

83rd Annual Report East Pottawattamie SWCD

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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East Pottawattamie SWCD - 2025 Recap

by Laura Ferguson, District Conservationist, West Pottawattamie

I had the privilege of serving as the Acting District Conservationist for East Pottawattamie County in 2025. I really enjoyed working with the producers and landowners in this part of the county this past year. East Pottawattamie has a lot of great conservation getting put on the ground. I've always been impressed by the number of no-till farmers in this area. Terraces have always been popular conservation practice in East Pott. In 2025, we had 50,128' of new terraces put in, with 66,983' of terrace upgrades. Cover crop acres funded through our state cost share programs exceeded 7,500 acres, which is 2,500 acres more than 2024! An additional 1,100 acres of cover crop acres were planted through federal programs. We have many great programs for cost share assistance, and we also can provide technical assistance without having to sign up for a program. Please call or stop by the office to discuss any of your conservation goals!

One exciting project completed in 2025 was 3,500 feet of streambank stabilization along the West Nishnabotna River. This practice helps save valuable farmland from eroding into the river and improves water quality and sedimentation. There are an additional 3,000 feet of streambank stabilization planned for 2026. These projects are funded by the West Nish RCPP program, a partnership between NRCS and Golden Hills RC&D.

The Oakland NRCS office faced some transitions over this past year, too. Terry Gleaves retired after 25 years of service at the end of 2024, although we are still lucky to have him around as an assistant commissioner! Russ Hopp also retired from his role as an ACES Civil Engineering Tech. We welcomed Jill Manhart in February 2025 as a State Technician, shared with Shelby County. She has been a great asset with terrace and waterway layout and design. In March, Kayla Chau joined the team as our Pheasants Forever wildlife biologist. Kayla covers Pottawattamie, Shelby, and Harrison counties, and can help assist you with your CRP and wildlife goals. In May, McKenna Sick joined the Oakland Team as our 780 district technician. McKenna helps with our dry hydrant program, CRP field reviews, cover crops, and other projects where needed. In January of this year, Shawn Macha started as the Acting District Conservationist for East Pottawattamie. He will be a great addition to the Oakland office.

It has been a pleasure getting to work with you all this past year, and I know East Pottawattamie will continue to be a county that stands out for its conservation efforts and local engagement. We are fortunate to have a committed board of Soil & Water Commissioners, a great Field Office staff, and most importantly the farmers and landowners that put conservation on the ground.



Need to contact the office?

| NAME, TITLE | EMAIL | EXT. |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Shawn Macha, Acting DC | shawn.macha@usda.gov | 712-482-7045 |
| Susan Rush, Conservation Assistant | susan.rush@ia.nacdnet.net | 712-482-7044 |
| Kelsey Blodgett, Resource Team Lead | kelsey.blodgett@usda.net | 712-482-7053 |
| Laura Monson, Education Coordinator | laura.monson@ia.nacdnet.net | 712-482-7049 |
| Jill Manhart, State Technician | jill.manhart@ia.nacdnet.net | 712-482-7048 |
| Andrew Casson, Technician Soil Conservationist | andrew.casson@usda.gov | 712-482-7047 |
| Laura Sellers, Wetland Specialist | laurel.sellers@usda.gov | 515-236-0452 |

STATE AND FEDERAL PROGRAMS

State Programs

iowaagriculture.gov/administrative/department-programs

Federal Programs

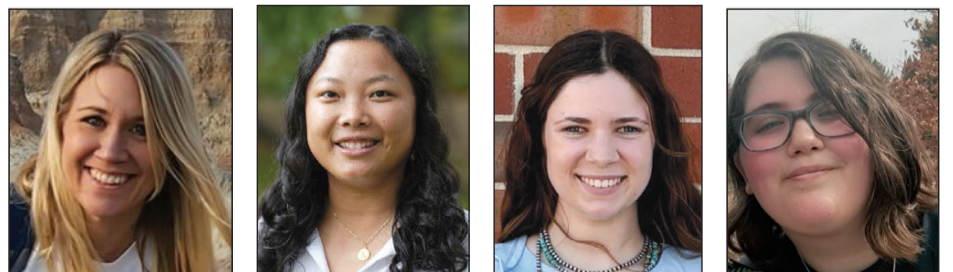
click on newsroom, then fact sheets: www.fsa.usda.gov



East Pottawattamie NRCS Field Office Staff

Shawn Macha, Acting District Conservationist; Kelsey Blodgett, NRCS Oakland Resource Team Lead; Andrew Casson, NRCS Technical Soil Conservationist; Susan Rush, Conservation Assistant; Laura Monson, County Education Coordinator, Jill Manhart, State Technician; Laurel Sellers, Wetland Specialist; Brad Richardson, Resource Conservationist; Kelsi Solheim, Farm Bill Specialist; Kayla Chau, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Specialist; McKenna Sick, 780 Technician; and Madeline Claussen, CDI Administrative Support Specialist.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Water Quality, Pottawattamie County, and East Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District employees assist in the SWCD mission.



2025 YEAR IN REVIEW – East Pottawattamie Soil & Water Conservation District

As we say goodbye to 2025, let's take a moment to reflect on the accomplishments of the East Pottawattamie Soil & Water Conservation District over the past year.

We began the year in January by hosting our Annual Awards Night Banquet, recognizing the 2025 award recipients. Once again, we extend our sincere thanks to the Oakland FFA members for assisting with the food line. We also attended the Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors meeting to present our annual Education Coordinator update.

February was a busy month, starting with our team hosting a booth at the 2025 Ag Summit & Expo at the Mid-America Center in Council Bluffs. We spoke with hundreds of attendees about conservation opportunities they could implement in their operations. While many attendees were not from East Pottawattamie County, it was a great opportunity to educate producers from surrounding counties and help get conservation practices on the ground across the region.

On February 20, the first-ever four-county Contractor Meeting was held at the Twisted Tail near Beebeetown. This event was the result of extensive collaboration among offices and proved to be a huge success. Contractors implementing conservation projects throughout East and West Pottawattamie, Shelby, and Harrison Counties were invited to attend.

In March, the 2nd Annual Southwest Iowa Soil Health (SWISH) Winter Conference was held in Atlantic. Several team members attended, and Terry Gleaves presented at the conference.

Our Dry Hydrant Project continued to serve the citizens of East Pottawattamie County when a large fire occurred near Elliott. Seven fire departments responded, and 4,500 gallons of water were pumped from Farm Creek to fight the fire. This time of year, it is virtually impossible to use tillage equipment to create fire breaks, making alternative water sources critical for volunteer fire departments and community safety.

In May, McKenna Sick joined the East Pottawattamie team. The Iowa SWCD 780-hour position (Soil Conservation Technician I) provides technical assistance to landowners, including field surveys, design, layout, and inspection of conservation practices aimed at improving soil health and water quality. Having this additional support was a great benefit to our district.

June remained busy with Commissioners attending the CDI Board Executive Meeting in Decorah, a Watershed Management Authority (WMA) meeting, and the SWISH Summer Soil Health Field Day. Districts must reapply annually for 780 positions, and we were



awarded another position for FY 2026. The salary for this position is covered by IDALS with a 20% match from the district, allowing us to expand staff capacity while minimizing local financial impact.

In July, we hosted another informational table at the East Pottawattamie County Fair. During this time, the team met with Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig to discuss conservation practices implemented in the county and our Dry Hydrant Project, which addresses severe water shortages and restrictions in southwest Iowa.

In August, Commissioners and Associate Commissioners attended the 79th Annual SWCD of Iowa Conference. During the awards luncheon, East Pottawattamie had the opportunity to recognize Chen Gao from AHSTW, the NACD National Poster Contest winner. East Pottawattamie Commissioner was also recognized as Iowa Commissioner of the Year for 2025.

September the implementation of 911 signage for all existing dry hydrants in East Pottawattamie County took place. These signs help volunteer fire departments—and mutual aid departments unfamiliar with the area—quickly locate water sources. In collaboration with landowners, the Hancock Fire Department, and County Roads, an additional dry hydrant was installed northwest of Hancock at Sunny Ridge Farm.

October brought significant challenges with a government shutdown that left our office operating with only three employees. The timing was especially difficult, as it coincided with the narrow fall window for implementing conservation practices. While some work was completed, many projects could not move forward due to the shutdown. We continue to emphasize to elected officials the importance of contingency planning to meet conservation goals and serve the people of East Pottawattamie County and the State of Iowa. Fortunately, NRCS funding is secured through September 30, 2026.

After 43 days, the office fully reopened and operations resumed. The Paasch Pond dry hydrant maintenance project was dredged, trees were removed along the south side, and additional dredging will occur once the ground is frozen and able to get down onto the ledge. A new pipe was installed and GPS-marked for future maintenance.

Looking ahead to 2026, we will welcome Shawn Macha as Acting District Conservationist for a 120-day detail. Laura Ferguson, who served as Acting DC for East Pottawattamie over the past year, will resume her role in West Pottawattamie County. We thank Laura for her service to EP.

In closing, it has been an honor to serve again as Chair in 2025. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our farmers, landowners, community partners, the Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors, and the residents of East Pottawattamie County for their continued commitment to soil health and water quality.

Respectfully,
Kami Willett, Chair

East Pottawattamie Soil & Water Conservation District

Please join us on Facebook – East Pottawattamie SWCD for upcoming events or stop by the office in Oakland and visit the staff about conservation opportunities that will fit your farming operation!

<https://www.facebook.com/eastpottawattamie.swcd>

A Rich Tradition Of Partnership

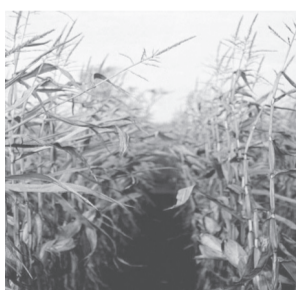
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FEDERAL PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

Kelsey Blodgett, Resource Team Lead
 If you ever happen to stop by the field office and ask about financial assistance opportunities for conservation, you may be overwhelmed by our response, as we have many programs available through Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as well as our partners, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) and the East Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District. As each program operates differently with specific goals, it is ideal to have a base knowledge of each program so you can decide which ones will best meet your goals. Below is an overview of our federal programs that we offer in East Pott:



Kelsey Blodgett
 Resource Team Lead

EQIP Program

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) program is our simplest and most “straight forward” federal financial assistance program. EQIP can be used to treat resource concerns on cropland, forest land, farmstead and pasture and can be used to treat concerns related to soil erosion and soil quality, water quality, forage production and health, or wildlife. Through EQIP, we develop a plan and estimate that reflects the applicant’s goals and objectives on their land and rank the application to compete with similar applications across the state of Iowa for a specific pot of funding. EQIP financial assistance does not provide funds based on a percentage of the overall cost of the project, but rather, is estimated based on a flat rate per unit of the conservation practice that is applied. An EQIP cost list is updated every year to help develop EQIP project estimates. An EQIP contract typically lasts between 2-5 years to give the producer time to implement the practices in the contract.

CSP program

The conservation stewardship program (CSP) is designed to be our “next step” program for producers that are already implementing various conservation practices in their operation. Land uses that are eligible for CSP include: farmstead, cropland, associated ag land, pasture, and forest land. As part of the application process, our office will evaluate your entire operation through a site visit as well as a producer interview to determine what conservation practices are currently implemented and what resource concerns are being met at the time of application. This information will help us to estimate a “base payment” for your contract, which is a payment you would receive every year for a 5-year CSP contract to maintain your operation and conservation practices that you currently have. As part of the site visit and producer interview process, we will also work with you to determine what new conservation practices you would like to implement to take your operation to the “next step” over a 5-year period and what a corresponding estimate for these new practices would be. We would then rank your application to compete with CSP applications across the state for funding. If you are interested in applying for CSP, we can create application scenarios to show what would be required in a funded contract and what the estimated financial assistance would be.

RCPP program- 2857 West Nishnabotna Water Quality and Infrastructure Partnership

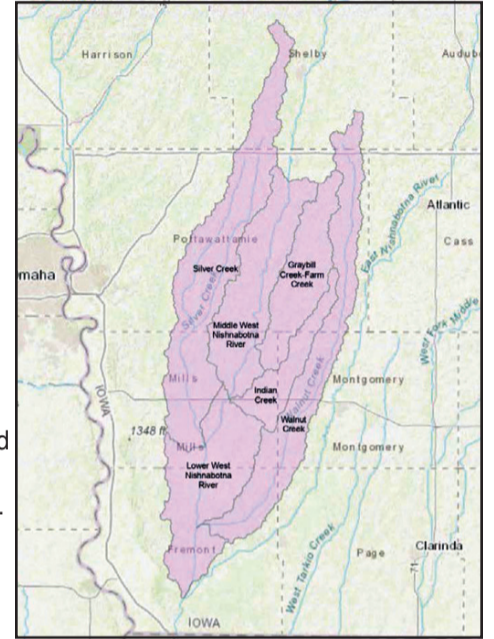
The regional conservation partnership program (RCPP) is a federal program where NRCS and a partner (Golden Hills RC&D is our local partner) work together to administer funds to treat specific resource concerns that the partner has designated as a priority. Our local RCPP partnership takes applications in the West Nishnabotna watershed (see map below) and prioritizes implementing structural practices such as bank stabilization, grade stabilization and terraces, as well as edge of field practices to help improve water quality within the watershed. The project is unique as it fosters a partnership between local producers, landowners, conservation entities and local governments in an effort to strategically treat over 681,000 acres in southwest Iowa. Do you have land within the watershed and a structural project in mind? Reach out to the office for more information.

Regenerative Pilot Program: New In 2026

The Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP) is in its first year of implementation and takes a whole farm approach to conservation while prioritizing the farmers goals and objec-

tives. In order to qualify for RPP, you must be willing to:

- 1) Work with NRCS staff, partners or technical service providers to conduct a whole farm assessment
 - 2) Implement a primary RPP management practice (as listed below):
 Primary Practices
 - Conservation Crop Rotation
 - Contour Farming
 - Contour Orchard and Other Perennial Crop
 - Cover Crop
 - Drainage Water Management
 - Forage Harvest Management
 - Forest Stand Improvement
 - Irrigation Water Management
 - Mulching
 - Nutrient Management
 - Pest Management Conservation System
 - Grazing Management
 - Residue and Tillage Management, No Till
 - Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced
 - Stripcropping
 - 3) Perform soil health testing in the first and last year of the contract to establish a starting baseline to record the resulting changes.
- RPP is a 5 year program that can be applied through EQIP or CSP. If you would like more information on the RPP program, please contact the local field office.



Soil & Water Conservation District Commissioners

Left to right: Terry Gleaves, Assistant Commissioner; Chris Perdue, Commissioner; Dwight Hobson, Commissioner; Dave Applegate, Commissioner; Wesley Henry, Assistant Commissioner; Austin Henningsen, Assistant Commissioner; Bernie Bolton, Commissioner; Kami Willett, Commissioner.

Full time positions available:

- Agronomy Sales - Oakland
- Custom Applicator/Outside Operations – Shelby
- Feed Delivery Driver (Harlan or Denison)
- Propane or Fuel Delivery Driver

Part-time Seasonal Positions

available:

- Agronomy Outside Operations – All Locations - Help fill anhydrous ammonia tanks and tender truck drivers, CDL holder preferred



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Atlantic, Defiance, Denison, Harlan, Irwin, Moorhead, Oakland, Portsmouth, Shelby

OATS AND APPLES

Dwight Hobson, Commissioner

Conservation Practices

As long as we can control our weeds with herbicides, there is no reason to till cornstalks. Tilling soybean stubble is just a waste of time, fuel and equipment.

A combination of no till, terraces, waterways and cover crops can stop erosion and I'm proud of our operators who use this on our HEL fields.

Nitrate Concerns

But! And it's a big but, nitrates, especially nitrates in the Raccoon and Des Moines rivers are a significant concern. So far, all conservation practices have been voluntary. Conservation plans on highly erodible land (HEL) is required by Iowa Code and you must follow to get crop insurance, cost

share, or other FSA programs. It is still voluntary what you choose to get to compliance.

If you resent compliance, how will you feel when nitrogen application is regulated? There are those lobbying our legislature to do this and return Iowa agriculture to "oats and apples." I suggest that you start experimenting with your nitrogen rates and figuring how you can get by with less.

Reducing Nitrates

Moderate nitrogen applications, following the 4R's, a small grain in rotation, cover crops that over winter, and bio-reactors or saturated buffers all help reduce nitrates. Educate yourself. What are the nitrate levels coming out of your tile lines? In your creek? Inform yourself, then act.

ON THE EDGE

*Corrine Jenkins, Environmental Specialist/
Nishnabotna Watershed Coordinator*

The new year brings new opportunities, and it is our responsibility to educate ourselves and embrace change, even with conservation. I am excited to announce funding is available for conservation practices that aim to improve water quality and enhance soil health through edge of field practices in southwest Iowa. Although we already see filter strips, field borders, and CRP seedings, we can add to the list of practices with a bioreactor or saturated buffer.

In a saturated buffer, the water from subsurface drainage in the field is routed through a control structure that is placed at the edge of a field. Water slowly flows out of the tile and through the soil under the perennial buffer. This allows retention time for the removal of nitrate through plant uptake, and an opportunity for de-nitrification before the water is released to the neighboring body of water.

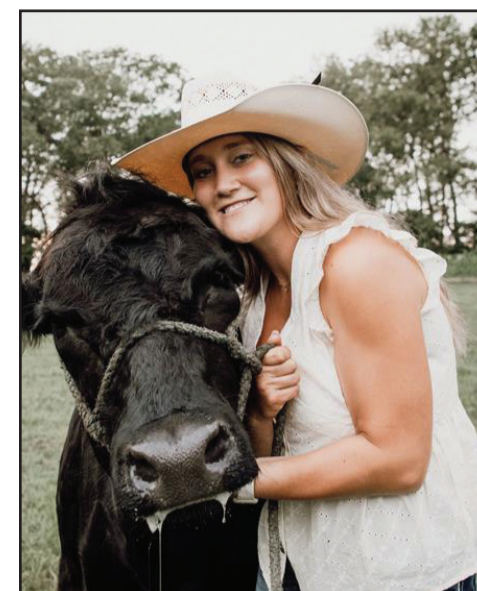
Just like a saturated buffer, a bioreactor also intercepts the drainage flow; however, the water flows through a buried trench of wood chips (carbon source) where naturally

occurring microbes remove nitrate from the water before it is released. These edge of field practices are designed to only treat a portion of the annual flow so in a high precipitation event, there is a bypass for some of the water.

It is important to understand that saturated buffers and bioreactors apply to subsurface drainage systems, not underground outlet systems where intakes could allow the entry of soil and debris which could potentially plug tile lines. Soils and topography are also key. Control structures are installed to raise the water table without harmful effects to crops, channel banks, or adjacent land.

Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship will pay for installation of the practice as well as an incentive on buffer acres. Incentives vary depending on whether the area will be harvested for hay or left standing.

If you would like to hear more about improving water quality through edge of field practices, I would love to meet with you. Please contact your local NRCS office or contact me, Corrine Jenkins, at 515-776-2775.



2025 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Caden Forristall

Congratulations to our 2025 East Pottawattamie SWCD, CDI Conservation Scholarship winner and the recipient of the 2025 Russ and Phyllis Brandes Memorial Scholarship, Caden Forristall!

Caden graduated from Riverside High School in May 2025 and attends Ridgewater College in Willmar, MN studying Precision Agriculture. His long-term goals are to take over his family farm and begin his own tiling business.

Caden received a \$500 scholarship at the district level as well as a \$500 scholarship through the Russ and Phyllis Brandes Memorial Scholarship fund.

Congratulations Caden! All of us at the East Pottawattamie SWCD wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors.

Ryleigh Harrison

Congratulations to our 2025 Robert Zimmerman Memorial Scholarship recipient, Ryleigh Harrison! Ryleigh graduated from Griswold High School in May 2025 and attends Northwest Missouri State studying animal science on the pre-vet track. She then plans to attend the Iowa State School of Veterinary Medicine and eventually hopes to open her own rural small and large animal vet clinic. Ryleigh received a \$500 scholarship through the Robert Zimmerman Memorial Scholarship fund. Congratulations Ryleigh! All of us at the East Pottawattamie SWCD wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors.

OUTSTANDING COMMISSIONER AWARD

Kami Willett was presented with the Outstanding Commissioner Award at the Annual CDI Conference in August 2025. The Outstanding Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner award is an annual award presented by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship to recognize the outstanding contributions of individuals serving as commissioners in Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Kami's approach to conservation is deeply personal, rooted in genuine care for her community; and she is known for her collaborative approach and effective leadership in coordinating projects, engaging partners and supporting district goals and policies.



CHECK OUT THE EAST POTTAWATTAMIE SWCD WEBSITE



You'll find an online version of the Annual Report along with helpful resources and information from your East Pottawattamie SWCD Team.

<https://www.soilwaterconservationia.com>

SUMMER COST SHARE – THE INVESTMENT THAT PAYS OFF IN THE LONG RUN!

Summer conservation projects may require producers to temporarily forgo crop income on acres designated for conservation practices. While this short-term sacrifice can be challenging, the long-term benefits of these projects far outweigh the initial costs.

Producers carefully plan their activities throughout the year and for the upcoming seasons, but many factors—such as weather patterns, frost timing, and contractor availability—are beyond their control. Given that the windows for planting and completing conservation projects can vary significantly from year to year, scheduling these projects in the summer (construction must start after June 15th and be completed by September 15th) increases the likelihood of successful implementation.

Investing in conservation today can lead to more resilient farming operations tomorrow. To help offset the income loss from these projects, we offer summer Cost Share programs designed to support producers in reaching their conservation goals.

Visit the Oakland office to speak with our staff and learn about the available programs!



DRY FIRE HYDRANTS IN EAST POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY

By Dave Applegate, Commissioner

Enhancing Rural Fire Protection

Dry fire hydrants play a vital role in improving fire safety throughout East Pottawattamie County. Unlike traditional hydrants, dry fire hydrants are installed in rural areas where municipal water lines are unavailable. These devices allow local fire departments to access water from ponds, lakes, or streams, providing a reliable source for firefighting operations. A dry fire hydrant consists of 8-inch PVC pipe installed into the water with a screen on the intake. The end above water has a quick coupler for the fire truck to attach their suction hose.

The installation of dry fire hydrants has significantly strengthened the county's emergency response capabilities. By reducing the time needed to locate water during fire incidents, these hydrants ensure faster and more effective firefighting. Local officials continue to promote the placement of dry hydrants at strategic locations, partnering with landowners to maximize coverage and accessibility. We are installing 911 address signs at each location. Each fire department will receive a map and address to quickly locate the hydrant. These hydrants become very important for field fires and building fires. Due to town water restrictions the hydrants can become another water source. Long power outages can also be a problem. The water towers can be too low to supply enough water for a fire.

Currently we have six dry hydrants in place. Our goal is to have one in each of the 14 townships in East Pottawattamie County. The East Pottawattamie SWCD has funds to install and maintain each dry hydrant. There will be no cost or labor required by the landowner. Sites are still needed in the following townships: Pleasant, Knox, Layton, Valley, Washington, Center, Belnap and Wright. If you have a location that would be or can be made accessible to fire trucks, please call the Oakland office at 712-482-6486.

Residents and property owners are encouraged to support these efforts by allowing access to water sources for hydrant installation. With ongoing community cooperation, East Pottawattamie County can further enhance its fire protection network and safeguard homes, farms, and businesses against fire emergencies.

PARTNERSHIPS IMPORTANT IN LATEST ADMINISTRATION TRANSITION

By Jon Hubbert, State Conservationist, USDA-NRCS, Iowa

Last year was quite memorable, with many ups and downs. Building upon the challenges we all faced will help us to be better prepared for the path ahead as we continue to deliver on our mission and work with Iowa farmers to meet their conservation goals and objectives.

I am very proud of NRCS staff for meeting the challenges that we have faced throughout last year, and grateful for the support and patience our conservation partners gave us. We are fortunate to have the Iowa conservation partnership in place to help us continue to serve Iowa farmers. This past year is a prime example of how the partnership benefits conservation implementation in Iowa.

We have had many staff working several jobs, sometimes in multiple counties, to get the job done well and to serve our customers. Below are some accomplishments that our staff achieved – with the help of our conservation partners:

- Through our four primary Farm Bill conservation programs, staff wrote 1,337 new contracts that will cover about 258,000 private land acres. We obligated more than \$75 million last year! It should be noted that Iowa farmers also invested millions to address and improve conservation on their operations.

- Grazing management, cover crops, fence, brush management and livestock watering facility were the most popular practices contracted through EQIP last year.

- Our easement team closed seven floodplain easements, stemming from the 2019 floods that affected farmers near rivers and tributaries statewide. The team also closed out eight traditional wetland easements.

- NRCS also provided disaster relief through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) to communities

impacted by flooding and high winds, including the Cities of Pleasant Hill, Spencer, and Johnston, and Polk and Webster Counties.

- Our staff wrote nearly 7,000 conservation plans last year, covering 685,000 acres.

Our budget for FY26 appears to be on par with last year, but again, it will take great effort from our staff and partners to obligate funds and accomplish the many other required activities such as cultural resources reviews, compliance checks, wetland determinations, and CRP plans – just to name a few.

NRCS 2026 Priorities

Lastly, NRCS Chief Aubrey J.D. Betencourt recently sent out the five NRCS priorities. They include:

- 1. Preserve and Protect Agricultural Land** (Goal: Reduce the loss of productive farmland and safeguard the long-term viability of America's agricultural landscapes.)

- 2. Modernize NRCS Infrastructure and Technology** (Goal: Transform NRCS into a digitally agile agency that empowers staff and farmers through modern tools and systems.)

- 3. Recenter Field Engagement and Technical Assistance** (Goal: Re-establish NRCS' presence in the field to deliver hands-on, personalized support to farmers.)

- 4. Strengthen Partnerships by Streamlining Processes and Accountability** (Goal: Leverage partnerships as force multipliers while reducing internal friction to accelerate conservation outcomes.)

- 5. Shift to Outcome-Based Conservation and Farmer Empowerment** (Goal: Measure success through outcomes and empower farmers with data, recognition, and market access.)

For more details about NRCS priorities, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/priorities.

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BUILDING IOWA'S CONSERVATION MOMENTUM

By Secretary Mike Naig, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship

Iowans have a long and proud history of caring for the land, and that work continues today through the efforts of our farmers, landowners, and public and private partners, including the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Conservation is not new to us. It is part of our agricultural legacy. And this past year showed, once again, that Iowa is accelerating progress in meaningful, measurable ways.

We continued to advance the goals of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy with the kind of boots-on-the-ground, dirt-moving, project-installing work that makes a real difference. We saw strong adoption of conservation practices across the board. Landowners stepped up. Local partners leaned into the work. We saw momentum in both rural and urban areas, and we saw people working together, especially in priority watersheds like the Des Moines, the Raccoon and the Middle Cedar.

That spirit of collaboration has been building for more than a decade. Since 2013, farmers and landowners, working alongside nearly 450 public and private partners, have been pulling in the same direction. When that happens in Iowa, good things follow. And that teamwork showed up in a big way this year. With the help of every Soil and Water Conservation District, we set an all-time cost-share record for the fourth year in a row. At the state level, we supported more than \$32.7 million in soil and water practice implementation, nearly \$6.5 million more than last year's cost share record. We processed more than 7,300 claims – that's 630 more than last year and more than 1,800 more than just five years ago. These numbers reflect real demand, real commitment and real results.

The progress we are making today builds on a strong foundation. For decades, Iowa farmers installed terraces, grassed waterways, and sediment basins to reduce erosion and phosphorus loss. Those efforts paid off, and because of that sustained commitment, we are now nearly at our statewide phosphorus reduction goal. That success story is important, not only because of what it achieved, but because it proves that long-term, science-based, voluntary conservation efforts work in Iowa.

Today, we are writing the next chapter. Our focus now also includes reducing nitrogen losses through wetlands, bioreactors, and saturated buffers. And we are scaling up those practices at a faster pace than ever before.

Through our batch and build model, we are streamlining funding, engineering, and construction, making it easier for farmers to say yes to conservation. We now have batch and build agreements working in 28 counties, and that number continues to grow.

The pace of progress has only increased in recent months. Together, we had record demand for cover crop cost-share, and Iowa farmers are now planting nearly four million



acres of cover crops. We initiated twenty-six wetland projects in 2025, the most ever completed in a single year. We expanded the cattle and conservation working lands project to eight counties. And we launched a new streamside buffer program that is helping address near-stream challenges across the state. Our partners at Iowa State University are also advancing this work by rolling out tools like N-FACT that help farmers optimize nitrogen rates, improve yields and protect water quality.

As we look ahead to the next year, we should carry forward the same spirit of teamwork, innovation and determination that has gotten us this far. Iowa's farmers, landowners, districts, and partners have shown what is possible when we work together with purpose. Thank you for everything you do for Iowa's land, water, and people. Let us build on our momentum, push even harder and accomplish even more in the year ahead.

STATE TECHNICIAN INTRODUCTION

Hi, my name is Jill Manhart and I am a State Technician in East Pottawattamie and Shelby County. I grew up on my family's farm outside of Neola, IA near Beebeetown. I always had an interest in geology and horticulture, growing up collecting rocks and always trying to identify flowers. I knew I wanted more than just a desk job, to be more involved in agriculture, and helping farmers.

Through working with Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and NRCS I have learned so much more about soil health and how important conservation is to the future of agriculture and I am excited to continue to work with our producers and utilize the cost share programs available through IDALS & SWCD.



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NEW PHEASANTS FOREVER BIOLOGIST AVAILABLE TO LANDOWNERS



Kayla Chau is one of southwestern Iowa's Pheasants Forever (PF) and Quail Forever's (QF) Farm Bill Wildlife Biologists. Her position partners with USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and she is stationed within their offices. Her service area includes Harrison, Pottawattamie, and Shelby counties. Kayla has been in southwestern Iowa for almost a year and is enjoying the beautiful scenery and diverse ecosystems.

Kayla was born and raised in the suburbs around Des Moines, Iowa where she spent her free time getting her hands on whatever critters she could find in her neighborhood. She attended Iowa State University and graduated in 2022 with a degree in Animal Ecology, focusing on wildlife. During and after college, she worked

seasonally with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Her first seasonal position was with the Loess Hills State Forest in Pisgah, IA, where she was part of the field crew. Her work consisted of cutting down eastern red cedars with a chainsaw, hand collecting rare native plants, and controlling invasive species. She eventually returned for another season—this time as part of the fire crew—where she helped burn over 400 acres and responded to the Jones Creek Wildfire, which burned 3,293 acres in 2023. She also assisted the Iowa DNR Prairie Resource Center in Lehigh, IA with cleaning native seeds harvested that season.

Kayla's journey with PF began in Minnesota in July 2023. She was stationed in Madison as a Farm Bill Biologist for Lac qui Parle County. Her primary focus was assisting NRCS with the Conservation Reservation Program (CRP) and supporting the local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD).

The Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist position provides a one-stop shop for your wildlife habitat needs. Kayla partners with the NRCS, Iowa DNR, Iowa Department of Ag. and Land Stewardship (IDALS), local SWCDs, and local PF chapters. Through these partnerships, she helps inform and assist landowners/operators of a wide variety of conservation practices and programs. Pheasants Forever believes the key to improving our wildlife populations is by improving our wildlife HABITAT. Farm Bill Wildlife Biologists can visit your land and create a personalized plan to enhance wildlife habitat—which also benefits soil and water quality—based on your goals. This service is free of charge thanks to NRCS, IDALS, SWCDs, DNR, and local PF chapters!

Kayla Chau, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist
 Email: kchau@pheasantsforever.org • Phone: 320-844-8234



TERRACE REPORT BY TOWNSHIP

| | | |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|
| 2025 Total Terrace Footage = 136,476' | | |
| PLEASANT 13,090' | KNOX 9,968' | LAYTON |
| JAMES 28,491' | VALLEY 41,435' | LINCOLN 4,932' |
| WASHINGTON | BELKNAP | CENTER 12,106' |
| | CARSON 1,845' | WRIGHT 3,073' |
| MACEDONIA 4,267' | GROVE | WAVELAND 17,269' |

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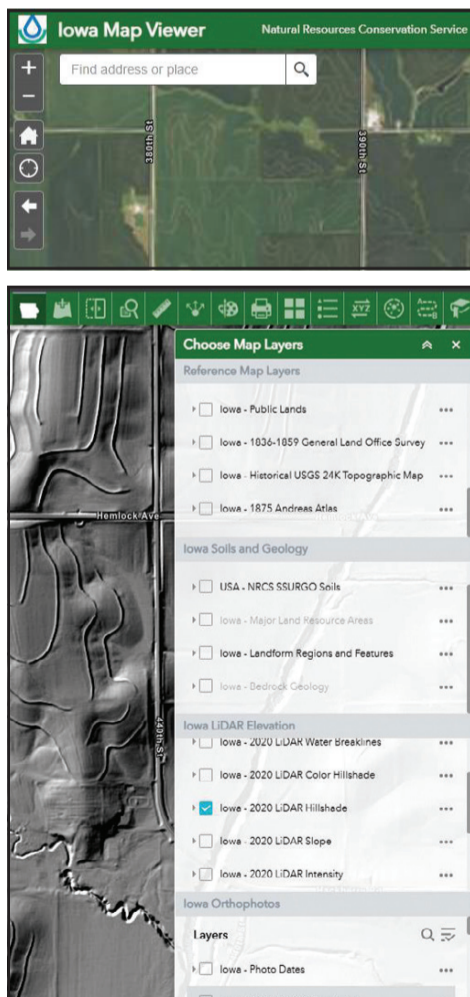
| | | | |
|---|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2025 Total State Cost Share Cover Crop Acres = 7,565 ac. | PLEASANT 559 ac. | KNOX 15 ac. | LAYTON 1,981 ac. |
| | JAMES 419 ac. | VALLEY 1,125 ac. | LINCOLN 595 ac. |
| | WASHINGTON 255 ac. | BELKNAP 330 ac. | CENTER 648 ac. |
| | CARSON | GROVE 233 ac. | WAVELAND 1,057 ac. |
| | MACEDONIA 154 ac. | | |

IOWA MAP VIEWER

Have you ever wanted to look at what your farm used to look like? Well, you are in luck because you still can. Just by doing a quick search of Iowa Map Viewer on google you have access to the public sight where they have imagery from the 1930's to the most recent layer that came out in 2025. Not only are you able to look up imagery but you can also draw on it and measure, using the tools on the top of the page.

We use this site every day here at the office. When someone comes in and wants a terrace, we pull up the farm and can tell a lot just by using a couple different layers. Specifically, the 2020 LiDAR Hill shade, this layer gives a good idea of what we may see when we go out to visit the field. It shows indentations of old fencelines or of where an old shed used to stand, but more importantly we can see where the erosion is happening in your field.

So now, by going onto this website, you can also look and see for yourself what your farm looks like today and in the past. There are a lot of different layers that you can use, and here in the NRCS office we have even more layers available to us. If you have any questions or are curious to know more about the capabilities of this website, just come into the East Pottawattamie office and we are happy to help.



GRAZING & COVER CROPS

Terry Gleaves, Assistant Commissioner

The economics of grain farming with low prices and high inputs, especially fertilizer, has caused me to look at other options. I am a cow guy who had them since I bought my first cow when I was ten years old. Dad had gotten a load of cows to start a herd out of the sandhills. Mostly Herefords back then but there happened to be a nice shorthorn, a white roan, that caught my eye. Her name was Rosie and she raised a calf every year, so I grew my herd slowly but surely. Dad let me have a few more as pasture allowed. I was hooked; I had a couple of calves for 4H every year but I also did a pen of 5 to feed. I never took those to the fair, but I kept records and learned how to feed them. We always had probably 200 head on feed back then, so I had chores anyway so just as well have some that were mine, have some skin in the game so to speak.



Well maybe I'm kind of long-winded there but my point is cattle have always been good to me. Looking at the commodity markets it's hard to be excited about good profits on grain. My point being it got me to looking at expanding my cow herd. I love cover crops and I graze them heavily in the spring. I had a 10 species mix last year and the cows just spent a lot of time on that portion of the field. I already spent the money seeding after combining some rye for seed so why not fence that off, it's right next to an existing pasture and made a lot of sense. I kept them off for approximately 3 weeks to get more growth and then started moving new pairs to those acres exclusively. I kept them on this piece from April 25th to June 20th when I put them in the permanent pasture. They stayed there until August 25th. This worked well and while they were back on the pasture I terminated what was left of a 10 way mix and seeded a new mix for late summer grazing consisting of mainly Sorghum Sudan but also had Pearl Millet, Cowpeas, Collards, and Sunflowers. Now this mix was not cheap, but I wanted to try it. Cost was \$55/acre but that was my first expense on those acres for the year so it was still substantially cheaper than corn would have been, and it grew so fast. What a good way to make some summer feed. I turned cows in the first paddock on that August 25th day from the pasture. I must admit it was scary to turn them in but I had gone to a Forage Field Day that ISU put on, and it was awesome to learn that day. I met Dr. Shelby Gruss who was new to the area, and I called her several times asking advice as I rotated through the 3 paddocks that I had set up. I must warn you it is harder to manage because of nitrates and prussic acids concerns. Grazing didn't start till an average of 30 inches tall, so it looked like they were out in a corn field and being on the highway people noticed but that is what I like to do, be different than the norm and create a little chaos. It worked!

My point being that with less inputs and less required rainfall I grew a different crop that helped me be profitable on those acres. Plus, your soil will really respond to these forages and add nutrients and microbes through manure to the ground. I can go back to corn very easily or I can do another year of this grazing and maybe even add a few more acres to handle some extra cows. Yes, cows are expensive if you don't already have some, but calves are at all-time highs and who knows how long we can maintain these markets, but it is another option so by spending less on these acres I can realize a lot more income on these acres and bonus by improving my soil health and structure.

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SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS & CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIPS

Bernie Bolton, Commissioner

Excerpt from speech presented at CDI Annual Conference over 20 years ago by Bernie Bolton on the relevance of local partnerships on conservation.

"My charge is to discuss who we are, why districts were an important component of the soil conservation system and perhaps get this discussion on relevancy started. Are we as SWCD Commissioners still an important and necessary part of the conservation partnership?"

The soil conservation movement began during a national crisis. Improper use of farmland and overuse of rangeland teamed up with recurring drought to produce the Dust Bowl era. In 1935, Public Law 46 of the 74th Congress, known as the Soil Conservation Act of 1935, went into effect. The act, passed unanimously by the House and Senate, and signed by President Roosevelt, recognized that "soil erosion is a menace to the national welfare and that it is hereby declared to be a policy of Congress to provide permanently for the control and prevention of soil erosion ...". The Soil Conservation Service started with pilot projects, but it was very slow and costly and didn't provide long-lasting land treatments. It was when the states made commitments to conservation, and the locally led cooperative system was organized in the 1940's that land protection goals began to be realized.

Districts are unique; as subunits of state government they rely on voluntary cooperation from private individuals. They are formed and administered locally by the people they serve, can receive funds from the county, are sanctioned by state law, receive funds and administrative assistance from the state, and accept technical assistance from the federal government in order to advance the wise use and protection of our most valuable and vital resources - soil and water.

So what's changed? Since the 1940's, think of technological changes. Farmers used to farm in small tracts, 40 to 80 acres were the norm. Farms were more diverse, they generally had livestock, pastures, row crops, gardens and orchards. They tended to work cooperatively, relying on family and neighbors to put the crop in and harvest. It was a time when people shared more than just equipment; they had real conversations over the fence. People relied more on word of mouth for news. For Commissioners, working one-on-one with the neighbor to promote soil conservation wasn't a major effort, it was more a lifestyle.

Now, it is not uncommon to farm 2,000 acres. Many have gone to specialty farming; they may raise hogs, or corn/beans. Those hogs may have an air-conditioned parlor, a computerized feeding and watering system. We have computer guidance systems on very large equipment that saves immensely on labor, all but eliminating the need to rely on outsiders for help. Tractors have radio and television reception where farms receive information on news, what products are available and how to produce more efficiently.

There have been a few social changes that have come with those advances in technology. A few questions for you:

- How many farm families live and work only on the farm?
- How many spouses have in town jobs?
- How many farmers themselves have at least a part-time job off-farm?
- Do the kids all stay at home and help with chores and continue the working family farm?
- How many people who farm the ground are actually the land owners?
- Do all farmers even own the animals they raise?

There have been changes in demographics. Landowners are not just white males. More people live in larger towns and cities. The impact that those urban residents have on the landscape cannot be ignored. I think later in the morning you'll have some numbers to discuss those changes.

Roles within the core partnership have changed. Prior to 1985, NRCS was an agency which provided technical assistance. They didn't offer any cost share programs. Commissioners signed off on all the conservation plans. Beginning with the 1985 Farm Bill, we no longer had to sign off on those plans. One big reason that occurred was because of a fairness issue. It seems that some commissioners were not signing plans because of a prejudice; perhaps the farmer was Black or Hispanic. Do you not want to sign off on plans in your district because of a prejudice? Think about this a moment, do we fight against some of our farmers who want to put conservation on the ground because they happen to farm in a way we disapprove of; maybe those corporate or big farms? Do we make efforts to work with non-traditional customers such as those who farm organically or raise specialty crops for the Hispanic community?

It is not appropriate or legal to set district priorities and ranking systems for a specific type of farmer we "approve" of. It is our job as commissioners to follow the intent of the law and support cost-effective conservation efforts.

If we choose to administer funds in such a way that it is discriminatory, it won't be long before Congress will no longer be able to justify working with "locally led".

A sign for loss of local support at the federal level is there now. The funds set aside strictly for conservation technical assistance are continually cut. It is those funds that Iowa depends on to provide technical support for state and local cost share programs. Technical assistance dollars are more and more tied to specific federal programs. Those folks who walk in the door looking just for some advice may be set aside to be worked with after program requirements are met or may not be served at all.

Our elected officials may be ignorant of what it is that we do. Most of our legislators don't have a farming background. And even if they do, perhaps we've not touched them. There is plenty of support for improving water quality and doing watershed work among the general public. Perhaps we are not involved in the water quality issues sufficiently to have the impact that society is demanding. Or perhaps it is something as simple as that terminology has, changed and our message is not being received by those who can make changes on the landscape occur.

How many of your local farmers really know what the Soil and Water Conservation District is and what our commissioners do? Heck, could you explain your role in the conservation partnership if someone asked you? During the current state budget crisis, CDI has asked you to put together a package or paper outlining your worth. Basically, tell what services will not be provided if the district is no longer supported and viable. Some have been afraid to do so, but if you cannot speak up for yourselves, how do we expect people to understand why the local input is so important?

Removing the local leg of the three-legged stool will leave a stool that can no longer stand. It is time to do a careful self-examination. Are there things we as SWCD Commissioners are elected to do that are not being accomplished? Do we bring local support to the table? Are we keeping up with the current natural resource needs of our community? Are we as inclusive as we need to be to have buy-in from the whole community?

Our Mission has not changed; soil and water conservation on private working lands continues to be our main concern. We need to be inclusive in our customers as well as our work groups. And with the changes in landownership and farming technologies, how we communicate with the vastly changing rural landscape has its own challenges. You can not separate what is happening in the urban environment from the rural. Water quantity from the urban landscape has dramatically impacted all streams. We need to stay focused; our mission is to protect the soil and water.

At the beginning of this speech, I told you what my charge was. It was comparatively easy, considering what we are asking you to do. Your charge as a participant in this conference is to actively listen to our speakers and each other; to be open to ideas and try to reach beyond the status quo. Over the span of this conference, we hope to have dialogue; you are the backbone of locally led conservation in Iowa, and it is important to remain strong. This afternoon you will be asked to reassess yourselves and your districts' ability to achieve priority land and water conservation results. And then we hope Commissioners will identify at least one strategy to undertake to strengthen the effectiveness and visibility of the Districts. These are tough times for SWCD Commissioners. Now is the time to step up to the challenge and look for ways to grow and thrive. Put conservation of natural resources back on the front burner and move the conservation movement on to new levels of effectiveness.

I ask those of you reading this to come forward to commissioners and assistant commissioners and tell us how we can do a better job for you, our cooperators.



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SWISH – SOUTHWEST IOWA SOIL HEALTH

by Laura Ferguson, District Conservationist, West Pottawattamie

Are you interested in soil health? Would you like to meet with like-minded individuals to learn about soil health practices? Consider joining the Southwest Iowa Soil Health (SWISH) team! SWISH is a volunteer group of dedicated conservationists, made up of farmers, extension, NRCS employees, and industry professionals who are passionate about soil health and are committed to doing what they can to further soil health practice adoption across SW Iowa. We have monthly meetings in the winter, typically December through April, as well as an annual summer field day. SWISH invites various speakers to come and educate the group on soil health topics, then works to share that information out to a larger audience in Southwest Iowa. We bring soil health experts to SW Iowa to help educate and inspire farmers and ag professionals in the area.

Meeting topics for the 2026 season include “Putting Soil Health Principles to the Test in Iowa” with Dr. Marshall McDaniel, “How Farmers Can Utilize AI Tools to Maximize ROI and Improve Soil Health” with Alexis Stevens, “Soil Health Economics” with J.D Hollingsworth and Meaghan Anderson, and “Building Soil Health for Forests and Wildlife” with Bailey Yotter.

This year, SWISH will be organizing a “Summer of Soil Health” Tour, which will take place throughout June and feature multiple field days at farms around SW Iowa. Keep an eye out for more information! To learn more about SWISH, contact Ruth Blomquist at ruth.blomquist@usda.gov, or reach out to myself, Laura Ferguson, at laura.ferguson1@usda.gov or 515-657-2175. We hope to see you at our next meeting! You can also see past recordings of meetings at the SWISH YouTube channel, @SWISH-IA, or follow SWISH on Facebook by searching SouthWest Iowa Soil Health.



ACTING DC INTRODUCTION



Greetings! I started with the NRCS in 2023 as a soil Conservationist on the Audubon Resource team covering Adair, Cass Audubon and Guthrie counties. Currently I am serving as the Acting District Conservationist for East Pottawattamie County.

I was a 2006 graduate of Iowa State University where I studied Animal Science and Agronomy. I spent the first 18 years of my career as an Agronomist and Manager in the Production and Retail Agriculture Industry. I live in Atlantic, IA with my wife of 15 years (Mindi), 9-year-old son (Brant) and 7-year-old daughter (Karli). I really enjoy working with farmers and producers to help them achieve their goals. I’m grateful I get to continue my career putting farmers first with a conservation and sustainability focus.

When not at the office you will find me working my food truck, helping with my family’s dozing and tiling business or driving school bus. I also enjoy camping, fishing, cooking and everything about family time!

I look forward to overseeing the office leadership and managerial duties along with helping the field office staff administer farm bill and county programs to our producers. Please feel free to reach out with any questions at any time, my cell phone is 712-571-9887.

--Shawn Macha

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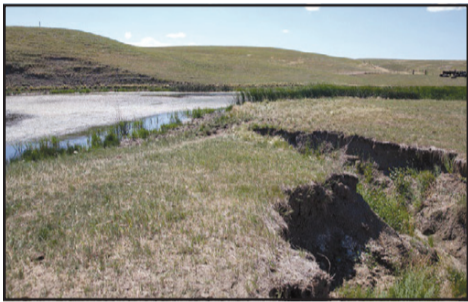
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TERRACES, WATERWAYS, HEADLANDS, AND MORE... OH MY!

By Andrew Casson, Technician Soil Conservationist

Leading down the golden road of conservation, we seem to get some of the same questions, do we truly need all these conservation practices to have effective erosion reduction? In a short and simple answer, YES! To heed the call to conservation, there are many factors that have persuaded this answer from the 1930's to the present with little change but additions. What are the underlying factors that still contribute to erosion in our county.

The 4 main types of erosion will include:



Classic gully erosion consists of channel erosion with runoff concentrates, usually large enough that it cannot be controlled through traditional tillage practices. Typically, gully erosion is treated through grade stabilization structures. Varying in size but typically large following large shortly behind is expensive. One quick down and dirty way to conserve these effected areas would be - seeding it down where you can. This one simply method can stabilize and improve water quality in a pinch. For further future goals of these locations larger practices will need to be involved to control such large amounts of soil loss. Basins can go a long way in line down the trail of erosion, to recommend but not limit too.

An ephemeral gully consists of a channel eroded by run-off from high water velocities. One of the most common types of erosion for the Loess hill area, typically paired with large, short rain events. Some of the common ways to alleviate these issues involve, seeding down these areas or disking the area back to a somewhat level contour. Given that those options are quick fixes, with one good rain they will be present once more. The best way to control these issues would be through: terraces, waterways, or headlands. Correct spacing will control a large amount of erosion, but there are always chances of large events or high-water velocities causing need for waterways to collect suspended soil particles. If our terraces do not reach the edges of fields that is where we are going to want some headlands to control water moving downhill, thankfully these act as areas to turn ever changing equipment size...

Rill erosion consists of areas with typically large number of small and shallow channels being formed through soil properties and water velocities. Typically seen in areas with a small amount of residue or cover on the ground (bare soil). In most cases these are areas



that are being broken out of parent material has been exposed/displaced. A simple fix to this issue would be to seed the areas of effect, i.e. cover-crops during the off season would be an exceptional practice. This would also give your soil life back in the off-season helping all the soil microbes along the way.

Sheet erosion consists of less channels like creation but more of a flat wide area with exposed bare soil. Typically caused by normal or large rain fall events with water velocity increases. Visible in areas with lesser slope as the water displaces and spreads out over larger areas like an alluvial area except removing soil particles rather than leaving them. Ways that this can be combatted are with your traditional cover types on or off-season, along with good amounts of residue on a no-till and contour crop rotation. Longer lasting conservation practices could involve waterway creation to control the suspended soil matter as the water moves off the land.

Erosion occurs all the time. As long as it rains, snows, sleet, or hails... Our job here at

the Natural Resource Conservation Service is to provide technical assistance to protect our natural resources: soil, water, air, plants, animals, energy, and human. In few cases with specific areas and soil types in your field you can overcome erosion through conventional no-till, but in most cases with our Loess parent material soil types and slopes there is always a need for more conservation.

Lucky for you we have the solution. So, hop on that golden brick road and make your way in to yours truly to get your next set of conservation practices.

"Productive capacity is responsive to management. A high productive capacity with good management proximate the ultimate, but even high productive capacity responds poorly to poor management. And a low productive capacity can be made to respond surprisingly to good management." – P.V. Cardon (Special assistant to the chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry, Soil, and Ag engineering) GRASS YEAR OF AGRICULTURE 1948





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IDALS STAFF ADJUST OPERATIONS DURING RECENT FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

By Will Myers, Bureau Chief and Susan Kozak, Division Director

Did you know that IDALS has approximately 155 permanent and 45 contract employees that work out of the 100 USDA Service Center offices in each of Iowa's 99 counties? These staff directly serve our farmers, landowners, and local communities to implement conservation projects ensuring that our state's valuable natural resources are preserved for future generations. To fulfill this mission, they work in partnership with federal Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), county Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and other local organizations as part of our state's collective conservation partnership. Through this partnership, NRCS provides all IDALS field office staff with office space and other work resources such as computers, phones, vehicles, and field equipment.



When we are faced with the unfortunate circumstances of a federal government shutdown, access to these work resources are generally not available until the shutdown ends. As a result, IDALS staff must make abrupt and significant adjustments to their normal work routines in order to continue providing core services to our customers. During the most recent shutdown, this required our staff to relocate and began working out of other partner offices such as Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, County Conservation, or other local offices as available in each county. In addition to providing a temporary workspace, many of these partners also provided computer access and shared other resources to assist our staff during the shutdown. IDALS staff in the central office also worked to deploy available vehicles, computers, and field equipment and coordinated sharing of resources to keep state funded conservation programs operational to the extent possible.

Unfortunately, this shutdown occurred during one of the busiest times of year while harvest was winding down and fall field work activities were ramping up. This resulted in significant delays in project planning, design, and construction which will undoubtedly take many months to recover. While disruptions to services occurred as a result of the shutdown and we are still assessing the short- and long-term effects, our staff worked to keep impacts to a minimum whenever possible. They found innovative and alternative means to continue business operations with limited resources, and most importantly to communicate and continue to serve our valuable customers. We are truly thankful for our staff and their patience and dedication throughout this difficult time. We are also thankful for our many local partners and organizations which generously stepped up without hesitation during the shutdown to assist our staff and our Agency. Although this experience was challenging and impactful on many levels it also served as a valuable example of the strength in our partnerships and the dedication to advancing our collective conservation mission in Iowa.



DISTRICT RENTAL EQUIPMENT

McKenna Sick, 780 Technician

Hello, my name is McKenna Sick from Carson, Iowa and I have been working at the Oakland NRCS office since last May as a 780 Technician. I graduated from Riverside Community High School in 2022 and attended South Dakota State University where I graduated with a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Science with minors in Animal Science, Agriculture Business, and a Certificate in Swine Science. Outside of work you'll find me running pig feed around for my feed business, as well as supporting youth in the area with their livestock projects.

Field work season is quickly approaching. We provide different equipment for rent including:

Air Seeder: This broadcast seeder is designed to seed terraces, as well as areas too wet to drive on, such as a new waterway. The rental price is \$25 per day.

No-Till Drill: This Haybuster 10' drill is a popular tool provided by the East Pottawattamie SWCD office available for rent. Using a no-till drill helps prevent erosion as well as decreases compaction. For \$15 per acre, we require the machine to be greased daily by the user and to be cleaned out after use. There is also a \$75 minimum.

Fabric Layer: no special hitch is required for the use of the fabric layer. There are different charges for the rental of the fabric layer depending on use. \$20 per day for use of fabric layer without district fabric, \$15 per check strip in the waterway (\$20 for strip of over 20' wide), as well as \$180 per roll for purchase of whole roll of fabric.



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EDUCATION AND OUTREACH IN POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY

Hello! My name is Laura Monson, and I am the County Education Coordinator for East and West Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation Districts. This past year has seen our outreach programs growing to new heights with over 1,400 students involved just with in-classroom programs, and even more students and adult community members reached through community events. All our outreach efforts are supported by the Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors and the East and West Pottawattamie SWCD Board of Commissioners; and by all the teachers, administrators, and students that welcome us into their schools and take part in our programs. Thank you to everyone who has supported and taken part in our outreach efforts, without your support it would not be possible. Read on to find out what all we have been up to this past year!

Conservation in the Classroom

In the past year we have reached over 1,400 students through in-classroom programs alone, combined from Pre-School through 12th grade students attending AHSTW, Riverside, Tri-Center, Treynor, Underwood, Titan-Hill, and Longfellow. Our programs focus on conservation, agriculture, soil, water, wildlife, and how students can utilize the things they learn to make our world a better place.

Thank you to all the teachers and administrative staff that have welcomed our programs into your schools and classrooms!

Going Beyond the Classroom

Our programs don't stop in the classroom! We also lead an after-school club called Conservation Superheroes for 3rd -5th graders at Riverside and AHSTW. Students meet once a month, for six months, to discover how soil, air, energy, water, plants, and animals connect with conservation.

We also lead stations at the AHSTW and Riverside STEM Fests. Our station was all about soil, with students getting to discover what soil is made of, and why it is so important that we work hard to keep our soil healthy.



The Outdoor Classroom

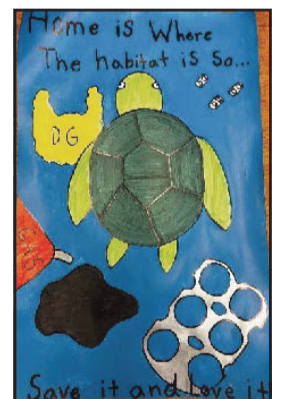
Many studies have shown that spending time outside, and learning outside, is extremely beneficial, to young students especially. We have hosted and attended multiple field days this past year, with the goal of teaching students about the environment and conservation through first-hand experiences.

To kick off our May Field Days, just over 100 5th graders from AHSTW and Riverside joined conservation professionals from across the county at Botna Bend Park to learn about prairie plants and pollinators, agriculture, how rivers form, what lives in our waterways, forestry, soil health and native lowan wildlife. Botna Bend Park also hosted our Trees for 3's field day where over 100 students from Riverside and Treynor 3rd grade classes joined us for a day of learning about trees, native plants, and wildlife – getting to take home their own native Red Oak tree to plant! To celebrate trees even more, we partnered with Treynor Schools and the Treynor Optimists Club to have 55 students in Treynor's 5th grade class mulch trees on the school grounds, and plant new trees donated by Home Depot – an event called Mulch Madness began by John Klein. To end our May field days, we lead a station all about soil and soil

health for the AHSTW and Riverside 5th Grade Ag Field Day held by the East Pottawattamie Farm Bureau, and their outreach coordinator Mason Geer.

Outdoor learning doesn't stop at field days for us; we also helped lead a program called School of the Wild for 5th graders from Underwood and Titan Hill. With 52 students from Underwood, and over 200 students from Titan Hill getting to spend a week at Arrowhead Park, and other local outdoor areas, learning about our environment and how we can take care of it.

This past year we also got to spend three wonderful days at Carstens 1880 Farmstead. One day to host a booth for the Carstens Farm kids' day, with around 170 students from local schools visiting our station to see the NRCS Soil Health Tunnel and learn how they can have a part in keeping our soil healthy. Carstens Farm also hosted our annual Soil Pit Judging Practice event. This year we had just over 60 high school students from AHSTW, Riverside, Griswold, Tri-Center, CAM, Shenandoah, and Coon-Rapids Bayard, join us to learn how to judge a soil profile. Thank you to Carstens Farmstead for hosting this event and to all the schools that attended.



Home Is Where the Habitat Is: the theme of this year's CDI Poster Contest. This year Riverside 3rd – 5th Grade, AHSTW 4th, and Treynor 2nd Grade classes all participated in this year's poster contest. The CDI Poster Contest is a national contest organized by the National Association of Conservation Districts. This year we had two regional 1st place winners; 5th Grade Riverside student Sidney Reed, and 2nd Grade Treynor student Lily Wilson. Congratulations to Sidney and Lily, and all the students that participated in this year's poster contest!

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH IN POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY



Summer Programs

Conservation Education does not stop just because school is out!

We had an amazing summer, filled with summer camps, fair booths, and programs at local schools. Our second year partnering with Pottawattamie County Conservation to host 3-day summer camps at Botna Bend Park could not have gone better! We had three great groups of campers that had the chance to learn all about native plants and wildlife, soil, river formation, and spend time learning and experiencing the great outdoors.

We offer Summer Camp opportunities for students entering 1st through 5th grade, and registration is still open for Summer of 2026 Botna Bend Summer Camps! For more information, or to register, visit pottconservation.com.



Join us at the fair! We hosted booths at both the East Pottawattamie County Fair and Westfair this past year. Fairgoers had the opportunity to learn about conservation practices and soil health with a soil health scavenger hunt through the NRCS Soil Health Tunnel.

Community Outreach

Women landowners make up almost 50% of farmland owners in Iowa. To honor them we host an annual Women Landowners (WLO) meeting. This year's meeting was held on August 13th, 2025. A wonderful group of 16 women joined us at the Hitchcock Nature Center. We had presentations on conservation highlights in Pottawattamie County given by NRCS District Conservationist Laura Ferguson, pollinator conservation initiatives given by ISU Professor Dr. Matthew O'Neal, soil health presented by NRCS Soil Health Specialist Ruth Blomquist, as well as leasing and succession planning presented by ISU Extension Farm Management Specialist Tim Christensen. The morning presentations were followed by lunch and a tour of Hitchcock given by Pottawattamie County Natural Resource Technician Aric Ping, NRCS Livestock Specialist Kayla Creek, and Pheasants Forever Wildlife Biologist Kayla Chau; with talks on historic land management strategies, livestock grazing, and native prairie plants.

Thank You

Thank you to all the schools, principals, teachers, and administrative assistants, for welcoming me into your schools and classrooms. Thank you to the Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors and the Pottawattamie SWCD Board of Commissioners for making my job possible. Thank you to all the students and community members that have taken part in our outreach efforts, and thank you to all our partners, the NRCS and IDALS, the Farm Bureau, Iowa State University Extension, and Pottawattamie County Conservation. The partnership of all these organizations and people has made our education and outreach program possible, and I can't thank everyone that has been involved enough. Thank you!

If you are an educator and you would like to include conservation education in your classroom or at an event, please do not hesitate to contact me! You can email me at swcdeducation@gmail.com, or you can call (712) 482-6486. I would be more than happy to discuss our programs and events with anyone that is interested!

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Soil & Water Conservation Report 2025

2026 PRACTICES FOR DISTRICT COST-SHARE - EAST POTTAWATTAMIE SWCD

This cost-share program is directed and controlled by the East Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District. This District retains the right to adjust cost-share rates and/or to discontinue the cost-share program dependent on funding sources. All applications must be approved by the District before work can be started. (includes state cost-share [IFIP/REAP/WSPF/WSP] and Local Option Sales Tax (L.O.S.T.) funds)

Cost-share rates are listed below with each practice. Maximum cost-share will not exceed \$25,000 per landowner. Cost share over \$25,000 will be presented to board on case by case basis.

Standard Cost-Share Practices

| Practice (NRCS practice code) | Cost-share or Incentive Payment | Comments | District Maintenance | Notes |
|--|--|--|----------------------|---|
| Structural Practices | | | | |
| Grade Stabilization Structure (378/410) | 75% | Livestock use exclusion required. Priority given first to structures that treat actively eroding gullies. Second to those that treat excess flooding and sediment damage. This includes structures for livestock watering systems. | 20 years | "with upland treatment"; stable outlet required. Additional funding may be available from other sources on an individual basis. |
| Terrace (600) | 75% | Maximum "eligible cost" on terraces is \$3.50/foot . | 20 years | Pasture ground will be limited to 25% cost-share. |
| Tiling within new terrace (606) | 75% | Maximum "eligible cost" is \$3.00/ft for up to 1,000 feet; \$500/intake not to exceed 75% of total bill. | 20 years | |
| Terrace (600) Upgrades | flat rate of .60 | A flat rate of \$.60 per foot will be paid on terrace upgrade project no matter what the final cost is. | 20 years | |
| Waterways, Grassed (412) | 75% | Maximum "eligible cost" for dirt work is \$2.50/foot. Fabric checkstrips are required. | 10 years | |
| Tiling within new waterway (620) | 75% | Maximum "eligible cost" is \$3.00/ft for ONE tile line only. Second tile cost shared only if technician deems it necessary. | 20 years | 5" or 6" as technician deems necessary |
| Water & Sediment Control Basin (350/638) | 75% | Maximum "eligible cost" is \$2.00/cuyd . | 20 years | |
| Fencing Structures in Pasture Practices (382) | 75% | Maximum "eligible cost": Fencing up to \$2.25/ft ; gravel pad up to \$1.00/sq ft ; perm tank up to \$500 ; frost free tank up to \$1,000 ; buried pipeline up to \$3.25/ft. LABOR EXCLUDED | 20 years | Maximum eligibility 75% |
| Terraces (600) in Conservation Cover/Pasture(327) | Fifty percent of cost share policy (37.50%/ or summer 45%) | Maximum "eligible cost" is \$3.50/ft . Seeding required for summer projects. | 20 years | |
| Management Practices | | | | |
| Tree Planting (612) | 75% | The maximum reimbursement for tree planting is \$450 per acre. At least three (3) acres must be completed. | 20 years | |
| Well Closure Incentive (351) | up to 100% | Through grant funds, Pottawattamie County will cost-share at 50% up to \$500. Through district Local Option Sales Tax dollars, the District will cover the remaining cost up to \$400 (excluding sales tax) . The total cost-share between the two sources will not exceed \$700. | | |

| Practice (NRCS practice code) | Cost-share or Incentive Payment | Comments | District Maintenance | Notes |
|---|---------------------------------|--|----------------------|--|
| Windbreaks Establishment (380) - Windbreak Renovation (650) | 75% | 75% of actual cost up to \$1,600 per farmstead & feedlot windbreak & windbreak renovation. 75% of actual cost up to \$450/acre for field windbreak. No minimum acres required. Priority will be given to the North and West sides. Trees must be planted per NRCS guidelines-- after the frost is out of the ground in the spring, prior to June 1. Fall planting after Oct. 15. Eligible cost is \$50/tree and \$5/shrub. | 20 years | Windbreaks subject to field office staff/District Forester approval. |
| Cover Crop (340) | flat rate | IFIP funding: IFIP cover crop up to 160 acres. This includes labor on seeding. Anyone can apply for IFIP funding; however, it is a one time only funding. WQI funding: First Time only for WQI funding. First time users: \$30/acre. Previous users: \$20/acre. Can bale but cannot combine for grain. | | Follow NRCS/DSC dates & rates. Follow DSC rules/regs on WQI & District programs offered; seeded by NRCS regulation |
| Pasture/Hayland Planting (512) | 50% | \$300/acre; 20 acre max; only eligible if land being converted has been planted to row crop 3 of last 5 years. Establish new stand (25% grass mix required) | 5 years | NRCS specifications; REAP P or IFIP Funding |
| Summer Incentive - Must begin "after" June 15 and be completed by September 15. Terrace upgrades only. | | | | |
| Terrace Upgrades New Terrace (600) | flat rate | A flat rate of \$.75 per foot will be paid on terrace upgrade project no matter what the final cost is. New Terrace eligible rate of \$3.50/ft -- 90% of eligible cost. Summer incentive \$200/acre. Cover crop must be seeded by May 1 -- 50' from top of terrace ridge and continue up until September 1. Re-seed to cover crop after construction, not cropped | 20 years | Maximum cost-share per landowner is \$25,000.00 . |

Updated 1/22/26

All programs and services of the District are offered on a non-discriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, marital status or handicap.

**FINANCIAL REPORT
EAST POTTAWATTAMIE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
REPORT ON ANNUAL USE OF DISTRICT FUNDS
FISCAL YEAR JULY 1, 2024 - JUNE 30, 2025**

| | |
|----------------------|-------------|
| Beg. Bal. | \$46,827.40 |
| Ending Balance | \$40,049.30 |

RECEIPTS

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Equipment Rental | \$3,053.30 |
| Ed Grant Reimbursement | \$4,479.76 |
| County Reimbursements | \$715.18 |
| State of Iowa (1M) | \$3,000.00 |
| Donations | \$1,371.00 |
| Internal Transfers | \$1,200.38 |
| Scholarship Donations | \$2,205.00 |
| Voided Checks | \$82.00 |
| Contractor Mtg. Reimb. | \$135.97 |
| TOTAL RECEIPTS | \$16,242.59 |

EXPENDITURES

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1M Expenditures | \$6,295.50 |
| 780 Qtrly Pmt-Dist Emp | \$1,721.22 |
| Annual Fees/Dues/Sub | \$135.00 |
| Awards/Donations/Events | \$2,054.54 |
| Dry Hydrant Expense | \$4,110.14 |
| Equipment Expense | \$1,600.85 |
| Internal Transfers | \$6,000.00 |
| Recording Fees | \$17.00 |
| Sales Tax Expense | \$110.29 |
| Scholarship Expense | \$500.00 |
| Minor Equipment | \$476.15 |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURES | \$23,020.69 |

EDUCATION FUND

| | |
|----------------------|-------------|
| Beg. Bal. | \$63,768.95 |
| Ending Balance | \$77,083.14 |

RECEIPTS

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| Pott. County Allocation | \$80,000.00 |
| Internal Transfers..... | \$6,000.00 |
| Misc..... | \$200.00 |
| Voided Checks..... | \$60.00 |
| TOTAL RECEIPTS | \$86,260.00 |

EXPENDITURES

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Project Expenses/Supplies..... | \$4,381.63 |
| Payroll..... | \$35,452.86 |
| Payroll Processing Fees..... | \$116.00 |
| Conservation Trailer Exp..... | \$141.99 |
| Edu. Grant..... | \$838.14 |
| Payroll Taxes/Contributions..... | \$32,015.19 |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURES | \$72,945.81 |

Beginning Balances July 1, 2024

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| General Checking..... | \$46,827.40 |
| District Education Fund | \$63,768.95 |
| TOTAL BEG. BALANCES..... | \$110,596.35 |

Ending Balances June 30, 2025

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| General Checking..... | \$40,049.30 |
| District Education Fund | \$77,083.14 |
| TOTAL ENDING BALANCES | \$117,132.44 |
| Total Beginning Balance July 1, 2024 | \$110,596.35 |
| Total Receipts | \$102,502.59 |
| Less Total Expenditures | \$95,966.50 |
| Balance June 30, 2025 | \$117,132.44 |

STATE COST SHARE EXPENDED (FY25)

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| SF512: Nishnabotna HUC 8 Project | \$153,399.00 |
| Iowa Financial Incentive Program (IFIP) | \$55,413.59 |
| Water Quality Initiative Incentive | \$9,275.70 |
| SF512: Statewide | \$20,522.00 |
| REAP Forestry & Native Grasses | \$3,168.00 |
| Total State Cost Share | \$241,778.29 |

1M FUNDS

| | |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Allocation | \$3,000.00 |
| 1M Expenditures | \$6,295.50 |

POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY FUNDING EXPENDED (FY25)

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) Allocation | \$261,613.22 |
| Total LOST Expenditures | \$180,063.60 |

Local Option Sales Tax (L.O.S.T.) funds allow the District additional funds for cost-share and educational projects. We would like to thank the Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors for their far-sighted support of soil conservation. The dollars they have invested in soil conservation these past years will pay off in benefits to county improvements and in protecting productivity of our soils.

As District Commissioners, we are proud of our conservation program and hope you are too. If the District has been a value to you in any way and you wish to be a contributor, please mail or bring your contribution to the East Pottawattamie SWCD, 16 Main Street, Oakland, IA 51560. Any amount you wish to contribute will be greatly appreciated. REMEMBER YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS TAX DEDUCTIBLE. Thank you in advance for your help and support in protecting the future of our natural resources.

---East Pottawattamie SWCD Commissioners