

81st Annual Report East Pottawattamie SWCD



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East Pottawattamie SWCD Who Are We?

The East Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is a subdivision of the Iowa State Government, Conservation Districts of Iowa. It consists of the following townships in Pottawattamie County: Washington, Pleasant, James, Belknap, Carson, Macedonia, Knox, Valley, Center, Grove, Layton, Lincoln, Wright, and Waveland. SWCD has a locally elected governing board of commissioners who direct the programs of the District. Commissioners are local citizens interested in conserving our natural resources without pay. They set policy and direction for local conservation programs and influence state and national conservation programs. In addition, the District has four assistant commissioners. SWCD Commissioners work together with field office staff employed by various conservation agencies such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (federal), the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship – Division of Soil Conservation (state), and Pottawattamie County. Education, planning, and technical assistance are all utilized to assist local landowners and operators to implement best management practices to conserve soil, protect wildlife, improve water quality, and restore wetlands. Education is also targeted to a wider audience of all ages to ensure that Iowa’s natural resources will remain productive and plentiful for this and future generations. All staff of the East Pottawattamie SWCD field office work together to carry out the District’s mission “to conserve Iowa’s natural resources through leadership, education, technical, and financial assistance.”

The field office staff works together providing technical assistance for both state and federal programs. The main federal programs are the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and technical assistance with the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the Public Law-566 Watershed Programs. The primary state programs include the voluntary Iowa Financial Incentive Program, Water Protection and Forestry/Native Grasses Practices with Resource Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP funds), Water Quality Initiative (WQI) and Local Water Protection Program featuring “low interest” loans. There is also a well closure cost-share program offered by the SWCD and Pottawattamie County to close abandoned wells.

Call the NRCS/SWCD when you are ready to update or add to your farm’s conservation plan and contact the District Commissioners to discuss conservation topics or concerns!

All SWCD/NRCS programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.



East Pottawattamie Staff Members of the Natural Resources Conservation Service

Starting at the top row, and going left to right: District Conservationist, Terry Gleaves; Conservation Assistant, Susan Rush; Technical Soil Conservationist, Andrew Casson; County Education Coordinator, Laura Monson; State Technician, Jessica Luke; 780 Technician, Russell Hopp; Wetland Specialist, Laurel Sellers; Resource Conservationist, Brad Richardson; Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever Farm Bill Biologist, Tabitha Panas; Resource Team Lead, Kelsey Blodgett; Farm Bill Specialist, Kelsi Solheim. 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.



	R-45-W	R-44-W	R-43-W	R-42-W	R-41-W	R-40-W	R-39-W	R-38-W
T-77-N	Rockford	Boomer	Neola	Minden	Pleasant	Knox	Layton	
T-76-N	Crescent	Hazel Dell	Norwalk	York	James	Valley	Lincoln	
T-75-N	Lake	Garner	Hardin	Washington	Belknap	Center	Wright	
T-74-N	Lewis 'W'	Lewis 'E'	Keg Creek	Silver Creek	Carson	Grove	Waveland	
					Macedonia			

East Pottawattamie SWCD’s Mission:

To conserve Iowa’s natural resources through leadership, education, technical, and financial assistance.

Need to contact the office?

Call (712) 482-6486 and choose their extension listed below.

NAME, TITLE	EMAIL	EXT.
Terry Gleaves, DC	terry.gleaves@usda.gov	ext. 302
Susan Rush, CA	susan.rush@ia.nacdnet.net	ext. 301
Kelsey Blodgett, RTL	kelsey.blodgett@usda.gov	ext. 311
Laura Monson, Ed.Coord	laura.monson@ia.nacdnet.net	ext. 308
Jessica Luke, ST	jessica.luke@ia.nacdnet.net	ext. 305
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<https://www.soilwaterconservationia.com>

Our Year In Review

Now that 2023 is in the rear-view mirror, let us look at all the great things our team has accomplished. In January we held our annual Awards Night Banquet. It was a very successful event recognizing deserving award recipients from 2022. It was our honor to have several state and local elected officials join us that night.

In January we also submitted a proposal to the Board of Supervisors to implement a beaver bounty (like Shelby County and other counties across Iowa and the United States). Our proposal was approved and implemented immediately to address the beaver activity impacting culverts, crossings and the stability of some county roads. Full details of this beaver bounty can be found on our Facebook posted 12/11/2023: <https://www.facebook.com/eastPottawattamie.swcd>



Kami Willett, Chair
East Pottawattamie Soil & Water Conservation District

In February East Pottawattamie hosted a four county Contractors meeting; this biannual event was held at the Treynor Community Building on February 8th and contractors from both West and East Pottawattamie, Shelby and Harrison counties attended.

Russ Hopp, our 780 Employee, identified some structural issues with some of the structures in BEE-JAY Watershed while completing annual inspections. After he completed full assessments on each site, he put together recommendations for repairs and removing unwanted trees. Our team put a plan in place to address the issues and much of the work has been completed and the remainder will be completed this spring by the contractor to ensure the integrity of these structures stay intact.

In March East Pottawattamie submitted a CDI Resolution titled "Change in Policy with The Federal Historic Preservation Act." Co-sponsors for our resolution included West Pottawattamie, Adair, Mills, Shelby, Warren, and Lucas counties. We were notified in January of 2024 that our resolution was passed by all departments at the state level, and it is now on its way to be reviewed and hopefully adopted at the federal level. We are happy with the progress we have made so far and more to come on this as it unfolds. East Pottawattamie also co-sponsored a second resolution titled: "Make (580) Stream Bank Protection An Eligible Practice For Funding Under SF512 Program". In addition to East Pottawattamie SWCD this resolution was co-sponsored with Fremont, Mills, Montgomery, Page, and Shelby counties.

In April, our entire Board attended the Region 5 Spring Regionals hosted by Guthrie County held at Guthrie Community Center. Lots of discussion occurred on the Federal Historic Preservation Act, PL 566 structures, carbon credits along with several other topics affecting our counties and the rest of the state.

The Board of Supervisors representatives to East Pottawattamie SWCD, gave their monthly updates, and informed our board that they were implementing Town Hall meetings on the east side of the county as requested by the citizens of our communities. In 2023 they hosted two Town Hall events at the Oakland Community Center and welcomed all citizens to attend. All Pottawattamie County Department Directors presented at the town halls, with the focus on rural issues.

In May a subcommittee was created to write and submit a grant proposal for a \$50,000 dollar "Innovation & Demonstration Conservation Grant" offered by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) for Dry Hydrants. Five grant proposals were submitted from the 99 Counties in Iowa, and two of the five were from East Pottawattamie. IDALS funded our education proposal for \$6,000; however, due to their limited funds, they were not able to fund both of our submissions this round. Once we were notified of this, we presented our proposal to the Board of Supervisors. After their thorough review they recognized the impact that dry hydrants have on the safety of our rural communities and voted to financially support the project. With their support we will be able to reimburse the cost of new installs and maintenance of current dry hydrants in East Pottawattamie.

In May/June our Board members were busy attending CDI and state meetings and numerous field days. Ensuring we are aware of changes at a state level and most important advocating at that level for our District and sur-

rounding Districts regarding soil and water conservation.

In July, during the East Pottawattamie County Fair, we hosted a kids education booth and conservation table led by our board members and educational coordinator. We also took this time to meet one on one with Attorney General Brenna Berg to discuss conservation issues affecting our county. It was great to meet her and showcase all the outstanding things we are doing here in East Pottawattamie! We also hosted our annual Women Landowners Day in July and had approximately twenty attendees from both east and west sides of the county.

In August, our entire Board attended the Annual CDI Conference in Des Moines. We presented and debated our proposed Resolution. It passed with overwhelming support from counties across the state. We also welcomed a new member to the East Pottawattamie office, Kelsey Blodget - Four District Resource Team Lead.

In September we conducted our Annual Financial Review and audit. No discrepancies were found, and it was another successful audit for East Pottawattamie. Susan Rush, Conservation Assistant, helped the West Pottawattamie office out with the day-to-day business while their conservation assistant was on extended leave. Huge thanks to Susan for keeping our office running and being a great team player for the West Pottawattamie office as well!

In September, our Board re-evaluated cost share project expenses and raised the cost share from 50% to 75% on the following practices: terraces, waterways, water and sediment control basins, tiling and grade stabilization structures. The Board also increased terrace upgrades from a flat rate of \$0.35 to \$0.50 per foot.

In October we put a planning committee together for the Annual Awards night set for 1/29/2024. We discussed speakers and award nominees.

We are very fortunate to have the FSA office co-located in the Oakland office and appreciate all the hard work they do to complete dual office contracts well before the deadlines. Thank you, FSA staff!

In November, our dry hydrant committee met several times and completed the final presentation in preparation for the December Emergency Management (EM) Fire Chiefs meeting in Macedonia. This was a great meeting and truly our privilege to work with Pottawattamie County E.M. and all the local fire departments on this project to implement every possible safety net for the residents of our communities and the preservation of the land in the event of a fire.

In closure, it has been an honor to serve as Chair and I would like to sincerely thank all our farmers, landowners, community partners, Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors, and the residents of East Pottawattamie County who are working to help preserve our soil health and the water quality in our county and state.

"It's about beliefs and values passed down through generations. Ensuring things are left better for those yet to come. It's all about Legacy."
-Unknown

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!

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Maps and Survey Notes of Original Government Survey of Pottawattamie County, Iowa

Prepared by: George M. Hilton

The original government survey of Pottawattamie County, Iowa was made by contract surveyors in the years 1851 and 1852. Twelve Deputy Surveyors were employed to do the work. The procedure uniformly followed by the Deputy Surveyors and their parties, working in Pottawattamie County, was in conformity with the laws of the United States and with the instructions issued to them by George B. Sargent, Surveyor General of the United States for Wisconsin and Iowa.

Each surveyor was assigned to separate townships to be surveyed. Usually, one Deputy Surveyor laid out the exterior lines of the township, while another survey party divided the township into 36-mile square sections. Land corners were marked with pointed oak posts driven into or set into the ground at each section and quarter-section corner. Pits were dug from the sod and thrown around the posts, thus making a mound.

Each survey party was made up of at least two chain bearers, one mound maker and one or more axmen and flagmen. The chain bearers made the measurements. Mound makers, sometimes called markers, made, and set the corner monuments. Axmen cleared the course being measured of brush, trees, and other obstacles so that the view fore and aft was clear. Flagmen kept the chain bearers on the course between land corners.

This party would travel out to the township to be surveyed in horse drawn wagons equipped with camping equipment, as there were very few settlements or towns in the country at that time, all supplies and equipment were carried along.

Once the Deputy Surveyor and his party arrived to their assigned township their operations usually started at the marker at the southeast corner of the township. There they would trace or retrace the south boundary of section 36, at the southwest corner, a line would be measured north to the northwest corner then east to the point where they intercepted the east line of the township. From section 36 they duplicated the procedure in section 35 and so on west to section 31. After section 31 was completed, they began on the second tier of sections. So on until all 36 sections were completed. All corrections were made upon the northern and western boundaries where their survey closed upon that of the exterior survey. That is the reason for our land titles carrying the condition such as 160 acres more or less.

Concurrently with the survey, the Deputy Surveyor made notes covering the courses followed and a record was kept of all distances measured. They often included observations of the surveyor as to the topography, rivers and streams, wooded areas, cultivated tracts, settlements within the township and trials crossed. There was a lack of complete uniformity in the preparation of field notes and summary remarks by the Deputy Surveyors. Each used his own style of reporting. Items which were important to one surveyor was often omitted by a fellow surveyor working in an adjoining township. For instance, the Mormon Trail, the only distinct trail across the county from east to west, was called Kaneshville to Ft Des Moines Road by one surveyor and the Council Bluffs to Mississippi River by another, and the Pisga Road to Kaneshville Road by another. One surveyor called it the Bluffs Road. However, by careful application of their notes, we are able to reconstruct a fairly good map illustrated to locate various settlements, streams, wooded areas, and trails.

The notes made by these surveyors contain no spark of romance or fiction. Their pages contain a brief account of the course they traveled and in summarizing the natural qualities of the township they surveyed, they had little time to spare on details. According to their own reports the subdivision survey of a township, 6 miles square required only 10 days to two weeks. The expression often used by surveyors "to run a line" could truthfully be applied to describe their work. An old resident in Boomer Township who lives near the Harrison County line told me that his father had seen a party of surveyors at work in 1852. He said the chainmen would run across the prairie stripped down to the waist, their skin torn with briars. Of course, their courses were more open, and they were not hindered by fields of crops, fences, highways, or building improvements.

In the hundred years past since this survey, very few traces of their actual work exists except that generally speaking improved roads and property line fences mark the lines which they followed and established. The written record for their work, however, has been preserved and to this date we are able to draw conclusions as to the vast changes which have taken place within the county. It is remarkable that their surveys compare favorable with more recent resurveys made with more accurate equipment.



Soil & Water Conservation District Commissioners

Left to right: Commissioner Dwight Hobson, Commissioner Keith Hotze, Commissioner Bernie Bolton, Commissioner Kami Willett, and Commissioner Robert Zimmerman. Assistant Commissioners not shown: Russ Brandes, Chris Perdue, John Thomas and Norma Bolton.

Help us Help You!

To better meet your needs, we are asking landowners to notify our office if they experience changes due to a tract sale, purchase, or change in operator. When these changes take place, it is the responsibility of the new owner or operator to update our office.

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Greetings from Lori Altheide

This past year's conservation efforts in SW Iowa were remarkable. The amount of funding and new opportunities for conservation has been unlike I have seen in my 40-year career working in conservation. Most noteworthy are the additional dollars available through the 2018 Farm Bill and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). IRA provides unprecedented funding levels for several of the existing programs that NRCS implements. Historically SW Iowa has not had big participation in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), but the number of operator's enrolling in the SW has seen a steady increase. With the recent increase in payment rates and available funds, this is definitely a Program for operators to check out. CSP helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resource concerns. CSP pays participants for conservation performance—the higher the performance, the higher the payment. This program provides two possible types of payments through five-year contracts: annual payments for installing new conservation activities and maintaining existing practices; and supplemental payments for adopting a resource-conserving crop rotation. NRCS accepts program applications on a continuous basis but makes application cutoff dates as funding allows. The first application cutoff to batch and rank applications in fiscal year 2024 for CSP in Iowa was November 3, 2023. The next application cutoff for CSP is April 12, 2024. Through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), SW Iowa farmers have new opportunities in partner projects that were announced in 2023. West Nishnabotna Water Quality & Infrastructure, Protection and Restoration of Grasslands in the Loess Hills, and Protect Rathbun Lake project are three of the newest RCPP projects. There are additional RCPP agreements that field offices are assisting with. Land-owners can check with their local office for these and other program updates.

The Southwest Iowa Soil Health group (SWISH) worked hard to bring a fantastic soil health event to our area! They hosted a soil health conference on Wednesday, March 6th in Atlantic, IA. The day featured soil health legend Jay Fuhrer, retired NRCS DC/Soil Health Specialist, now the lead educator of the Menoken Soil Health Research and Demonstration Farm in North Dakota. Other expert speakers included NRCS Regional Soil Health Specialist Candy Thomas, and Davis Behle from Green Cover Seed, as well as a local farmer panel. The day had demonstrations, discussions, and information for everyone. If you were not able to attend this event, I hope you can attend another soil health field day that will be happening across the area this spring and summer.

Best Always,
Lori Altheide
STC-FO SW Iowa

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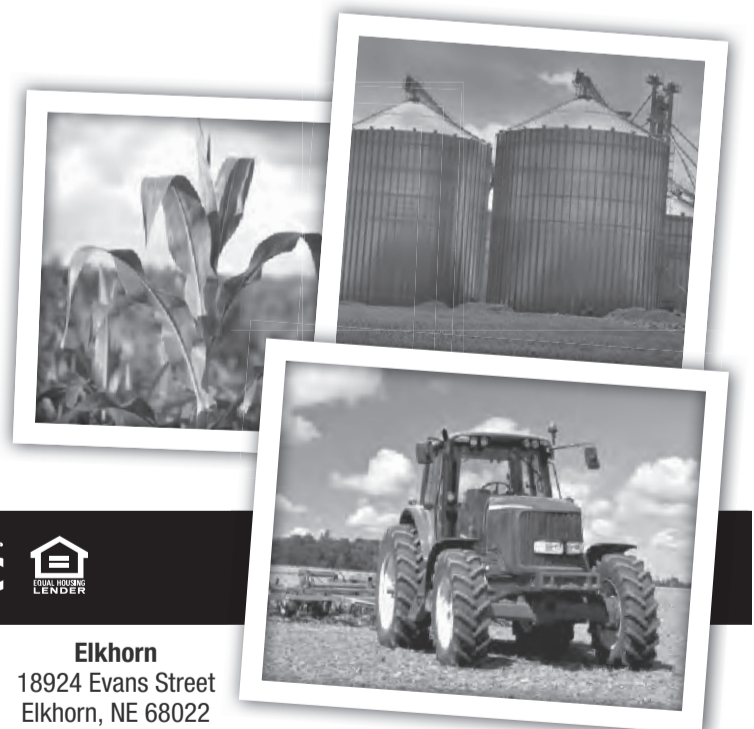
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Resource Team Greetings



Kelsey Blodgett
Resource Team Lead

Greetings! My name is Kelsey Blodgett, and I took over as the new resource team lead for the Oakland resource team in July of 2023. I am originally from Orange, California, and I began my career with Iowa NRCS with the pathways intern program in the summer of 2014. Upon graduation from Northern Arizona University in 2016, I began working full time as a soil conservationist in the Malvern field office where I worked with Mills County producers on conservation planning for over 3 years. In the fall of 2019, I accepted a position in the Sidney Field Office as the District Conservationist, where I continued to work with producers on conservation planning as well as managing workload within the field office. In the spring of 2022, I was selected for the Resource team lead position within

the Creston resource team, where I was able to provide direction and support to resource team staff and work with the district conservationists in the resource area to provide support to the field offices and provide excellent customer service to our producers. I have enjoyed my time as a resource team lead and am excited to continue to take on the role where I can serve staff, field offices, and producers doing conservation in the Loess Hills.

The Oakland resource area (covering Shelby County, Harrison County, and Pottawattamie County) has seen a lot of changes over the last year in staffing and programs that continues to keep us on our toes. Despite this, I am constantly amazed at how staff are committed to overcoming these challenges to continue to provide the best customer service. In 2024, my goal is to find ways to support these offices in their efforts to provide the best customer service: to look for opportunities to work together to complete workload, to create resiliency within our team to complete engineering design and implementation, and to continue to develop our staff and build on their knowledge and skills so that we can better serve our customers.

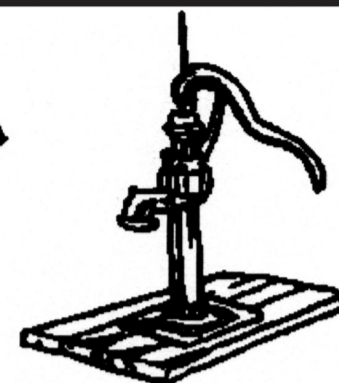
I look forward to a busy and productive year with the Oakland resource team and I hope to cross paths with you all, our customers, in 2024! Happy Planting!

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Our Haybuster 10' drill is available for \$15.00/acre with a \$50 minimum use fee. Using a No-Till Drill helps to prevent erosion, decreases compaction, and helps to minimize soil disturbance. If you are interested in checking out our No-Till Drill, call our office at (712) 482-6486 to be placed on the reservation list. A lease/waiver is signed when checking it out, and each user is expected to clean it out and grease prior to returning.



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Compliance Reminders

by Terry Gleaves, District Conservationist, East Pottawattamie Co. Field Office

As we get close to spring, I want to remind all of upcoming Status Reviews. These are all computer-generated selections for review. They are based on your conservation plan and existing practices on your farm. We usually have about twenty tracts per year plus any holdovers from previous year that needed to correct something on their tract.

These are all based on conditions of the day the reviewer is present. Rotations from conservation plan are checked and any practices that are present in plan as well. Usually, it is an area that shows erosion that is called if there are any issues. Residue amounts or ephemeral gullies are the most common problems where treatment may be needed. You are given options and have until the next spring to correct.

I wanted to bring to your attention to something that we see a lot that is now on NRCS radar. That is the practice of disking around the boundaries and terraces of a field. If no-till is required in your conservation plan than you could be called out of compliance by doing so. A no-till plan means no tillage and even going around the outside of a field could put you in jeopardy of passing a review. If you have questions on any of this, please contact the office.

East Pottawattamie County Soil & Water Conservation District Commissioners meetings are held at the NRCS office at 321 Oakland Avenue in Oakland, Iowa. The meetings are normally held the third Wednesday of every month at 8:00 a.m. All meetings are open to the public. For more information, please call 712-482-6408, ext. 301.

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Growth in Water Quality Programs Increases Access to Conservation Funding

by Jake Hansen, Water Resources Bureau Chief – IDALS Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality



Jake Hansen, Water Resources Bureau Chief – IDALS Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality

Since the Iowa Water Quality Initiative was first funded in 2013, the program landscape for conservation funding and options for producers has grown significantly. Farmers have been presented with a charge to voluntarily incorporate cover crops, nutrient management practices, and structural projects aimed at holding nutrients in place and reducing nitrogen and phosphorus losses. This call to action has been well-received- cover crop adoption in the past decade has grown to more than 4 million acres statewide, and landowners are installing nutrient reduction wetlands and edge of field practices at record levels year over year. All of this work is happening in addition to continued commitment to “traditional” soil conservation practice adoption at historic levels.

The success of the Water Quality Initiative has been noticed on a regional and national scale. Some of the programs piloted in Iowa are taking hold in other states in the Mississippi River basin, and the science team led by the Iowa Nutrient Research Center has added several water quality practices to the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy in the last few years, including bioreactors, saturated buffers, and prairie strips, to name a few. Cost-share programs are becoming increasingly flexible, with more ways to support practices than ever before.

Growth in program offerings is not without its challenges. New programs and new funding bring new partners to the table; and local staff, commissioners, and partners find themselves work-

ing to understand subtle differences in the wider variety of cost-share opportunities in order to help meet ambitious conservation goals. I am happy to report that local staff and elected commissioners are rising to the challenge and effectively working to help more producers than ever. The Water Quality Initiative has engaged over 250 partner organizations throughout Iowa and beyond over the ten years of its existence, but cooperation and leadership from our Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Iowa Department of Natural Resources partners has been essential to the successful growth we are all experiencing. Thank you so much to all of the staff and local leaders who have helped to make this growth a reality, and to the thousands of farmers who have been willing to embrace new conservation ideas and implement new practices! As interest in water quality programs continues to grow, we look forward to continuing to work with all of you to maintain local conservation priorities and to embrace new opportunities.

2023 COVER CROPS BY TOWNSHIP

2023 Total Cover Crop Acres: 3,784 ac.	PLEASANT 0 ac.	KNOX 0 ac.	LAYTON 1,756 ac.
	JAMES 309 ac.	VALLEY 606 ac.	LINCOLN 104 ac.
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Available Cost Share Funds

by Terry Gleaves, District Conservationist

This past year we paid out over \$425,000 of cost share funds through several different programs. We are lucky to have Local Option Sales Tax (LOST Funds) which is where the largest amount of money is spent. LOST funds provided \$158,000 to cover conservation projects this last year. This is why we can always find money if it is a viable application.

We receive a yearly allocation from Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and we receive about the same amount every year as long as it is spent; if there is a need for additional funds from the state, we can request supplemental funds. State funds this last year amounted to \$124,000 with around \$45,000 for terraces or waterway practices and the rest from a separate fund pool specifically for cover crops. They pay \$25/acre for first time users of cover crops and \$15/acre for previous users of cover crops, subject to the availability of program funds.

Federal funds come from several different programs. In all last year we paid out \$144,000 through these federal programs. There are ample dollars available for all sources. EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) is the old standby covering many practices; some do not rank very high in the point system but is possible. CSP which stands for Conservation Stewardship Program is being pushed more and is built to reward good conservationist and try to get them to even a higher level of conservation management. You can also use both EQIP and CSP to help you achieve your goals. There are enhancements that must be done at some point to get you to that level based on your operation. It is a good fit for medium sized operations that own most of their ground.

RCPP (Regional Conservation Partnership Program) is the newest program that is on a bigger scale as far as size of area or watershed and money that is available. It is new and we are entering our first ranking and obligation right now for the coming year. It is scheduled for 5 years currently. Structures are a priority and specifically streambanks on the West Nishnabotna River. Almost the entire East Pottawattamie District is in this watershed area so we are looking at this as another opportunity to get more conservation work done.

In closing I just want to reiterate that if you have a problem area or just don't like how something looks give us a call and we can look and help you fix or improve an area of concern on your farm. We have significantly raised our rates to help you do conservation work for the coming year with 75% cost share and we have put more incentive on getting some summer jobs to spread out our workload. Summer will be \$300/acre for acres set aside to build on with 150' strips for terraces plus 90% cost share so please take a look at this new program for summer. Thank you.

Informational Websites

Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship–
www.iowaagriculture.gov
Iowa Natural Resources Conservation Service– www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov
Conservation Districts of Iowa– www.cdiowa.org
Soil & Water Conservation Society– www.swcs.org
Iowa Department of Natural Resources– www.iowadnr.gov

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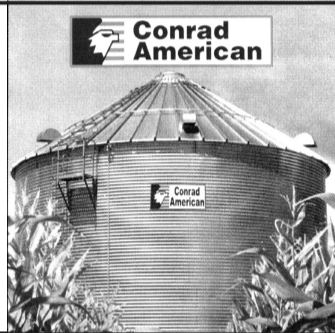
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State and Federal Programs

State Programs -

<https://iowaagriculture.gov/administrative/departments-programs>

Federal Programs - click on newsroom, then fact sheets

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/>

TERRACE REPORT BY TOWNSHIP

FY2023 Terrace Footage = 102,966'	PLEASANT 6,942'	KNOX 2,958'	LAYTON 3,986'
	JAMES 20,045'	VALLEY 35,855'	LINCOLN 2,588'
	WASHINGTON 7,810'	BELKNAP 2,144'	CENTER 1,860'
	CARSON 4,788'		
	MACEDONIA 2,056'	GROVE 3,165'	WAVELAND 8,769'

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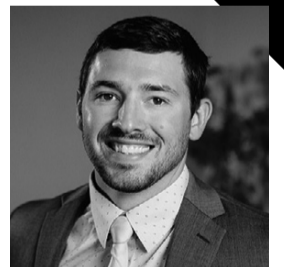
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2023 SWCD Annual Newsletter

By Jon Hubbert, State Conservationist, Iowa NRCS

It's great to be back serving as State Conservationist for Iowa NRCS, after serving in a detail as a Regional Conservationist for the Northeast Region for nearly 10 months. I am getting caught up with all the changes that took place throughout 2023.

Jaia Fischer, from our staff, and Neil Dominy, from Nebraska, did a wonderful job during my absence as Acting State Conservationist throughout the year. I appreciate their leadership, collaboration, and hard work.

So much was accomplished by our staff and core conservation partners in 2023. On the periphery, the record \$85.8 million in conservation funding obligated to Iowa farmers through Farm Bill programs is awesome.

But I am just as proud with the work our staff did to onboard so many new employees, the training we conducted for our newer staff, and the outreach to find and work with new customers.

The latest update is that our current Farm Bill has been extended through Fiscal Year 2024, Sept. 30, 2024. With that, many of our priorities for this year remain the same. We will continue to incorporate nationwide NRCS priorities including emphasizing climate-smart agriculture, implementing urban and small-scale agriculture and innovation, and delivering equity within our programs.

In Iowa, we continue to emphasize conservation planning and implementation, conservation program delivery, and conservation compliance.

We filled 158 positions last year, so we have a lot of newer, less experienced staff. Training and mentoring our employees will be a priority for the next few years. Many of our new staff have very little farm background, so we are open to local farmers and commissioners mentoring or even conducting informal training for our employees.

Our reorganization was initiated in March of 2020, and we have navigated many staffing changes since then. Leasing new office space for our resource teams has been a bigger challenge than anticipated, but we are making progress as leases cycle.

What is more directly within our control is providing training and tools to our teams so they can be successful. We are continuing to explore ways to improve communications and coordination within our teams to meet customer and partner expectations at the local and state level. The next year promises to be another interesting one, full of challenges that will test us. We are an evolving agency, being asked to take on and produce about as much as we can handle. The best part about our work is our mission. That's why I am still here after 36 years. Like most of you, I have a passion for helping our customers take care of their land for future generations.



Jon Hubbert, State Conservationist, Iowa NRCS

SWISH – Southwest Iowa Soil Health

by Laura Ferguson, District Conservationist

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 between December and March, 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 are working hard to bring soil health experts to SW Iowa to help educate and inspire farmers and ag professionals in the area. This year was the first year SWISH hosted a winter soil health conference, that took place on March 6th in Atlantic, IA. We heard from soil health pioneer, Jay Fuhrer, and had a farmer panel to help bring practical and real-world examples to those in attendance.

The last week in June, SWISH will host their annual summer field day at the Armstrong Research Farm near Lewis, IA. We will have in-field demonstrations and some excellent speakers lined up! SWISH events are free and open to the public. To learn more, 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!



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2024 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 \$15,000 per landowner/ except for summer incentive.

Practice (NRCS practice code)	Cost-share or Incentive Payment	Comments	District Maintenance	Notes
Standard Cost-Share Practices				
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 \$3.00/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 500 feet; \$500/intake not to exceed 50% of total bill.	20 years	
Terrace (600) Upgrades		A flat rate of \$0.50 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 \$2.00/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 \$1.50/cuyd.	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.		
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 after the frost is out of the ground in the spring, prior to May 10. Bills must be submitted by May 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 cover crop up to 160 acres. This includes labor on seeding. Anyone can apply for IFIP funding. First Time only for WQI funding. First time users: \$25/acre. Previous users: \$15/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
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 \$0.50 per foot will be paid on terrace upgrade project no matter what the final cost is. New Terrace @ 90% of maximum eligible cost. Summer incentive \$300/acre. Cover crop must be seeded by May 1 -- 50' until September 1. Re-seed to cover crop after construction, not cropped	20 years	Maximum cost-share per landowner is \$15,000.00.

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.

Increased Cost Share

The East Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District increased the state and L.O.S.T. funds cost share assistance from 50% to 75% for most practices on September 21st, 2023. Practices include terraces, waterways, water and sediment control basins, tiling, and grade stabilization structures. Terrace upgrades also increased from a flat rate of \$0.35 to \$0.50 per foot. Please contact the Oakland NRCS Office at 712-482-6486 for more information.

Conservation Milestones and Water Quality Momentum

By Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig 2023 was a milestone year for conservation and water quality in Iowa. Not only did we recognize 10 years of the state's Nutrient Reduction Strategy, 40 years of the state's Abandoned Mine Land reclamation program, and 50 years of the state's conservation cost-share program, but we also set yet another record for conservation implementation in the state.



Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig

Department wide, our cost-share programs continue to see record utilization – in dollars spent, dollars leveraged, and in total practices implemented. We've gone from approximately 10,000 acres of cover crops statewide a decade ago to nearly 4 million today. We've completed 132 wetlands and have dozens of additional sites in the design process as we head toward our goal of building 30 per year. We've built hundreds of saturated buffers and bioreactors through our innovative "batch and build" model which modernizes and streamlines the process to install practices on multiple farms at once. With eight active "batch and build" agreements in place and more in development, there's ample room for growth. We have also launched new or expanded Water Quality Initiative projects in targeted watersheds across the state, and this work is making a difference.

I want to thank Iowans for saying "yes" to conservation. I also want to thank the hardworking and devoted conservation professionals at the local, state, and federal levels as well as the many supporting public and private partner businesses and organizations. From outreach, design, and layout, to developing watershed and community-based projects, these men and women go to work every day to help us deliver more water quality improvement.

Even though Iowa State University's dashboard measurements show that we are making Nutrient Reduction Strategy progress, we are far from satisfied. Records exist to be broken, and that's what we intend to keep doing. We want to push further every year, continually recruiting more farmers, landowners and partners. Positive changes to the land equals positive impacts to our water. We need everyone pulling in the same direction – the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, USDA NRCS, Iowa's 100 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, farmers, landowners and all of our private and public partners. Water quality matters to everyone, and everyone has a role to play in conserving our natural resources and improving our soil and water. Despite challenges ranging from drought to inflation, I remain optimistic and excited about what we can do together in the years and decades ahead. Without question, the investments we are making, the partnerships we are forming, the practices we are implementing, and the water quality momentum we are accelerating will benefit not just the Iowans of today but the generations of Iowans yet to come.

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East Pottawattamie SWCD 2023 Annual Awards Ceremony



Educator Award
Mason Geer

This year East Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District had the chance to celebrate 12 very deserving award winners for their dedication to conservation.

A special thank you to our keynote speaker Ruth Blomquist, NRCS Soil Health Specialist, and to the Riverside FFA Chapter for helping us serve supper and ensure everyone had a wonderful night. Another thank you to Pottawattamie County Supervisors Tim Wichman and Susan Miller for attending and speaking with everyone.

Congratulations to all our deserving award winners and thank you to everyone who attended to celebrate their achievements.

- 2023 Awards and Recipients**
 Ed Kleen Stewardship Memorial Award, Grant Stuart
 New Cooperator Award, Dillan Hamilton
 Owner Operator Award, Wayne Martin
 Landowner / Tenant Award, Keith Tye
 Landowner / Tenant Award, Mark and Trevor Keiser
 Pasture Award, Mike Jones
 Friend of Conservation Award, Tim Wichman
 Special Recognition Award, Ruth Blomquist
 Special Recognition Award, Russ Hopp
 Educator Award, Mason Geer
 Commercial Recognition Award, Keast Enterprises



Special Recognition Award
Ruth Blomquist



New Cooperator Award
Dillan Hamilton



Friend of Conservation
Tim Wichman



Owner Operator Award
Wayne Martin



Special Recognition Award
Russ Hopp



Ed Kleen Stewardship Memorial Award
Grant Stuart



Landowner/Tenant Award
Mark and Trevor Keiser



Pasture Award - Mike Jones
(Family Accepting Award)



Commercial Recognition Award
Keast Enterprises

Iowa Farmers Lead the Way in Soil Conservation Efforts for a Sustainable Future



Susan Kozak, IDALS
Director of Soil Conservation
and Water Quality

By Susan Kozak, IDALS Director of Soil Conservation and Water Quality

As I write this article, I am in the middle of a project looking at soil health and water quality benefits when multiple conservation practices are utilized together. I find myself pondering different ways to implement conservation on the ground. With its expansive fields of corn and soybeans, Iowa has long been a cornerstone of American agriculture. Now, the state is at the forefront of a movement to prioritize soil health and water quality. Farmers across Iowa are adopting conser-

vation practices such as cover crops, no-till farming, and edge of field practices to enhance soil health, improve water quality, and boost overall productivity.

One of the standout practices gaining popularity in Iowa is cover cropping. By planting cover crops like rye or oats during the off-season, farmers protect the soil from erosion, improve water retention, and contribute to water quality improvement efforts in the state. This not only safeguards the environment but also enhances the long-term viability of the land for future generations. This year, Iowa is approaching 4 million acres of cover crops planted across the state – about 13% of the farmed acres. This is a huge increase in cover crop adoption from 10 years ago, but we still have a long way to go. As cover crops gain popularity, we should also look at integrating them with other conservation practices to offer a multitude of benefits, creating a synergistic approach that enhances overall agricultural sustainability.

The success of Iowa's soil conservation efforts is bolstered by strong partner support and collaborative initiatives. State and federal programs provide financial incentives for farmers adopting conservation practices, making it economically viable to invest in sustainable agriculture. Partnerships with key organizations in the state also play a crucial role in disseminating knowledge and best practices. Here at the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship we are proud of the commitment Iowa's farmers have made to soil conservation and water quality, as we work towards a more sustainable and resilient future for agriculture. If you are interested in trying some of these practices on your farm or layering new practices with what you are already doing, please reach out to your local USDA service center for more information.

Planting Native Prairie Species in Iowa

by Tabitha Panas, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist



Photo of diverse prairie reconstruction courtesy of Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever Inc.

Most people understand the importance of planting a tree, but do you know the importance of planting native prairie? Many people across the state of Iowa are planting tallgrass prairie and reaping the benefits. Being the once dominant ecosystem across the great plains, tallgrass prairie has numerous benefits to us and to our land still today. Historically, Iowa was covered with 70-80% tallgrass prairie. These prairies helped to build the rich organic matter of Iowa's soils that have made agriculture so successful. The remaining 20-30% of our landscape would have been timber or wetlands.

What is native prairie?

Prairie is an ecosystem with grasses being the dominant type of vegetation. While grasses can tend to seem nondescript, there are over 70 species of grasses native to Iowa – each displaying differences in color, size, shape, and texture. But prairies are composed of more than just grass. They also support native wildflowers, legumes, and some woody plant species to an extent. Besides just plants, a wide diversity of insects, mammals, birds, and reptiles also call prairies their home.

Why plant native prairie?

There are many benefits of planting native prairie. They include increasing soil health, preventing erosion in highly erodible areas, improving water infiltration, and providing wildlife habitat for grassland species like the ring-necked pheasant and bobwhite quail. While grassland bird species will benefit from the increase in biodiversity, many other species will benefit as well. Deer use prairies for bedding. Pollinators use prairies for food and overwintering. And these are just a few examples. Besides the benefit to wildlife, folks who are planting prairies through a program can also gain financial benefits, and through targeting prairies on lower yielding acres of crop ground, farmers can see an increase on their bottom line through planting prairie in a conservation program.

What programs can I use to help with the cost of planting native prairie?

There are programs through which landowners can plant prairie reconstructions on a federal, state, and sometimes local level. The most used program in Iowa for prairie reconstructions is the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Through CRP, farmers receive an annual rental payment in exchange for planting a perennial cover on their more fragile acres of crop ground. Contracts are typically 10 years in length and there are several practices in CRP that are specifically for planting native prairie mixes. Another program that can be used is the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP is a program that provides a one-time incentive payment for a specific conservation practice, and it aims to cover 50-75% of the cost of implementing that practice. This program pairs well on non-crop acres that do not meet the crop history requirements for CRP. A third program is the DNR Prairie Partners Program that provides a seed voucher for 50% of the cost of prairie seed when purchased from one of the 6 native seed dealers in the Iowa Native Seed Growers Association. Each program will have its own eligibility requirements for both the land and the landowner. If you are interested in learning more about these conservation programs or how to improve wildlife habitat on your farm, contact your local USDA Service Center and tell them about your goals. They will use their technical expertise to help you better understand your options in conservation. Happy prairie planting!

EAST POTTAWATTAMIE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT REPORT ON ANNUAL USE OF DISTRICT FUNDS FISCAL YEAR JULY 1, 2022 - JUNE 30, 2023

DISTRICT CHECKING

Beg. Bal.	\$8,292.07
Ending Balance	\$41,215.21

RECEIPTS

Rental Equipment	\$2,908.38
Equipment Allocation	\$39,589.00
State of Iowa (1M)	\$2,750.00
Donations	\$1,123.41
Project Reimbursement	\$1,361.08
Recording Fees	\$10.00
Voided Check	\$1.87
TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$47,743.74

EXPENDITURES

1M Expenditures	\$(6,592.93)
780 Qtrly Pmt-Dist Emp	\$(2,568.96)
Annual Fees/Dues/Sub	\$(85.00)
Awards/Donations/Events	\$(1,160.04)
Equipment Rental Fees-Repairs	\$(1,267.00)
Internal Transfers	\$(1,164.57)
Pheasants Forever	\$(1,500.00)
Prior Year Mileage	\$(77.69)
Recording Fees	\$(101.00)
Misc	\$(106.90)
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$(14,820.60)

DISTRICT EDUCATION FUND

Beg. Bal.	\$118,484.11
Ending Balance	\$54,939.63

RECEIPT

Internal Transfers	\$1,498.83
Miscellaneous	\$160.50
TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$44,764.21

EXPENDITURES

Trees for Threes	\$(300.00)
Project Expenses/Supplies	\$(1,392.19)
Projects/Payroll	\$(32,651.85)
Payroll Processing Fees	\$(209.50)
Payroll Taxes/Contributions	\$(2,615.40)
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$(65,203.81)

Beginning Balances July 1, 2022

General Checking	\$8,292.07
District Education Fund	\$118,484.11
TOTAL BEGINNING BALANCES	\$126,776.18

Ending Balances June 30, 2023

General Checking	\$41,215.21
District Education Fund	\$54,939.63
TOTAL ENDING BALANCES	\$96,154.84

Total Beginning Balances	\$ 126,776.18
Total Receipts	\$ 49,403.07
Less Total Expenditures	\$ 80,024.41
Balance June 30, 2023	\$ 96,154.84

STATE COST SHARE EXPENDED (FY23)

SF512: Nishnabotna HUC 8 Project	\$95,125.00
IA Financial Incentive Program (IFIP)	\$38,665.50
Water Quality Initiative Incentive	\$43,033.25
REAP Forestry & Native Grasses	\$843.75

The East Pottawattamie Soil & Water Conservation District thanks the Division of Soil Conservation and the Iowa Legislature for making these funds available.

COUNTY FUNDING EXPENDED (FY23)

Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) Allocation	\$244,763.00
Expenditures	\$107,646.50

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*

West Nishnabotna Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Underway

Golden Hills RC&D, the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), and Hungry Canyons Alliance (HCA), through a \$9 million Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) grant, will be helping landowners in the West Nishnabotna Watershed implement conservation practices. This 5-year project will provide cost share and technical assistance to landowners to implement practices that will improve water quality, increase flood resiliency, and protect public infrastructure. Such practices will include streambank and grade stabilization projects as well as upland practices that include, among others, denitrifying bioreactors, prairie strips, water and sediment control basins (WASCOBs), terraces, and cover crops. Landowners whose properties are at least 50% within the project area (shown below) are eligible.

Golden Hills successfully held five public informational meetings for landowners in 2023 and plans further outreach events for the project in the coming year.

More details and information are available at: <https://www.goldenhillsrcd.org/rcpp.html>

Contact Project Coordinator Shaun Ahern (at shaun.ahern@goldenhillsrcd.org or 712-482-3029) or your local NRCS field office for more information or with any questions.

Watershed Update

by Russ Hopp

In January 1958 a watershed committee was formed by five local landowners. This committee then held several small group meetings, in order to start a PL-566 (Public Law) watershed. Approval for this PL-566 project was applied for and approval was received on January 12, 1959.

The project was formally named Bee-Jay Watershed. The name was picked because the location of the watershed was in the Belknap and James Townships. Bee-Jay Watershed consists of 16,920 acres northwest of Oakland. In 1959 there were 91 farms involved in the watershed project.

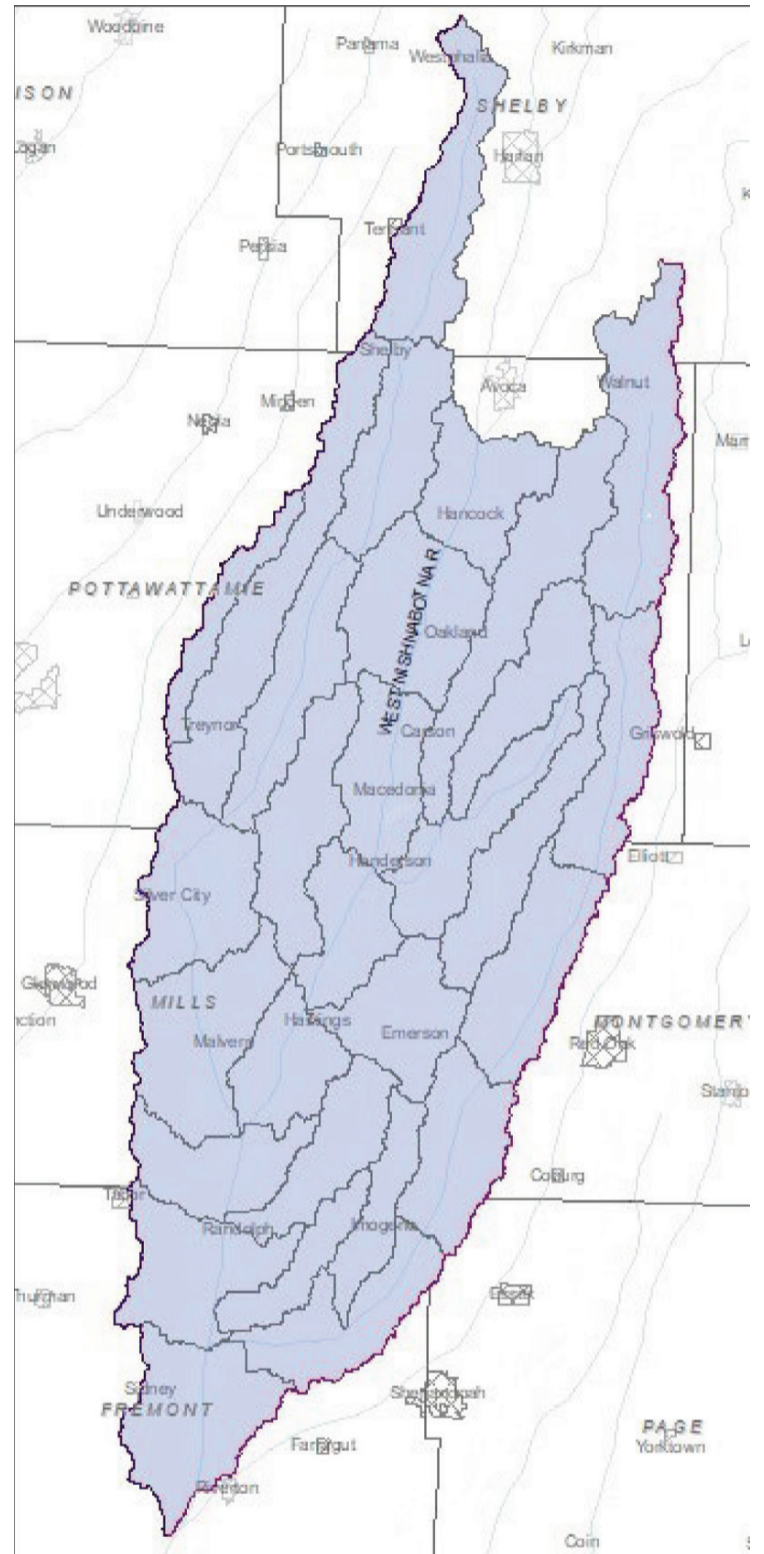
In 1960 the total estimated cost for the entire project was \$365,376. Bids for the first project were opened in August of 1963. The last two structures were completed in 1977. In the last almost 50 years these fourteen structures have helped to reduce and prevented downstream erosion and bottom land flooding.

I completed an inspection of all fourteen structures in Bee-Jay during the fall of 2022 and spring of 2023. The inspection involved checking all components of each structure. This included pipes, concrete, and earth fill for damage or needed repairs. Each site was checked for animal damage (holes), settling, erosion, and encroachment of trees on the structures. I also checked for any preventative maintenance items.

Three sites were identified as needing to have trees and shrubs removed from the earth fill and near the pipes or concrete components of the sites. The trees need to be removed to keep the roots from developing paths for water to erode the soil, which can eventually lead to a blowout of the fill. Also, these sites are all located in the stream channels and the beaver population seems to be increasing; once the beavers begin knocking down trees and plug the pipes or the concrete chutes it increases the amount of water stacked up above the structures and increases chances of damage or failure. The trees on these three sites are scheduled to be removed in the spring of 2024.

One of the structures had small areas in the concrete that were spalled and in need of repair. Those repairs were completed in the fall of 2023.

Overall, the structures in Bee-Jay are in good shape and continue to function as designed. With continued inspection and maintenance they should last another fifty years.



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>

USING the NRCS Web Soil Survey: Free Public Access to the Nation's Soil Resource Data

The NRCS Soil Science has transitioned from its traditional, static soil surveys published in bound hard copy to more fluid online format that allows NRCS to continually update soil survey data as needed and from which customers can create custom soil survey reports for just their area of interest.

Check out the website: <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>

Education and Outreach in Pottawattamie County

Hello everyone! My name is Laura Monson, and I am the County Education Coordinator for East and West Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation Districts. I am so proud to say that we have spent the last year expanding our education and outreach efforts immensely, having now reached more than 1,000 students with our in-class programs and at community events. All of this could not happen without the support of the County Board of Supervisors, the SWCD Board of Commissioners, all the teachers, students, administrators, and school staff that welcome us into their schools, and all our partners in the community. Thank you to everyone who has had a hand in our outreach programs; without you it would not be possible! Please read on to find out what all we've been up to!

Conservation in the Classroom

The majority of my days are spent in the classroom, leading programs to students from Preschool to 12th Grade, speaking about all things related to conservation, agriculture, soil, pollinators, native prairie, wildlife, the environment, and farming. In the past year and a half, we have reached upwards of 1,000 students with our in-class programs alone. I have presented programs in classrooms and/or at events for students at AHSTW, Riverside, Tri-Center, Treynor, Carter Lake, Lewis Central, Crescent Elementary, and Heartland Christian. Some of our most popular programs are: The Soil Health Scavenger Hunt, From Rocks to Soil, Biodiversity Bonanza, The Fabulous World of Wetlands, Monarch Migration Madness, We All Live in a Watershed, and the 5th Graders at Riverside have even started their own vermicomposting bins!

Another thank you to all the teachers and administrators for inviting me into your classrooms and being willing to incorporate conservation education at your schools.



Going Beyond the Classroom

Our programs don't stop in the classroom! We also lead after school clubs called the Conservation Superheroes club with 3rd through 5th graders at AHSTW and Riverside. This club is made possible by our partnership with the East Pottawattamie Farm Bureau and their Outreach Coordinator Mason Geer. The Conservation Superheroes meet once a month, discovering how soil, air, energy, water, plants, and animals connect to conservation.

We also led a booth at the AHSTW STEM Fest, with a rainfall simulator, soil samples of clay, silt, and sand, the chance to make your own soil, and learn about how soil formed and created layers; the students at AHSTW discovered why soil is so important and what it means to work hard to keep it healthy.

One Water, Water Connects Us All; the theme of this year's CDI Poster Contest. This year



Riverside 3rd, 4th, and 5th as well as Riverside 5th and Treynor 2nd grade classes all competed in the CDI Poster Contest. The CDI Poster Contest is a national contest organized by the National Association of Conservation Districts. Along with making the posters, the students spent five class periods learning about water conservation, watersheds, and the global water cycle. Our winners were:

- AHSTW 5th – 1st: Stella Rold 2nd: Peyton Schnepel 3rd: Lucas Plumb
- Riverside 3rd – 1st: Sidney Reed 2nd: Aleah Linson 3rd: Cecilia Ku
- Riverside 4th – 1st: Casey Kvaal 2nd: Macli Poland 3rd: Benjamin Echevarria
- Riverside 5th – 1st: Peyton Scott 2nd: Serenity Haver 3rd: Harrison Rone



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 to teach the students about the environment and conservation through first-hand experiences.

We started with our Trees for 3's program, giving away around 100 trees to 3rd Grade students at Riverside and AHSTW. For students at AHSTW this program was part of a field day where they learned about their trees and how to care for them, and they also learned about the native Iowa prairie, soil health, and Iowan wildlife.

On May 5th, we had our Botna Bend Field Day with one hundred and five 5th Graders from AHSTW and Riverside. The students spent the whole day outside learning about soil, river formation, native plants and wildlife, and the importance of biodiversity.

To celebrate Arbor Day, we planted ten trees with sixty-six 5th Grade students from Treynor. The students planted these trees at the local park and on school grounds. They worked hard to spread mulch around the newly planted trees, as well as the trees planted last year.

We also led pond study stations and fishing stations at the Macedonia Quarry Day with 4th Graders, and at a field day at Viking Lake. These students had the chance to explore the ecosystems thriving in ponds and lakes. Finding dragonfly and grasshopper nymphs,



tadpoles and frogs in all stages of their life cycle, fish, and even snakes!

On September 6th of 2023 we held our annual soil pit practice judging event at Carstens Farmstead. Forty high school students, all on the soil judging teams at their schools, and their teachers, joined District Conservationist Laura Ferguson and myself, to learn about soil health and how to judge a soil profile. The schools in attendance were AHSTW, Riverside, Griswold, Fremont-Mills, and Stanton. FFA Soil Judging is a career development event that helps motivate students to learn about land use, soil properties, and surface features. For many of the students, this was their first chance to see a soil profile in person and apply what they were learning in class. Having this practice prepares the students for the Southwest Iowa Soil Judging Contest where they must evaluate soil pits on; the depth of profile, soil texture, agricultural management practices, and productivity for different management systems. Thank you to Carstens Farmstead for hosting this event and to all the schools that attended.

Another thank you to Carstens Farmstead for inviting us to your Carstens Farm Kids Day! Five hundred students from area schools and homeschools attended this event. At our station, I led a soil health scavenger hunt inside the NRCS Soil Health Tunnel. The students learned about why soil is important, what microbes are, and the principles of soil health. Students were sent on another Soil Health Scavenger Hunt through the NRCS Soil Health Tunnel at the Farm Bureau 5th Grade Agriculture Field Day at the Avoca Fairgrounds. One hundred 5th Graders attended this field day to learn about agriculture and the importance of keeping our soil healthy.

If you would like to donate to our education fund to help programs like these continue, please contact us at swcdeducation@gmail.com or by phone at (712) 482-6486.

Summer Programs

Conservation Education does not stop just because it's Summer! Helping Hands in the Community is a gardening club we lead at Impact Hill in Oakland. Five to fifteen students meet Monday through Thursday to plant and take care of their own garden. This year we planted a Milpa inspired garden with seeds donated by Green Cover. We planted sweet corn, beans, and all types of squash (the Three Sisters) along with sunflowers and native



prairie plants. The students learned about where the food we eat comes from, plant growth, pollination, soil, and agriculture.

Join us at the Fair! In 2023 we hosted booths at both the East Pottawattamie County Fair and Westfair. Fairgoers had the opportunity to learn about conservation practices, native plants, and soil health with a soil health scavenger hunt through the soil health tunnel.

Summer Camps with Pottawattamie County Conservation

With a very successful summer camp season this past summer, with camps at the Hitchcock Nature Center and Arrowhead Park, we are now partnering with Pottawattamie County Conservation to provide three new summer camps at Botna Bend Park! Registration is open for campers entering 1st through 6th Grade. For more information, or to register, visit www.pottconservation.com/environmental_education/summer_camps/. I will personally be leading all the Botna Bend camps, so, if your student enjoys their in-class conservation lessons, they will love this camp!

Community Outreach

Women landowners make up almost 50% of farmland owners in Iowa. To honor them, we hosted a Women Land Owners (WLO) meeting on July 7th of 2023. An amazing group of sixteen women joined us for a morning of presentations, lunch, and an afternoon tour of the county. During the morning portion we played Wetland Bingo and various door prizes were given away, generously donated to us by various community members and businesses. Our presenters were: NRCS District Conservationist Terry Gleaves, who discussed cost share programs, availability, and rules - East Pottawattamie SWCD Commissioner Chair Kami Willett, presenting on owner/operator responsibility and operator contracting options - East Pottawattamie SWCD Commissioner Pete Hobson who shared with us information on the STAR Program, and his experience with it - NRCS District Conservationist Laura Ferguson, who spoke on how to understand your conservation plan - NRCS Soil Health Specialist Ruth Blomquist, who did a rainfall simulator presentation and discussed soil health and how to achieve healthy soil on your farm - Pheasants Forever Farmbill Wildlife Biologist Tabitha Panas, who gave an engaging presentation on pollinators and the benefits of native prairie.

After lunch, provided by Destination Coffee and Cuisine, we embarked on a tour of the county, visiting CRP, pollinator habitats, and conservation at work. We visited Wheeler Grove, Farm Creek, and the Elliot Wetland, stopping to discuss conservation practices like terraces and dry hydrants, along the way.

Thank you so much to all the Women Landowners that attended this meeting, to all our presenters, and to Riverside School District, Pottawattamie County Conservation, East Pottawattamie Farm Bureau, Van Wall Equipment, Oakland Pharmacy, Minden Bowl, Gress Locker, and Guyers Greenhouse for your contributions to making our WLO Meeting a success!



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 have made our education and outreach program possible, and I can't thank everyone 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!

Dry Hydrant Project Update

by Kami Willett, SWCD Chair

As you may recall from last year's East Pottawattamie SWCD's Annual Report, one of our goals was to add an additional ten dry hydrants to the east side of the county over the next three years. We have worked diligently with key stakeholders, and we are on target for meeting our projected goal. What is a dry hydrant you say? The National Fire Association defines a dry hydrant as "An arrangement of piping with one end in the water and the other extending to dry land and available to connection with a pumper."

In 2023 Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) and the State Soil Conservation and Water Quality Committee issued a request for grant proposals to provide funding for innovative and demonstration focused conservation initiative projects. Our team quickly formed work groups and wrote and submitted two proposals; one for \$50,000 (max each proposal could request) for our dry hydrant project and the other for an education grant. This IDALS grant was available to all 99 Iowa counties; five proposals were submitted from across the state and East Pottawattamie submitted two of the five. IDALS funded our education proposal with \$6,000 but were unable to fund both projects. So, we worked with the Board of Supervisors for funding, and on September 5th the BOS approved securing funding to reimburse installation costs of additional dry hydrants and the maintenance of current dry hydrants. This allocated funding will help cover new dry hydrant locations, pipe fittings at the dry hydrant locations that all departments can utilize, and any maintenance/dredging that is needed at current sites.

In December we had the opportunity to present at the Pottawattamie County Emergency Management Fire Chiefs meeting in Macedonia. It was the ideal setting to get all the subject matter experts at the table and discuss their department's needs regarding dry hydrants. We discussed and decided on universal signage for the dry hydrant locations. This signage will be displayed at each site as well as along the neighboring intersecting roads; this will help fire departments not familiar with the area to easily find and access the water if a mutual aid call is activated. We also discussed county GIS maps for department cover-

age areas and will work with the County GIS department to update the maps to include the new dry hydrants. We will be presenting a progress update of this project at the Emergency Management Fire Chiefs meeting in April 2024.

Currently we have five landowners that we are working with for site surveys/possible new construction. We need additional sites so if you have a location that has hard surface access (paved or gravel, no minimum maintenance roads), year-round access and good water availability we would love to hear from you. Please contact Terry Gleaves at the SWCD office in Oakland.

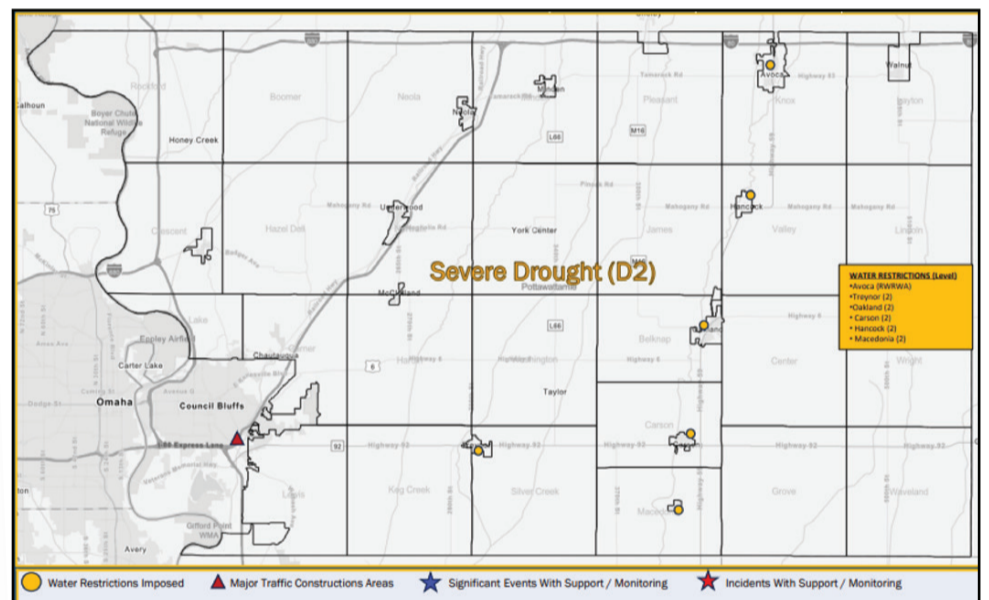
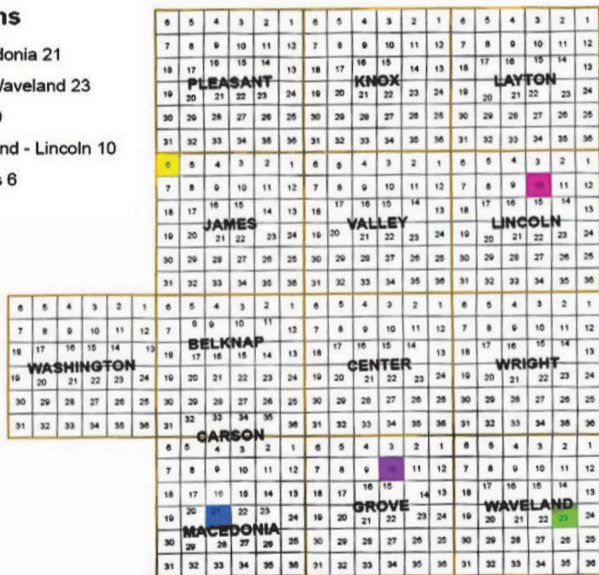
The following story was shared with us at the East Pottawattamie Annual Awards night in January 2024, by Pottawattamie Board of Supervisor Chair, Susan Miller:

"It was Tuesday, January 9, 2023, with 8" of blowing snow and below zero temperatures and communities in Eastern Pottawattamie County were out of power due to power lines "galloping". The communities of Carson and Macedonia were without power for over 12 hours. A phone conversation with the EMA Director at 8:00 p.m. gave hope that MidAmerican Energy would restore power by 9 p.m. His report came with a warning that the Macedonia water tower was very low because the pumps were unable to operate without power. The concern was the tower would be emptied before power was restored. He was going to notify the Mayors and City Clerks, and I asked him to include the Fire Chiefs in his communication. Shortly after 10 p.m. the volunteer fire departments in Macedonia, Carson, and Treynor were notified of a house fire in Macedonia. The Macedonia Fire Chief alerted Carson to stage at the Dry Hydrant at the Rock Quarry. Having access to a dry hydrant provided a water source redundancy that was much needed during the blizzard."

In addition to the isolated above story, many communities are under water restrictions due to the severe drought. This is why it is so important we have additional resources, like dry hydrants, to help fight fires in East Pottawattamie! Please see below map identifying communities with water restrictions imposed:

Dry Hydrant Locations

- Old Town Park - Macedonia 21
- Griswold - Big Hole - Waveland 23
- Farm Creek - Grove 10
- Ron Paasch/Heyne Pond - Lincoln 10
- Clayton Young - James 6



Maintenance of Terraces

Whenever a landowner receives cost share to build terraces, they sign a maintenance agreement for 20 years to make sure these practices are maintained. This is recorded at the county level and that way we have a record when they are built that is easily traceable. This agreement states that you will maintain ridge height, channel profile, and any tile inlets that may be part of your system. Big rainfall events, animal holes and excessive tillage can cause issues with your system working properly so they should be inspected annually. Animal holes from badgers, ground hogs, and coyotes can really lead to problems when we get that heavy rain event and often, they blow through and cause ditches right below the terrace. These are often hard for a farmer to fix because the hole needs cored out and repacked so it will hold until fully settled out.

The number one maintenance issue is trees, and it is a never-ending battle. If you get them caught up there are newer chemical applications that can keep them under control, so please consider that as a time saver.

This is just a reminder that you are responsible to maintain terraces which can be dirt work such as blocks to cleaning around intakes and even reseeding if needed.

