

Notes from Waterloo Creek Watershed Landowners Meeting

Bee/Duck Creek Watershed Committee, NRCS, and
Allamakee County and Root River Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Thurs., March 14, 2013

9:30 a.m. to noon at Spring Grove Fest Building

Water Quality and Conservation Practices

Notes by Jan Lee Buxengard, Bee/Duck Creek watershed committee recorder

About 35 attendees, including agencies:

Michelle Elliott, Project Coordinator – Allamakee SWCD

Peter Hartman, Area Soil Scientist – Minnesota NRCS

Gary Larson, District Conservationist, NRCS – Houston County

Ron Meiners, District Manager – Root River SWCD

LuAnn Rolling, District Conservationist – Allamakee NRCS

Suzy Meneguzzo – Program Coordinator with Hiawatha Valley RC&D

Sara Berges – Allamakee SWCD

Janice Messner – NRCS Office Staff – Caledonia (did water testing)

Bee/Duck Creek Watershed Committee: Chairperson Roger Stenhoff, Dan Griffin, Kenneth
Anderson, Glenn Kinneberg, Jan Lee Buxengard – Recorder

Dana Kjome – County Commissioner

Trout Unlimited covered the cost of the refreshments and rent of the building.

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Meeting started a bit later than scheduled due to the new snow and slippery roads.
Roger Stenhoff, Chairperson of the Bee/Duck Creek Watershed Committee, opened the
meeting. This committee started in 2008.

Michelle Elliott, Project Coordinator – Allamakee SWCD

-Waterloo Creek is the only creek on the impaired waters list, for E. coli bacteria

-Last year was the third and final year of biweekly sampling for the study

-Sampling is a protection-based approach

-Cold water score – measure health of the stream; 44 sites in the Driftless Region & 2 in
watershed

-Maintain or improve score

-Threats to watershed: E.Coli (found in water and sediment) and sediment

-Bacteria love sediment

-55% of cropland in row crops

-Between 2009 and 2011, corn crop more than doubled.

-Grants – no request for applications for implementation grant (due to budget), possibly in
future

Peter Hartman – Area Soil Scientist – MN NRCS

-New approach of how we deal with soils. If had healthy soil, wouldn't need those bandaids.

- In SE Minnesota for most part our soils are not healthy
- Can infiltrate water at faster rate
- Livestock – lot more livestock
- Underground organisms generate organic matter, which is so important to soil
- Water rush into the pores; raindrops at 20 MPH are like a bullet
- Tilling nutrient flush
- If soil healthy, would have less damage from flood events.
- Does the soil infiltrate water well?
- Photo of Fillmore County July 10, 2012: summer was dry; conventional tillage showed corn stressed out; leaves curled; baked like a brick. Water ran off.
- Crop roots aren't that efficient to capture water; organisms do that.
- Bare plowed soil has no residue or plants to protect it from rain.
- When you till the soil, you destroy the "glue" -- organic matter
- Soil food web – all things living in the soil
- Some local farmers are planting a cover crop after silage corn taken off. The cover crop shades soil and protects it from baking.
- Living roots in the soil are what feeds soil organisms and create organic matter.
- Living roots -- have sugars coming out of these roots.
- Transitioning from a conventional tillage to a no-till system is painful and even yield loss, but by 5th year would see benefits. After ten years reduced 40% of fertilizer needed.
- Answered question from audience: when spray alfalfa do you lose nutrients? No. Leave the roots in the soil.
- Dan Griffin asked: what cover crop after soybeans? To hold nitrogen, use a mixture of oats and tillage radish (will die off), suggested in early September
- Rye another cover crop for corn; stays green whole winter
- A good tool is to go to website cover crop decision
- Question: soil compaction from heavy machinery? Hartman: road vehicles like grain wagons and trucks driving on field ground make compaction quite deep – tires are different. Driving over same wheel tracks makes matters worse.

Gary Larson, District conservationist – NRCS – Houston County

Focus on four basic programs:

- Land Retirement Conservation Reserve
 - Land Easement Program
 - Rewards Program - stewardship
 - EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program): offers a wide range of conservation practices
- Accept applications any time of the year
 - On Farm Initiative – conserve energy; seasonal high tunnel initiative (like vegetables) pays \$2.83 per foot
 - Residue and Tillage Management pays \$23.75 to mulch till or no till
 - Well decommissioning pays \$6.41 per foot to pull well out, grout and seal
 - Karst sinkhole treatment: direct conduit to our water supply; pays \$4,028 to seal sink hole
 - Grassed waterway: pays \$2.04 per foot and also for seed

- Grade stabilization structure: \$6,197.64, which pays the lion's share of the dirt work
- We offer dam rehab, a cost share with EQIP.
- Cover crop - chemical kill pays \$53.12
- Stop in and see us
- Encourage to not chase the program, but what you want to do to take care of conservation plan. We'll look at program to meet that plan.
- Contour Buffer Strips: 15-30' wide, help intercept water runoff; pays \$471.73 per acre; office helps lay out strips
- All programs are voluntary; we can help you meet your conservation goals through these programs.

Ron Meiners, District Manager – Root River SWCD

- This is a unique meeting – partnership between Iowa and Minnesota
- Upland treatment has to be considered when drainage area management be in control by that landowner
- A partnership/cooperative approach
- Tillage and cover crops
- If have bare land above, is a problem
- Upland treatment for erosion on your property
- Principle of what we are doing with Iowa - Minnesota being a good neighbor to Iowa
- Landowner comes into our office we will find a way to help in any situation.
- Landowners' contribution can be very difficult
- Can help through cost-share programs
- Bee/Duck Creek only 10,000 acres in size; difficult to create enough money as a watershed district
- Another avenue: if get support of majority, could approach County Commissioners about an ad valorem tax, which puts a small portion of money in escrow that could be used to offset landowners cost to get that practice on the ground.
- Flowage easements need landowner's agreement
- Clean Water Grant – not successful for Houston County yet, but are very close. Next application going to be in August; will be targeting specific projects. I think we will be successful and get projects on the ground. I think it's coming together (bigger projects).
- Are incentive payments for push up ponds, which still do a really nice job
- Flood control Bee/Duck Creek – flood was tough on things
- Talked about little things that can be done
- Identified places in watershed that are target;
- We've made good strides with Winnebago Watershed.
- 2007 & 2008 and 2010 Roger collected information from these rainfall events
- Cost nearly three fourths of a million dollars total; Roger will get me the figures he collected
- Spent on 10,000 acre watershed on Minnesota side.
- \$63,000 townships
- \$178,000 from SWCD sources
- \$191,000 FEMA

-In conclusion Ron stated: This group effort has been interesting to me. If you have a problem, talk to us. Help your neighbor, yourself and the watershed.

LuAnn Rolling, District Conservationist – Allamakee NRCS

- Last summer (third week of August) hired airplane to aerial-seed cover crops
- Beautiful cover crop
- Got tillage affect from radishes
- Allamakee has 3,000 acres signed up for 2013
- Recognize benefit of the cover crop; broadcast seeding
- Reason we're here – flood damage
- IA is totally dependent on what MN is doing
- Prescribed grazing conservation practices
- Streambank stabilization conservation practices
- Staff writing conservation addendums; Sara Berges working with them

Landowner testimonials:

Mike Burrichter of Dorchester: (Michelle Elliott did the presentation for Mike who wasn't able to attend the meeting) She said he approached us; installed water and sediment control structure

Dan Griffin – Wilmington Township: put in six grade stabilization structures over the last ten years; really work well; they fill up and slowly release; have stand pipes with holes in releases water; big benefits control what happens down below

One upland from Carlyn Kraabel's; all built with EQIP

Cost \$10 Grand; 75% of cost paid for;

Donna Myhre thanked Dan; "We didn't get the water they usually expect."

Dean Ellingson of Spring Grove Township:

Put in pond 7 years ago; a big waterway and buffers

Would like to get some more ponds in

3 years ago Glenn Kinneberg and Randy Wohlert did a project above Ellingson's