

Waterloo Creek Watershed



Brown trout naturally reproduce in Waterloo Creek. (Photo by Bill Kalishek)

Allamakee County Soil and Water Conservation District

Landowner Meeting Held in March

On March 14, a watershed-wide landowner meeting was held in Spring Grove. There were about 35 people in attendance. The last watershed landowner meeting in Iowa was held in 2009.

The meeting was jointly held by the Bee/Duck Creek Watershed Committee, Allamakee County and Root River (Houston County) Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), and IA/MN NRCS. Representatives from each organization, as well as landowners, provided information during the meeting.

Trout Unlimited provided refreshments and covered the facility rental cost.

The following topics were covered: water quality, soil health, cost-share incentives, cover crops, best management practices, and landowner testimonials.

The meeting allowed landowners an opportunity to share with each other about practices they have installed on their property, and the results they have seen.

Several landowners also brought drinking

water samples, which were tested for nitrates by the Root River SWCD.

Although the watershed is impaired for E. coli (fecal) bacteria, the overall condition of the watershed is good based on other measurement indicators. This condition needs to be protected, which can easily be done through the installation of best management practices. Several of these practices were discussed, as well cost-share incentives available to assist landowners.

April 2013

Points of Interest:

- Landowner meeting covered wide variety of topics
- Best Management Practices being installed throughout watershed
- Resources available to assist landowners with conservation practices
- Cover crops provide many conservation benefits



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The NRCS provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.



Landowners listen to a water quality update about the watershed, one of several topics covered at the meeting. (Photo by Jan Lee Buxengard)

Best Management Practice (BMP) Update

Both Minnesota and Iowa have been busy with the planning and implementation of BMPs throughout the watershed.

Practices are typically installed in conjunction with federal Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) dollars. EQIP provides cost-share assistance to landowners wanting to install BMPs.

Throughout the watershed, the following practices have been recently planned and/or implemented: 7000 ft terraces, 7 ponds, 7 water/sediment control basins, 1 flood control structure, 5 ac grassed waterway, and 20 ac timber stand improvement.

Cost-share incentives are available for a wide variety of practices.



A water/sediment control structure traps sediment and reduces gully erosion. (Photo by Jacob Groth)

If you are interested in installing a BMP on your property or would like more information, please contact your local NRCS office.

Minnesota: 507-724-5261

Iowa: 563-568-2246

Visit us online at Allamakeeswcd.org



Cover Crops

(Written by Jacob Groth, Iowa NRCS Soil Conservationist)

Adding cover crops to a farming operation can be a great way to reduce soil erosion, improve soil and water quality, scavenge residual nitrogen, and provide forage for livestock. Several different species, such as oats, cereal rye, rye grass, and radishes, may be used as a cover crop and are typically planted in the fall after the corn and soybean harvest. Depending on the species used, they will grow until they are winter-killed or terminated by herbicide or tillage in the spring. To achieve the full benefits of cover crops they must be planted early enough in the fall to ensure they have sufficient time to grow prior to a hard freeze. Unfortunately, in this region, if a producer waits until after corn or soybean harvest there may only be 2-3 weeks available for the cover crop to grow before a hard freeze and the cover crop is killed or stops growing until spring. Interest in cover crops has rapidly grown over the last few years as area producers began looking for alternative cover crops after harvest. The Allamakee SWCD (SWCD) recognized this need and initiated a program to aerial seed cover crops in August 2012.

The SWCD partnered with Hall Robert's Son Inc., a seed company in Postville, IA and Klinkenborg Aerial Spraying of Parkersburg, IA to seed cover crops into standing corn and soybeans with a plane in late August. Because growing cover crops need sufficient light to grow, the seeding was timed to coincide with soybean leaf drop and corn plant maturation. Producers that partici-



The aerial seeding of oats and tillage radishes in a cornfield was done in August 2012, and this photo was taken on October 27, 2012. (Photos by Jacob Groth)

pated in this project had different goals and objectives for their cover crops and 4 different mixes were offered to meet their needs: winter rye, oats/tillage radish, rye grass/tillage radish, and winter rye/red clover/tillage radish.

The service was offered in Allamakee, Clayton, and Winnebago Counties with a total of 1514 acres seeded into standing corn and soybeans in late August. Hall Robert's Son Inc. mixed the seed and delivered it to the Waukon, Decorah, and Monona airports where the seed was loaded onto the plane. Depending on the mix used, 35-100 acres could be seeded with each load and about 60 acres could be seeded per hour. The plane was equipped with a GPS navigation system, flew 40-50 feet off the ground, and only flew when wind speeds were less than 10 miles per hour to ensure an accurate delivery of the seed.

The results from this program are encouraging, and there is

sufficient interest that the program is being offered again in 2013. To date, a total of 1500 acres have been signed up for aerial seeding in Allamakee County alone. The final deadline for Iowa landowners to sign up is anticipated for mid-July.

Landowners can use the Cover Crop Decision Tool, offered through the Midwest Cover Crops Council, at <http://www.mccc.msu.edu/selectorINTRO.html> to help select cover crops.

If you are interested in adding cover crops to your operation, whether through aerial seeding or conventional methods, please contact your local NRCS office to discuss what cover crop options will meet your objectives and update your conservation plan. Cost share assistance may be available through several State and Federal programs.

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