



**Allamakee County
Soil & Water
Conservation District**

635 9TH St NW

Waukon, IA 52172

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Annual Newsletter

2017

Allamakee SWCD Awards Banquet

The Allamakee SWCD held its Awards Banquet on Wednesday, January 18 at Farmers and Merchants Savings Bank. Thank you to all producers, staff, and commissioners who attended. We congratulate the award winners and thank them for the commitment to conservation in Allamakee County. The awards were sponsored by Waukon State Bank, Farmers and Merchants Savings Bank, Kerndt Brothers Bank, and New Albin Savings Bank. The meal was provided by donations to the district's Conservation Club. See the back page for more information on how to donate to the district.

The Award winners were:

Forestry Award: Sandra Koehring



Pictured L to R: Dave Asche (District Forester), Sandra Koehring, Jack Knight

Cover Crop Award: Scott Ness



Pictured L to R: Mike O'Hare, Scott Ness, Karen Ness, Dylan Ness

Beginning Farmer Award: Ryan Collins



Pictured L to R: Josh Dee, Dalen Collins, Ryan Collins, Sam Collins, Rayna Collins

Lifetime Conservation Achievement Award: Leo and Kathy Conway



Pictured L to R: Don Elsbernd, Leo Conway, Kathy Conway, Erik Helgerson (Waukon State Bank, award sponsor)

- Commissioners**
 Jack Knight—Chairman
 Don Elsbernd—Vice-chairman
 Josh Dee—Treasurer
 Mike McCormick
 Mike O'Hare—Co-treasurer
- Office Staff**
 LuAnn Rolling—District Conservationist
 Megan Waechter—Soil Conservationist
 Steve Scholtes—Soil Conservation Technician
 Barb Hanson—Soil Conservation Technician
 Tom Duvel—Soil Conservation Aid
 Sara Berges—Project Coordinator
 Brianne Wild—Conservation Assistant
 Brady Kruger—Part-time Federal CSP Tech.
 Jared Winkie—Part-time Federal CRP Tech.

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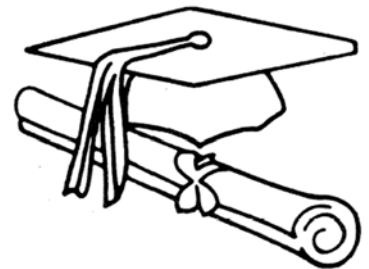
EQIP SIGN-UP DEADLINE

March 17, 2017

- Cover crops: payment rate for single-species, winter-hardy cover crop is \$41.39/acre, need to be able to mark out on a map where you want to do the cover crop. Seeding deadline Oct. 21.
- Higher cost-share rate for specific practices including access control, pasture planting, prescribed grazing, TSI, and Streambank protection (rip-rap)
- If interested, start the application process as soon as you can because designs will need to be completed for some practices.
- You will need **DUNS** and **SAMS** numbers if you are an entity in order to have an application processed. This can take up to 2 weeks to receive if you don't already have them. Contact the office for information.

SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE!

The Allamakee SWCD plans to award scholarships to 2017 high school graduates. Applicants must reside in Allamakee County and plan to study in the field of agriculture or natural resources in college. **Applications are due on February 28, 2017** for consideration. Winners will be awarded in the spring at the schools' awards nights. For more information, visit the district's website at Allamakeeswcd.org.



The Scholarship program is funded by donations to the district conservation club. Last year, the district awarded three scholarships in the amount of \$500 each. We have presented scholarships totaling \$16,500 over the last ten years!

Thank you to our Conservation Donors! FY2016

Supporters \$5-25\$

Gary & Karen Galema
Richard & Debbie
Moose
Dan & Sue Cahoon
Mark & Deb Palmer
Oswald Goettler
Dennis & Chris Soride
Brad & Linda Winkie
Earl Goodman
Steve & Donna Story
Connie Halvorson

Soil Savers \$26-\$50

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Bill & Karen Regan
Walter & Lorraine
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Dave & Jean Cahoon
Rollie Henkes
Jason Howe
Earl & Vivian Iverson
Ardie Kuhse
Clay & Adele Monserud
Dennis Nebendahl
David Schulte
Miles & Susan Schulte

Stewards \$51-UP

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Vernalene Oelberg
John & Jenny Opfer
Dean & Mary Teslow
Allan Bacon Family
Trust
John Dresser
David & Suzanne Hahn
Dr. Steve & Stefanie
Perkins
Bernard Welsh

Scholarship

Brad & Linda Winkie
Dick Newcomer
Greg & Marlene Palmer
Barb & Phil Salstrom
Leo & Kathy Conway
Charles Cota
Eric & Stephanie Palmer
Ron & Therese Snitker
Tony & Liz Willie
Bob & Diane Schulte
Dan & Traci Byrnes
Marilyn Clark
Betty Decker
Randy & Lois Dickson
Velma Huebner
Todd & Jan Soukup
Gary & Connie Tilleros
Warner Enterprises
Herb & Ann Dehli

Commissioner Changes

Lynn Stock and Clinton Welsh decided to end their roles on the Allamakee SWCD Board of commissioners at the end of 2016. They have a combined 20 years on the board and have been dedicated participants through those years. Lynn has been Chairman for the last 9 years and has been on the board for 16 years. Clinton has been treasurer for the board for four years. The district appreciates everything they have done for the office and community by supporting conservation.

New to the board this year are Josh Dee and Mike O'Hare. Josh grew up on a dairy farm right outside of Waukon. He graduated from Waukon High School in 2009 and Iowa State University in 2014 with a degree in agronomy. He currently lives in Lansing and works as an agronomy advisor at Innovative Ag Services in Waukon. Mike O'Hare has been married to his wife Virginia for 49 years and they have 4 children, 11 grandchildren, and 1 great grandchild. They currently reside in French Creek Township where they have lived on their farm since they bought it in 1979. Mike has a beef cattle herd and he backgrounds his calves to about 700-800 lbs. He has worked closely with the Allamakee SWCD since he bought his farm by starting with contour strips for his corn bean crop rotation. We would like to welcome Josh and Mike to the board!



Allamakee SWCD to Host Photo Contest for Youth and Adults



Allamakee County residents can participate in a photo contest through the Allamakee SWCD. This year we will have a youth contest (K-12) and an adult contest. The theme for this year's contest is "**Conservation in Action**". Find your favorite view of a conservation practice in Allamakee County and take a photo. Some ideas include strip cropping, buffer strips, no-till farming, cover crops, streambank stabilization, terraces, CRP, windbreaks, and rotational grazing. The contest deadline for **youth will be Friday, April 28** and the deadline for **adults will be Friday, June 23**.

There will be prizes for contest winners and the winning photos will be displayed at the Allamakee SWCD fair booth and the Robey Memorial Library in Waukon. To submit a photo, either drop it off at the SWCD/NRCS office at 635 9th St NW between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday or email it to sara.berges@ia.nacdn.net or Brianne.wild@ia.nacdn.net. Each picture should include your name, grade for K-12 entries, information about when the photo was taken, where it was taken, and what practice you are showcasing. Adults should also include a phone number or email address to contact the winners.

Are you ready to try something different with your rotation or land use?

By Sara Berges, Project Coordinator

Have the current commodity prices and input costs provoked you to consider changing some practices or trying different crops? Do you have areas that consistently have low yields and negative profits? The Allamakee SWCD has been working the past year to help promote several practices that may help reduce input costs, diversify a farm, or allow you to take advantage of different markets. These practices include converting (marginal) cropland to pasture, adding a small grain to a corn-soybean rotation, and using cover crops on acres that have manure application.

We will be receiving special EQIP funding through a USDA Regional Conservation Partnership Project (RCPP) to provide financial assistance for these practices. Funds will be available for implementation in FY2018. We are not sure what the rates will be yet, but we anticipate that they will be higher than standard EQIP rates to help alleviate risk associated with land use changes. We plan to follow regular EQIP deadlines, so the first signup cutoff will likely be fall 2017. If you have interest in any of these practices, please call or stop by the office to get the planning process started.

Many land uses and tillage practices are highly erosive on our steep and shallow soils. Any tillage on many of the soils here will exceed the “tolerable” soil loss level or “T” value for those soils. Even no-till corn and soybean farming exceeds the “T” value in many cases. This is one reason why many rotations traditionally had hay in them. Of course, having livestock provides an outlet for the hay. There are a lot of steep, shallow soils around here that do not produce high enough yields to generate profit. Many of these acres were likely



Rotational Grazing Photo: NRCS

pastured at one time and now might be the time to return them to pasture. Obviously this won't work on every field and not everyone wants to produce livestock, but cost-share rates are currently high and can help to offset some of those initial costs. If this interests you, please stop in soon so that we can begin the planning process. A pasture plan will need to be developed before we can process an application. We are planning on holding a **pasture walk this summer** to showcase a site that has been converted and talk about cost-share and the planning process.

Another option for land use change is adding a small grain to your rotation. We held a workshop last August to provide some basic information on growing small grains as a crop, not just as a nurse crop. If there is enough interest in learning more about this, we will try to set up another workshop late summer. Input costs with small grains are low and there are many benefits. Small grains can reduce pesticide and herbicide needs for the following crop. Red clover added to a small grain can help provide nitrogen for the next crop as well as act as a cover crop after the small grain is harvested. There is a lot of information available regarding variety selection, planting rates, fertility, and fungicide use.



Rye/oat cover crop in spring. Manure knifed into growing cover crop in the fall. ISU

Another practice that may interest you is using a cover crop on fields that have manure application. Cover crops help capture some of the nutrients in the manure and can be planted before or after manure application, as long as they get planted before the October 21st EQIP deadline for winter-hardy species. Cover crops can also be seeded with the manure application through slurry seeding, where the cover crop seed is mixed directly into the manure tank. If you're looking for a place to start planting cover crops (with or without manure), we suggest silage acres. Cover crops make sense on silage ground to provide cover and you can get better fall growth when you plant the cover crop earlier. We are planning a

caravan **field day in early April** to view sites that have utilized manure and cover crops together through different application and seeding methods. Keep an eye on the newspaper, the allamakeeswcd.org website,



and your mail for more information.

Information about all of these practices is available on the Allamakeeswcd.org website or by stopping in the Allamakee SWCD/NRCS office. You can also contact Project Coordinator, Sara Berges, at sara.berges@ia.nacdnet.net or call 563-568-2246 ext. 3. Make sure to keep an eye on the Waukon Standard and the district's website for information on upcoming field days and events.

Sign up NOW for Cost-Share From the State of Iowa at the Allamakee SWCD

There are many cost-share options available through funds from the State of Iowa on agricultural ground as well as woodlands. Funds from the Iowa Department of Agriculture's Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality (IDALS-DSCWQ) can be used towards the installation of structural/designed practices like terraces, grade stabilization structures (ponds), and grassed waterways. Funds are also available for contour buffer strips and cover crops as long as they meet our requirements for seeding. Forestry practices can be funded through the state's REAP funds for windbreaks, timber stand improvement (TSI), and tree planting. If you are interested in doing TSI or tree planting, you'll need to first contact one of our DNR District Foresters to have them write a forest management plan. The District Foresters for Allamakee County are Dave Asche (cell: 563-880-0507) and Jeff Seago (cell: 563-880-0449). They can also be reached at the Elkader Service Center by calling 563-245-1891.

Cost-share rates are as follows:

Terraces: 50%. Funds will not be approved switching tile outlet terraces to a new type (e.g. grassback to narrowbase) but may be approved for conversion of grassed waterway outlet terraces to tile outlet terraces.

Waterways: 50%. Tile may be approved if it is necessary to keep the waterway dry.

Grade Stabilization Structures (ponds): 50%

Cover Crops: \$25/acre for first-time cover crop users
\$15/acre for people who have used cover crops before

Contour Buffers: One-time incentive payment of \$300/acre and the buffers must be maintained for five years. Buffers will be installed according to NRCS standards. If a producer encroaches on the contracted acres with row crops during the 5 years, they will immediately destroy the crop and reseed the buffer at their cost or repay the entire amount issued for installing the buffer system.

Windbreak: 75% not to exceed \$1500

Timber Stand Improvement: 75% not to exceed \$120/ac

Tree Planting: 75% not to exceed \$450

For more information about the district's cost-share policies, please visit the Allamakeeswcd.org website.

District funds are disbursed based on order of application. The sooner you fill out an application, the more likely your project will receive funding. However, available funds are based on district need (number of applications and total requested amount) and the amount of funds appropriated by the legislature.

Waukon Service Center Staff



Pictured left to right
Front: Steve Scholtes, Megan Waechter, Sara Berges, LuAnn Rolling
Back: Jared Winkie, Tom Duvel, Barb Hanson, and Brianne Wild

Not pictured: Brady Kruger

2017 Board of Commissioners

Pictured left to right: Mike McCormick, Don Elsbernd, Josh Dee, Mike O'Hare, and Jack Knight



Soil Health

The Natural Resources Conservation Service, NRCS, is launching an effort to educate producers on the concept of soil health. Soil health is defined as “the continued capacity of soil to function within natural or managed ecosystem boundaries, to sustain plant and animal productivity, maintain or enhance water and air quality and promote plant and animal health.” The foundation of soil health is soil biodiversity. Biodiversity includes plant roots, earthworms, bacteria, fungi and all other living components in the soil in addition to soil particles of sand, silt and clay.

In order to be considered a “healthy” soil, it must be stable and thus not detach easily and erode. The most essential substance that binds soil particles together is glomalin. It is a glue-like substance secreted by a group of soil microorganisms. The microorganisms are found around roots and root hairs and form a “glue” with soil particles.

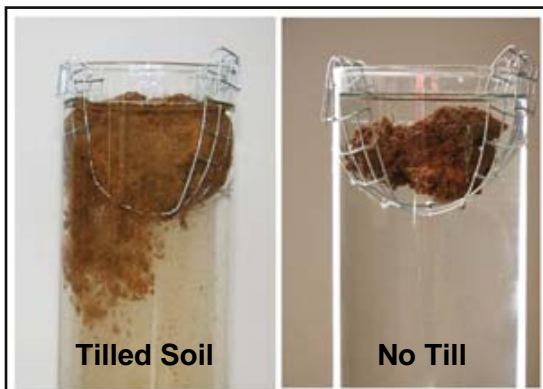
Soil dynamic properties are affected by management and are constantly changing either with or without human activities. The properties include soil organic matter, microbial community, bulk density, infiltration rate, soil water, and nutrient holding capacity. These dynamic properties of soils are used as indicators to evaluate soil health.

Soil organic matter is the single most important soil health factor because it affects the soil physical, chemical and biological properties. Soil organic matter constitutes 1 to 6 percent of the total soil mass. Soil organic matter is the source of the soil nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorus and sulfur which are only released into the soil during decomposition. The organic matter level also plays a role in the water holding capacity of the soil.

There are four basic principles that are key in improving the health of your soil.

1. Keep the soil covered as much as possible.
2. Disturb the soil as little as possible.
3. Keep plants growing throughout the year to feed the soil.
4. Diversify as much as possible using crop rotation and cover crops.

There are seven core practices that form the basis of a Soil Health Management System. These include: conservation crop rotation (growing diverse crops), cover crops, no till, mulch tillage, mulching, nutrient management, and pest management. Not all practices are applicable to all crops, but employing any of these practices will potentially help to optimize inputs, protect against extreme weather conditions, and increase production.



The slake test demonstrates aggregate stability. Chunks of soil are put in water to compare their structural integrity. The tilled soil has lower aggregate stability due to destruction of pore space.

Tillage is a major factor in destroying soil organic matter by accelerating its oxidation. Tillage operations increase soil aeration which can increase microbial activity and decompose organic matter. Plant materials such as cover crop, crop residues, and manure inputs can help boost some nutrient pools such as soil organic matter.

A healthy soil environment is the foundation for food production. Human activities, including some farming practices, disrupt vital soil processes such as the building and storage of soil organic carbon, building stable soil aggregates and nutrient cycling.

Implementation of conservation systems can lead to the improvement of many soil health indicators.

Healthy soils have the ability to maintain their porous medium to allow the passage of air and water and to withstand the erosive

forces of water because of the presence of stable aggregates. Soil plays a key role in modifying the risks and effects of climate variability. It acts as earth's major carbon sink by sequestering atmospheric carbon dioxide and contributes to the mitigation of greenhouse gasses.

The NRCS/Allamakee SWCD staff is available to conduct soil health tests on individual farms. We can look at soil compaction, porosity, biological activity, earthworm counts and overall tilth. If you are interested in looking at the soil health on your farm and beginning to implement practices to improve soil health, please call the office and we can set up an appointment to meet with you on your farm.



**Allamakee Soil & Water
Conservation District**
635 9th St. NW
Waukon, IA 52172
(563)568-2246 ext. 3

Non Profit Org.

U.S. Postage

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Permit No. 115

Waukon, Iowa

Or Current Resident

JOIN THE CONSERVATION CLUB—YOUR SUPPORT IS NEEDED

Landowners, producers, and area businesses:

We hope that the Allamakee County Soil and Water Conservation District can count on your support again in fiscal year 2016-2017. We thank you for your generosity in the past. For 74 years, the District has been helping you and your neighbors conserve our most valuable resources, our soil and water. We invite you to join in the local conservation effort by becoming a Conservation Club member.

The District has no taxing authority and the commissioners volunteer their services, which become more demanding every year. Funds for promoting soil and water conservation in our county must be raised locally through donations.

Donated dollars are used for a variety of projects including the district newsletter, scholarships, materials for the local conservation education day, CDI and NACD dues, a booth at the county fair, and awards for conservation leaders.

We believe promoting soil and water conservation is everyone's job and we invite you to help. Please consider donating.

Categories are as follows:

SUPPORTERS \$5-25

SOIL SAVERS \$26-50

STEWARDS \$51-UP

SCHOLARSHIP— ANY AMOUNT

PLEASE ATTACH THIS SLIP TO YOUR DONATION.

THANK YOU!

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CHECK HERE IF YOU WANT YOUR DONATION TO GO TO SCHOLARSHIPS

RETURN TO:

Allamakee SWCD
635 9th Street NW
Waukon, IA 52172