



Soil and Water Conservation 2001

Conservation Program

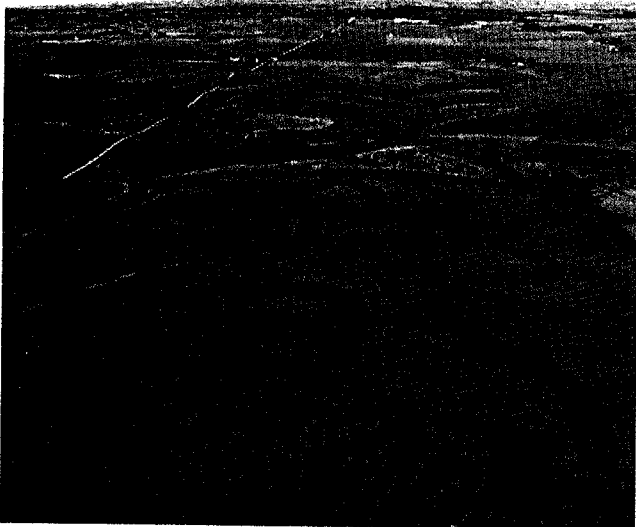


Photo Courtesy of USDA-NRCS

WATER QUALITY PROTECTION

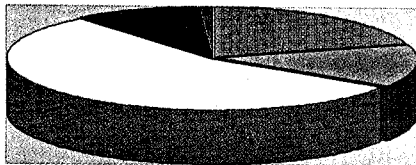
Water quality projects protect the state's surface and ground water from point and non-point sources of contamination. Projects consider the importance of resources to be protected and extent of the water quality problems, proposed solutions, landowner interest and the overall cost effectiveness.

Currently there are 36 water quality projects underway across Iowa to protect ground water, lakes, rivers and streams. Soil and water conservation districts develop strong partnerships with landowners, operators, government and non-profit organizations. These projects provide treatment measures for manure and nutrient management, wetland restoration and enhancement, lake protection and rehabilitation and other protection practices as well as technical assistance.

SOIL CONSERVATION COST SHARE

Since 1973, the Cost Share Program has provided financial resources to assist landowners with the application of structural and management practices to control soil erosion, maintain land productivity, and protect water quality.

This year nearly 2,500 landowners installed practices protecting more than 27,000 acres with terraces, waterways, structures and basins. The State of Iowa provided over \$5,300,000.00 in cost-share incentives.



- Grade Stabilization Structures
- Terraces
- Other
- Grassed Waterways
- Water & Sediment Basins

WATERSHED PROTECTION

Addressing environmental issues from the watershed approach is sound conservation. These types of projects have achieved dramatic results by reducing erosion, preventing impacts from flooding and providing recreational opportunities.

Incentives were provided in 28 watershed projects for grade stabilization structures, terraces, hay and grassland plantings, stream bank stabilization, tree planting, wetland development, water and sediment basins, and management practices. Technical assistance was available to assist owners and operators install planned practices.

Development grants were awarded to 9 soil and water conservation districts that demonstrated leadership, multi-objective watershed concepts, multiple partnerships and strong evidence that the development grant will lead to a full project.

NO-INTEREST LOANS

Since 1983, when the program was established, 732 no-interest loans have been approved for eligible landowners for the construction of permanent soil conservation practices. This year, 40 new loans were granted with the funds received from current loan payments.

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CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (CREP)

The Iowa CREP is a major state/federal initiative to develop wetlands which are strategically located and designed to remove nitrate from tile-drainage water from cropland areas. This technology was developed through research at Iowa State University which confirms that wetlands meeting program requirements will remove 40-90% of the nitrate and 90+% of herbicide in drainage water from upper lying-croplands. The program will provide up to \$38 million in funding over the next three years to construct and restore up to 9000 acres of wetlands and buffers.

The state and federal agreement initiating the program was signed by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman and Governor Thomas Vilsack August 17, 2001. Advanced computer techniques have been developed to assist in siting CREP wetlands to assure program requirements can be met. Through these technologies, a total of thirty (30) potential wetland sites were identified in 2001, and landowner contacts and wetland designs are underway through the soil and water conservation district field offices.



Photo Courtesy of USDA-NRCS

REAP WATER QUALITY PRACTICES

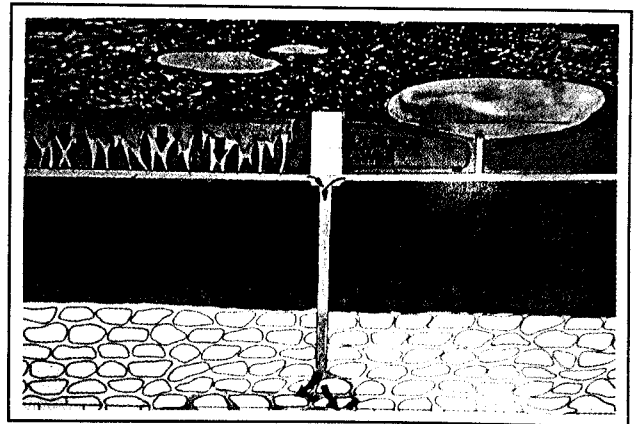
REAP funding provided incentives to 882 applicants to establish water quality practices that protect Iowa's lakes, rivers and streams. More than 6,400 acres were protected by those practices.

The principal objective of the Water Quality Protection Practices program is to protect water quality in Iowa by targeting and preventing off-site sediment and nutrient and livestock waste pollution problems. These funds are allocated equally to Soil and Water Conservation Districts across the state to address water quality protection problems of local significance.

AG DRAINAGE WELL CLOSURE

The program provides financial assistance for closing high priority agricultural drainage wells and developing alternative drainage outlets to surface streams. Closure of 66 wells and construction of alternative outlets have now been completed under state cost-share from the fund at an estimated total project cost of \$5.2 million. These projects include Pocahontas Drainage District 176 and Wright County Drainage Districts 230, 231, and 232. The Wright County projects completed included the wells that were mandated to be closed by December 31, 2001 to eliminate the environmental risk to drinking water supplies associated with the wells in close proximity to earthen animal waste storages.

High-priority projects to close an additional 22 wells have received funding commitments and are currently in various stages of design and development. A total of 88 wells will be closed upon completion of all currently-funded projects, at an estimated total project cost of \$8 million.



MINING RECLAMATION

The Division is reclaiming abandoned coal mines in Marion, Mahaska and Monroe Counties with Department of Interior, Office of Surface Mining funds. These sites were mined prior to 1977 and problems of dangerous highwalls, acid mine drainage and off-site sediment damage are being corrected.

Active coal mine sites in Marion, Mahaska, Lucas and Monroe Counties are being reclaimed with bond money forfeited from mining companies following their bankruptcy.

The Division also enforces the State's mining and reclamation laws on more than 1140 minerals operations that produce sand, gravel, gypsum, clay and quarried and crushed stone.

Conservation Partners

IOWA WATERSHED TASK FORCE

The Iowa Watershed Task Force met its charge to study the status of the state's watersheds, with the input of more than 100 Iowans representing landowners, organizations, agribusiness, local government, and state and federal agencies. A Coordinating Committee has been established to carry out Task Force recommendations to enhance the organization, integration, local leadership and funding for comprehensive, multi-objective watershed protection.

INTEGRATED FARM AND LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

In crop year 2001, more than 150 farm operators voluntarily participated in the Integrated Farm and Livestock Management (IFLM) Demonstration Program. These producers demonstrate the effectiveness and adaptability of emerging agricultural practices focusing on nitrogen management, reduced tillage, and manure utilization.

The IFLM program provides a valuable link between sound research and actual in-field application with the goal of improving input management to the benefit of the state both economically and environmentally.



Photo Courtesy of ISU Extension

FISH-KILL RESTITUTION PROJECTS

Twenty-one districts worked with landowners in 26 projects to restore streams and make watershed improvements in streams where fish kills resulted from pollution releases. Funding has come from Department of Natural Resources penalties assessed against those responsible for the pollution.

BUFFER INITIATIVE

Through the Iowa Buffer Initiative, enrollment in the USDA Continuous Sign-up Conservation Reserve Program has increased by 28 percent. State funds support staff and specialized equipment in Iowa's soil and water conservation districts encouraging landowners to participate. Funds also provide sign-up bonuses for select buffer practices complementing similar USDA opportunities. These efforts have helped Iowa remain the leading state in this USDA program.

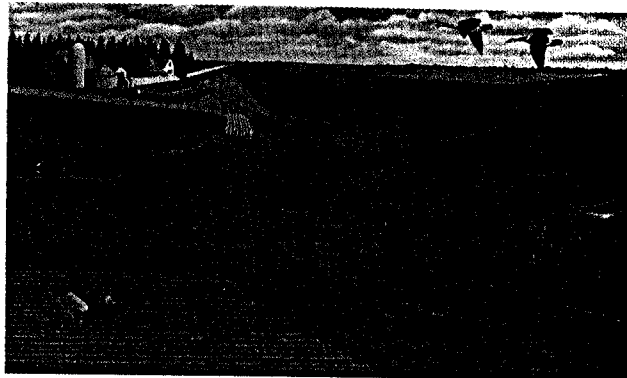


Photo Courtesy of USDA-NRCS

NEW NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The Division supports research at Iowa State University to develop improved crop and manure management practices that will reduce environmental impacts. Technologies being developed include the use of wetlands for water quality protection and new nitrogen placement techniques. The technology of using strategically-located wetlands for nitrate removal has become the basis for the Iowa Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). New nitrogen placement technologies offer promise of reducing nitrate movement from cropped lands by 25-50%.

SOIL SURVEY

Soil surveys provide a field-based, scientific inventory of soil resources, including soil maps, data about the physical and chemical properties of soils, and information on the potential uses and limitations of each soil. The Division cooperates with county governments, Iowa State University and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to map the state's soils. This year, completed soil survey updates were distributed in Black Hawk, Humboldt, Keokuk and Monona Counties. Editing and compilation work occurred in six counties with field mapping in an additional seven.

Strengthening Our Conservation Resources

IOWA ENVIROTHON

Two hundred fifty students, representing 50 teams from across the state, competed in this year's Envirothon. This nationwide competition for high school students tests their knowledge in forestry, aquatics, soils and wildlife. Each team makes a presentation applying the principles of environmental science and policy to a hypothetical problem. The Division collaborated with Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) to hold five regional competitions and the state contest. The winner this year, advancing to the final competition in Mississippi, was Linn-Mar High School.

STAFF TRAINING

Utilizing emerging internet technologies, the Division has embarked on a new, on-going program to provide staff with better tools to improve the delivery of conservation technical assistance and programs to Iowans.

Fifty-two staff have been participating in web-based training, where the employee and supervisor can develop an individualized training program. Also, technical staff are receiving instruction in Global Positioning System (GPS), Geographic Information System (GIS), and use of a personal data assistant. In addition, field office staff continue to participate in training opportunities including integrated crop management, water quality enhancement, and watershed protection to improve customer service.

SWCD COMMISSIONER DEVELOPMENT

The Division, CDI and NRCS presented an orientation session for new commissioners in 2000. With that session receiving great reviews, the partnership worked during 2001 to create a series of development sessions for all commissioners.

New development modules focus on: Life as a Commissioner, Caring for Our Resources, Working Together, Reaching Out in Our Community, Effective Communications, Money Management. The entire series of six modules will be presented in 2002.

The Division of Soil Conservation prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status.

Proposed FY-03 Funding

Maintain Current General Fund

• Operations (includes Commissioner expense/1M \$268,376)	6,943,500
Total	\$ 6,943,500

Maintain Current Infrastructure Fund

• Cost Share	7,500,000
• Watershed Protection Program	2,700,000
• Integrated Farm/Livestock Mgt. Demo	850,000
• CREP	1,500,000
• Buffer Initiative	1,500,000
• Ag Drainage Well Closure	1,000,000
• Soil & Water Enhancement/REAP (est)	2,108,700
Total	\$17,158,700

Total to Maintain Current Funding \$24,102,200

Proposed New Infrastructure Funding/Authorization

Soil Survey Funding/Authorization

• Reauthorize Soil Survey Program	200,000
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Soil Conservation Cost Share

• Additional Cost Share	2,500,000
• Authorization to use 10% of total Cost-Share funding to meet operational needs for program implementation:	

Field Office Technicians (13) for: 364,000

—pasture/paddock management

—CREP/pilot wetlands programs

—nutrient management systems

—practice design/application

IFIP Program Mgr. 48,000

Field Rep. 48,000

Equipment, training, travel,
& supplies 30,000

Commissioner/SWCD
operations 250,000

Urban Cons. Specialists (5) 180,000

Urban Cons. Program Mgr. 48,000

Equipment, training, travel,
& supplies 32,000

Total New Askings \$2,700,000

Watershed Protection Program

• Authorization to use 2% of total funding to meet operational needs for program implementation:

Watershed Contracting Officer 44,000

Equipment, training, travel,
& supplies 10,000