

82nd 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 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.

Need to contact the office?

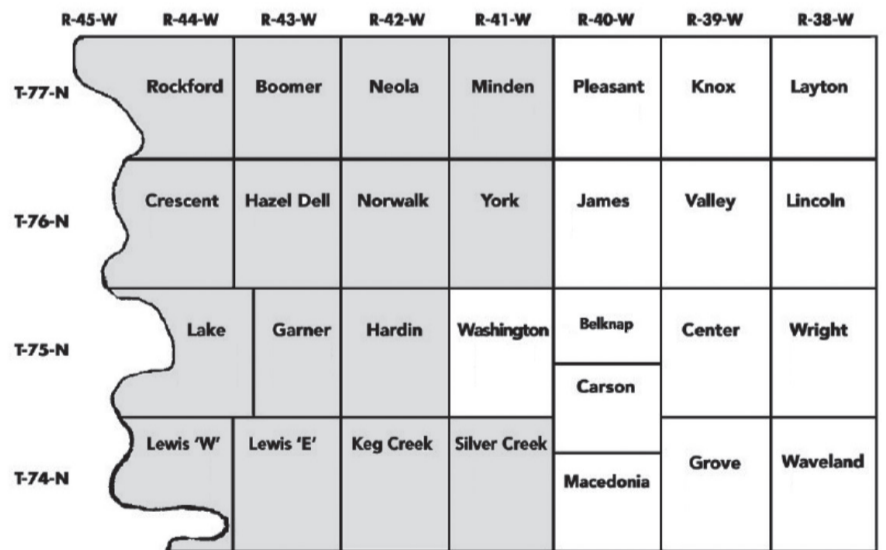
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Susan Rush, CA	susan.rush@ia.nacdnet.net	ext. 301
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East Pottawattamie NRCS Field Office Staff

Terry Gleaves, District Conservationist (retired), Laura Ferguson, Acting District Conservationist, Kelsey Blodgett, NRCS Oakland Resource Team Lead, Andrew Casson, NRCS Technical Soil Conservationist, Russ Hopp, ACES Civil Engineering Technician, 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, Tabitha Panas, Natural Resource 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.



East Pottawattamie SWCD's Mission:

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

Our Year In Review

Now that 2024 is in the rear-view mirror, let's look at all the great things our team accomplished over the year...

In January we held our annual Awards Night Banquet. It was a very successful event recognizing the deserving award recipients from 2023. Oakland FFA members supported the event by helping with the food line.

February was a busy month for our team. Members of the East Pott Board presented at the Pottawattamie Board of Supervisors meeting to discuss renewing the beaver bounty due to the overwhelming success it had in 2023, along with the annual report for the Education Coordinator position. The Conservation District of Iowa (CDI) Partnership Day at the Capital was the 8th. CDI Spring Regionals District 5, hosted by Cass County, was held in Atlantic and all the EP Commissioners attended. Our team also worked on writing a proposal for a CDI state Resolution that will be voted on at the Annual Convention in August. The Resolution proposal title was "Provide more clarity with eligibility of USDA Farm Programs for Foreigners". Action item: CDI will work with NRCS, FSA and our federally elected officials to change this to read if you are not a U S Citizen you are not eligible for any USDA Farm Programs. (Co-sponsored support West Pottawattamie SWCD).

In March members attended and presented at the Southwest Iowa Soil Health (SWISH) conference that was held in Atlantic. In 2024 our Districts 5-Year Conservation Resource Plan (2020-2024) was due to be updated. We put a working group together, identified key stakeholders and set dates for our community meetings with an end goal of July 1st to have it completed and recorded at the state level. As the weather permitted, office staff started the annual inspections of CRP contracts, years 4 and 9 are reviewed. Our team also reviewed Cost Share rates for summer projects. With multiple factors (weather, time, contractor availability), spring and fall work can sometimes be limited. We reviewed and implemented cost share rate changes to help producers accomplish their conservation goals in the summer season.

In April, we hosted our 5-year community meeting and had a great turnout and participation. The six categories reviewed were Soil Resources priorities, Water Resources priorities, Conservation Practice, Recreation and Wildlife, Urban & Rural and Miscellaneous.

Members attended the Pottawattamie County Fire Chiefs meeting to discuss progress on the Dry Hydrant project in East Pottawattamie.

In May we once again applied for an Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship (IDALS) 780 Hour Conservation Position and were again awarded one of the positions in East Pottawattamie. This position augments our current staff to ensure we are keeping up with conservation projects. We welcomed Russ Hopp back in this role.

We applied for the IDALS Innovation & Demonstration Conservation Grant. Our proposal was for a drone (and staff training), so we could utilize it to monitor PL 566 structures, conservation projects progress, checking CRP acres, post storm damage surveillance and stream bank aerial photos to name a few. Unfortunately, we were not awarded one of the grants, but we will try again next year.

In June East Pottawattamie team was interviewed to be showcased in the CDI Connections newsletter that was published in July for our 5-year Conservation Plan. Members also attended the Southwest Iowa Soil & Conservation summer meeting hosted at the Wallace Learning Center at ISU Armstrong Research & Demonstration Farm.

In July our team spent the day attending the East Pottawattamie Fair and provided fair goers soil and water conservation handouts and information on current programs we offer through our office.

In August our team attended the Iowa Soil & Water Commissioners' 78th Annual Conference in Ames.



We also hosted the Pottawattamie Soil & Water Conservation District Women Landowner meeting at the ISU Armstrong Research Farm.

In September our team spent time discussing all the topics presented at the Annual Conference in August and how we could implement applicable practices in EP.

In October we designated our HUC 12 priority watersheds for the 2025 programs. The focus watersheds for 2025 are Middle Silver Creek, Upper Silver Creek and Graybill Creek. As a whole our office funded over a million dollars in conservation projects for the 2024 year through all programs!

After a fast and furious harvest season, we were back to full speed in November. The dry conditions and fire risk reinforced our goal of getting a dry hydrant in every township in East Pottawattamie to assist volunteer fire departments, preserve the residue on fields that would be lost after a fire and the safety of all our citizens residing in the area. We also planned for the retirement of our "leader" Terry Gleaves, District Conservationist. This is bittersweet news as he will be greatly missed but we are happy for him and what the next chapter entails. Congratulations Terry!!

As we wrap up the year our team has been very busy planning for the upcoming Awards night, retire-



ment celebration for Terry, Four County Contractor's meeting and attending Pott. Co. Fire Chiefs meeting to update their team on Dry Hydrant project. Also in December our team was able to install a Dry Hydrant at Applegate's Pond east of Dave's house.

Striving to educate our community, we submitted an application to host a Vendor table the 2025 Ag Summit & Expo on February 12th at the Mid-America Center. Our team manning the table will be informing attendees on the importance of preserving our valuable resources and the Soil and Water conservation programs available to help accomplish that.

I would also like to acknowledge the Oakland FSA office staff again this year. The collaboration between these two offices is essential to serve our customer's needs. We thank you for your continued willingness and commitment to serve alongside East Pottawattamie SWCD!! Thank you FSA staff!

Although we had many highlights this year it is with very heavy heart that I write we lost two of our dedicated members. Their commitment to conservation will

not be forgotten and their impact on the topography of our District will be here for many years to come!

Robert Allen Zimmerman II, "Bob" to us, December 4, 2024.

Russell Lee Brandes, "Russ" to us, January 6, 2025.

In closure, it has been an honor to serve as Chair again in 2024. 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.

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!
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Understanding Your Conservation Plan

Kelsey Blodgett, RTL

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a technical service agency that has prioritized conservation planning with customers for decades, but, what is a conservation plan? What does your conservation plan mean to you?

NRCS History

NRCS, Originally the Soil Conservation Service, was created in 1935 in response to the dust bowl with the goal of creating awareness of the negative impacts associated with soil erosion and to also provide tools and information to help producers mitigate soil erosion. The 1985 farm bill began the agency's role in wetland and highly erodible land compliance. This was the first farm bill that included highly erodible land conservation and wetland conservation provisions to reduce soil loss and protect wetlands and tied conservation to farm payments and, later on, crop insurance. These provisions mean that, in order to partake in farm bill programs, farmers need to follow an NRCS approved conservation plan or system on highly erodible land and cannot convert wetlands for ag production. This began agency efforts to work with all highly erodible land producers to develop compliance conservation plans to ensure producer participation in farm bill programs.

Compliance Conservation Plan

A compliance conservation plan is a basic plan developed with a producer to address highly erodible land (HEL) compliance concerns and is required on HEL land. When developing a compliance plan with producers, our intent is to ensure that conservation practices are planned that will control all ephemeral erosion (ditches) on the farm; These practices could include terraces, waterways, basins, seedings etc. As part of your compliance plan, we also must ensure that sheet and rill erosion is occurring within tolerable amounts as dictated by these compliance provisions; no-till and contour farming are practices often used in basic compliance plans to minimize sheet and rill erosion. There are many conservation practices that can be used to meet conservation compliance and our goal is to tailor these plans to your operation and create a plan, with you, that you can reasonably follow in order to stay involved in farm bill programs.

Conservation Planning and programs

As conservation entities, NRCS and local partners administer multiple conservation/financial assistance programs that can be used to treat many resource concerns on multiple land uses such as cropland, forest land and pasture. When developing a plan for financial assistance, a solid conservation plan that illustrates producer objectives and what practices they want to implement is crucial to the planning process for these programs. When producers reach out to the office for technical or financial assistance, our goal is to work together to create a "road map" that outlines the goals of the producer and a plan of how to achieve these goals. How this type of conservation plan is used after it is developed is based on how the producer chooses to move forward with implementation of the plan.

Compliance reviews and whistleblowers

Every year, a percentage of farms in each county are randomly selected for a compliance review. Farms can also be added to this list if they have received a whistleblower complaint. As part of this review, NRCS is required to visit the farm, document ephemeral erosion that may be occurring, ensure your operation is within tolerable limits for sheet and rill erosion, review the farm for any potential wetland conversions and review your conservation plan to ensure it is being followed. If the plan is not being followed and conservation compliance requirements are not being met, you will be required to fix concerns brought up from the review to maintain your participation in farm bill programs. We encourage you to stop by the office and review your conservation plan and make updates as needed so that your plan truly reflects your operation on the farm.



Kelsey Blodgett
Resource Team Lead



Soil & Water Conservation District Commissioners

Left to Right: Commissioner Bernie Bolton, Commissioner Chris Perdue, Commissioner, Kami Willett, Commissioner Dwight Hobson, and Commissioner Dave Applegate. Assistant Commissioners not shown: Terry Gleaves 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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Time Flies

Corrine Jenkins, Nishnabotna Watershed Project Coordinator

How often have you heard the phrase ‘time flies’? I think it would be fair to say, most of us have heard it countless times. I am headed into my eighteenth year with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and looking back, that statement couldn’t be any truer, time flies!

I have been the Conservation Assistant for the Montgomery Soil and Water Conservation District in the Red Oak USDA office.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to help with some office coverages in Fremont, Mills, Adams, and Page Counties. I have met and worked with a lot of producers, staff, various partnerships, and commissioners.

This year, I am excited to be in a new role. I am now a Project Coordinator for the Nishnabotna Watershed. If your eyes were googly after reading that, so were mine! Haha! The Nishnabotna Watershed indeed is a large territory; however, my primary focus will be working with producers in a portion of the West Nishnabotna (Montgomery, Mills, Fremont, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby Counties). This territory mirrors the federally funded Regional Conservation Partnership Program project area. The RCPP project is a 5- year project which provides cost share and technical assistance to landowners to implement practices that will improve water quality, increase flood resiliency, and protect public infrastructure. Practices include but are not limited to grade stabilization structures, streambank stabilization, and edge of field practices like bioreactors and saturated buffers.

It was 16 short years ago, the Walnut Creek Watershed received its first round of funding through the Watershed Improvement and Review Board assisting landowners to install conservation practices; terraces and grade stabilization structures being the most common. Over time, the funding sources have changed, practices have been added, the boundary expanded to include Indian Creek, and now portions of the West Nishnabotna. Once again, time flies!

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship – Division of Soil Conservation & Water Quality (IDALS- DSCWQ) will continue to offer cost share assistance through Water Quality Initiative funding for producers applying cover crops.

It’s never too early to begin the planning. Cover crops within the shaded watershed boundaries will receive \$25/acre with no acre cap! Please contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District for further information!

In Loving Memory...

East Pottawattamie SWCD would like to dedicate this year’s Annual Report to two great commissioners who were committed to furthering soil and water conservation efforts in this county and beyond.

Robert (Bob) Zimmerman, May 1, 1955-December 4, 2024

Bob was raised on a family farm and graduated from Oakland High School in 1973. He furthered his education at Morningside College and earned a bachelor's degree in Farm Operations from Iowa State University. He started his career on ranches in Colorado as a cattlemen and team roper. He eventually made his way back to the farm and was a dedicated soil conservationist. He served as a commissioner for East Pottawattamie SWCD for 12 years and was also a member of the FSA committee and a regional director for Conservation Districts of Iowa. We are so thankful for his time and dedication to serving the community and furthering soil and water conservation. Bob will be remembered for his dedication, light heartedness and sense of humor. Bob, you are missed greatly!

Russell (Russ) Lee Brandes, June 2, 1952-January 6, 2025

Russ was raised on a family farm in a house known as “west place”. After attending Iowa State University in the early 70’s, Russ moved back to the “west place” and began farming with his father. In June of 1981 Russ married Phyllis Reed and lived their entire married life on the “west place”. In 1982 Russ was elected to a position on the Board of the East Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District. This led to a significant change in his life. Russ then branched into a role with the Golden Hills Resource and Development Board. This then led to becoming a founding member and chairman of both the Hungry Canyons Alliance and Loess Hills Development and Conservation Authority focusing on stream infrastructure and Loess Hills preservation. Russ then was appointed to serve on the State Soil Conservation Committee in 1996 where he served for six years. This board then appointed Russ to serve on the Natural Resources Conservation Service State Technical Committee, the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture board and the Iowa Grazing Lands Coalition board. He was also an active member of Iowa Forage and Grassland Council. Russ had a deep appreciation for the land and was passionate about the health and conservation of the land. His commitment to the land will affect generations to come. Russ will be remembered for his dedication and innovative thinking to trying new things. Russ, you will be greatly missed.

In honor of both Robert Zimmerman and Russell Brandes, East Pottawattamie SWCD will be accepting donations for the **Robert Zimmerman Scholarship** and the **Russell & Phyllis Brandes Scholarship**. You may stop into the office at any time to make a donation to either of these scholarships or send donations to East Pottawattamie SWCD, 16 Main St., Oakland, IA 51560.

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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 window is after June 15th and before 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!



Picture taken by Kami Willett SW of Avoca, Iowa.

New No-Till Drill

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.



Dry Hydrants

By Russ Hopp, Civil Engineer Technician

The East Pottawattamie Soil & Water Conservation District is looking to add more Dry Hydrants throughout the eastern half of the county. The goal is to have at least one dry hydrant in each of the townships.

The purpose of dry hydrants is to provide additional water supply for the local fire departments for use while fighting rural fires.

Currently there are 6 dry hydrants in the 14 townships that make up the E. Pott. Conservation District. On December 23, 2024 the 6th hydrant was installed. This was installed in James Township, northwest of Oakland.

East Pottawattamie SWCD has received funds from the Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors for the installation of these new dry hydrants. This is a high priority for the E. Pott. Soil Water Conservation District commissioners to see that the funds are spent. The dry hydrants need to be located at sites that are accessible to the fire tankers along with key locations throughout the district.

Dry hydrants can play a vital role in fighting rural structure, equipment, and field fires. None of us wishes fires to ever happen, but if they do, additional water supply can make a great difference. They may shorten the time and distance to refill the tankers and get them back to the fire scene.

The staff at E. Pott. NRCS have identified potential sites which can potentially be installed in the spring/summer of 2025. Ideal sites are ponds that are close to roads or on streams with continuous flow and sustained depth. Also not more than 15 feet of elevation from the pool to the top of the hydrant. If you are aware of any sites that may be a potential, please call or stop at the E. Pott. NRCS office.

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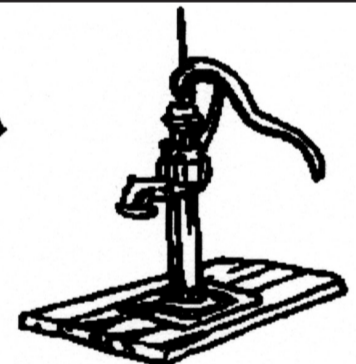
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Annual Compliance Reminder

By Terry Gleaves

As we roll into spring, I want to remind producers to follow their conservation plans. As we move forward, if you are doing any tillage, you still have to meet residue levels, or you can be out of compliance. Most of you will need to have 40% residue on corn and 60% for soybeans at planting and 50% for corn on corn. Any tillage on bean stubble is probably going to put you out of compliance if you are checked. Any disc mark that is worked, whether a ditch or not, will get called and you will be required to treat that area somehow. Last year was awesome as every farm that was on the compliance list passed with flying colors; nothing of any sort was questioned. I do not think that has ever happened before to my knowledge.

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 712-482-6486, ext. 301.

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The FSA / NRCS Working Environment

By Tracy Zimmerman, County Executive Director

FSA (Farm Service Agency) and NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Service) are often referred to as 'sister-agencies'. The reason for this is because it takes both agencies to ensure that our program participants receive benefits available to them.

FSA is considered the 'administrative' provider and NRCS the 'technical' provider for many programs administered by the FSA office. FSA has the software required to implement programs and the handbooks / directives / policy procedures required to maintain program integrity, while NRCS has the knowledge and tools required to write a farm's conservation plan and offer the technical services for producers to be best stewards of the land.

The farm program (ARC-PLC, Agriculture Risk / Price Loss) requires producers to elect a program and enroll into the program with the FSA office. However, for benefits to be earned, it is a requirement that producers are compliant with their conservation plan, which is written by NRCS.

For CRP (Conservation Reserve Program), applications are submitted through the FSA office. The FSA office will provide finance assistance for establishing practices or completing mid contract management requirements, as required in the conservation plan, which is written by NRCS as the technical agency. NRCS programs also require FSA administrative provisions in order to provide benefits to program participants.

For EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentive Program), applications are submitted to NRCS to implement conservation practices on the land, using the technical services provided by NRCS. However, before financial assistance can be earned, the participant needs to be determined actively engaged in farming, using FSA policies.

Another way to look at the relationship between FSA and NRCS is to see that the paperwork completed by FSA determines a producer's financial eligibility, while NRCS is the boots on the ground to determine compliance with conservation plans.

When a producer requests to remove trees, or otherwise change the composition of a farm, NRCS will be the agency in the field providing the technical determinations to keep a farm in compliance with their conservation plan. FSA updates the software used by both agencies to determine eligibility of benefits requested.

FSA will also update and maintain the map work used to determine acreages of soil types on a farm, which is used to compute CRP rental rates, or determine the number of acres on a farm that are HEL (highly erodible).

The above are just a few examples. I hope this snippet gives you all a better understanding of the working relationship between FSA and NRCS. It takes both agencies to make sure that you are receiving the highest quality service and the most benefits and assistance our 'sister' agencies offer.

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WHY COVER CROPS?

Terry Gleaves, Assistant Commissioner

Last year I participated in a farmer panel to talk about cover crops, and in doing so was asked the question why or what part of covers were the most important to you. I thought a second and the following was my answer. I said all are equally important in my operation and here is why. Soil armor protects the soil surface from wind and water erosion. In other words, no movement or lost soil. By doing this it also conserves soil moisture, reduces soil temperature and suppresses weeds. Minimize soil disturbance which allows the soil structure to develop and increases soil biology which also helps improve infiltration to have better water holding capacity.

Living roots help to provide feed for the microbes which keeps active nutrient cycling. They supply sugars and amino acids through the roots and also break up any compaction that may exist.

Plant diversity by using multiple species ;the plant communities develop a symbiotic relationship which means they help each other and thrive in this environment to increase soil health and biological activity.

Lastly, integrate livestock by grazing on these acres; the livestock manure and urine is the best natural fertilizer on earth and makes for a strong fertile soil.

So yes, to all five principles; I believe in all of them and together make for a very satisfying soil structure. I understand that not everyone wants to farm that way because it is a system approach and takes extra time and labor. They all work as one with much planning as to when to terminate and that can be different each year depending on moisture conditions, plus what species to grow each year, but it can and does work. Please if you have any questions about any of this, reach out and I will gladly try to answer any questions or help you with your own cropping system.

TERRACE REPORT BY TOWNSHIP

**2024 Total State
Cost Share
Cover Crop
Acres = 4,980 ac.**

	PLEASANT 120 ac.	KNOX	LAYTON 1,734 ac.
	JAMES 294 ac.	VALLEY 616 ac.	LINCOLN 40 ac.
WASHINGTON 155 ac.	BELKNAP 444 ac.	CENTER 250 ac.	WRIGHT
	CARSON		
	MACEDONIA	GROVE 456 ac.	WAVELAND 871 ac.

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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State and Federal Programs

State Programs - <https://iowaagriculture.gov/administrative/department-programs>

Federal Programs - click on newsroom, then fact sheets
<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/>

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Farm Bill: Conservation & Crop Insurance Key to Supporting Farmers

By Chris Perdue

The Farm Bill is a critical investment in American agriculture, shaping crop insurance, conservation programs, and rural economies. Historically renewed every five years, the last full version passed in 2018, but delays led to extensions through September 30, 2025. As farmers face rising input costs, lower commodity prices, and inflation, crop insurance remains one of the bill's most vital components, securing over \$3.5 billion in funding. Recognizing the importance of a strong Farm Bill, Congressman Feenstra has played a key role in shaping the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2024, which passed out of the House Agriculture Committee last May. Conservation programs—historically accounting for about 7% of Farm Bill funding—remain a priority alongside crop insurance, which has received about 9% in past bills. Feenstra has helped champion several key conservation-focused provisions, including:

- Advancing Cutting Edge (ACE) Agriculture Act – Promotes the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AgARDA) under the USDA, driving innovation in water conservation, soil health, disease and pest management, and extreme weather variability.
- Increased TSP Access Act of 2025 – Tackles shortages of Technical Service Providers (TSPs) by streamlining certification processes, cutting bureaucratic red tape, and ensuring farmers have access to expert conservation assistance.

Conservation Investments in the Farm Bill

Conservation remains a major focus in this Farm Bill, with expanded financial and technical assistance to help farmers improve soil health, water quality, and wildlife habitat. Key provisions include:

- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP): Supports cover crop rotations and advanced grazing management.
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): Offers technical and financial assistance for working lands, including field crops, specialty crops, organic, confined livestock and grazing, and non-industrial private forest land.
- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP): Helps protect, restore, and enhance wetlands, grasslands, and working farms and ranches through conservation easements.
- Title II Investments: Reallocates Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) conservation dollars to expand covered conservation practices.
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Modernization: Encourages enrollment of marginal lands and strengthens state partnerships.

With these improvements, the Farm Bill reinforces voluntary, incentive-based conservation efforts, ensuring farmers have the resources needed to protect and enhance their land.

Funding Uncertainty & Future Conservation Support

With the repeal of the IRA, conservation funding remains uncertain as federal agencies conduct a 90-day review of spending. However, on Feb. 20, USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins announced the release of \$20 million in paused funding for EQIP, CSP, and ACEP, ensuring that contracts approved before Jan. 20 will be honored. Speaking at Commodity Classic, Rollins confirmed that the USDA has completed its review of IRA funds, with more conservation funding announcements expected soon.

With strong leadership at the USDA and ongoing advocacy from lawmakers like Feenstra, farmers can be hopeful that key programs like CRP and EQIP will continue to receive the funding needed to support conservation and sustainability efforts.

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 and winter conference. 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 second year SWISH hosted an annual winter soil health conference that took place on March 25th in Atlantic, IA. We heard from Understanding Ag Consultant Brian Dougherty, an experienced and knowledgeable soil health advocate and educator. We also 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!



Conservation Districts of Iowa

By Dwight Hobson, Commissioner

Our District, along with the other 99 Districts, belongs to the Conservation Districts of Iowa. CDI is a non-profit association formed for educational, scientific, and charitable purposes. CDI then represents Iowa with the National Association of Conservation Districts.

CDI sponsors a scholarship program with local, regional and state awards. We also promote a poster contest for grades K-12 with local, regional, state and national awards. We are the sponsors of the Envirothon competition for high school students. State winners of the Envirothon go on to compete at the national level.

On the business side, CDI hires 2 Conservation Planning Coordinators, 25 Administrative Support Specialists, 5 Conservation Wetland Specialists, and 5 Land and Water Conservationists. CDI supports the Districts by taking resolutions from the local level and voting them up or down. Resolutions receiving 60% approval of the commissioners become our policy and will be lobbied for at the state or federal level.

For more information about CDI go to cdiowa.org

The logo for the East Pottawattamie County Farm Bureau features a stylized "FB" monogram in a bold, black font. Below the monogram, the text "EAST POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY FARM BUREAU" is written in a bold, sans-serif font. At the bottom, a black banner contains the slogan "PEOPLE. PROGRESS. PRIDE." in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

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The logo for KNOD 105.3FM Harlan, Iowa features a circular design with a clock face. The text "105.3FM" is at the top, "KNOD" is in large, bold letters in the center, and "Harlan, Iowa" is written in a script font below it. The background of the circle is a gradient of colors.

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2025 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)

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 \$3.25/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 75% of total bill.	20 years	
Terrace (600) Upgrades	flat rate of .60	A flat rate of \$0.60 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 \$2.00/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	
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 \$3.25/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 \$0.60 per foot will be paid on terrace upgrade project no matter what the final cost is. New Terrace eligible rate of \$3.25/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 \$15,000.00 .

Updated 1/2/25

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.

Another Record-Breaking Year for Conservation in Iowa

By Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig
Iowans have once again demonstrated a strong commitment to protecting our state's rich natural resources with yet another record-setting year for our state's conservation and water quality efforts. For the third consecutive year, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, in partnership with Iowa's 100 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), farmers, landowners, and public and private partners, have set a record for the implementation of proven practices within Iowa. This noteworthy achievement highlights the continued acceleration of the impactful work we do together. For the fiscal year ending on June 30, 2024, \$26.26 million was spent in state cost-share assistance, which leveraged a total investment of \$56.42 million in practice implementation. This was an increase of nearly \$3.8 million from the previous year, also a record. For every dollar invested by the state, farmers and landowners have matched it with \$1.15 of their own resources, proving their ongoing commitment improving Iowa's soil and water. But it's not just an increase in dollars, it's an increase in practices, too. Reimbursements paid by the state for cost-share are up over 900 from 2022, and up over 2,000 from a decade ago. Whether its cover crops and nitrogen inhibitors or terraces and grass waterways, these practices work, and we continue to see growing utilization by Iowans.



Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig

Notably, these record cost-share totals do not consider all other conservation and water quality financial assistance and funding paid by farmers and landowners, other government entities, and other private partners. They also do not factor in other programs including our water quality wetlands program, batch and build projects for saturated buffers and bioreactors, our Abandoned Mine Land (AML) reclamation projects, among many others. And this progress and these successes should be recognized. Our urban conservation program this year surpassed 125 urban conservation projects completed in the last decade. We announced an anticipated record year for water quality wetland development. Our AML program began seven more projects in southeast Iowa, including the largest in the program's 41-year history. We closed the last of the state's 195 ag drainage wells, concluding this program's work to protect groundwater that has spanned more than a quarter-century. We're constructing more grade stabilization structures, establishing more multi-purpose use oxbows, and are expanding our popular cattle and conservation working lands program. With nine batch and build agreements in place across 16 counties, hundreds of bioreactors and saturated buffers have been built and hundreds more are in the construction or planning phase. All of this work would not be possible without a wide range of dedicated partners. And while these highlights are exciting, we also know there is much work to be done. As we continue to implement the state's Nutrient Reduction Strategy, it's important to recognize that the adoption of practices is a long-term effort that takes time, planning, resources, and commitment to show its full impact.

To ensure that Iowa's water and soil are protected for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations, I encourage everyone —no matter where you live—to get involved. The records we've set this year are proof that when we work together, we can achieve great things. Let's keep working together to continue this momentum. I look forward to even more successes in the years ahead.

Increased Cost Share

The East Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District increased the 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. Please contact the Oakland NRCS Office at 712-482-6486 for more information.



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East Pottawattamie SWCD 2024 Annual Awards Ceremony



East Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners with Pottawattamie County Supervisors Tim Wichman and Susan Miller



Ed Kleen Stewardship Memorial Award, John Eyler

This year, on January 27th, 2025, the East Pottawattamie Soil and Water Conservation District joined by many community members, had the chance to celebrate 13 very deserving award winners for their dedication to conservation and the mission of the SWCD.

A special thank you to our keynote speaker for the night, Dr. Peter Moore, Iowa State University Assistant Adjunct Professor, for speaking with us about streambank processes and the effectiveness of different conservation practices along streambanks. We also want to say a special thank you 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 of our deserving award winners and thank you to everyone who attended to celebrate their achievements.



Educator Award, Katelynn Long



Friend of Conservation, John Thomas



Landowner/Tenant Award, Denise Bane, Linda Frizzell, and Kevin Schechinger



Contractor Award, John Hurd



Commercial Recognition Award, Dan Miller



Special Recognition Award, Terry Gleaves



Special Recognition Award, Robert Zimmerman



Special Recognition Award, Russ Brandes



Pasture/Forage Award Winners, Gary Nilan and Holden Hoffman

Update from IDALS Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality

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



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

As the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) continues to implement more conservation practices on Iowa's landscape, we are also working diligently to develop our staffing support in alignment with increased growth. At the county level, IDALS employs staff in the 100 USDA Service Center field offices. Our staff are integral to the greater conservation program delivery system alongside entities including the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and local Soil and Water Conserva-

tion Districts (SWCDs). This means that state, federal, district and other partner staff all work in collaboration to deliver conservation program assistance to landowners in their local areas. We recognize that our ability to build and maintain relationships with our farmers and landowners through quality customer service directly impacts conservation implementation levels and program growth. In recent years, keeping field office staffing levels maintained and resource support needs met has increasingly become a challenge for all entities within our partnership. Unfortunately, these resource limitations often result in challenges to deliver practice and program assistance to our customers in a timely and efficient manner. While we continue to assess solutions both within IDALS and with the greater partnership, we recognize that these challenges are often complex and must be addressed through multiple approaches. Highlighting one aspect of building staffing support for the future is our summer internship program. This program is operated with partner support from both SWCDs as well as NRCS and provides for an intern to assist and support field office operations. This year, IDALS is implementing several changes to our field office internship program in an effort to alleviate some of the administrative burden on SWCDs while continuing to build a positive educational experience for the students. In previous years, the IDALS supported interns were employed locally by the SWCDs. Starting in the summer of 2025, all field office interns will be employed by IDALS through the newly revamped and state-supported Internship Development Program. The revamped internship program will continue to rely on the knowledge and expertise of local SWCDs, partners and staff to provide interns with meaningful, practical experiences. Our goal with this new intern program structure is to provide the interns with a clearer identity within the partnership as well as offer potential options for future State employment upon completion of the internship. While this is just a single example of program improvements within our field offices, we remain committed to strengthening our valuable partnerships across all levels in support of advancing the collective conservation mission in Iowa.

Thanks For The Memories!

By Terry Gleaves

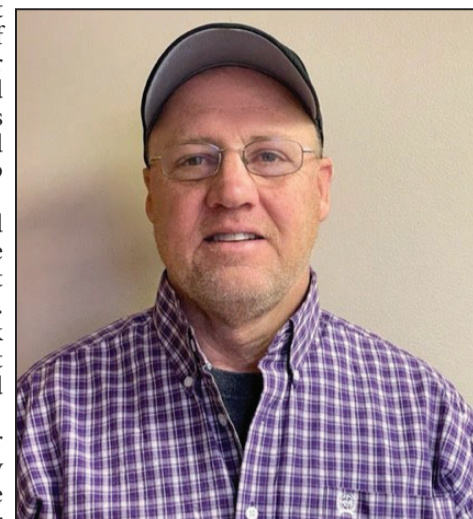
By now I am sure most everyone knows that I have retired from NRCS after 25 years of service. This was a very satisfying job for me, and I thoroughly enjoyed the work I did helping farmer whether it was putting terraces on their farm or planning another practice and finding a cost share program that would help them achieve their goal.

Through the years I met a lot of people and made many new friends, most from within the county but also many absentee landowners that wanted help to keep their farm in top shape. Many memories were made which I still think about today. Thank you to the landowners that we have; I appreciate your passion for the land we have in this county.

To the producers out laboring and caring for their crops, I hope I had an impact in some way to help with your operations. It is a pleasure to work with such great farmers. I have never been so proud as I was this past year when all farms passed the compliance checks this past year--not one single thing was found on farms that were spot checked in East Pottawattamie! That is awesome! I was part of a tour we hosted last spring for RCPP involving streambank projects and had 2 state engineers down and they told me numerous times how impressed they were with the amount of no-till and high residue fields in East Pottawattamie, as the rest of the state had lots of tillage and wind erosion of blowing soil that was making headlines in the media. I am sure all this information made it back to the state office staff. Kudos to you and thank you for making my job easier! To the contractors in the county, I was able to work with a great group of contractors; they were very knowledgeable and helpful in my years as a technician. They taught me how to efficiently move the dirt to make the job easier and to envision the work before we designed it so it would farm better when finished. Thank you for working together and building lots of successful projects.

To the Soil & Water Commissioners, thank you for always backing the office and pushing us to do more. We are the most progressive district in the state, and we are so lucky to have this board that helps us get the job done.

I also want to recognize the Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors that have worked with us to start new projects and improve existing programs. They have been huge supporters of our district from funding for the Education Coordinator to funding the Dry Hydrant program we just started this past year, and I can't thank them enough for their involvement. In closing we are in a great place to keep putting conservation on the ground with many supporters and there is no better place than East Pottawattamie.



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.

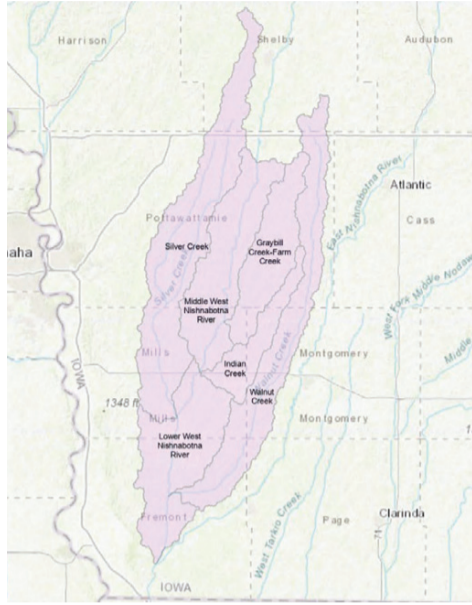
Check out the website:
<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>

Federal Programs Overview

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:

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.

BE A PART OF DECISION MAKING FOR SWCD

By Bernie Bolton, Commissioner

You too can be a part of decision making for agricultural leadership. Help guide decisions being made to protect and preserve our precious Soil and Water resources.

I want to congratulate newly elected SWCD commissioners, Chris Perdue and Dave Applegate, who join Chair Kami Willett, Pete Hobson and myself, Bernie Bolton to the East Pottawattamie Team. We also welcome new assistant commissioners, Wes Henry, Austin Henningsen, Terry Gleaves, Keith Hotze and other prospective cooperators.

Please visit with anyone of the commissioners about becoming an assistant commissioner in the future. Our team tries to be a very progressive and energetic group looking to expand programs to improve water and soil quality in our community. Our district has always been active on both the state and national level in moving soil and water forward to make a better world for our future generations. Our Award night took place on January 27th to honor our 2024 Award winners. We honored two of our Conservation Champions of the past. Both Russ Brandes and Bob Zimmerman spent tireless hours in Conservation Work over numerous years. It was an honor to know and work along side both of them through the years. Their leadership was significant locally and statewide.

A scholarship is being established for Russ and Phyllis Brandes which will be awarded to a senior graduating from Riverside Community or AHSTW Community School who is interested in a career in conservation and/or agriculture. If you are interested in contributing toward that scholarship, please visit with me, Bernie Bolton. We would like to make it available for at least a couple of years. Think about it. God Bless.

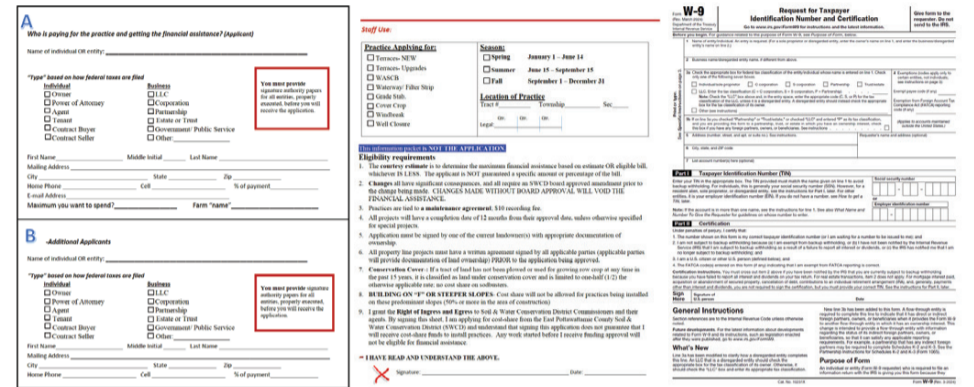
Application for Engineering Practices

Andrew Casson, Technician Soil Conservationist

So, you are thinking about applying for federal/(technical) assistance...

Looks like you have come to the right place; let me go get my papers, (aka Susan). All jokes aside, lets discuss what you as a producer are looking to do to better conservation in the fields current condition. Some things that you may want to ask yourself along the way would be but not excluded too: where is my soil collecting, why is it collecting there, what practice can I involve, what are some of the resources I can lean on...

Lucky enough for you here at your local level NRCS-USDA, we can provide technical and financial assistance for your needs. Stepping into the office of the NRCS might be an unknown, but rest assured we are here to help you the producer! So, say you are looking at your land and you think some terraces and waterways would benefit the land. A NRCS employee will take you, the landowner, through the process; lets start with filling out an application through state cost share. It looks a little something like this...



In this you will be letting us know some key pieces of information from type of practice you are going forward with, to information on a personal level with the W-9. As you are in the process of filling this form out, a technical assistant will be reviewing the case file were the land in concern lays, along with providing a map of the location in interest. From there, you can provide the specific area of concern, and we can discuss the options for the practice through the NRCS. We can also provide any other information that is requested upon the visit to the office such as contractors list, incentive amount, etc. Say it is terraces, let's go ahead and mark the location you are interested in on the map provided. In most cases, we are going to be processing through the application and scheduling a time to meet in the field to assess the area of interest in person and discuss the corrections. Now we know what practices, and where we will be applying these practices, an estimate will be create based off the needs and the timeline the landowner is looking to complete the project.



Fast forward to the timeline we have discussed, and construction is upon us. The landowner will have needed to find a contractor for the construction. A technician will be getting in contact with the landowner for a time to meet in the field to make sure all plans are set in stone. Once these parameters are established, the federal or state technician will perform the layout and design of said practice for the contractor. We as an agency will work with the best technical advice and knowledge that we have with the guidance of the NRCS-USDA. From there, the construction can begin; in events of changes to the practice or NRCS specifications contact the office to have a technician listen into the landowner's concerns. Upon completion of the project, the landowner needs to contact the contractor obtaining the "bill" and contractor checkout notes if they have not yet submitted them to the office of the county which the project lays. A technician will then come back out to the land where the practice was applied and complete a guideline of checkouts needed for engineering records and to make sure specifications are met. If the contracted conservation, such as the terraces, are completed properly and to specifications under the NRCS we can proceed to processing the payment. This process can be slightly lengthy due to time constraints, the payment will need to be approved through the board of commissioners of the county the work was completed in. This end process may vary depending upon the cost share program the landowner chooses to follow through with, which will have the potential to have its own set of rules and guidelines. From this point, we appreciate your contribution to conservation in making the NRCS motto whole... provide conservation solutions to protect natural resources and feed the world.

We will be looking forward to seeing how the conservation is upkeeping, so don't be afraid to stop in and have a conversation about it. We will be there for you when you are seeking more assistance through the NRCS-USDA.



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 even more, having now reached well over 1,000 students regularly involved in classroom programs, and even more students and adult community members reached through community events. All of this could not happen without the support of the County Board of Supervisors, the SWCD Board of Commissioners, our partners in the community, and all of the teachers, students, administrators, and school staff that welcome us into their schools. 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

Most of my days during the school year are spent in the classroom, leading programs for



students from Preschool to 12th Grade, speaking about all things to do with conservation, agriculture, soil, pollinators, native prairie, wildlife, the environment, and farming. In the past year we have reached approximately 1,370 students, just through in-class programming! I have presented programs in classrooms and/or at events for students at AHSTW, Riverside, Tri-Center, Treynor, Underwood, and Iowa School for the Deaf. 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, and We All Live in a Watershed. Thank you to all of 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! I 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 had stations at the AHSTW and Riverside STEM Fests! Our stations were all about soil, with students getting to try their hand at making their own soil, exploring real soil samples, and learning about how soil is formed. Students discovered why soil is so important and what it means to work hard to keep it healthy.

May The Forest Be With You Always: the theme of this year's CDI Poster Contest. This year Riverside 3rd, 4th, and 5th as well as AHSTW 4th 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 multiple class periods learning about forests, the animals that live in them, the threats forests face, and the conservation efforts happening to protect them. This year, something extremely special happened; one of our district poster contest students made it all the way to the National Poster Contest and won 1st place in the 4th-6th grade division, that student was Chen Gao! Chen placed first in the 4th-5th Grade Division for the CDI Poster Contest at the District level, won first place at the Regional level for Southwest Iowa, and won State Honors at first place for the 2024 Conservation Districts of Iowa Poster Contest. This all moved her on to the 4th-6th Grade Division in the National Association of Conservation Districts, National Poster Contest, where she also placed first! This is an incredible achievement.

Congratulations Chen Gao! District Poster Contest Winners

AHSTW 4th: Chen Gao - District, Regional, State & National, Xiemena Garcia, Gibson VanNordstrand
Riverside: Evelyn Spitzer, Braelynn Heath, Maddie Hebing

Treynor: Alexis Robbins, Irie Mayer, Remy Bonnet

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.

To start off our field days we had our 5th Grade Botna Bend Field Day with just over 100 5th graders from AHSTW and Riverside.

They had a day filled with learning about raptors with the Fontenelle Forest, river formation, native plants and wildlife, did a river study, and learned about wetlands and bird migration with Water Rocks!. To celebrate Arbor Day, partnered with Treynor Schools, Treynor Optimists, and IDNR; 54 students mulched all of trees planted in the past few

years, and worked hard to plant 6 new Red Oak trees on school grounds. To round out our May Field Day season we joined 95 3rd graders from AHSTW and Riverside in a field day at Botna Bend Park. They spent the day learning about trees, native plants, pollinators, and wildlife, and at the end of the day they got to take home their own native Red Oak tree to plant.



We were also involved with two School of the Wild Programs this year! Both the Underwood 5th grade (52 students) and Titan Hill 5th grade (229 students) classes got to spend a week learning outside at various parks around Pottawattamie County. They discovered new information about nature, conservation, wildlife, and outdoor survival skills.

On September 10th and 11th of 2024 we held our annual soil pit practice judging event at Carstens Farmstead. Just over sixty 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 Riverside, AHSTW, Griswold, Red Oak, Sidney, Station, Tri-Center, and Atlantic.



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



Soil & Water Conservation Report 2024

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! Over 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. 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! New Summer Camps with Pottawattamie County Conservation Our first year of leading 3-day summer camps for students entering 1st through 5th grade, at Botna Bend Park went amazingly! We had three great groups of campers that had the chance to learn all about native plants and wildlife, soil, river formation, and outdoor survival skills. Registration for Summer of 2025 Botna Bend Summer Camps is now open! For more information, or to register, visit pottconservation.com!

Join us at the fair! ! We hosted booths at both the 2024 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 NRCS Soil Health Tunnel.

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 August 14th, 2025. An amazing group of 20 Women Landowners attended our meeting this year at the ISU Armstrong Research Farm. We had presentations on cost share programs, how to incorporate prairie on your property, information on the Master Woodland Steward Program, how to understand your conservation plan, a soil health demonstration, and how to incorporate conservation in your leases and succession planning. Followed by lunch and a tour of the ISU Armstrong Research Farm. Thank you to ISU Extension and Outreach and the IDNR for providing amazing speakers for this event, to the ISU Armstrong Research farm for hosting us and taking us on a tour, and to all of the organizations and businesses that sponsored door prizes!



Thank You

Thank you to all of 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 of the students and community members that have taken part in our outreach efforts, and thank you to all of our partners, the NRCS and IDALS, the Farm Bureau, Iowa State University Extension, and Pottawattamie County Conservation. The partnership of all of 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!



EAST POTTAWATTAMIE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT REPORT ON ANNUAL USE OF DISTRICT FUNDS FISCAL YEAR JULY 1, 2023 - JUNE 30, 2024

DISTRICT CHECKING	
Beg. Bal.	\$41,215.21
Ending Balance	\$46,827.40

RECEIPTS	
Equipment Rental	\$7,259.26
Edu Grant Reimbursement	\$1,520.24
State of Iowa (1M)	\$2,750.00
Donations	\$1,110.00
Internal Transfers	\$511.39
Recording Fees	\$3.00
Dry Hydrant Funds	\$75,000.00
TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$88,153.89

EXPENDITURES	
1M Expenditures	\$5,425.56
780 Qtrly Pmt-Dist Emp	\$5,304.17
Annual Fees/Dues/Sub	\$35.00
Awards/Donations/Events	\$1,210.05
Equipment	\$18,589.00
Equipment Expense	\$1,337.00
Internal Transfers	\$50,511.39
Misc	\$129.53
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$82,541.70

EDUCATION FUND	
Beg. Bal.	\$ 54,939.63
Ending Balance	\$ 63,768.95

RECEIPTS	
Pott. County Allocation	\$80,000.00
Internal Transfers	\$511.39
Miscellaneous	\$604.99
TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$81,116.38

EXPENDITURES	
Project Expenses/Supplies	\$1,162.04
Payroll	\$33,822.02
Payroll Processing Fees	\$457.50
Conservation Trailer Exp.	\$580.00
Edu. Grant	\$5,211.51
Payroll Taxes/Contributions	\$31,053.99
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$72,287.06

Beginning Balances July 1, 2023	
General Checking	\$41,215.21
District Education Fund	\$54,939.63
TOTAL BEG. BALANCES	\$96,154.84

Ending Balances June 30, 2024	
General Checking	\$46,827.40
District Education Fund	\$63,768.95
TOTAL ENDING BALANCES \$	\$110,596.35

Total Beginning Balance July 1, 2023	\$96,154.84
Total Receipts	\$169,270.27
Less Total Expenditures	\$154,828.76
Balance June 30, 2024	\$110,596.35

STATE COST SHARE EXPENDED (FY24)	
SF512: Nishnabotna HUC 8 Project	\$49,825.00
Iowa Financial Incentive Program (IFIP)	\$30,381.32
Water Quality Initiative Incentive	\$27,489.00
REAP Forestry & Native Grasses	\$5,406.25

1M FUNDS	
Allocation	\$2,750.00
1M Expenditures	\$5,425.56

POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY FUNDING EXPENDED (FY24)	
Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) Allocation	\$254,066.18
Expenditures	\$133,867.80

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