

# CDI News

Volume 13, Issue 4

October, 2008

## CDI Board Members

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

## Just Juchems

I thought I was getting a handle on being a SWCD commissioner. These days, soil and water conservation was taking a definite tilt toward water quality and watershed work. It seemed to be what a lot of people have cared about. So we started working a little harder on water quality and a little less on soils issues. Then came the September issue of National Geographic.

Right there on the front cover for the whole world to see, is a picture of *SOIL*, with a plant and the roots. Open up to page 80 and there you'll find a full color article titled, “Our Good Earth; The Future rests on the soil beneath our feet. Can we save it?” So now people are actually talking about soil and the need to save it? Again?

Rattan Lal, a soil scientist at Ohio State University says in this article, “Political stability, environmental quality, hunger and poverty all have the same root, in the long run, the solution to each is restoring the most basic of all resources, the soil.” Have you considered your job as a SWCD Commissioner to be one that will have such far reaching impacts?

Over the past few decades, there can be no doubt that science and technology have done a lot to help increase crop yields. We grow a whole lot more corn on a lot less ground. But not without costs. In Iowa, soil scientists will tell you that soil struc-

ture has changed. There tends to be less organic matter on fields with continuous row crop production. Larger equipment has increased problems with soil compaction. Increased compaction leads to more surface runoff, which leads to more soil loss. And the list goes on.

Does all this mean that Iowa is doomed to lose the rich soil we've had the luxury of working for the past century and a half? It doesn't have to be so, not if we are diligent. We need to step up and bring soil quality to the forefront here in Iowa and the nation. We need to work farmer to farmer, and with agribusiness professionals. We need to step outside of our comfort zone and share our success stories with others. And be willing to look back at what doesn't work and learn. We need to push policy makers to develop strategies for the good of society, for the long haul.

I'm thankful to have soils brought up for serious dialogue. This article highlighted some critical issues I've given very little thought to, such as desertification and soil salinization. I encourage you to become an active participant in this important dialogue. Read and be active locally, to have impacts globally. After all, healthy soil is an important, world issue.

*Rick Juchems*

Visit our website  
often for events and  
other information at:  
[www.cdiowa.org](http://www.cdiowa.org)

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Hilary Johnson, Envirothon Coordinator [envirothon@cdiowa.org](mailto:envirothon@cdiowa.org)

## Ask Your Candidates

Have you attended your elected officials' coffees or candidate forums lately? There is no better time than now to ask your elected officials, or candidates, how they stand on conservation issues. Ask them to commit to protecting our natural infrastructure that is so important to Iowa's economic engine.

Are you looking for some key points that we all could use, or questions you might ask?

- At a minimum, the state should commit to at least maintaining the current funding level for all soil and water conservation programs.
- Consider new programs that would lessen the impacts of flooding, this might be a program to re-meander previously channelized streams. Or if not a new program, how about adding flood prevention to the allowable uses of Watershed Improvement Review Board funds?

- Do the candidates support adjusting the commissioner expense appropriation to more accurately reimburse SWCDs?
- Will you work to beef up the District Initiatives Program (state CRP--this is in the infrastructure budget line) to promote the use of buffers? This program is especially valuable along streams. It is important to water quality, provides wildlife habitat, adds water retention capacity and can be used to create biomass fuel sources.
- **Will you make funding for conserving and protecting natural resources a priority?**

Don't overlook opportunities to ask those running for office to support soil and water conservation. Now more than ever we should know that land use and protection is important. The only way for legislators to know that you care about soil and water conservation issues is to tell them!

### ***DID YOU KNOW?***

NACD has several district presentations and guides available for you to download online. They are a great resource for your district to use. This information can be found at the NACD website under the District Resources tab, just one more reason to be an active NACD supporter!

<http://www.nacdnet.org/resources>



## Iowa Envirothon

The 2009 Iowa Envirothon is gearing up for another great competition! This event is for

teams of Iowa High School students who are interested in learning more about aquatics, wildlife, forestry and soils. Teams of 5 compete at regional events across the state by taking tests in each of the four topics. The top 15 teams in the state then attend the State Envirothon Competition at Springbrook State Park near Guthrie Center, Iowa. There, teams take tests outdoors and prepare and present an oral presentation on this year's topic. The topic this year is "Biodiversity in a Changing World."

Important dates to remember: Registration is due Feb. 1st, Red Oak Regional March 10th, Waterloo and Cherokee Regionals March 11th, Iowa City Regional March 16th, and West Des Moines Regional March 19th.

The 2009 State Envirothon Competition will be on Monday, April 20th. If you have questions or would like to start a new team, contact Hilary Johnson at [envirothon@cdiowa.org](mailto:envirothon@cdiowa.org)

**For more information visit:**  
[www.cdiowa.org/envirothon.html](http://www.cdiowa.org/envirothon.html)

## “Building A Better Tomorrow”

New Orleans, La. will host the **2009 NACD Annual Meeting, February 1-4, 2009**. This year’s meeting will look to the future of conservation, centered around the theme “Building a Better Tomorrow.” Times are changing and the same is true of the demands on the nation’s natural resources. Come and learn how conservation districts can play a key, proactive role in the future of natural resource conservation.

Meeting planning is well under way. Registration is now open and anyone who registers before November 21, 2008 will receive the early registration discount. Speaker invitations have gone out and planning for breakout sessions has begun. The latest confirmation NACD has received is from the former Miss Louisiana, who will sing the national anthem at the opening general session.

In addition to breakout sessions and general sessions, NACD has plenty of events and entertainment planned. From host-state and partner tours to the 2009 Annual Legislative Auction to local entertainment, your time in New Orleans will be filled with fun. And for those of you worried about where you’re going to view the big game on Sunday, February 1, 2009—don’t worry! For only \$20, NACD will provide for all of your viewing needs at the Super Sunday Social (cost of drinks not included). See the Activities page of the website below for details.

Be sure to join us in New Orleans for what is shaping up to be the best NACD Annual Meeting to date.

**Check for updates at the NACD website:**  
<http://nacdnet.org/events/annualmeeting/>

## Biofilters Now Eligible Practice Through EQIP

*By Jason Johnson, Iowa NRCS*

Iowa livestock producers with confinement operations can now apply to receive financial assistance through NRCS to install biofilters, odor-reducing structures fit to the outlets of confinement exhaust fans.

Through the USDA’s Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), eligible producers can receive \$2.50 per animal unit for three years, with a cap of 1,500 animal units, to install and maintain biofilters. EQIP is a voluntary conservation program through NRCS that promotes environmental quality in agricultural production.

A biofilter is a device or structure containing an organic material that filters out particulates. It contains active bacteria attached to the organic material that break down odorous compounds as they pass through the filter. It is a living ecosystem of microorganisms that continually feed on odorous gases.

Larry Beeler, NRCS assistant state conservationist for programs, says EQIP is available to help agricultural producers protect air quality and reduce the need for regulatory programs. “There is more awareness of air quality issues than ever before,” he said. “We are offering biofilters as an eligible air quality management practice through EQIP as an incentive to producers who have



considered installing odor-reducing practices and want to be proactive.”

According to Steven Hoff, Ph.D., P.E., an associate professor in Iowa State University’s Department of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering, biofilters are very effective in reducing odor when designed correctly. His research indicates a reduction in odorous gases after emission from a biofilter compared to an unfiltered exhaust fan.

For more information about biofilters, visit your local NRCS or Iowa State University Extension office.

# Plan Now to Attend the 62nd Annual Conference

## *DRAFT* 2008 Conference At A Glance

### Tuesday, November 18

- 1:00 p.m. Urban Conservation Tour (Optional, with 30 minimum required)
- 3:00 p.m. CDI Board Meeting
- 6:00 p.m. SSCC Meeting

### Wednesday, November 19

- 8:00 a.m. Registration Table Opens
- 8:00 a.m. Auction Items Accepted  
Continental Breakfast Available
- 9:30 a.m. Silent Auction Begins
- 9:30 a.m. CDI Business Meeting
- 10:30 a.m. Optional Guest Tour
- 11:00 a.m. Welcome and General Session Speaker
- Noon Lunch
- 1:30 p.m. General Sessions
- 3:00 p.m. Break & Posters
- 3:30 p.m. General Sessions
- 5:00 p.m. Posters, Partners Stations & Social
- 6:00 p.m. Awards Presentation
- 6:30 p.m. Dinner  
Auction



### Support the Scholarship Program!

Plan to bring your silent and live auction donations as you've done so graciously in the past. Proceeds go to support students pursuing a career in ag and natural resources.

### Thursday, November 20

- 6:30 a.m. Chairs Breakfast
- 7:00 a.m. Breakfast Buffet  
Meet Your Regional Chair  
Announcements
- 8:30 a.m. Concurrent Sessions Begin (three tracks)
- 10:00 a.m. Break & Posters
- 10:30 a.m. Concurrent Sessions
- 11:30 a.m. Awards
- Noon Lunch  
Speaker
- 1:30 p.m. CDI Board Restructuring Meeting  
Other Meetings as Required

Reservations for the Hotel at Gateway Center in Ames, November 18-20, 2008, can be made by **calling 800-367-2637**. Ask for the Conservation Districts of Iowa room block with a special rate of \$79 single or double rate.

**More News Soon At: [www.cdiowa.org](http://www.cdiowa.org)**

## 62nd Annual Conference Highlights

Rick Juchems, President of CDI, and Duane Sand, Chair of the SSSC, encourage you to attend the 62nd annual conference of the SWCD Commissioners. The theme of this conference is "Conservation Works".

This year has shown us yet again, you can't outwit Mother Nature. It is unlikely all of the flooding in 2008 could have been prevented. The ground was super saturated and the rains just wouldn't quit. But in many places, conservation systems that have been installed and maintained properly have proven they can do the job as designed. Impacts to the land and cities from floods could have been even more dramatic if there were not flood control and water retention structures in the landscape, functioning as designed. The conference will focus on the current trends in climate and agriculture, and what changes in techniques we may consider employing to keep up with the changing needs.

Practices specific to urban areas will be highlighted in the preconference tour Tuesday afternoon. In order to have real buy-in from all Iowans to protect our natural resources, we have to work in both the urban and rural environments. Urban specialists will lead this expanding segment of IDALS-DSC's technical assistance opportunities.

The opening plenary sessions will look at climatic trends and the changes in land use that have occurred over the past several decades. Then after lunch a panel discussion with state and federal agency leaders will discuss how agencies have responded to the weather extremes, and what additional practices may be needed in the future. The final session will look at how good conservation has protected rural and urban areas.

On Thursday, we'll have three sets of sessions, each with a specific focal point. One set of concurrent sessions will focus on farm scale planning and sustainable production systems. A second set of concurrent sessions will look at watershed scale planning and how to integrate soil and water protection along with water quantity issues. And the third set of sessions will concentrate on possible changes in our conservation delivery systems, and how SWCDs can remain relevant as weather patterns and land uses change.

This is a great opportunity to get together with fellow commissioners to engage in meaningful dialogue; the networking with other districts is invaluable.

**Make your plans today to attend!**

## Warren SWCD Promotes Conservation at Fair With Zach

Ken Core, farmer from Ackworth, was the winner of the newly released "Sportsman's Dream" wildlife print. The numbered print was donated to the Warren Soil & Water Conservation District by renowned artist Larry Zach and given away at the 2008 Warren County Fair. Zach, a six-time "Iowa Artist of the Year", donated the print to the SWCD to promote conservation because it is one of his priorities.

The print was presented to Ken and his family at the SWCD Commissioners' dinner meeting held August 5<sup>th</sup> at Harold & Kay Whipple's farm in Lacona. Harold is one of the commissioners.



Pictured are Brenda, Kendra and Ken Core winner of the print and Larry Zach, wildlife artist. Also pictured are Ken Croat, Harold and grandson Will Whipple, Cathie Graves, Karey Claghorn, Rick Shafer, Deb Ryun, Jason Delay and Nick Morrell.

# Cover Crops an Essential Conservation Tool

by Dick Tremain, Iowa NRCS

Bedford farmer Paul Ackley says cover crops he planted last fall protected his soil from the ravages of this spring's flooding.

"The cover crops' plant residue reduces the impact of raindrops on the soil, and the fibrous roots hold the soil in place. This year's rains on my fields proved cover crops save soil," says a satisfied Ackley.

"When I plant a cover crop of rye in the fall," said Ackley, "we can turn cows out in the field and they'll have fresh feed when nothing else is green. It's a protein source you can abuse. Cattle can graze it down to nothing and it will grow back to give your fields erosion protection in the spring." In addition, Ackley says the cover crops offer many benefits besides controlling erosion. He says biologically, cover crops are a third crop in a corn/soybean rotation, which research shows can reduce insect pressure on row crops and perhaps boost yields. They also reduce field compaction, add organic matter to the soil and can be used as cattle feed.

Doug Davenport, district conservationist with US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), calls Ackley an innovator and a conservationist. "He doesn't toot his own horn. Paul's learning all of the time and he's always involved in locally-led conservation planning. This man is genuinely interested in conservation and preserving what he has. He seems to do it right."

Ackley has been farming 40 years in Taylor County. He and his wife, Nancy, own 750 acres of farmland and rent another 350 acres. They plant 500 acres of row crops in a corn and soybean rotation. The couple also operates a 100-head cow and calf herd.

Some of the other conservation practices Ackley uses on his farm include terraces, filter strips, riparian buffers, shallow water wetlands, rotational grazing and erosion

control structures. Crops are no-tilled to save soil.

Ackley said he added cover crops to his mix of conservation practices to help address erosion concerns. After some 20 years of trying, Ackley thinks he has figured out the right corn stubble and cover crop combination. He mixes rye grass seed with phosphorus and potash and broadcasts the mixture right after harvest. The rye grass seed takes root, grows and provides erosion protection for Ackley's fields soon after harvest and into the summer.

"Cover crops need to (be) cheap, cheap, cheap," said Ackley, "and not cause any other problems on its own. For me, rye is part of the solution. I am firmly convinced I get my money back with cover crops." Ackley estimates he can plant a rye cover crop to his harvested corn fields for \$11 an acre. He applies one bushel of seed to the acre. He mixes rye seed with phosphorus and potash and broadcast applies the mixture.

He says seeding a cover crop into a soybean field is trickier. Ackley notes that cover crop seed has to be applied just before leaf drop, must be the right seed combination and the mix must be cheap. His current combination is a mixture of turnip, sweet clover and oats, which costs just \$24 per acre, including aerial broadcasting.

"All my fields can benefit from cover crops. I plan to seed all of my corn fields and 50 acres of soybeans in cover crop this fall. I want my soil to stay where it belongs -- up on the hill where it can do some good, not down along the fence," Ackley asserts.

"I'd see erosion even with no-till," Ackley notes, and adds, "You begin to figure up how many tons of dirt you're losing and get sick. It's always the good dirt that goes. The stuff beneath you'd wish you could get rid of stays. It's the fertilizer, humus and organic matter that are lost. You lose the good soil and it hurts."

## Benefits of cover crops:

- Prevents soil erosion
- Can improve yields
- Provides rotational benefits by biologically adding another crop
- Adds organic matter to the soil
- Facilitates soil microbial activity
- Reduces compaction
- Root structure binds the soil long after the cover crop plant is dead
- Improves water infiltration
- Cattle can graze it winter and spring

# Commissioner Development Advisory Team (CDAT)

**Mission Statement:** *To advise and guide the Commissioner Development Team (CDT) in creating recruitment and development strategies that help Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Commissioners and Boards become highly effective.*

## Membership

The CDAT consists of:

- Seven (7) SWCD Commissioner members that are interested in commissioner development and that represent different areas of the state.
- Of the 7 members, one will serve as Chairperson. This position will be elected by CDAT members annually at the CDAT annual business meeting, which will take place every November at the Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) Annual Conference. Of the 7 members, one will be a CDI Board member or alternate, as appointed by CDI. This member may or may not be the Chairperson.

The initial CDAT members (2008) will serve a minimum of 4 years. New members will serve a maximum of two 3-year terms. Beginning in 2011 (4<sup>th</sup> year of CDAT existence) and annually thereafter, the CDAT will solicit member nominations at the CDI Spring Regional Meetings. Two CDAT members will then be replaced every year, to create a rotation of continuity and consistency. Member replacements will be selected by the CDAT.

The CDAT will exhibit the following characteristics:

- Open mindedness
- Enthusiasm
- Commitment
- Passion about natural resources
- Highly informed
- Acting as a team
- Effective leadership
- Thinking ‘outside of the box ‘
- Strong advocacy
- Salesperson skills
- Willingness to volunteer
- Willingness to donate time

## Customers

Our primary direct customers are:

1. Commissioner Development Team (CDT)
2. Commissioners statewide
3. Assistant Commissioners statewide
4. Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI)

Our other customers include County Conservation Boards, Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) Division of Soil Conservation, United States

Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and County Boards of Supervisors.

## Products, Services, and Activities

The CDAT provides:

- Written information
- Recommendations
- Networking opportunities
- Support
- Activities
- Outreach
- Annual conference breakout sessions
- Meetings and conferences
- Personal interactions
- Recruitment
- Education and training
- Regular communication of goals and accomplishments
- Periodic evaluation of these methods and revisions as necessary

## Operating methods

The CDAT will meet face-to-face twice annually, in June and during the CDI Annual Conference in November. The CDAT may meet at other times or by teleconference to discuss any pertinent information, as determined and scheduled by the Chairperson. The CDAT Chairperson will meet with the CDI Executive Director prior to every CDAT meeting. Most decisions are reached by consensus of CDAT members in attendance at meetings. All members are expected to actively participate and provide input. Occasionally, the Chairperson must make independent decisions.

## Job description

The CDAT focuses on:

- Developing recommendations for recruitment of SWCD Commissioners
- Providing counsel and a voice for SWCD Commissioners
- Soliciting input from SWCD Commissioners on training needs

The CDAT will direct commissioner complaints that are outside of the CDAT mission to the CDI Regional Director.



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## Dates to Remember

October 16, 2008

Hypoxia Conference, Hotel Gateway, Ames  
<http://www.card.iastate.edu/hypoxia/>

October 19-22, 2008

Farming With Grass, Sheraton, Oklahoma City, OK  
[http://www.swcs.org/en/conferences/farming\\_with\\_grass/](http://www.swcs.org/en/conferences/farming_with_grass/)

November 18, 2008

CDI Board Meeting, Hotel Gateway, Ames

November 19-20, 2008

CDI Annual Conference, Hotel Gateway, Ames

February 1-4, 2009

NACD Annual Conference, Sheraton,  
New Orleans, LA

<http://www.nacdnet.org/events/calendar/>