 16, 17, 25, 30
New Commissioner Orientations (see brochure)

January 10-13
Annual No-Till Conference, Des Moines
<http://www.lesspub.com/cgi-bin/site.pl?ntf/ntfConf>

January 11-12
Iowa Watersheds Annual Meeting, Altoona

January 12-13
Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference,
Des Moines <http://www.practicalfarmers.org/>

January 19-21
Pheasant Fest, Des Moines
<http://www.pheasantsforever.org/>

January 24
Legislative Day, Des Moines at the Capitol

Feb 4-8
NACD Annual Conference, Los Angeles, CA
<http://2007.nacdnet.org/>