



**Allamakee County  
Soil & Water  
Conservation District**

**770 11<sup>th</sup> Ave. SW**

**Waukon, IA 52172**

**Phone: 563-568-2246 ext. 3**

**Nominations for Conservation Awards**

Is there someone in our community that you think is doing an outstanding job and you would like to nominate them for an award? See the awards below to see if there is someone you would like to nominate.

**IOWA FARM ENVIRONMENTAL LEADER:** This award recognizes those that have taken steps in their farming operations that improve or protect the environment and natural resources of our state while also serving as local leaders to encourage other farmers to follow in their footsteps by building success upon success. These farmers have adopted best management practices and incorporated environmental stewardship throughout their farming operations. Nominations are due to office by April 19th

**CONSERVATION FARMER OF THE YEAR:** This prestigious annual honor is given to an Iowa Farmer who has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to environmental stewardship and leadership. One nominee is selected by each District office in the state and they are considered for regional awards. Nine regional award winners will compete for the title of "Iowa Conservation Farmer of the Year." Nominations are due to our office by May 10th.

**CONSERVATION WOMAN OF THE YEAR:** This award is selected annually by the Iowa NRCS Federal Women's Program Committee. The award recognizes a woman who has made significant contributions to the conservation and improvement of Iowa's natural resources through achievements on her own land, her career, or voluntary efforts. Nominations are due to our office by May 24th

**TREES FOREVER WINDBREAK:** This award is given to a producer that has an outstanding windbreak in our county. Nominations are due to the office by May 24th.

**WOODLAND OWNER OF THE YEAR:** This award is given to a producer that has been doing several woodland improvements (Forest Stand Improvements, tree planting, fencing, pest control, wildlife habitat, etc.) Nominations are due to the office by May 24th.

**SWCD Board of Commissioners**

Don Elsbernd-Chairman

Tom Gavin- Vice-Chairman

Mike O'Hare-Treasurer

Brady Kruger-Co-Treasurer

Scott Dougherty

**Office Staff**

Benjamin Cottrell-District Conservationist

Eric Novey-Soil Conservationist

Brianne Wild-Conservation Assistant

Barb Hanson- Project Coordinator

**Would you like to be a Soil & Water Conservation  
District Commissioner**

The board is a group of 5 elected officials who are passionate about conservation. If you are someone who is dedicated to conservation and would like to assist in helping our community to get more conservation on the ground and assist in helping determine the use of district funds we would love for you to join our board. If interested please contact the office or stop in during regular business hours to find out how!

## **New Pheasants Forever Biologist Available to Landowners**

Cole Anderson is Northeast Iowa's Pheasants Forever (PF) and Quail Forever's (QF) Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist. His position partners with USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and is primarily stationed in their West Union office. Cole will cover Fayette, Clayton, Allamakee, and Winneshiek Counties. The Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist position assists landowners interested in improving wildlife habitat through Partnerships with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Iowa Department of Ag. and Land Stewardship (IDALS), local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), and local PF chapters. These partnerships allow biologists and landowners plenty of opportunities for habitat improvement.

Cole grew up in Northwest Iowa, where he spent most of his childhood outside hunting, fishing, and enjoying the outdoors. His passion for the outdoors grew, and he attended South Dakota State University. Cole graduated with his degree

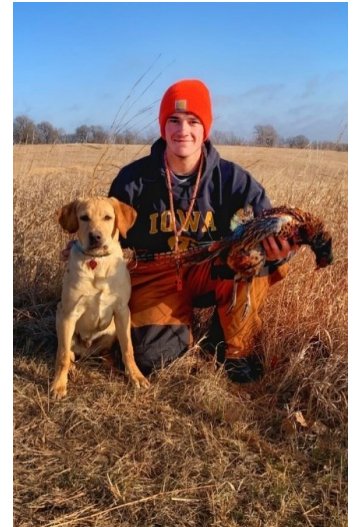


in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences in 2020. During his schooling, Cole held various summer technician positions throughout South Dakota, helping to study waterfowl, their nesting preferences/success, and nest site predators. After graduation, Cole worked as a wildlife technician in Custer, South Dakota, working with bobcats and tracking bobcat kitten survival.

After working in Custer, Cole moved to Kingsville, Texas, where he pursued his master's degree with Texas A&M – Kingsville and Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute. Cole's research focused on white-tailed deer genetics and the heritability of different antler traits. While in Texas, Cole worked with many different species of wildlife and some phenomenal whitetails.

Cole and his wife Erin are excited to be in the area and look forward to helping landowners reach their habitat goals. Feel free to reach out to him if you have any questions or if you would like to schedule a time for him to come

out to your land and make a personalized plan for how you could increase your wildlife habitat. This service is free of charge, thanks to NRCS, IDALS, SWCDs, DNR, and local PF chapters.



# Allamakee SWCD Receives Grant for Planting Kernza

*Special to Connections*

*by Allamakee SWCD*

The Allamakee SWCD was awarded a 3-year grant from IDALS to implement a perennial grain into a crop rotation. The goal of this is to improve conservation, soil health, and water quality through diversified crop rotations. Through this project, a new crop will be explored to show how it can work with crop rotations and provide data to encourage producers, both local and throughout the Midwest, to consider experimenting with it.

Allamakee SWCD Chair Don Elsbernd says the IDALS grant helps the district sponsor a test plot for kernza, to gauge the local potential of this perennial crop. “It’s always important to be looking into new opportunities and the potential for new crops to put in a rotation, or new uses,” says Elsbernd, who also serves as CDI Vice-President. “There are many things you can do with kernza. It can be made into flour, could be used for feed – quite a few different things.”

Kernza is an intermediate wheatgrass and the only perennial grain crop currently marketed in the United States. It was selected because it has many desirable traits and was already being used in the United States as pasture and rangeland grass. Intermediate wheatgrass is related to other wheatgrass species like crested wheatgrass that are commonly used as forage/rangeland grasses and is a distant relative of wheat and other annual grains.

Kernza is currently an uncommon crop, and the hope is that this test plot may encourage producers to consider adding this crop to their rotations, or at least provide them with information to help them better understand what a



perennial grain could do for them. Elsbernd says coordinating results with those few producers also experimenting with kernza will help producers understand potential soil health, conservation, and economic benefits of adding a perennial grain crop to a rotation. “If we can coordinate with them, we can see what we can come up with. One trial is one thing, but if you have multiple people doing it, we’ll have all different perspectives.” the 1.5-acre test plot area was donated to the Allamakee SWCD by the Waukon Economic Development Corporation. The Allamakee SWCD planted a rye cover crop in the fall of 2022 after a soybean crop to provide cover on the area until the Kernza would be able to be seeded the following fall. The rye was donated from Innovative Ag Services (IAS). Kernza’s optimum seeding dates for this region is August 1st -September 30th. The Kernza needs to be seeded early enough for it to have 3 leaflets before a hard frost. Field days are planned over the next few years to evaluate how the seeding is doing and determine if the harvest will be for grain or for forage.





## **Cost-Share Programs Available through the Allamakee SWCD**

There are several cost-share practices available to you through the Allamakee SWCD and NRCS programs. The district receives state cost-share dollars July 1st of every year and, depending on need, again in January. Cost-share is distributed on a first come, first served basis. The practices below are eligible to receive cost-share through our state-funded program. Many additional practices are eligible for cost-share through Federal EQIP or CSP funding. If you would like more information, please stop in the office and talk with us during our regular business hours.

### **Structural Practices**

**Waterways– 50%-**

**Terraces– 50%**

**Grade Stabilization (pond)- 50%**

**Water & sediment control basin  
(50%)**

### **Vegetative Practices**

**Cover Crops- \$15/ac. previous  
user \$25/ac first time user**

**Buffer Strips-\$300/ac. 1 time  
payment must leave for 5**

### **Forestry Practices**

**(must have forestry plan)**

**Tree Planting– 75%, minimum  
of 3 ac.**

**Timber Stand Improvement–  
75%, minimum of 5 ac.**

**Windbreak– 75% up to \$1600**

### **Loans**

**Low-Interest Loan– 3% loan for up to 15 years max \$500,000**

**No Interest Loan– Financial Statement must be provided to IFA (Iowa Finance Authority) before  
approval can be done**

## **Best Timing for Prescribed Burning!**

Spring is here and we are seeing several people out and about conducting burns across the county in their road ditches, hay fields, CRP, and timber. Burns can be very beneficial if completed timely and conducted routinely every 3-5 years. One exception is woody vegetation. It may be necessary to burn two or more consecutive years to control undesirable sprouting woody vegetation. Having a purpose or a goal in mind before you burn can dictate when your best burn window can be.

Just because your neighbor is burning doesn't always mean it is a good time to go out and burn for yourself as their purpose may be different than yours. Whether you are burning to remove last year's litter, promote native species or introduced species, improve wildlife habitat, or control trees timing can vary. Burning too early may cause some unwanted or adverse effects.

### **Some general guidelines for conducting burns.**

- Reduce deciduous trees/shrubs (April 1–May 15)**
- Increase warm season grasses April 1–May 15)**
- Reduce cedar trees (Sept. 1–May 20)**
- Reduce cool season grass (April 20-May 20)**
- Reduce noxious perennial weeds (before flowering)**
- Improve wildlife habitat (Only burn 1/3 of site)**
- Increase forbs/diversity (Sept 1-February 1)**



Whatever your goals are, planning and preparation are key to a successful controlled burn. Proper firebreaks, equipment, and site conditions can make a huge difference on the outcome of a safe and successful burn. We offer assistance for burn plans, cost share for prescribed burns, and have a list of prescribed burning vendors if you are looking for someone to burn for you.

## **Allamakee County SWCD Commissioners Award Scholarships**

The Allamakee Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners made their selection for this year's Allamakee Scholarship Fund Scholarship at their March 2024 Meeting.

The board awarded four scholarships in the amount of \$1,000.00 each to Kole McCormick , son of Keith and Amy McCormick of Harpers Ferry, Olivia Marti, daughter of Richard Marti of Waukon, Mallory Mohn, daughter of Clint & Noelle Mohn of Lansing, and Andrew Kolsrud, son of Tara Kolsrud of Lansing.

To be eligible for the scholarship the applicants must be living in Allamakee County, and enrolling in an agricultural or natural resource based major. The SWCD was able to present this scholarship due to the generous donations that we receive from members of the Conservation Club.



**Kole McCormick**



**Olivia Marti**



**Andrew Kolsrud**



**Mallory Mohn**

## **Prairies Plantings are the Bees knees!**

*But what do prairies really do?*

Prairies provide excellent habitat for wildlife. Grassland birds in Iowa depend on prairies all year long, including nesting cover, escape from predators and bugs! Prairie wildflowers attract bugs that are not only important pollinators but also important bird food! Lose the bugs, lose the birds! To put it bluntly, dozens of species of grassland birds would not live in Iowa without prairies!

Prairies improve water quality! Prairie grasses have deep roots that can reach 10 plus feet into our soils. Not only did prairie build our rich soils, it also can anchor them. Prairies deep roots keep our soils from washing away into our rivers. Prairie roots can absorb up to 7 inches of rain during one rainfall event! Wow! These roots also absorb chemicals including nitrogen and keep them out of drinking water.

Prairies are special, but something else will grow in its place. Wild Parsnip has deep roots that shoot below and dominate cool season grasses. Once parsnip roots get down below cool season grasses, they have all the space they need to flourish! Native grasses say not so fast! Prairie grasses deep roots compete with and usually beat wild parsnip and keep it out! Want to slow or stop parsnip? Plant prairie!

Prairies provide pollinators! Pollinators are vitally critical for food production. Without pollinators we would not have apples, plums, tomatoes, pumpkins and so many more local foods! Allamakee County is home to the endangered Rusty Patch Bumblebee and 8 other species of bumblebees! Diverse prairies provide critical nectar sources for all bumble bees and many butterflies! Take a trip into a diverse prairie in July and it absolutely buzzes with life!!



Prairies provide income. Iowa annually gets thousands of pheasant hunters and bird watchers that visit and traverse our prairies in outdoor pursuits. These user groups contribute mightily to our local economies.

Prairies are beautiful. If you're will considering planting a prairie, the work usually begins a year before seed gets planted! If prairie sounds like something you want to add to your yard or farm, reach out to your local USDA NRCS office for advice and possible assistance or call Brian Sauer Iowa DNR @ (563) 880-3363.

(Copyright Mark Miller 2011)

[Brian.sauer@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Brian.sauer@dnr.iowa.gov) with any questions.



# Thank you for your generous donation!

## Supporters \$5- \$25

Dave & Rhonda Bahr

Tim Dohrmann

Goettler Family Farms LLC

Dennis Nebendahl

Greg Palmer

Dennis & Chris Soride

## Soil Savers \$26- \$50

Ed & Amy Bieber

Marilyn Clark

Verna Johannningmeier

Diane Kraus

Doug Kubitz

Jane Lamborn

Beverly Platten

William & Karen Regan

Eugene & Barb Sanderman

Stan & Mary Straate

## Stewards \$51- UP

Beverly Bacon

George Beardmore Inc.

Dennis & Judy Byrnes

Dave Cahoon

Beverly Haas

David & Suzanne Hahn

Clayton & Adele Monserud

Lesla Moose

David & Gail Prestemon

Doug Sass

Kathy Schacht

Robert & Diane Schulte

Bob & Dave Stilwell

Steve & Chris Weymiller

## Scholarships

Dan & Traci Byrnes

Charles Cota

Velma Huebner

Laurie Knoke

Marlys Leiran

Curtis Lundy

Maria Maloney

Clayton & Adele Monserud

Ronald & Susan Schlitter

Ronald & Therese Snitker

Todd Soukup

Gary Tilleros

Warner Enterprises

Brad & Linda Winkie

Rose Zoll

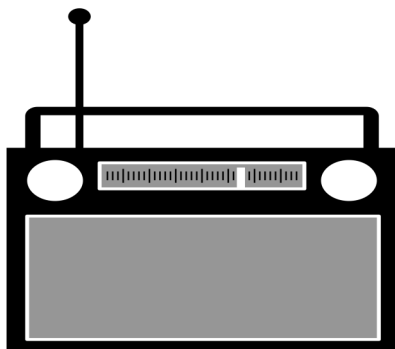
---

## To keep up to date on all of our programs and events happening

-Tune in to KNEI every Wednesday morning at 9:00 a.m.

-Visit our website at [www.allamakeeswcd.org](http://www.allamakeeswcd.org)

-Find us on facebook search for Allamakee Soil & Water Conservation District





**Allamakee County  
Soil & Water  
Conservation District**

Non-Profit Org.

US Postage

PAID

Permit No. 115

**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 2024. We thank you for your generosity in the past. **For 81 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, 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.

PLEASE ATTACH THIS SLIP TO YOUR DONATION.

THANK YOU! RETURN TO:

Allamakee SWCD

770 11th Ave. SW

Waukon, IA 52172

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Categories are as follows:

**SUPPORTERS \$5-25**

**SOIL SAVERS \$26-50**

**STEWARDS \$51-UP**

**SCHOLARSHIP— ANY AMOUNT**

RETURN TO:

Allamakee SWCD

770 11th Ave. SW

Waukon, IA 52172