

# DSC DISPATCH

Volume 6 September 2012

A quarterly publication by the Division of Soil Conservation



Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship  
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[www.iowaagriculture.gov](http://www.iowaagriculture.gov)

**“Preparing for the Future,”** Soil and Water Conservation District of Iowa’s theme for 2012 and their annual conference, seems all too appropriate during this interesting and ever challenging time.

Since the start of fiscal year 13, we have been able to increase our budget for agricultural drainage well closure, cost share, operations, soil conservation account, and the Loess Hills/Hungry Canyons programs. The other programs have been funded at the same levels as last year. In these tough budget and economic times, these increases are a great reflection on all of the partner’s efforts to inform and educate on the importance of what we accomplish. The increase in operations and the soil conservation account has allowed us the opportunity to refill three secretarial positions and two technician positions that have been vacant. We also have hired Jackie Suckow to serve as our Communications and Outreach Coordinator. All of these positions are important to the mission of the division and in providing assistance to all of our partners.



As you read this, the Annual Conference for Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners is or will have happened. The agenda includes the annual business meeting, discussion on “Soil Erosion: Are we Really Losing Ground”, remarks by Secretary Northey on where he sees agriculture and urban conservation going, insight from partners into the future of conservation, and breakout tracks on soils, customer service, technology, and watershed based community assessments. There will also be information on soil quality and health, nutrient reduction strategy and field office of the future. This is going to be a jammed packed conference and I hope commissioners will be able to attend.

At the Iowa State Fair in August, we participated with partners in several conservation activities including a new award called the “Environmental Leadership Award,” sponsored by the Governor’s Office, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. In late August, we were a part of the Conser-

*...continues on page 3*

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Share about their experiences   Environmental Leader Awards   No-Interest Revolving Loan   w/ Iowa Conservation Team   Twelve Approved Applications

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## SEPTEMBER

- 5-6** CDI Conference,  
*West Des Moines*  
[www.cdiowa.org](http://www.cdiowa.org)
- 7** Cover Crop Field Day  
*Martinsburg, 10:30am-12pm*  
[www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf)
- 10-13** Gulf Hypoxia Task Force,  
*Des Moines*  
[www.cdiowa.org](http://www.cdiowa.org)
- 12** New Technology Science Fair  
*ISU BioCentury Farm, Ames*
- 12** Sustainable Stormwater  
Infrastructure Training  
*Des Moines*  
*6:00 PM to 8:00 PM*  
[www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com](http://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com)
- 12-17** Nat'l Assoc. of State Dept. of  
Agriculture Annual Meeting,  
*Des Moines*  
[www.2012naamlp.com](http://www.2012naamlp.com)  
[kbc@boonecounty.iowa.gov](mailto:kbc@boonecounty.iowa.gov)
- 23-26** National Assoc. of  
Abandoned Mine Land  
Programs Conference,  
*Des Moines*  
[www.2012naamlp.com](http://www.2012naamlp.com)

## OCTOBER

## NOVEMBER

## DECEMBER

- 13-14** Cover Crops: Practical Strategies  
for Your Farm Conference  
*Prairie Meadows, Altoona*  
<http://www.swcs.org/>  
WIRB Application Due
- 15**

**If you'd like to share the date of  
a local event, email us and we  
can upload the details onto our  
monthly calendar at**

[www.idalsdata.org/lowaData/  
calendar.cfm](http://www.idalsdata.org/lowaData/calendar.cfm)

**Didn't catch them live?**

**You can still view important webinars**

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf/Webinars/>

*Cover Photo taken at Monroe & Appanoose  
County interns' joint field day at McGee West  
AML site*

# Jackson County's ROBOTIC Dairy

Two Robots Milk 120 Head of Cows

## A visit to a Robotic Dairy in Jackson County

The dairy uses 2 robots to milk 120 head of cows, 24 hours a day. Cows come to the milking machine voluntarily, so they first need to be "trained". As the cow is being milked, a computer tracks how much milk comes from each quarter of the udder. Each time the cow is milked, the milk is sampled and tested for conductivity to determine the quality of the milk and for disease detection. If a cow hasn't been milked in a certain timeframe, the robots notify the farmer by calling his/her cell phone.



-Article & photo by Matt McDonald, SE Iowa Field Rep.

## How has technology changed farming for you?

Share your stories with us by emailing [Jackie.Suckow@iowaagriculture.gov](mailto:Jackie.Suckow@iowaagriculture.gov) or at:



facebook  
[www.facebook.com/IowaDeptofAg](http://www.facebook.com/IowaDeptofAg)



twitter  
[www.twitter.com/iadeptag](http://www.twitter.com/iadeptag)

## 2013 SAVE THE DATES

### JANUARY 22

- Conservation Partnership Day

**CAPITOL ROTUNDA • 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM**

Annual opportunity for Districts to interact with Legislators!

### MARCH 4-5

- Iowa Water Conference

**Scheman Building • Iowa State University • Ames IA**

[www.water.iastate.edu](http://www.water.iastate.edu)

### MARCH 15-24

- National Science Week

### MARCH 17-23

- National Agriculture Week, *National Agriculture Day March 19*

### APRIL 28- MAY 5

- National Stewardship Week & Iowa Soil & Water Conservation Week

MORE INFORMATION TO COME

*Continued from page 1...*

vation Central Tent at the Farm Progress Show. The Division looks forward to helping host a Hypoxia Task Force meeting, followed by the National Association of State Department of Agriculture meeting, followed by the National Association of Abandoned Mined Land Program Conference in Des Moines in September. These meetings will bring together leadership from many states dealing with agricultural, resource and conservation issues. We will be highlighting what we do in Iowa and create interaction with these folks in tremendous learning and outreach efforts.

In the last year we have seen tremendous weather pattern swings, from seeing flooding occur in western Iowa and other isolated areas in Iowa last year to wide spread drought conditions this year. These drought conditions have impacted agriculture a lot this year, affecting both grain and forage production, which in turn impact livestock production and our ability to build conservation practices due to poor soil compaction. We have been working on some emergency changes to the Chapter 10 administrative rules to allow for haying and grazing.

In addition, we are giving an extension to the summer construction program deadline. This would allow for haying and grazing of the area set aside and for the completion date to change from October 15 to December 31. Allowing both of these would require an amendment to the current applications.

Also, the addition of cover crops as a cost share practice, under the management practice rule, will be available at \$25 per acre according to the NRCS standards and specifications. Cover crops can help during this drought period by providing a good cover after harvest, particularly where silage was removed, and reduce nitrate leaching. In order for districts to administer these changes, more guidance on these changes will be available soon.

There has been a committee made up of NRCS, Commissioners, State Soil Conservation Committee members, State Technical Committee members and staff from DSC on a Field Office of the Future plan. That strategy/plan, completed in September, will be submitted to the national office of NRCS, the National Association of Conservation Districts, and the National Association of Conservation agencies.

This has been a great process. Even after sending the plan to the national offices, information gathered at last spring's regional meetings, including ideas related to efficiencies, technology, training, and programming, should be considered and reviewed at our future commissioners meetings.

As we move forward, there are and will continue to be challenges; some within our control, others not. I continue to appreciate all of the work that you and our partners do to protect our natural resources. Let us all continue to work together on being as "Prepared for the Future" as we can.

-Jim Gillespie, DSC Director

## 2012 State Fair IN PHOTOS



1/Nominees for Art in Agriculture Award  
2/Fairgoers await start of Century Farms Awards  
3/FFA helped at Century/Heritage Farms Awards  
4/Gov. Branstad, Secretary Northey & Charles Gipp at Environmental Leaders Awards  
5/Kids learn about watersheds at Lil' Conservation Station's Enviroscape

**In next issue...**  
Photos from the CDI Annual Conference



# 2012 Summer Interns Reflect

← Pictured Erin Mickey  
Photo Courtesy of NRCS



↑ Pictured Lauren Hartman  
Bremer Intern

Not afraid of the heat or dirt, 24 young college students from across the state worked this summer as interns at county SWCD's. The interns worked on district activities including mapping projects, CRP status reviews, soil inventory, pond surveys, GPS data collecting, cost-share estimates, water samples and more, while working closely with state and federal staff.

← Pictured Ariel Wauhob  
Photo Courtesy of Ariel Wauhob



→ Pictured Rachel Husman  
Cherokee Intern



↓ Photo from Allison Vincent  
Marion Intern

Interns enjoyed learning a variety of skills including using a probe for soil sampling, checking windbreaks, using GIS and ToolKit. Each intern completed over 480 hours.

At the end of the summer, interns that worked in the Mine Reclamation Program hosted Field Days at county sites.

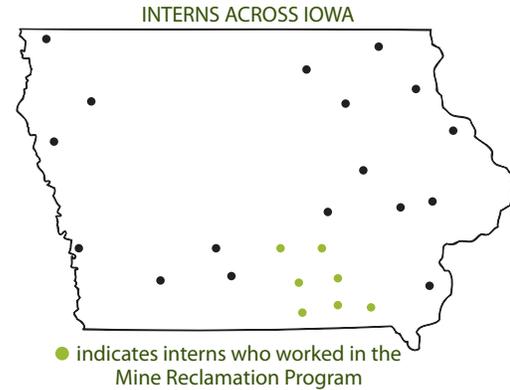
There they spoke to the community about the conservation work being done, and what they accomplished throughout the summer.



→ Pictured Brittany Eichhorst  
Benton Intern



→ Pictured Jeremy Brill  
Johnson Intern



“Before this summer I had only ever lived north of Des Moines, so all of these strip mines in southern Iowa were completely new to me. I had no idea how much of an impact they had on this part of the state.

-Allison Vincent Marion SWCD Intern

“What a great opportunity for a college student pursuing a degree in natural resources.

Our DSC summer intern did a great job for the Burlington FO.”

-Drew DeLang, Des Moines County

“Learning...has been a wonderful experience. I wouldn't want to change my summer for anything.”

-Erin Mickey, Des Moines County Intern

“I have learned how to design and layout terraces, review CRP fields, and create conservation plans for land owners. Interacting with farmers was also a priority on a day to day basis. I do not think I could have asked for a better place to work over the summer.”

-Curtis Berry, Madison County Intern

...how  
I spent  
my summer

# Iowa Learning Farms students reflect on their summer internship experiences

For the last five years, the Iowa Learning Farms (ILF) team has been traveling around Iowa with the Conservation Station to engage Iowans of all ages about the importance of soil and water quality. Since March, the Conservation Station fleet visited 93 venues including a first time appearance at the Iowa State Fair. From field days, to farmers markets, county fairs and outdoor classrooms, they engaged thousands of people in order to motivate change on the landscape.

None of this would be possible without the help of student interns. From May until August, six Iowa State University student interns worked with ILF, traveling with the Conservation Station and working on projects with individual staff members. The students hailed from different parts of the state, including one from Illinois, and brought unique perspectives to their jobs.

Senior Brittney Carpio is from Bettendorf and is majoring in political science and environmental studies, and minoring in Spanish. She helped with the community assessment of Black Hawk Lake watershed and designed material for the Conservation Pack website.

"I had the amazing opportunity of learning how to talk to local business owners about promoting major environmental programs as well as talking to farmers to gain a better understanding of what they do and why they do it," Carpio said. She added that her favorite event this summer was the Breakfast on the Farm in Calmar, Iowa, where she was able to milk a cow for the first time.

Junior Patrick Kelly is from



Iowa Learning Farms summer interns Becca Meerdink and Brett McArtor teach Glidden-Ralston students about watersheds and the many ways we impact water quality when the Conservation Station made a stop at Carroll Co. Environmental Field Days.

Fonda in northwest Iowa and is majoring in biosystems engineering. He also worked on the Black Hawk Lake watershed community assessment, installed water well depth sensors and traveled with the CS.

"The information that we gathered goes into an awareness campaign about Black Hawk Lake watershed which includes background information, goals and strategies, how to get information to the public about the project, a time frame, and finally the survey results," Kelly noted. While on the road with the Conservation Station he enjoyed many events, including UNI Sustainability Day on the University of Northern Iowa campus.

Majoring in agriculture systems technology, senior Brett McArtor worked with Mark Licht and Mark Hanna on plant development while using different tillage practices, such as no-till, strip till, minimum tillage and conventional tillage. McArtor enjoyed traveling throughout the state with the Conservation Station including a visit to his hometown of Crawfordville in southeast Iowa.

Senior Mikah Wright is majoring in journalism and mass communication and environmental studies and worked directly with ILF communications specialist Carol Brown on the promotion of events and outreach activities such

...continues on page 6

**"The students hailed from different parts of the state, including one from Illinois, and brought unique perspectives to their jobs."**

**For more information,**  
go to [www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf)

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as field days. Wright is from Waukon in northeast Iowa. Her projects included taking soil and water samples for research, traveling with the CS, and designing material for the Conservation Pack website.

"I learned so much during this internship that I will be able to take away and use later in life," Wright said.

ILF had two returning interns this summer: Becca Meerdink and Sara Sloan. A senior majoring in environmental studies, Meerdink, a native of Akron in northwest Iowa, spent her second summer traveling with the CS and as a liaison between two water quality research labs transporting, filtering and testing water samples collected by ISU field research teams.

"I've learned a great deal about watershed management, nutrient transport and conservation practices, and how they impact water quality," Meerdink said.

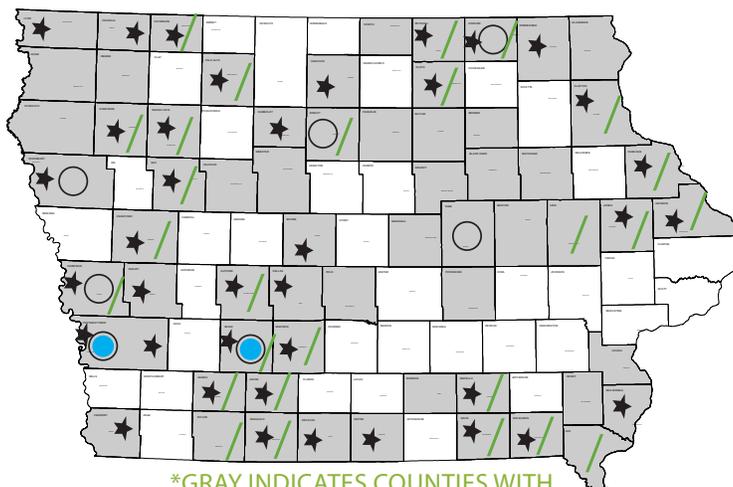
With her recently completed B.S. in environmental science, Sloan spent her second summer with ILF logging the most miles traveled with the CS than any other student. When she wasn't on the road, she was helping conduct the community assessment survey for the Black Hawk Lake watershed as well as gathering classroom enhancement activities to accompany water quality based music videos. Sloan is from Lacon, Illinois, and will spend next year in northern Minnesota participating in Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center's Naturalist Training program, in partnership with the University of Minnesota Duluth's Master of Environmental Education program.

With great humor and exuberance, these student interns got valuable teaching experience, attended field days, participated in field work and research projects and got to know the beautiful state of Iowa a little bit better. The Iowa Learning Farms is a stronger program because of their participation.

Iowa Learning Farms is a partnership between the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa State University Extension, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in Iowa, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. EPA (Section 319), in cooperation with Conservation Districts of Iowa, Iowa Farm Bureau and the Iowa Water Center.

-Mikah Wright

## OUTREACH AROUND IOWA



Check out the amount of conservation outreach we are doing in the state!

- 62 had outreach
- 7 hosted +10 events
- 2 hosted +20 events
- 28 had +1 State Legislature
- 38 had +1 elected officials

July 1, 2011 - June 30, 2012  
guests attended

6,675 guests Pottawattamie West  
2,000 guests Madison  
1,090 guests Tama  
1,000 guests O'Brien  
20,654 total guests in attendance at outreach events

# MEET THE SSCC

## Sherman Lundy



I was born and raised in the Kansas City, Missouri, area and have degrees from University of Oklahoma, Southern Methodist University and the big degree from the University of Iowa. My family came from a farm background although they lived and worked in an Urban area when I was growing up. I have been married to my lovely wife Beverly, for 52 years and we have two grown children and two grandchildren who are rapidly growing up.

I am the Geologist and Farm Manager for BMC Aggregates and previously [and in addition] taught Geology and Chemistry for many years at the Secondary and Community College level.

I have been a member of the SSCC for the past three years wearing two hats: 1) I am the appointed representative for the Mining Industry in Iowa, and 2) I am also a Soil and Water District Commissioner from Black Hawk County. My priorities include the implementation of good soil and water conservation practices within the Ag Community and Industry, particularly the aggregate mining industry in Iowa. The Aggregate Mining industry has been working with IDALS to help improve reclamation practices and become good stewards of the land within the watersheds and communities we serve.

**The DSC is administered in accordance with policies established by the SSCC, but how much do you *really* know about them?!**

In addition as a Commissioner working in conjunction with the other Commissioners in our County and the NRCS/DSC staff, we are directing our efforts to encourage greater participation by rural and urban residents in implementing innovative conservation practices and supporting the Dry Run Creek Watershed Project. In regards to hobbies and outside interests I enjoy G Gauge Trains, working on Dinosaur Bones, Scouting, and Civil War Reenacting(in gray).

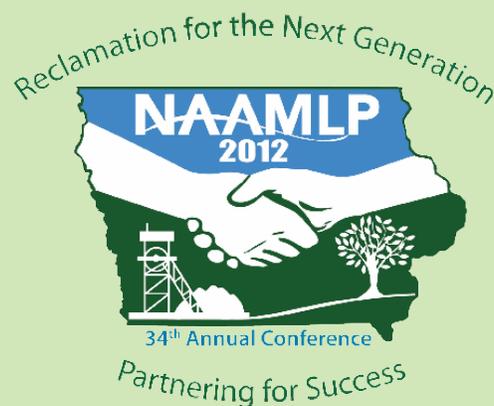
-Sherman Lundy

### In next issue...

Meet Charles McCullough, NE Region Rep.

## Iowa Hosting 2012 Conference

The 34th Annual NAAML P Conference is held in Des Moines on September 23-26, 2012  
Get the latest updates on twitter: @2012NAAML P



## URBAN UPDATE

The urban conservation program suffered a set back this past month. Rich Maaske in Council Bluffs retired after a stellar career. Steve Anderson in Spirit Lake accepted an offer to manage the waste water district for the Iowa Great Lakes region. He will start his new career on Sept 4.

The good news is that interest in urban conservation continues to grow. Kirkwood Community College started a 3 hour credit course on Rain Gardens and bioretention this

fall and is hoping to offer an Urban Conservation certification to students in their Ag and Natural Resources program in the future.

Iowa Western Community College in Council Bluffs is also developing courses on storm water and urban conservation. They will be developing students that will have the knowledge and skills to work in this growing field.

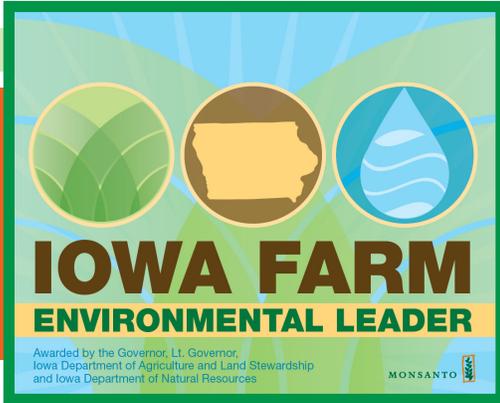
-Wayne Peterson, Ex. Officer, Urban Cons.

New

# Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Awards

## at the Iowa State Fair

The inaugural year of the Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Awards recognized the environmental stewardship efforts of farmers across our state at this year's fair



Aluminum Plaque given to award winners provided by Monsanto



The 1<sup>st</sup> annual Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Awards were held on August 17<sup>th</sup> on the Knapp Stage at the Iowa State Fair to recognize the exemplary voluntary actions of farmers to improve and protect the environment and natural resources of our state. The awards are a joint effort between the Governor, Lt. Governor, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and Iowa Department of Natural Resources. For 2012, 67 farm families across all of Iowa received the awards which were presented to them by Gov. Branstad, Sec. Northey, DNR Director Chuck Gipp, and special guest Karl Brooks from EPA Region 7.

These awards recognize those that have taken steps in their farming operations to serve as local leaders in environmental stewardship on their farms, utilizing a variety of techniques and best management practices. As environmental leaders, these farmers have adopted best

management practices and incorporated environmental stewardship throughout their farming operations. True stewards of the land, they recognize that improved water quality and soil sustainability reaps benefits that extend beyond their fields to reach the citizens of Iowa and beyond, and have made environmental stewardship a priority on their farms. We thank them for their efforts and look forward to continuing to recognize farmers across Iowa in future years of this award.

-Shawn Richmond & Matt Lechtenberg,  
Env. Spec. CREP



Terry Brandstad, Governor of Iowa,  
Bill Northey, Secretary of Agriculture, Chuck Gipp, IDNR Director,  
Karl Brooks, EPA Region 7 Administrator

### In next issue...

How to make a nomination for an Environmental Leader Award



## Century Farms & Heritage Farms

Videos made available on youtube

This is the first year that we have recorded the Century Farms and Heritage Farms awards on August 10th. Videos will be accessible to view on youtube, separated by county. Relive the moment!



You Tube  
[www.youtube.com/user/IDALS1](http://www.youtube.com/user/IDALS1)

JUNE



## Tammy Grebert

Secretary, Fremont SWCD

*Pictured with Brandon, Western Iowa Field Rep. and Vince Sitzmann, Chief of Field Services Bureau*

# Employees OF THE Month

JULY



## Ruth Holan Technician, Adair SWCD

### HOLAN FAMILY PROGRESS

Ruth is pleased to report steady progress has been made 10 weeks after the accident her family suffered on May 25, 2012, as they were traveling to Nebraska to visit family for the weekend. Ruth is currently recovering from her injuries.

*"I cannot begin to express in words my most sincere appreciation and thanks for all the cards and gifts we have received. We just praise the Lord that my husband, Jerry, and the two grandchildren (Lily and Weston) were not seriously injured. Calissa has now been released, and Micah and I will heal - with time!"*



Jerry and Ruth Holan  
Micah and Calissa Holan, Lily and Weston

*Pictured with Jim Gillespie, DSC Director and Brandon Dittman, Western Iowa Field Rep.*

AUGUST



## Claudia Dalbey

Secretary, Marshall & Story SWCD

*Nichole Williams, Tara Henson, Dana Holland, Claudia Dalbey, Dora Guffy, Yolanda Butler*

*Thanks for all your hard work!*

## Program Spotlight

# No-Interest Revolving Loan Fund

Since 1983, the Division of Soil Conservation has been offering no-interest loans through local Soil and Water Conservation District offices. These loans have been made to over nine-hundred Iowa producers.

The no-interest loan program is an alternative to traditional state and federal grant programs. Unlike grant programs, the loan program is self-sustaining. By design, the funds revolve – meaning as producers make payments on their loans, these loans become available to make new loans.

Loans made under this program can be used to fund conservation practices that protect soil and water resources. Examples include terraces, water and sediment control basins, grade stabilization structures and waterways.

-Tony Toigo, SRF

### ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Applicants must own of the land where the conservation work will take place
- Tracts of land must be over 10 acres with a minimum of \$2,500 of agricultural products sold annually

### TERMS

- Up to \$10,000 loaned per borrower
- Loans set up to be paid back in equal installments over a 10 year period
- Payments due March 1st each year with no penalty for prepayment

### OTHER IMPORTANT FACTS

- Qualification based on a review of financial documents
- Loans can be used to fund 100% of the cost up to the loan maximum, but can't be used in conjunction with other public funds (EQIP or State Cost Share for example)
- A security interest will be placed on the land until the loan is paid in full
- \$800,000 available

**To apply**, contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District office or apply online at [www.iowaagriculture.gov](http://www.iowaagriculture.gov)

## Become a Soil & Water Conservation District Commissioner



Have a positive impact on Iowa's land and people.

Contact your local Soil & Water Conservation District or for more information go to:

<http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/soilConservation.asp>

Set local priorities for natural resource protection

Make decisions that will make your county a better place to live

Improve local awareness of natural resources

Give back to your community

## DSC's Newest Employees

### Matt McDonald

#### SE Iowa Field Representative

Greetings! My name is Matt McDonald and I wanted to introduce myself as the new SE Iowa Field Representative for the Field Services Bureau. I have been a native of Prairie City, IA since 2007. I grew up near Princeton, MO where my Dad was large animal veterinarian and my Mom was a school teacher. Our family ran a cow/calf operation. I was involved in 4-H and FFA, where I was involved in teams that made it to state in dairy cattle judging, beef cattle judging, and poultry judging. I also was an Eagle scout. I worked at a swine confinement for 6 years during high school and college to pay the bills and have worked for engineering companies doing survey work, soil lab work, construction materials testing, geotechnical drilling work, and as an environmental consultant. Most recently I worked for Iowa DNR Land Quality Bureau as an Environmental Specialist where I worked to utilize industrial wastes/by-products in agriculture for soil amendments as well as industrial uses. I also assisted with environmental clean-ups/emergency response, and oversaw the state composting permitting program.

I attended Northwest Missouri State University where I received a bachelor's degree in Environmental Geology and a minor in Agriculture.

My pastimes include football, fishing, and hunting. I also enjoy camping and canoeing. I have a wife, a 9 year old son and a 6 year old daughter. I am currently the cub master of my son's cub scout pack and a deacon at Grace Church in Newton.

I look forward in helping further conservation projects in Iowa in my new position. Agriculture has been and will continue to be a corner stone in the growing world we live in. My contact information is below so feel free to drop me a line!

Matt McDonald  
SE Iowa Field Representative  
Division of Soil Conservation  
Phone: 515-281-6153  
Fax: 515-281-6170  
[matt.mcdonald@iowaagriculture.gov](mailto:matt.mcdonald@iowaagriculture.gov)



### Jackie Suckow

#### Communications & Outreach Coordinator

Hello! My name is Jackie Suckow. I am the Communications and Outreach Coordinator for the Water Resources Bureau. I was born and raised in Iowa. I went to Valley High School in West Des Moines, and then to Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa with a bachelor's degree in Graphic Design and Spanish.

I like to stay active. My hobbies include biking, running, design and photography. I love to travel, meet new people and experience their culture. Most recently I spent a year living in Chile in South America. I am thankful that my family lives close and I'm happy to call Iowa home.

Previously working as a graphic designer at a local business in Urbandale, this will be my first time working for the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. I am very excited to be here, where I'll be working through web, print and social media to generate communications throughout the state. The goal is to create a stronger presence and awareness of the DSC's involvement and role in the community.

Feel free to contact me to introduce yourself, a program, or an upcoming event. I can work with you on planning and communications to get the information out.

Jackie Suckow  
Communications & Outreach Coordinator  
Division of Soil Conservation  
Phone: 515-725-2853  
Fax: 515-281-6170  
[jackie.suckow@iowaagriculture.gov](mailto:jackie.suckow@iowaagriculture.gov)



## We are connected

Join the conversations





# Iowa Conservation Team Celebrates 10 Years at RAGBRAI

The Iowa Conservation Tent site has become a daily destination for thousands of riders

July's 40th RAGBRAI wasn't the only milestone celebration for the annual bicycle ride across Iowa. For the past 10 years, the Iowa Conservation Team has set up a tent site each day along the RAGBRAI route, providing riders with a place to refill water bottles, send conservation-themed postcards and enjoy free bananas while taking a break from the heat. The Iowa Conservation Team is a partnership between the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS), the Iowa Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) and the Conservation District of Iowa (CDI).

The Iowa Conservation Tent site has become a daily destination for thousands of riders. Duane Miller, a retired NRCS employee, has volunteered at the tent site most years and participated as a RAGBRAI rider. "With 10,000 or more bike riders from all over the United States and many foreign countries riding through Iowa's rural countryside, it is the perfect backdrop to get the conservation message out," said Miller. "The riders can see and look for the practices that NRCS and conservationists are promoting. Where else can you have an audience this large on a daily basis for a whole week?"



Riders write postcards during a break at this year's RAGBRAI

Over the past decade the Iowa Conservation team has:

- Stamped and mailed about 40,000 conservation-themed postcards to people all over the world.
- Gave out about 100,000 bananas.
- Provided about 30,000 gallons of drinking water.
- Set up their site at 60 different rural homes.
- Talked and displayed information about Iowa conservation practices to thousands of riders from all over the world.

The partnership began in 2003 as an outreach project to educate riders about conservation and Iowa agriculture. Laura Crowell, Iowa NRCS state public affairs specialist, says the Iowa Conservation Team has increased awareness of conservation efforts in Iowa and the organizations that help to accomplish those efforts.



Jim Gillespie, DSC Director, & Susan Kozak, Minerals Inspector pass out bananas near Zeauring, Iowa

In addition to the tent site during RAGBRAI, permanent signs have been placed along Iowa's roadways to show conservation efforts in a particular area of the state. "Cyclists are surrounded by conservation efforts each day along the route, so RAGBRAI is the perfect setting to show the impact of conservation in Iowa," said Crowell.

The hard work of volunteers helps make this event a success each year. "It is always great to hear riders talk about how much they appreciate our presence and the work we do," said Miller. Most of the volunteers come from the local county conservation offices.

Finding just the right location for the daily tent site is high priority for the Iowa Conservation Team. In early spring, not long after the route is announced, team members take to the road looking for the right farm. "We are grateful to the homeowners for allowing us to take over their place on those days," said Miller, "but I think they believe in our message and enjoy the activity our site brings to their place." Miller believes the Iowa Conservation Team has made an impact over the past 10 years. "I hope they can take away just a small message, such as the water they are drinking is affected by many farming practices and the conservation team is there to help protect the high quality drinking water we have," he said. "We also try to inform riders of farming and how it works since many of the riders are no longer closely associated with farming."

Iowa Conservation Team member Alan Lauver says donations help pay for bananas and postcard postage, and any extra goes to the Iowa SWCS Chapter to use for college scholarships in the areas of agriculture and environmental science.

-Jason Johnson, Public Affairs Specialist, USDA-NRCS

Want to read more? Find another article at [www.ragbrai.com/2012/07/24/ragbrai-2012-conservationists-go-bananas-1-5k-worth-on-ragbrai/](http://www.ragbrai.com/2012/07/24/ragbrai-2012-conservationists-go-bananas-1-5k-worth-on-ragbrai/)

# WIRB Update

## Twelve Watersheds to Receive Grants from Watershed Improvement Review Board

The Watershed Improvement Review Board recently approved twelve applications totaling \$946,952 in grants to support projects that will improve water quality or reduce flooding in the state.

The grant funds will be matched by recipients, who will provide \$7,176,469 in funding from the local communities to support these projects. As a result, \$8.1 million will be going to improve priority watersheds throughout the state.

"These projects are a partnership between federal, state and local organizations that are committed to improving Iowa's water quality," said Bill Northey, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture. "By supporting projects that address runoff and drainage, sedimentation, urban stormwater, groundwater pollution, flooding, and a number of other issues, these projects are focused on issues that directly impact the state's waterways and water quality."

The approved projects have already completed watershed assessments that identified critical water resource areas and will focus on implementing specific water quality or flood reduction improvements. The projects will start after a grant agreement is signed between the applicant and the Watershed Improvement Review Board.

The Watershed Improvement Review Board is comprised of representatives from agriculture, drinking water and wastewater utilities, environmental organizations, agribusiness, and the conservation community along with two state senators and two state representatives. It is anticipated that another request for applications will be announced later this year.

-Dustin Vande Hoef, IDALS

To receive more information or ask questions, contact Jerry Neppel at 515-281-3599.

Watershed Name	Organization	Length	County(ies)	Award
Sands Timber	Taylor SWCD	2 years	Taylor	\$70,500
Upper Otter Creek	Fayette SWCD	2 years	Fayette	\$100,000
North Fork Maquoketa	Dubuque SWCD	2.5 yrs	Dubuque, Delaware	\$99,571
Dry Run Creek	Black Hawk SWCD	2 years	Black Hawk	\$19,853
North Raccoon	Buena Vista SWCD	3 years	Buena Vista, Pocahontas	\$63,900
Waterloo Creek	Allamakee SWCD	2 years	Allamakee, Huston (MN)	\$100,000
Central Park Lake	Jones Cty Conser. Board	3 years	Jones	\$96,650
Clear Lake	Hancock SWCD	2 years	Hancock, Cerro Gordo	\$20,000
Muchakinock Creek	Mahaska SWCD	1 year	Mahaska	\$78,688
Rathbun Lake	Rathbun L & W Alliance	3 years	Appanoose, Lucas, Wayne	\$97,790
South Chequest Creek	Davis SWCD	2 years	Davis	\$100,000
Competine Creek	Wapello SWCD	2 years	Wapello, Jefferson, Keokuk	\$100,000
<b>TOTAL WIRB AWARDS</b>				<b>\$946,952</b>

For more information on the Watershed Improvement Review Board, visit:  
<http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/IWIRB.asp>

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The Division of Soil Conservation is responsible for state leadership in the protection and management of soil, water and mineral resources, assisting soil and water conservation districts and private landowners to meet their agricultural and environmental protection needs.

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