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Iowa RC&Ds—
making
THINGS
happen

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Resource
Conservation and
Development in Iowa

USDA NRCS
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Des Moines, Iowa
December 1999

Iowa's Resource Conservation

What is RC&D

Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) is a unique program that helps people protect and develop their economic, natural, and social resources in ways that improve their area's economy, environment, and quality of life. Local RC&D Councils provide a way for people to plan and implement projects that will make their communities better places to live.

Making it Happen – Local People Working Together

RC&D is based on the idea that local people know what their communities need and can create solutions that will really work. Groups of local volunteers establish RC&D Councils, which represent sponsoring organizations within a multi-county region. RC&D Council Directors volunteer their time to address important issues in their communities, and to build a better life for themselves and others. The strength of the RC&D Program is in local people working together to solve their own problems. The development of local leadership and community pride is a key part of RC&D projects and successes.

RC&D is based on the idea that local people know what their communities need and can create solutions that will really work.

How Does RC&D Work?

Iowa's RC&D Councils receive staffing and financial support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which provides a Coordinator to work with each Council in the state. RC&D Coordinators work closely with Councils to identify problems, establish goals and objectives, build strategies, and implement plans. Although RC&D Councils receive assistance from NRCS and many other partnering agencies and organizations, priorities and policies are always set by local people.

The Benefits

RC&D projects may create new jobs in agriculture, forestry, tourism, and other industries. Projects may focus on natural resource issues, or may work to improve community development, economic growth, or quality of life in Iowa communities. All are designed to make communities more viable, productive, and better places to live.

Finding the Right Resources

RC&D Councils seek and coordinate assistance from a variety of public and private sources. Assistance may include coordinating technical help from a government agency or private consultant; planning a financing package for a project that includes donations, loans, grants, or cost-sharing; or bringing together diverse groups to achieve common goals.



and Development Program



The Iowa League – Linking RC&Ds Together

There are currently 13 RC&D areas in Iowa, with three or more areas in various stages of formation. (One area serves counties in both Iowa and Illinois.) Each RC&D area covers four to eight counties that share similar economic, community, and natural resource conditions. The Iowa League of RC&Ds is an association of Iowa's RC&D Councils. The League provides support to councils, promotes communication among councils, and helps them work together toward common goals. Joint projects include hosting conferences, coordinating statewide projects, and informing community leaders about issues of concern.

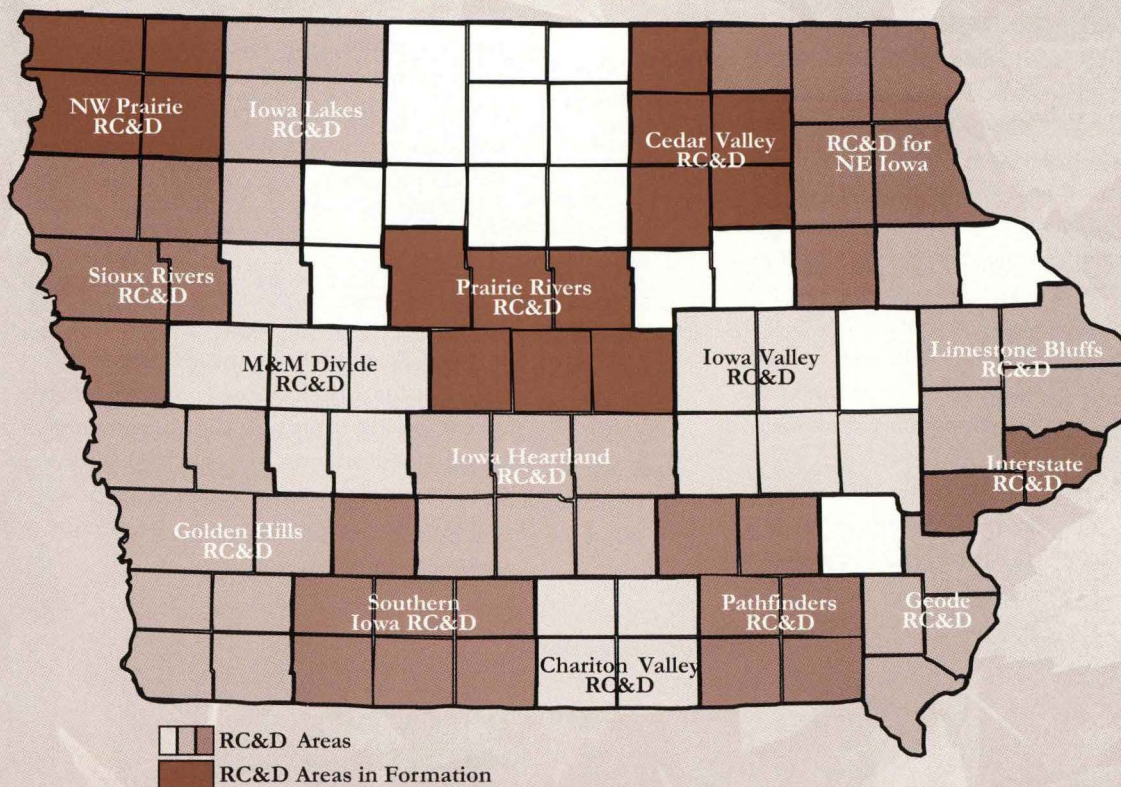
Getting Involved

You can make things happen too! There are many opportunities to get involved with your local RC&D Council. People from all walks of life are making changes in their communities and you can join them. Whether you live in the city or the country, and whether you're a school council member, business owner, farmer, landowner, or a consumer, there's a place for you in RC&D.

You may already be involved in a community project which could benefit from RC&D Program involvement or assistance. Your local RC&D may be able to provide technical assistance or funding, or put you in touch with private and public organizations which can help your group reach its goals. You may also want to consider working with the RC&D Council in your community to develop new projects together.

To find out more about Iowa's RC&D Program, contact: one of the RC&D offices highlighted in this booklet (phone numbers provided at the bottom of each page); your nearest NRCS office, listed in the phone book under U.S. Government; or your County Board of Supervisors.

RC&D Areas in Iowa



A Message to Iowans . . .

From the Iowa League of RC&Ds

With the coming of the new millennium, the Iowa League of RC&Ds wishes to make a new start with a project explaining the Resource Conservation and Development Program, how it works, and the many benefits RC&D Councils offer to Iowa's communities.

For more than 25 years, RC&Ds have been responding to local needs, working on local initiatives, and solving local problems in their communities. Things have changed dramatically in the last 25 years and will continue to change even more so in the next 25 years. The RC&Ds must work together as one unit to be prepared to help with the needs of our communities. Even though each RC&D is a little different and has unique projects and activities, we are all part of one Iowa RC&D Program. Unity makes us strong!

The Iowa League of RC&Ds has several goals for the next millennium. First, we must work together to keep our natural resources, such as air and water, healthy. Second, we must invest in another one of our great resources—our people. If it weren't for the hard work of the many volunteers throughout the United States, there would be no RC&Ds. It is through the efforts of these dedicated volunteers that RC&Ds are able to do the work and projects that make all of our communities better.

Paul R. Kelley
President, Iowa League of RC&Ds



From the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

RC&Ds work with local organizations, groups, and citizens to protect and develop economic, social, and natural resources in their communities. Each day the RC&D Program in Iowa demonstrates that locally developed solutions to local problems work best—because people know what their communities need, and are willing to work hard to make them better places to live.

The Iowa NRCS provides staffing and financial assistance to support the 13 designated RC&D Councils in the state. NRCS provides each Council with a Coordinator, who works hand-in-hand with the Council to develop projects and reach its goals. Although NRCS and many other partners provide assistance to the RC&D Councils, the key to the success of the program is local involvement and leadership. Priorities, policies, and ultimately solutions, are always developed and implemented by local people.

Each of Iowa's RC&Ds illustrates how people can come together to make things happen. This booklet describes just a few of their projects. The range of activities is wide, from helping offer employment opportunities to physically or mentally challenged people, to creating recreational trails, to developing affordable wastewater treatment systems. The one thing all of the RC&D projects have in common is that they were each developed, planned, and implemented by a local council in an effort to improve the economy, natural resources, or quality of life in their community.

In Iowa, RC&Ds are an integral part of helping NRCS accomplish its mission of a productive state in harmony with a quality environment. I am proud of the accomplishments of our RC&Ds, and encourage you to learn more about the councils and how they are making things happen in your corner of Iowa.

Leroy Brown
State Conservationist, NRCS





Chariton Valley RC&D

Serves Lucas, Monroe, Wayne and Appanoose Counties

Mission

To assist community leaders in defining local objectives, planning and coordinating activities, and securing technical and financial assistance to implement a regional development program in south central Iowa that integrates economic development, natural resource conservation, and community improvements.

Projects

Chariton Valley Biomass Project

Chariton Valley RC&D Inc., in partnership with Alliant Power, a major Iowa energy company, is leading a statewide coalition of public and private interests to merge Iowa's agricultural potential with long-term energy requirements. Plans call for production of electrical power through switchgrass. Project partners include numerous state and federal agencies, Iowa State University (ISU), Iowa Farm Bureau Federation (IFBF), John Deere, Vermeer, local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and Alliant Power. The project was initially funded for \$2 million in 1996. The U.S. Department of Energy funded an additional \$2 million in 1998.

Rathbun Land and Water Alliance

Chariton Valley RC&D and the Rathbun Regional Water Association (RRWA) led an effort to form the Rathbun Land and Water Alliance. Other sponsors include local SWCDs and Boards of Supervisors, various government agencies, IFBF, Pheasants Forever, ISU, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The Alliance has developed a Comprehensive Plan of Work, completed a sociological survey of water users and watershed residents, is conducting the third year of water quality monitoring, and has extensive Geographic Information Systems (GIS) coverage and analysis of the watershed. The Alliance is currently organizing a regional GIS office and has received Environmental Protection Agency funds to perform assessments in the watershed.

Local sponsors are funding water quality monitoring and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is processing all samples. The Division of Soil Conservation funds a full time position in the watershed.

Economic Development in Centerville and Appanoose County

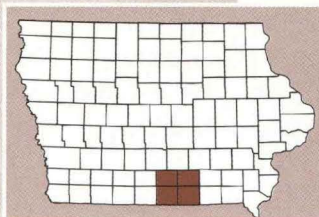
Since 1995, the Chariton Valley RC&D has provided economic development assistance which has resulted in the expansion of Rubbermaid and Modern Muzzleloading, the opening of H&S AutoShot and C&C Machining, and the relocation of Barker Company, all in Centerville. The RC&D wrote the grants for these projects, developed creative financial packages that helped Centerville leverage local funds, and developed a recruitment package to attract new businesses. These projects have resulted in a total of 330 jobs with an annual combined payroll of \$7.5 million. The community has also received financial assistance to improve public works and services associated with the new businesses.

Small Rural Community Water Treatment

A number of small communities in southern Iowa are still without a sanitary sewer system. Chariton Valley RC&D, USDA Rural Development (RD), Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED), and the RRWA have developed a strategy for serving these communities. The RRWA, which provides water to the communities, has agreed to franchise the installation and operation of the sewer systems. RD and IDIED provided funding for the projects. The RC&D coordinated community involvement, wrote the grant proposals, and continues to administer the projects. The RRWA is overseeing design and construction and will operate the completed systems. Five communities have received funds totaling more than \$3.3 million for facilities serving 760 people. Many other small communities are on a waiting list for 2000 and beyond.

Chariton Valley RC&D

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Geode RC&D

Serves Louisa, Henry, Des Moines, and Lee Counties

Mission

To provide services to the community to enhance and maintain rural life through conservation and economic development of our human and natural resources.

Goals

- Coordinate various inter-agency, multi-disciplinary, planning events to more effectively create and manage change within our rural communities.
- Sponsor a wide variety of innovative, natural resource-based, rural development projects.
- Conduct an outreach program designed to involve and empower various underserved segments of our population.

Projects

Geode Forestry, Inc.

Geode Forestry, Inc., which was created in 1989, has evolved into a private business serving a wide variety of forestry needs in southeast Iowa and the surrounding states. Besides providing a comprehensive forestry program, Geode Forestry also provides prairie and wetland restorations and was a leading innovator in developing direct seeding methods.

Water Resources Management Program

This fee-based program which began in 1997 provides comprehensive water management assistance to private landowners and local units of government. Some of the projects include pond renovations, installation of fish and wildlife habitat structures, pond weed control, fish stocking, streambank stabilization, and filter strips.

Revolving Loan Program

Geode RC&D's revolving loan program provides financial assistance to entrepreneurs to start or expand businesses in prioritized, natural resource-related industries, including value-added agriculture. The delivery of financial assistance gives Geode RC&D another tool to influence future businesses that create additional jobs and more efficiently utilize and conserve the area's natural resources.

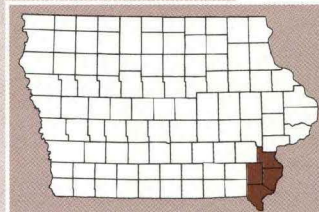
Future Projects

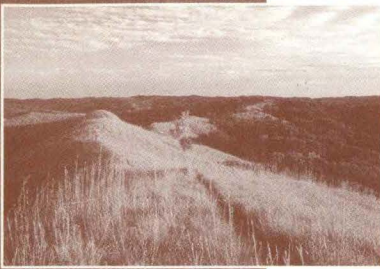
A primary reason that Geode RC&D exists is to assist people to adapt and grow in our ever-changing rural environment. Periodically Geode RC&D may need to reinvent itself to better address the changing needs of our clients. Geode RC&D recently hired an outside consultant who provided guidance through a strategic planning process. Geode RC&D's new agenda includes projects in the following areas:

- **Quality of Life Projects** - protect and improve our area's natural resources, improve rural health care, reduce the out-migration of our youth, and serve the needs of the under-served segments of our population.
- **Value Added Agricultural Projects** - include a wide variety of demonstrations, educational programs, and business incubations.
- **Rural Commerce Infrastructure Projects** - improve the area's tourism industry, recreational facilities, and transportation capabilities.

Geode RC&D

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Golden Hills RC&D

Serves Harrison, Shelby, Pottawattamie, Cass, Mills, Montgomery, Fremont, and Page Counties

Mission

Develop and promote economic, human, and natural resources through cooperative efforts.

Goals

- Develop economic opportunities that capitalize on the region's unique natural features and resources.
- Ensure the availability of quality land and water resources to satisfy the region's business, recreational, residential, and wildlife needs.
- Work with public agencies and private organizations to protect the environment.
- Provide natural resource-related community services that benefit the youth, elderly, and disadvantaged.

Projects

Loess Hills Development and Conservation Authority

This Authority is a 22-county association authorized by the Iowa Legislature to develop and coordinate projects related to the unique resources and infrastructure of the deep loess area of western Iowa.

Loess Hills Scenic Byway

Deep loess soils are found in corrugated hills in seven counties adjacent to the Missouri River. The Loess Hills Scenic Byway travels 220 miles through seven counties, two dozen communities, and beautiful and unique scenery. To improve travelers' understanding of the area and to increase tourism, the Golden Hills RC&D worked with the Western Iowa Tourism Region and the National Park Service to produce a Byway Guidebook and install 42 interpretive panels along the route.

Wabash Trace Nature Trail

This project provides technical and financial assistance for natural resource and economic development along a 63 mile multi-use trail. The Trail is used by 30,000 visitors annually.

Hungry Canyons Alliance

The Hungry Canyons Alliance develops regional solutions to stream channel erosion and degradation in the loess region of western Iowa. This initiative has united local leaders in the 22-county area to cooperatively plan, fund, and implement channel stabilization projects. Since 1991, \$3.8 million has been provided by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and \$4.77 million through state appropriations for use in streambed stabilization. Member counties receiving Hungry Canyons Funds have provided 20 percent of the cost of structures.

Loess Hills Alliance

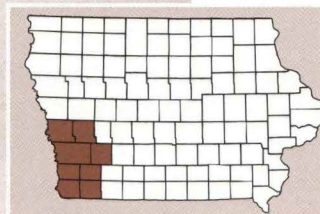
The 1999 Iowa Legislature formed the Loess Hills Alliance under the Loess Hills Development and Conservation Authority, and appropriated \$500,000 to the Alliance. Golden Hills RC&D has been the catalyst for the creation of the Alliance, which was established to be a regional voice for the seven county area, working to protect special natural and cultural resources while ensuring the economic viability of the region. Diverse groups are seeking to find the balance between preservation and development, without destroying the unique resources of the Loess Hills.

Community Services

The Golden Hills RC&D has sponsored a variety of projects in small rural communities in western Iowa. Some of the projects have been economic development for small businesses or community improvement projects. Examples include: restrooms and park improvement in Farragut; organizational assistance for a Historical Park in Lewis; start-up assistance for a business operated by physically challenged individuals; and cabins at a county park.

Golden Hills RC&D

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Interstate RC&D

Serves Muscatine and Scott Counties in Iowa, and Rock Island, Mercer, and Henry Counties in Illinois

Mission

To provide local leadership and foster partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies to assist in solving the needs and concerns of the region. (Interstate RC&D is the only multi-state RC&D in Iowa, serving counties in both Iowa and Illinois.)

Projects

Riverboat Development Authority

Interstate RC&D received a \$7,000 grant from the Rural Development Authority to purchase computer equipment and software. The new equipment will be used to assist the Wapsi River Corridor Project and Forest Resource Assessment in Scott and Muscatine Counties.

Andover Lake Project

Interstate RC&D received a \$4,500 Community Outreach Grant to help rehabilitate a community lake dam in Andover, Illinois. The dam and sidewalk on top of it have become a safety concern, especially to physically challenged and young people. This project will benefit community residents and visitors, as well as preserve a landmark that has been part of the community for decades.

Wapsi River Corridor Project

Interstate RC&D was awarded a \$50,000 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for a wetland and corridor protection project to protect a 100 year floodplain of the Wapsipinicon River in Scott, Clinton, and Cedar Counties. Interstate RC&D is partnering with other federal, state, and county units of government and local conservation groups to protect this valuable area.

Capacity Building Grant

Interstate RC&D and Blackhawk Hills RC&D offered a two-day grant writing course in Springfield, Illinois. The Illinois Association of RC&D Councils contributed \$4,100 to the training on developing effective and successful grant proposals.

Rural Development Through Forestry

Interstate RC&D received a \$4,000 grant from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to complete a Forest Resource Inventory and Assessment for Scott and Muscatine Counties.

Legislative Breakfasts

Interstate RC&D sponsored a breakfast for both Iowa and Illinois legislators in the region. The event was well attended by state and federal legislators from both states, and is scheduled again in Fiscal Year 2000.

Duck Creek Education Demonstration Project

This project will demonstrate Best Management Practices for streambank stabilization along Duck Creek. Interstate RC&D, county governments, and local action groups are using private and public funding for this project.

Tri-State Value-Added Agriculture Marketing Committee

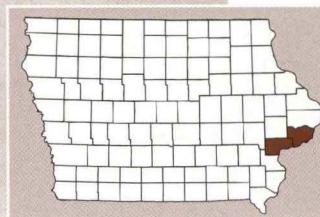
Interstate RC&D is participating in efforts with agriculture producers, economic development professionals, and agribusiness leaders to expand the economy of southeast Iowa, west-central Illinois and northeast Missouri. The group is investigating new opportunities to help revitalize rural economies in the region.

Atalissa Flood Control Project

Interstate RC&D is assisting the town of Atalissa and rural landowners to control runoff and flood prevention. Best Management Practices have been identified and possible funding opportunities are being investigated.

Interstate RC&D

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13020 E. 1st Ave. Airport Road
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Iowa Heartland RC&D

Serves Dallas, Polk, Jasper, Madison, Warren, and Marion Counties

Mission

Economic development opportunities and natural resources commitment.

Projects

Recycling of Urban Trees

Iowa Heartland RC&D and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources continue to work with tree services, woodworkers, government agencies, and others to recycle urban trees for high-end uses instead of composting or firewood. Recycled trees are now fine furniture, finished lumber, and pallets. The RC&D is working to expand this economic opportunity in the Des Moines metro area that also conserves valuable hardwood timber resources.

Greenhouse Utilization Project

Metro Waste Authority donated twelve large greenhouses to the RC&D for use in its educational, vocational, and economic development programs. Working with several other partners, the RC&D will use this opportunity to provide outreach to minority, physically challenged persons, and other disadvantaged groups and organizations. Project goals include providing needed plant materials for resource conservation efforts, adding diversity to diets of urban residents, teaching life skills and work ethics, and providing income opportunities for project participants.

Agricultural Showcase Development

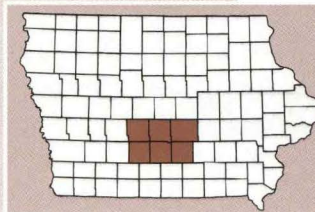
The Iowa Heartland RC&D is working on almost six hundred acres of land to develop and implement a detailed management plan showcasing best management practices and innovative efforts to improve water quality, limit erosion, and improve rural life. Project partners currently include Trees Forever, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Iowa State University, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and several others.

Grant Writers Training

Basic and professional level courses are slated for those who want to learn how to write grants. The purpose of the efforts is to leverage the ability of the RC&D to impact the area and Iowa in a rapid manner by creating skilled leaders in the economic development and natural resources conservation arenas.

Iowa Heartland RC&D

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Iowa Lakes RC&D

Serves Dickinson, Emmet, Clay, Palo Alto, and Buena Vista Counties

Mission

To provide the local leadership and framework required for developing and carrying out a comprehensive plan of action for the conservation and development of natural and human resources in northwest Iowa.

Projects

Nutrient/Pest Management Workshop Series

This course is designed for farmers who want to improve their bottom line and protect the environment. The series will benefit farmers who want to be more in control of their soil fertility and pest operations, take greater advantage of their manure as a fertilizer resource, raise their net profits, and improve water quality.

Adaptive Fishing

Most of the lakes in the RC&D area are partially surrounded by timber and wetlands. Adaptive Fishing is a new local business that provides access to these areas to physically challenged individuals. Iowa Lakes RC&D worked with Adaptive Fishing to receive a grant to start the business. Adaptive Fishing takes individuals or small groups out for a day of fishing on a specially outfitted pontoon, which is equipped with special devices to assist persons with disabilities. The owner plans to expand the business to provide hunting trips in the future.

Native Grass Project

The Native Grass Project focuses on creating new grass seed alternatives for landowners and protecting natural resources. The project will create a new local business that will provide a new source of native grass seed. The business will also provide assistance with planting and marketing.

Rural Fire Protection

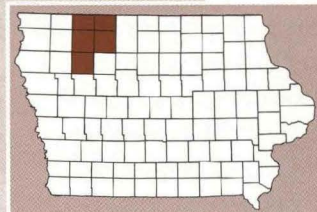
Several local rural fire departments are working together to address fire protection needs. Dry hydrants are being installed in several ponds and lakes throughout the five county Iowa Lakes RC&D Area. The hydrants are funded using grant funds approved by the Iowa Legislature, local contributions, and volunteer assistance.

Storm Lake Community Gardening

The Community Gardening Project, which will begin in the spring of 2000, will provide an economical way for anyone to garden. It will benefit the community of Storm Lake in many ways, including encouraging families to work together and interact with other families with similar interests. It will provide opportunities for limited resource residents to get involved in a project in the community, and will fill a need of culturally specific produce for local families and businesses. Finally, it may provide educational and business development opportunities for community members.

Iowa Lakes RC&D

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Iowa Valley RC&D

Serves Tama, Benton, Poweshiek, Iowa and Johnson Counties

Mission

To provide a framework through which local people can participate in planning and implementing social, economic, and physical development in the entire area.

Projects

Iowa River Valley Wetland, Woodland and Prairie Restoration Demonstration Project

Seven restoration projects in the Iowa Valley RC&D Area will promote the use of native plant materials as buffers along waterways, and demonstrate the appropriate use of plant materials in floodplain transition zones. The projects are being funded by the Environment Protection Agency (EPA). Demonstration sites include: Camp Cardinal Road Floodplain Wetland Restoration, Coralville; Iowa River Streamside Wet Prairie Restoration, University of Iowa; Amana Colonies Golf Course Mesic/Dry, Main Amana; Lily Lake Wet/Mesic Prairie Restoration, Main Amana; Lions Park Wetland Restoration, Marengo; Larry Beyer Farm Wetland/Mesic Prairie Restoration, Iowa County; and the Sac and Fox Settlement Floodplain Woodland Restoration, Tama County.

Iowa Valley Land Stewardship Program

The mission of the Iowa Valley Land Stewardship Program is to provide technical assistance to customers for all aspects of native prairie restoration. The program will provide educational outreach in the areas of design, implementation, and management for restoring and enhancing native prairies, wetlands, woodlands, and savannas. The Land Stewardship Program is designed to reach rural and urban customers interested in the environmental and economic value of sustainable native prairie communities, and the value of our existing native prairie remnants.

Birdie Birthplace, Forestry Inventory, and Oak Savanna Restoration Projects

The Birdie Birthplace, Forestry Inventory, and Oak Savanna Restoration Projects were funded by Rural Development through Forestry grants. Through the Birdie Birthplace Project, the Iowa Valley RC&D will cooperate with a local farmer to develop a business plan that utilizes locally grown pine, oak, and cottonwood trees to develop a value-added agricultural product. The Forestry Inventory Project was designed to improve the management and utilization of the forest resource in Tama, Benton, Iowa, and Johnson counties. The Oak Savanna Restoration Project will provide education, marketing, and management techniques for prairie, oak savannas, and woodlands.

Lincoln Highway

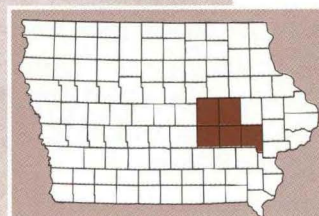
The Iowa Valley RC&D received funds from the Lincoln Community Enrichment Corporation to enhance the Lincoln Highway, specifically from Belle Plaine to Chelsea. Funds will be used to develop a brochure to raise travelers' awareness of Belle Plaine and the historical significance of the Lincoln Highway.

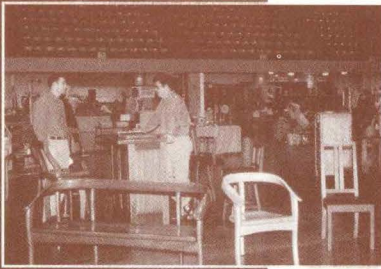
Iowa Valley Scenic Byway

The Iowa Valley RC&D and the Iowa Department of Transportation are working cooperatively to develop a corridor management plan for the Iowa Valley Scenic Byway. The Byway received designation as a scenic highway in November of 1998.

Iowa Valley RC&D

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Limestone Bluffs RC&D

Serves Delaware, Jones, Jackson, Cedar, and Clinton Counties

Mission

To serve as a catalyst by uniquely assisting people, communities, and businesses to enhance the value of existing and future resources in the five county region.

Goals

- Adequate public facilities and service that will attract and keep capital investment, and improve quality of life.
- Safe and adequate supplies of surface and groundwater.
- A diversified agricultural economy.
- A regional tourism and outdoor recreation industry.
- Value-added industry compatible with local resources.

Projects

Olin Family Resource Center

The Limestone Bluffs RC&D coordinated with the City of Olin to receive a Block Grant in 1998 to build a Family Resource Center. The project will include a daycare, Head Start Program, pre-school program, and space for a family resource center counselor.

Maquoketa River Alliance

This alliance consists of a core group of agencies and organizations, including Limestone Bluffs RC&D, working to improve water quality in the Maquoketa River System. Technical information has been collected from agencies which monitor water quality in the Maquoketa River and initial water quality protection efforts have begun in priority watersheds.

Organic Farming Demonstrations

The Limestone Bluffs RC&D has supported organic farming as a sustainable, economically-feasible, and environmentally-friendly method of agriculture. In 1999, demonstration sites were established in Dubuque and Jackson Counties to illustrate techniques for organic farm production. The Dubuque County site focuses on organic corn and soybean crops. The Jackson County site, funded by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, established vegetable and organic herb crops, including Echinacea, St. John's Wort, Anaheim Peppers, and Basil.

Grant Wood Recreational Trail

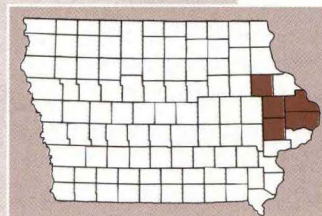
The Limestone Bluffs RC&D is providing assistance to the Grant Wood Trail Association to plan and develop a multi-purpose recreational trail along an abandoned railroad. The RC&D has assisted the group to receive non-profit status and develop grant applications. An Iowa Federal Recreational Trails Fund Grant was approved in 1999 to develop the first 5.5 miles of trail.

Iowa Hardwood Product Show

The Limestone Bluffs RC&D cooperated with the RC&D for Northeast Iowa to sponsor several Iowa Hardwood Product Shows. The shows highlight the fine craftsmanship of Iowa woodworkers and expose their products to the public. Funding was obtained through the Rural Development Through Forestry Program and the Iowa Wood Industry Association.

Limestone Bluffs RC&D

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M&M Divide RC&D

Serves Sac, Crawford, Carroll, Greene, Audubon, & Guthrie Counties

Mission

Promote the orderly development, improvement, conservation, and utilization of natural and human resources of the RC&D area, thereby increasing income and expanding employment, economic opportunity, and the health, education, and welfare of the people. Provide local leadership and opportunities to fully coordinate the most effective available combinations of facilities and techniques.

Projects

Forestry Services Program

The Forestry Services Program (FSP) is a fee-for-service program that assists landowners to improve, conserve, develop, and wisely use west central Iowa's forest resource. This program was originally funded with a Rural Development through Forestry grant in 1993 for the first 18 months, but has sustained itself since then. Planting has increased from approximately 25,000 seedlings in 1993 to more than 150,000 in 1999. About \$50,000 worth of equipment has also been accumulated through the program, which currently employs two full-time foresters and has employed one to five part-time technicians during planting seasons since 1993.

Lincoln Highway

Projects in the M&M Divide RC&D area along the scenic Lincoln Highway have included developing marketing and membership plans. Supporting items which have been created include a logo, brochures, map packs, collectible items, interpretive sites, street banners, scenic route signs, and displays of historic interpretive materials. The Lincoln Highway was the first coast-to-coast motor road for automobile travel in the United States. The historic highway spans the continent from New York City to San Francisco, passing through 12 states including Iowa.

Sauk & Coon River Bluebird Trails

This project was made possible with a grant from Rural Development Through Forestry. In hopes of developing a bluebird trail, the M&M Divide RC&D coordinated construction and placement of 600 bluebird nesting boxes along a 50 mile stretch of the Raccoon River Corridor and Sauk Rail Trail in Sac County. Signs were produced and placed to mark the trail. The boxes were monitored and some bluebirds were banded for future tracking. Butterfly gardens were established in Breda and at Swan Lake State Park, both of which are adjacent to the Sauk Rail Trail. A nature festival was held in Breda, showcasing local nature-related crafts and art.

Cottonwood Agriculture Buildings

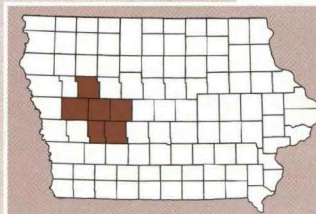
Cottonwood was used in the construction of pony walls in five hoop buildings in Crawford and Audubon Counties. These buildings have many uses, including livestock shelter, equipment storage, or hay storage. Cottonwood is very cost effective, readily accepts preservation treatment, is high quality, and helps keep money in local communities. Cottonwood is easily grown, harvested, transported, milled, and used in Iowa. This project was funded by Rural Development Through Forestry.

Audubon Community Development Block Grant

M&M Divide RC&D provided assistance to the City of Audubon to receive a Community Development Block Grant to improve services to elderly and physically challenged citizens. The RC&D helped with planning, writing, and administration of the grant. The kitchen in the Audubon Memorial Building was relocated in order to provide mobility and accessibility for elderly and physically challenged persons. About 65 meals are served daily to low and moderate income people in the Congregate Meals and Meals On Wheels programs sponsored by the Good Neighbor Center, Inc.

M&M Divide RC&D

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Pathfinders RC&D

Serves Mahaska, Keokuk, Wapello, Jefferson, Davis and Van Buren Counties

Mission

To conserve, develop, and utilize the natural and human resources of the six counties for the economic benefit and social well being of all citizens.

Goals

- Conservation and development of natural resources.
- Economic development.
- Community facilities and services.

Projects

Total Forestry Program and Environmental Tech-Action Program

Pathfinders RC&D currently administers two fee-for-service programs, the Total Forestry Program (TFP) and the Environmental Tech-Action Program (ET). The TFP provides assistance to landowners with forest stewardship plans, timber stand improvement, timber sales, appraisals, tree planting, maintenance, and other specialized services. The ET provides technical assistance for a variety of conservation measures including ponds, wetlands, fencing, urban conservation, wildlife management, vegetative seeding, erosion control, and conservation plans.

Tracht Conservation Farm

The 130-acre Tracht Conservation Farm located near Fairfield was donated to the Pathfinders RC&D in 1991 by Clarence and Ruth Tracht. The farm is managed to enhance soil, woodland, wildlife, and water resources, and serves as a demonstration site for various agronomic and environmental management practices. The property contains four ponds, two of which are being used to study raising fish as an alternative crop.

Rural Enterprise Revolving Loan

Pathfinders RC&D administers a \$100,000 revolving loan program which was capitalized by a \$58,000 USDA Rural Development grant and a \$42,000 contribution by Pathways Development, Inc. To date, loans have been made to a saw mill, custom wood shop and organic producer organization for items including tree planting equipment and a warm season grass drill.

Organization, Structure, and Administration

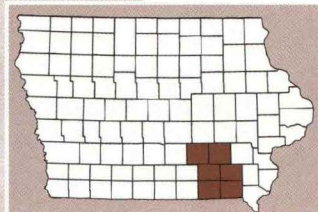
Pathfinders RC&D provides administrative services for Pathways Development, Inc., and CHIPS, Inc. Pathways Development, Inc. is a non-profit corporation providing financial assistance to small-scale natural resource enterprises. CHIPS, Inc. was formed as a spin off of the Cow Herd Improvement Program Service previously operated by Pathfinders RC&D. The program currently has 244 clients that manage more than 20,000 cows. CHIPS, Inc. has seven employees and operates in 52 Iowa counties.

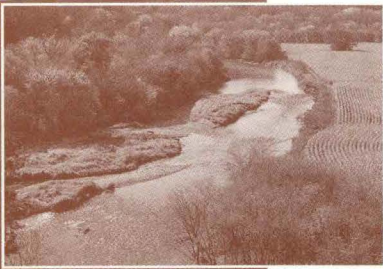
Infrastructure/Community Facilities/Industrial Development

Pathfinders RC&D continues to coordinate planning, technical, and financial assistance for a wide variety of sewer, water, and road improvements to benefit low and moderate income communities and stimulate economic development. Through the years, the RC&D has prepared numerous grants and financial packages resulting in tens of millions of dollars of improvements made in the RC&D area. The RC&D is continuing to explore creative options for funding and operating waste water treatment systems for small rural communities.

Pathfinders RC&D

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RC&D for NE Iowa

Serves Howard, Winneshiek, Allamakee, Fayette, Clayton and Buchanan Counties

Mission

To accelerate the development, conservation and wise use of human, financial, and natural resources in order to improve the standard of living and quality of life in Allamakee, Buchanan, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek Counties in northeast Iowa.

Goals

- The primary goal of the RC&D is to promote healthy lands and healthy communities through projects in economic development, water quality, natural resources, recreation and tourism, community improvement, recycling and other areas.

Projects

Spectrum Industries, Inc.

RC&D for Northeast Iowa, Inc. is working with Spectrum Industries Inc., a sheltered workshop for physically and mentally challenged people in Decorah, to produce furniture and crafts for marketing throughout the Midwest and beyond. Three grants totaling \$105,000 are implementing three phases of the project, including remodeling a building and equipment, woodwork training for instructors and employees, and working with local businesses to locate, produce, and deliver lumber.

SMI Company of Cresco

SMI Company, Inc. a pallet plant in Cresco, received two grants to expand its business by recycling old pallets to build re-conditioned pallets. The RC&D for NE Iowa assisted SMI Company to test and market nationally approved playground mulch. All of the waste generated from the pallet plant is now being ground and marketed to playground contractors throughout the Midwest. This project has created at least three full-time jobs and eliminated a waste problem that was previously costing SMI \$40,000.

Shiitake Mushroom Business at TASC, Inc.

RC&D for Northeast Iowa, Inc. assisted Training Advancement Skills in the Community (TASC, Inc.), a sheltered workshop, in Waukon, to develop a Shiitake mushroom growing facility. This project was completed with a grant from a private foundation, Rural Development Through Forestry funds, and local donations. The RC&D helped TASC write the grant, train clients and employees on growing Shiitake mushrooms, and develop a marketing strategy. Twelve to seventeen TASC clients work in the operation, producing about 50 pounds of mushrooms each week.

Upper Iowa River Alliance

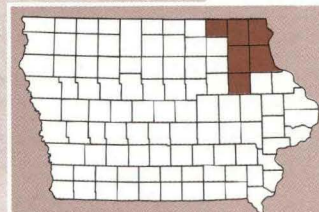
RC&D for Northeast Iowa, Inc. has partnered in a multi-county, multi-state, and multi-agency effort to receive a \$30,000 grant from River Network, a national conservation organization that helps protect and restore rivers and watersheds. The group has hired a Coordinator to: identify sub-area watersheds that contribute excessive sediment and nutrient runoff into the watershed; analyze and compile historical data; develop educational programs; identify other funding opportunities; and unite landowners, private organizations, and government agencies in a diverse alliance.

Weiland & Sons, Inc.

RC&D for Northeast Iowa worked with Weiland and Sons, Inc., of Winthrop, to receive a \$33,000 Rural Development Through Forestry grant to expand the wood flooring division of their plant. This expansion allowed Weiland to hire eight more people, resulting in higher production and expanded marketing opportunities. They have established markets that use Iowa resources in hardwood flooring businesses throughout the United States.

RC&D for Northeast Iowa

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Southern Iowa RC&D

Serves Adair, Adams, Union, Clarke, Taylor, Ringgold and Decatur Counties

Mission

To provide leadership and technical services to individuals, groups and communities to conserve, develop, and sustain natural, community, and human resources in southern Iowa.

Projects

Natural Resource Business Development

During the 1990s, the RC&D has assisted approximately 40 regional natural resource-based businesses to start up or expand. To increase available business capital, the RC&D acquired moneys from the USDA Rural Development and the Southern Iowa Agricultural Boosters to start a \$75,000 revolving loan program. The RC&D is currently working to increase the loan pool. The first start-up business the RC&D assisted was a tree planting and timber stand improvement company, which planted its one millionth tree this spring.

Economic Development Organizations

Southern Iowa RC&D provided technical assistance to help three counties develop separate economic development organizations, as well as a multi-county development organization and \$1 million revolving loan program for southwest Iowa. The loan program was funded by USDA Rural Development. These organizations have brought several million dollars of new and expanded businesses and industries to the area.

Ag Connect

During the mid-1990s, the Southern Iowa RC&D initiated the organization of Ag Connect in Lenox. Ag Connect is a non-profit corporation which partners retiring Iowa farmers and ranchers with couples who would like to enter production agriculture. Using innovative acquisition methods through a phased purchase of ag capital, farm or ranch operations are transitioned to under-capitalized couples.

Ag Connect has become a statewide agriculture organization with offices in Fremont, Nemaha, Kanawha, and Leno. Several Iowa farm and ranch operations successfully transition each year with help from the organization.

Community Projects

The Southern Iowa RC&D has provided assistance with organization, grantwriting, and fundraising to several large community projects, including: daycare facilities in Afton and Creston; regional juvenile home in Lamoni; walking/biking trails in Adair, Decatur and Union Counties; area arts center with YMCA in Creston; group homes in Corning and Creston; and flood protection projects throughout the area.

Dry Fire Hydrants

The Southern Iowa RC&D worked with the Iowa Legislature to develop a pilot project program through the Iowa Department of Economic Development to demonstrate the need for dry fire hydrants in rural Iowa. The pilot was successful, and the program was funded at \$100,000 in 1998 and 1999.

Mormon Trail Association

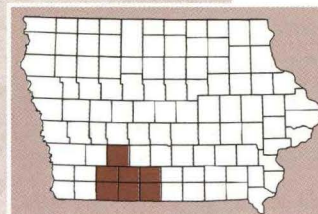
The Southern Iowa RC&D assisted in the development of the Mormon Trail Association, which has brought renewed interest in the 150-year old trace, and more than \$2 million in landmark improvements. The Association includes all southern Iowa counties on the trail.

Three Mile Lake

One of the largest natural resource projects organized by the Southern Iowa RC&D and local leaders is Three Mile Lake. The 870-acre lake serves as a regional water supply for seven counties and as a regional water-based recreation area. It also provides flood prevention for the Grand River. The project resulted in the expansion of the regional rural water system to all seven counties, totaling \$25 million in potable water improvements.

Southern Iowa RC&D

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RC&D Areas in Formation

Cedar Valley RC&D

Serves Mitchell, Floyd, Butler, Bremer, and Chickasaw Counties

Projects

Value-Added Conference

The Cedar Valley RC&D is currently planning a Value-Added Conference which will feature speakers who have found ways to diversify and add value to items produced locally. The purpose of the conference is for participants to share ideas and explore possibilities for adding value to their products.

Rural Fire Protection

Local fire departments are working together to address fire protection needs in rural areas within the Cedar Valley RC&D Area. Dry hydrants are being planned and installed in several local ponds and streams. The hydrants are being funded through local contributions and installed through volunteer assistance.

Wapsi River Corridor Project

The Wapsi River Corridor Project focuses on coordinating landowners, government agencies, and non-profit groups to develop a greenbelt along a 60-mile stretch of the Wapsi River. The Cedar Valley RC&D has developed a brochure for landowners that explains the programs available to help develop the green belt. The RC&D is also assisting current project sponsors in developing a long range plan for the entire project.

Cedar Valley RC&D

Cedar Valley RC&D
2504 East Bremer Ave.

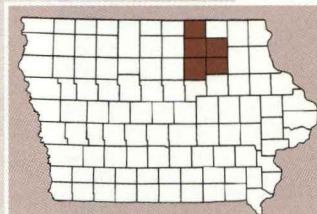
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Northwest Prairie RC&D

Serves Lyon, Osceola, Sioux and O'Brien Counties

Projects

Resource Management Assistance

Northwest Prairie RC&D is working with the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and private groups to provide additional technical assistance to landowners. Activities include assistance in planning and applying filter strips, wellhead protection sites, and riparian buffers. The project will result in improved water quality, increased wildlife habitat, decreased soil erosion, and increased employment. Funding is being provided by the member Soil and Water Conservation Districts through a grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Sioux and Lyon County Pheasants Forever Chapters, and the Osceola and O'Brien County Sportsman's Clubs.

Alternative Uses of CRP

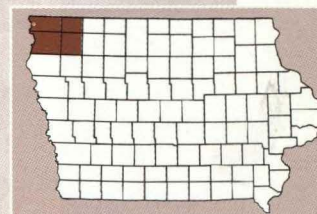
Landowners within the area are looking for other uses for land coming out of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) when contracts expire. The Northwest Prairie RC&D has provided landowners with technical assistance to produce native grass seed for resale and implement managed intensive grazing systems on land formerly enrolled in CRP. The project will maintain environmental improvements created by CRP, while diversifying sources of farm income.

Rural Fire Protection

Volunteer fire departments are working with the Northwest Prairie RC&D to improve fire protection within the area. Dry hydrants are being planned in several local ponds and rivers. Hydrants will be funded through contributions from participating fire departments and grants from the Iowa Department of Economic Development. They will be installed through assistance from cooperating counties and volunteers.

Northwest Prairie RC&D

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RC&D Areas in Formation

Prairie Rivers of Iowa RC&D

Serves Webster, Hamilton, Hardin, Boone, Story and Marshall Counties

Projects

Recycled-Content Products Program

Prairie Rivers RC&D is currently conducting a study to determine the feasibility of implementing a joint purchasing program of recycled-content materials. The goal of the program is to develop a regional effort to support recycling and promote the use of recycled-content materials. Buying supplies in bulk will boost the market for recyclables and offer financial savings to local governments, schools, and organizations.

Digital Environmental Atlas

A digital environmental atlas is being created to provide basic ecological data to help landusers assess, interpret, and make informed decisions about resources within the Prairie Rivers RC&D Area. Other products will include a series of paper maps, a website, and book. Initial funding was provided by a Rural Development Through Forestry grant and assistance from the Iowa State University (ISU) Geographic Information System Facility.

Iowa League of RC&D's Brochure and Logo

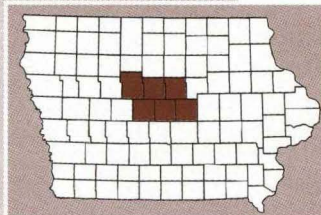
Prairie Rivers RC&D led an effort to design and produce a new logo and brochure for the Iowa League of RC&Ds. The project was completed with a Rural Development Through Forestry grant and other matching funds.

Critical Areas Study

A Landscape Inventory and Analysis class at ISU conducted a study of the six-county Prairie Rivers RC&D Area to identify regional and local characteristics. The final report included information ranging from geology and groundwater to tourism and transportation. Results show opportunities and limitations for RC&D programs which will be used for future planning.

Prairie Rivers RC&D

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