

---CONSERVATION DISTRICTS OF IOWA (CDI)---

CONNECTIONS

The Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) informs, educates, and leads Iowans through our local soil and water conservation districts to promote conservation of natural resources.



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A Reminder from past CDI-President Dennis Carney

The Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) Board of Directors recently re-committed CDI to partnering with local Soil and Water Conservation Districts to foster the gift of higher education for Iowa students interested in conservation and agriculture by offering scholarships for their first year of college. While honoring CDI's past, we are focused on the future by helping students gain a quality education that will improve Iowa and the world.

Funds for these scholarships are raised primarily through the auction held at the commissioner's annual conference. Auction participation has fallen to a level where our scholarship program is now in jeopardy. As a result, the CDI Board decided to forgo the annual scholarship fund auction usually held at annual conference, scheduled for August 28-29, 2023, and appeal directly to district commissioners.

District commissioners have supported the CDI sponsored scholarship program for several decades. Now given the limited scholarship fundraising participation and auction cancellation, the CDI Board believes it is imperative that each district contribute a minimum of \$100 to the CDI Scholarship Fund so it remains viable. Commissioners, this is your opportunity to continue to support our future conservation leaders and global citizens. There is no greater gift than the opportunity for success for Iowa students as they pursue their dreams through higher education. Please support our future conservationists by forwarding your contribution to the CDI office by September 30, 2023 at the address in the left column.

Thank you in advance for your financial support of the CDI Scholarship Fund. These scholarships are absolutely worth it given the extreme need for our young people to embody the conservation ethic. If you have questions, contact CDI at admin@cdiowa.org.

-Dennis

Save the Date!

CDI Annual Conference – August 28-29 – Gateway Center, Ames
Free for all commissioners/assistant commissioners! Details coming soon.

Executive Director Report – John Whitaker

We are finalizing preparations for the annual conference on August 28 and 29 at the Gateway Center in Ames. I sincerely hope that you will plan to attend. I attended CDI annual conferences when I served at USDA and the attendance was considerably higher. I realize that many commissioners now work during the week, which means you must take time off to attend. All of commissioners' costs for the annual conference are paid for, including registration and overnight stay, so it can be a brief chance to get away and learn from other commissioners. We are going to include more discussion time this year so that we can continue to hear your ideas as we did during the spring regional meetings. Our partners will be there to help answer your concerns and questions. CDI board members and staff will be offering a commissioner training session on Tuesday the 29th, since that has been requested by so many of you.

This year we will not have the live auction after dinner on Monday when we normally raise funds for our scholarship program. Many of your districts have already responded to the call for cash donations to the scholarship fund and we truly appreciate your contributions. At this time, it appears we might be able to increase the amount we award for scholarships but will wait to make a final determination after the annual conference. Please enjoy your summer and stay safe.

77th CDI Annual Conference August 28-29

Final details are almost in place and registration information will be available soon for the 77th CDI Annual Conference, August 28-29, in Ames. An overview of what's planned highlights a return of favorites like the ice cream social, exhibits and guest activities – plus important, insightful exchanges of ideas and information among commissioners, partners and CDI leadership.

On Monday the 28th of August, Iowa SWCD commissioners will be welcomed in the morning by Iowa Secretary of Ag Mike Naig, followed immediately by the CDI Annual Business Meeting, where policy and resolutions are debated and decided. In the afternoon, an NACD representative will offer updates on the 2023 Farm Bill, now being negotiated in Washington. After the (always delicious!) Ice Cream Social, a unique 1-1/2-hour session – “Propelling Conservation through Conversation” – brings together commissioners and partners for a general discussion that explores ways to increase commissioner involvement: sharing ideas to get people involved with SWCDs, suggesting ways to enhance commissioners and partners relations and sharing local best practices for conservation events and district operations. Monday evening: dinner and awards!

Tuesday morning, the 29th (after breakfast with seating for 9 regions for easy discussion among fellow commissioners), partners representing IDALS, NRCS, FSA and Iowa DNR will give presentations and updates, taking questions. After break, and by request during Spring Regionals, a 45-minute “Commissioner Training Refresh” will be held, offering value to new and experienced alike. Late morning breakout sessions include three choices, each offering valued insight: “PL 566 Structures” – a topic of great concern to many commissioners in the south east/west where structures have ‘aged’ out, and for NRCS, as well; “Climate Smart Farming” – a new opportunity given new Congressional funding; and “Farm Bill Opportunities” – further information on critical legislation. At noon Tuesday: lunch and more awards! And from there, a safe drive home after a beneficial and helpful two days enjoyed with conservation colleagues. Registration information will be available soon!



The conference is FREE, including lodging, for commissioners and assistant commissioners.

Summer Tour '23

A close look at conservation successes in South-Central Iowa



Top to bottom: Graceland University drill/combine; SIDCA streambank project; Red Haw State Park restoration.

The State Soil Conservation and Water Quality Committee (SSCWQC), in partnership with CDI, held their annual “Conservation Summer Tour” on June 13th, traveling the roads of South-Central Iowa, touring sites in Osceola, Lamoni, Centerville, and Chariton (following joint board meetings held June 12th). The tour viewed conservation efforts, ongoing program activities and offered networking with other conservationists.

The first stop checked in on a SSCWQC Research and Demonstration Grant program at Graceland University in Lamoni. IDALS Water Resource Bureau Chief Jake Hansen – who helped plan and organize the tour – says the tour heard a promising development in planting technology. “They’re working on figuring out a way to seed cover crops while the field is being combined,” said Hansen. Max Pitt, Assoc. Professor of Business at Graceland, demonstrated progress with engineering seed-to-soil planting of cover crops with drill units mounted on a 9600 Deere combine, saving field passes, creating a cost-effective method of planting cover crops.

The tour visited a project on the Decatur/Wayne county line – a Southern Iowa Development Conservation Alliance (SIDCA) streambank project that helped stabilize a county bridge, preventing a major road system from washing out. SIDCA puts focus on erosion control structures, usually to protect bridges or county roads that are vulnerable to erosion and flooding.

In Centerville, the focus was on conservation efforts that protect Rathbun Lake as a source of drinking water for 18 counties in Iowa and Missouri, managed by Rathbun Regional Water Association (RRWA). CDI Executive Director John Whitaker credited the RRWA for meeting the challenges of keeping sediment from getting into the lake. “It is so critically important to put in those sediment structures above the lake,” said Whitaker. “It stops the sediment, helps control flooding by holding back that water for a longer period of time so it doesn’t raise the lake level so much, and it gives chemicals and nutrients that could be getting into the water and becoming a containment from getting into the lake.”

The tour closed the day near Chariton, at the Red Haw State Park, where Jake Hansen credited efforts to restore the area after a devastating tornado struck in March 2022. “The message was how park facilities are being reconstructed, and reforestation is happening – there was a lot of damaged, destroyed trees. It had an impact on fisheries, too. This was an opportunity for us to hear about response and recovery.”

Early bird registration ends July 3rd...!

Now is a great time for SWCDs to join the Soil and Water Conservation Society because this year, SWCS is hosting its 78th International Annual Conference in Des Moines, August 6-9, 2023! The Soil Conservation Society is now the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS), and its mission is to foster the science and art of natural resource conservation. SWCS is a community of more than 2,000 conservation leaders that represent nearly every academic discipline and many different public, private, and nonprofit institutions around the world. SWCS is an international organization, but it is headquartered right here in Ankeny, Iowa. For most of its existence, SWCS members have been individuals, but in 2019, the Society created a new membership level that provides an opportunity for Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) to have office-wide memberships! Learn more, and plan to attend!

Quick links here ...

- [Register for the international conference](#)
- Complete Details: www.swcs.org/23AC
- [Agenda at a glance](#)
- [Discounted Hotel Room Block \(through July 14\)](#)



Healthy Land, Clean Water:

CULTIVATING A LEGACY OF CONSERVATION

78th SWCS INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE

DES MOINES, IOWA

AUGUST 6-9, 2023

SAVE^{the} DATE

www.swcs.org/23AC

#SWCS23

Science Festival Trail 2023

CDI returns to help promote conservation science to area youth



The "Science Festival Trail" returned to Raccoon River Park in West Des Moines in June, and so did CDI – as a co-sponsor with 20 other local conservation and science-focused organizations. (Clockwise:) CDI introduced the Poster Contest to kids and parents; Dr. Julie Meachen, Associate Professor of Anatomy, Des Moines University (standing) presents a discussion on Ice Age fossils; sponsors filled the grounds with information and activities to remind people – especially young people! – that science is the best way to make sense of the world around us; the Aviana Gedler Trio entertained guests through the afternoon.



Jasper SWCD Prairie Seed Farm

A vision to preserve native grass celebrates 20 years of production



(Top:) Mature Indiangrass ready for harvest at Prairie Seed Farm last fall. (Bottom:) Manager Eric Imerman points out purple coneflower.



Jasper SWCD Prairie Seed Farm Manager Eric Imerman

The original idea was to conserve the plants and wildflowers local to Jasper County, growth once trod by Native Americans and the first Jasper County settlers. Curt Donahue, the DC at that time, had a vision to collect and preserve that native seed, and make them available for CRP and along roadways. Curt's Jasper SWCD commissioners liked the idea. Soon, their investment in 12 acres to grow the seed – and a tractor and drill to plant the seed – began the distinctive aspirations of the Jasper SWCD Prairie Seed Farm, celebrating its 20th anniversary this year; the only Iowa SWCD with such an operation. Prairie Seed Farm Manager Eric Imerman says the Prairie Seed Farm – like any farm – is intended to be profitable, while uniquely serving conservation efforts for local farmers who pay the district by the acre to have seed planted – usually CRP. And like most farms, market trends, land values and rain rule the workload. “I’ve been here for 10 years, we go through cycles,” says Eric. “We put in a lot of prairie grass for a year of two, then for two years we don’t.” The farm offers a wide variety of seed mix grown on their acreage or (based on demand) purchased from private growers – bluestem, Indiangrass, switchgrass, milkweed for butterflies, forbs, and more. “We grow the seed, we order the seed, we mix the seed, we take it out and plant it. If our equipment goes out the door, I’m driving it!” Eric believes the farm will stay one-of-a-kind, it’s creation 20 years ago well-timed. “There’s a lot of different ways that district commissioners can promote conservation. This is just one of them. It’s only limited to their imagination, what they want to do. This whole thing started with one man’s imagination and the commissioners listened to the DC, thought this was a good idea, and ran with it.”

Safe and Healthy Farming for All Iowans

By Tabitha Kuehn
I-CASH Outreach Coordinator

Many Iowa farmers are leading the way when it comes to protecting land and water, but it is also important that farmers protect themselves. In 2021, agricultural workers experienced fatal injuries at a rate six times higher than the rate for all U.S. industries (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). Farming is one of the most dangerous occupations, and many Iowans are injured and killed while farming each year.

Farm work is inherently risky, but many of these agricultural injuries and fatalities can be avoided through prevention strategies. Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health, or I-CASH, is a state funded organization dedicated to sharing prevention strategies that make farming safer. I-CASH has been around since 1990 and is a collaborative partnership between the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa Health and Human Services, and Non-Profits for Farm Health.



I-CASH connects Iowa farmers to safety materials in several different ways, such as seasonal campaigns, agricultural youth grants, the annual Midwest Rural and Agricultural Safety and Health Conference, and bi-monthly safety articles published in *Iowa Farmer Today*. The seasonal campaigns are one of I-CASH's largest efforts; four times a year safety information and resources are sent out to every county in Iowa. The summer 2023 campaign focused on mowing safety and included safety

glasses and a booklet of resources. County FSA and ISU extension offices receive the campaigns to distribute in the office or use in educational programming. You can find past campaign topics and check out the 2023 Ag Youth Grant recipients on our website, **[I-CASH.org](https://www.icash.org)**!

We are always looking for more ways to connect with farmers and spread safety information across the state! We invite soil and water commissioners and conservation professionals to reach out with any safety and health topic ideas, opportunities to share our resources, or ways we can help you! You can reach us cph-icash@uiowa.edu or 319-467-0327.

