STATE COST-SHARING FOR SOIL CONSERVATION IN IOWA

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN COST-SHARING

- *Any landowner* can file an application with his or her local soil conservation district indicating the type of proposed project. The SCD staff prepares an estimate of work and cost involved, and the landowner indicates when he or she plans to start. The applicant may obtain the appropriate forms and information sheets at the soil conservation district office.

- *The applicant* signs an agreement to adequately maintain the cost-share practice for 10 years from the time of construction. Failure to maintain the practice will result in action to cause the landowner to repay the cost-share funds.

- *The SCD staff* visits the site of the proposed practice to determine its suitability and need. If it is determined the practice is needed and practical, initial plans are drawn up which include costs and quantities.

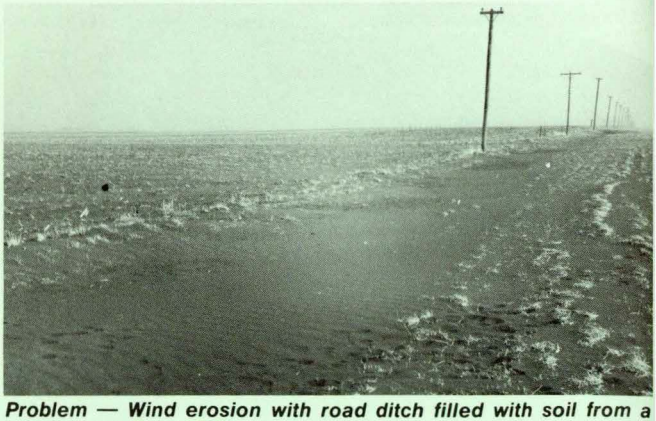
- *District commissioners* review the application. If approved, the application becomes an agreement between the district and the applicant.

- *The staff* makes additional surveys and detailed plans, and assists the applicant with a layout of the erosion control project. District staff members also visit the site of construction to make sure the practice is being built to specifications.

- *A district representative* keeps adequate records of the project, certifies that costs are valid, and that construction has been satisfactorily completed.

- *The applicant* submits bills marked paid for the work completed to the district commissioners. The staff then prepares a voucher for reimbursement of the cost-sharing funds to the applicant. The commissioners approve the completed voucher and receipts and submit them along with the bills to the Department of Soil Conservation. After a review for completeness and correctness, the DSC sends it along to the state comptroller. The comptroller issues a warrant for payment which is routed through the Department of Soil Conservation to the local district for delivery to the applicant.

Conservation through concern, cooperation, and commitment



Problem — Wind erosion with road ditch filled with soil from a nearby bean field which had been fall plowed.

EROSION: CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES

Erosion destroys effort, hopes, and future.

Over time, erosion quietly washes or blows away soil on gentle slopes or unguarded land — all happening so gradually it is oftentimes ignored. At times, torrential rains cause erosion to occur with vicious onslaught. The resulting sediment destroys growing crops and reduces the productive capacity of the land that is covered and the land that is eroded. Its damage is underscored by these facts:

- **An estimated 9.9 tons of topsoil per acre is lost every year.**
- **Row crop production, especially on fragile or hilly land or on areas not suitable to the types of crops planted, can deplete the soil even more quickly. For years, soil fertility losses have been masked by the increased use of artificial fertilizers, improved hybrid varieties of crops, and technology. However, the use of these supplements has reached a plateau, and yields are leveling off. In addition, chemical-laden silt is washed into lakes and rivers and pollutes sources of water supply.**

USING APPROVED COST-SHARE PRACTICES

Priority for cost-sharing benefits is given to practices which are effective for long periods of time and to those which will need significant capital investment by the landowner or farm operator. Present approved cost-share practices include:

- **TERRACE, BASIN: A form of level terrace with closed ends constructed on non-cropland with permeable soils and designed to impound a given amount of run-off from the drainage area above it. (600 A)**

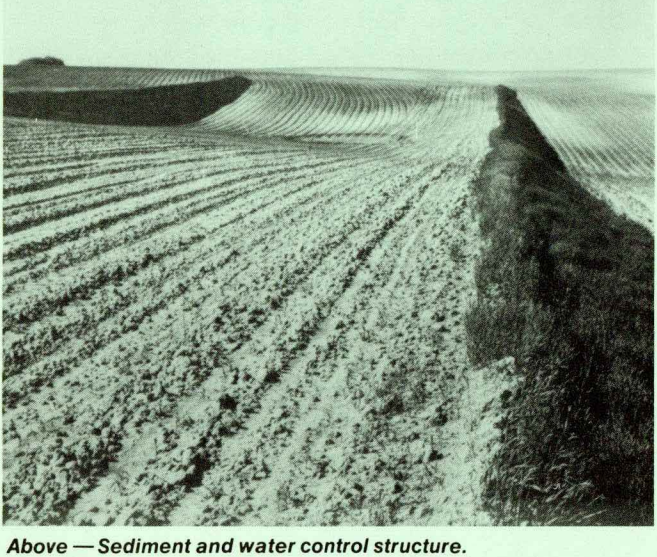
Progress — Corn being cultivated on terraced land.

- **TERRACE, GRADIENT: An earth embankment or a ridge and channel constructed across the slope at a suitable spacing with grade. (600 B)**
- **TERRACE, LEVEL: An earth embankment, or a ridge and channel constructed across the slope at a suitable spacing with no grade. (600 C)**
- **TERRACE, PARALLEL: An earth embankment, or a ridge and channel in parallel, constructed across the slope at a suitable spacing and with an acceptable grade. Terraces constructed so that the interval between terraces is of uniform width constitute a parallel terrace system. (600 D)**
- **DIVERSION: A channel with a supporting ridge on the lower side constructed across the slope on a grade or grades to an outlet in order to divert water from areas of a location where it is in excess and moved to where it can be used or disposed of safely. (362)**
- **EROSION CONTROL STRUCTURE: A structure to stabilize the grade and solve an erosion problem. (410)**
- **GRASSED WATERWAY OR OUTLET: A natural or constructed waterway or outlet, shaped or graded and planted with suitable vegetation as needed for safe disposal of runoff from field, terrace, or other structure. (412)**
- **SEDIMENT AND WATER CONTROL BASIN: A short earth embankment or ridge and channel generally constructed across the slope and minor watercourses, using subsurface outlets. This is to be used on cropland where terracing is impractical and off-site sediment and flood damage reduction is desired. (559)**
- **PASTURE AND HAYLAND PLANTING: Establishing long-term stands of adapted species of perennials or biennials, or reseeding forage plants on land converted to pasture or hayland from cultivated crops. (512)**
- **FIELD WINDBREAK: Suitable trees or shrubs established in a strip or belt within or around a field to control wind erosion. (392)**

- **CRITICAL AREA PLANTING: Stabilizing silt-producing and severely eroded areas by establishing vegetation cover. This includes woody plants, such as trees, shrubs, or vines, and adapted grasses or legumes established by seeding or sodding to provide long-term ground cover. (342)**
- **TREE PLANTING: Planting tree seedlings or cuttings in open areas to establish a stand of forest trees for erosion control. (612)**
- **STRIPCROPPING, CONTOUR: Growing crops in a systematic arrangement of strips or bands on the contour to reduce water erosion. The crops are arranged so that a strip of grass or close-growing crop is alternated with a strip of clean-tilled crop or fallow. (585A)**
- **STRIPCROPPING, WIND: Growing wind-resisting crops in strips alternating with row crops or fallow and arranged at angles to offset the averse wind effects. (585 C)**

In 1979, the Iowa legislature designated that up to $500,000 of cost-share funds could be used for a conservation tillage incentive payment on a per-acre basis. This program is known as "Iowa Till" and will be used to encourage groups of farmers to retain a specified amount of crop residue on the surface of the ground over winter and in the spring to reduce wind and water erosion.

Although not a permanent structural practice, Iowa Till is estimated to reduce erosion on most cropland by 50%. Use of Iowa Till can adequately protect 60% of Iowa's cropland and help slow the erosion rate on the remaining cropland until cost intensive permanent practices such as terraces can be constructed.



Above — Sediment and water control structure.

Cover Picture — Parallel seeded backslope terraces.

THE LAND — A VITAL RESOURCE

The land is one of our most precious resources. It is at one and the same time part of our history, our heritage, and our future. Its past has shaped our lives. Its products provide our sustenance, and along with the accompanying resources of water and air, it helps give us our basic needs for life.

But the resource of the land is limited. It is being depleted and weakened at an alarming pace. In Iowa alone, a state that provides one-tenth of the nation's food supply, one-half of our rich prime topsoil has been lost to erosion in 100 years of farming. As the land is blown away by the wind or is washed away by the rains, it takes with it not only the productive capacity for much of this nation's food and fiber — but pesticides and fertilizer, which, with silt from erosion, can damage our state's public water supplies.

There is a direct connection between Iowa land, personal and public benefits, and national and international economy. Iowa agriculture has helped feed the world's hungry, balance world trade, and forms a solid basis for human interdependence.

STATE COST-SHARING TO PROTECT THE LAND

The protection of our land is a collective responsibility. What affects the land affects the public — this single principle underlies the Iowa Cost-Share Program, a unique program through which State funds are made available to landowners to pay a portion of approved permanent soil and water conservation practices.

It is logical that one of the nation's leaders in agricultural production is also the leader in providing State funds to share the cost of installing such practices.

This program began in 1973 when Governor Robert D. Ray recommended its establishment to the Iowa General Assembly and subsequent legislation provided two million dollars for each fiscal year of the 1973-1975 biennium. Appropriations have increased with each biennium to the present $5,000,000 for each fiscal year of the 1979-81 period.

These funds, appropriated from the Iowa General Fund to the Iowa Department of Soil Conservation, are allocated to each of Iowa's Soil Conservation Districts and are to be used solely to cost-share conservation practices on land used for agricultural or horticultural purposes.

Water erosion — Soil losses after heavy spring rain being checked by District Conservationist.

SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS AND THEIR ROLE

The boundaries of Iowa's 100 soil conservation districts (SCD's) coincide with the boundaries of Iowa counties. One exception is Pottawatamie County in southwestern Iowa which is divided into two districts. Each of the 100 districts is governed by five locally elected commissioners who serve without pay. Each district receives technical assistance from a staff assigned by state and federal agencies. Cost-share agreements are administered by the SCD commissioners.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR COST-SHARE FUNDS?

- **Any landowner who is a cooperator with the SCD and who enters into voluntary agreement with the district to install and maintain an approved conservation practice is eligible to receive 50% of the estimated or actual cost of the project — whichever is the lesser amount.**
- **Any landowner against whom a valid complaint is filed, and who is subsequently served with an administrative order by the soil conservation district to correct an erosion problem, will be entitled to receive 75% cost-share of the actual cost of installation of eligible soil conservation practices.**

In addition, the state legislature has earmarked Road Use Tax Funds to be used for incentive payments in a Wind Erosion Control Incentive Program (WECIP). Practices eligible for payments are Iowa Till — conservation tillage; field windbreaks — a windbreak strip of trees as long as necessary to be effective; and grass strips — a fifty-foot width of grass as long as necessary to be effective. These practices along Iowa's roads will help control the movement of soil by wind from cropland into road ditches which interferes with highway drainage and maintenance. Also by reducing wind-blown soil, highway visibility and safety can be improved.

COST-SHARE PRACTICES TO HELP SAVE EFFORTS, HOPES, AND FUTURE

These conservation measures reflect what can continue to be accomplished to avoid a very real crisis to our existence. To be stewards of the soil, to preserve a heritage, to sustain and protect the land which is used for own sustenance — State Cost-Sharing for Iowa Soil Conservation can make this, not just a hope, but a reality.

For further information and assistance please contact:

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