



Allamakee Soil & Water Conservation District

USDA

2013

Allamakee County Soil and Water Commissioners Terms Expire

Randy Kruger and Arlyn “Butch” Fossum have been dedicated commissioners for the Soil and Water Conservation District for a combined total of 28 years. The district is grateful for their help on the board and their contributions to conservation. Thank you for all of your hard work and dedication to our office.



Commissioners

- Lynn Stock
- Dan Byrnes
- Jack Knight
- Clinton Welsh
- Michael McCormick

Office Staff

- LuAnn Rolling – DC
- Jacob Groth – SC
- Steve Scholtes – SCT
- Barb Hanson – SCT
- Tom Duvel – SCA
- Sara Berges – WC
- Michelle Elliott – WC
- Brianne Bjerke – Secretary
- Brady Kruger – DE
- Jim Ranum – DE

Newly Elected Allamakee Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners

The new commissioners were elected into position in the November 2012 election. They started their four-year term on January 2, 2013. We would like to welcome both Clinton and Michael to the board.



Clinton Welsh is an organic farmer in Center township. He graduated from Kee High in Lansing in 2004 and from NICC Calmar in 2006. He and his wife Kelly have a son Oden. Clinton has been farming full time with his father and brother for the last 8 years. They raise organic broilers, hay, beef cattle, corn, and soybeans.

Michael McCormick farms in Taylor Township. He farms with his family and they raise custom hogs, crops and beef cattle. He and his wife Hollee have two children, Reese and Tade.



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New Apprentice Program Available

The Allamakee County Soil and Water Conservation District have a new apprentice program available for students interested in work experience in natural resources. Students with either a non-agricultural or agricultural background will be considered. This program allows the apprentice to participate in a variety of hands-on learning experiences. These could include: engineering surveying, staking terraces and ponds, water quality activities, environmental education, and natural resource camps.

How to Apply?

Please talk to your school guidance counselor or the Allamakee USDA-NRCS office to fill out an application and return to your local USDA-NRCS office. Applications may be submitted anytime for consideration. Apprenticeships are variable in length of service, an apprentice may serve more than 1 year. The requirements for this program are that you must be at least 14 years of age.

How will you benefit from this apprenticeship?

This will provide experience and information to help make informed career choices. It will also fulfill community service requirements for scholarships, colleges, and technical schools. Provides work experience for job application and resumes. It will also provide a reference to natural resources in making lifetime decisions.



SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE!

The Allamakee SWCD plans to award scholarships to 2013 high school graduates. Applicants must reside in Allamakee County, and plan to study in the field of agriculture or natural resources in college. Applications were due on January 28, 2013 for consideration. Winners will be awarded in the spring at their awards banquet.

The Scholarship program is funded by donations to the district conservation club. Last year, the district awarded four scholarships in the amount of \$500 each. We have presented scholarships totaling \$11,000 over the last six years!

Indian Springs Watershed Project

The Allamakee SWCD is wrapping up the 3-year Indian Springs Pond Watershed Project, funded by the Watershed Improvement Review Board (WIRB). The watershed project was extended through the spring of 2013 to allow one final terrace project to be completed since the drought in 2012 made construction difficult. The approximately 1,300 acre watershed is unique because it has both urban and rural components.

During the three years of the project, a total of 1,900 feet of terraces, 17.6 acres of improved grazing management, 3 sediment basins, 16 rain barrels, and 2 rain gardens have been installed. An additional 2,350 feet of terraces were laid out in 2012, to be installed in 2013. Also, 9 educational signs were installed in the Waukon City Park including 5 large signs, 3 small signs, and one kiosk. Nine acres of prairie were planted in the new South Unit of the Waukon City Park along the new walking trail.

The trail, bridges, fencing around the sinkholes in the park, and woodland management were covered under a Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Grant that the city received in the fall of 2010, which ended in December of 2012. It is likely that any additional trails or further trail improvements, such as asphaltting the rock sections, will not be completed until the city receives more grant funds or if citizens make donations to the city. The city is still seeking donated funds for benches to go along the trail.

Throughout this project, the Waukon 6th Grade Conservation Club has assisted in many ways. They have been taking water samples from the pond since the fall of 2010. They also helped to plant the rain garden near the Thompson Shelter in the spring of 2011. In addition, they assisted with some woodland management last fall.

We would like to thank all people who participated in this project in any way, especially the landowners and the City of Waukon.

Thank You Conservation Club Members

For your 2011-2012 Donations

Supporters \$5-\$25

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Waterloo Creek Watershed Project

The Waterloo Creek Watershed straddles the boundary of Iowa and Minnesota. The watershed's streams are popular trout fisheries in both states. The stream has been designated as a high-quality water resource and an Outstanding Iowa Water (OIW) by the Iowa DNR. These waters are outstanding state resources with exceptional recreational or ecological significance. Their current level of water quality must be maintained and protected, and not allowed to decline. This system's habitat, hydro-logic stability, and ecological integrity are the reasons it was named an OIW.

The mission of this project is to create and implement a comprehensive watershed plan that will help prevent further degradation of the water quality of Waterloo Creek and its tributaries, and support and maintain long-term conservation practices in the watershed.

2012 was the third and final year of water sampling in the watershed, funded through a grant from the Iowa DNR and US EPA. The final product of this research will be a watershed protection plan, the first such plan written in either state.

The Waterloo Creek Watershed Project was recently approved for funding through the Watershed Improvement Review Board (WIRB) for 2013-2014. While the funds provided through this grant are only available to implement conservation practices in Iowa, other funding sources are being sought to apply practices in Minnesota. Landowners will be expected to sign up for federal Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds to combine with grant funds in order to provide up to 75% cost-share for grade stabilization structures and terraces.

Iowa Landowners: Please contact the Allamakee SWCD if you are interested in applying for a practice. We can conduct a site assessment of your property and calculate a cost estimate for you.

Minnesota Landowners: Please contact the (Houston County) NRCS Service Center at 507-724-5261 if you are interested in implementing a practice. Minnesota's available EQIP funds may allow similar, if not greater, cost-share incentives than Iowa.

New Conservation Lease Project

The Allamakee County Soil and Water Conservation District has been approved for a new Conservation Lease Project through a grant from the McKnight Foundation. The project will run through August of 2014. The District's Conservation Lease Specialist, Sara Berges, will work with interested landowners, and hopefully operators as well, to create lease addendums that specify conservation practices to be implemented on specific fields. We will not be writing farm leases, just addendums (or attachments) to farm leases. The addendums can include such topics as specific crop rotations, required conservation practices, nutrient management, stipulations for non-compliance, shared costs for conservation practice installation, and residue management, as well as many other topics. At a minimum, the conservation addendum could be a map showing the location of expected practices, but they can also be full plans with maps.

There is a need for this project because current high crop prices have led many farmers to tear up land previously controlled by conservation practices in order to have more land to farm. In addition, uncertainty in future Farm Bills may remove our ability (NRCS/SWCD) to enforce conservation compliance. The goal of this project would be to have the landowner and renter work with the conservation lease specialist to determine their priorities for the farm and work together to come to an agreement about how to address those priorities. Sara will also conduct annual compliance oversight for those who request it to ensure that the plan is being followed and will provide reports to both the landowner and renter.

This project is a joint effort with the Drake Agricultural Law Center (The Center). Ed Cox, from The Center, came to Waukon in November to assist with public informational meetings. We will likely have more informational meetings in early March. Having Ed work with us on this project will ensure that the lease addendums meet legal requirements and will build on the past work that they have done, which can be viewed on their website sustainablefarmlease.org.

Please watch the Waukon Standard and the Allamakee SWCD website (allamakeeswcd.org) for information regarding the project and resulting lease addendums. If you would like more information on this project or may be interested, please stop by the office, call us at 563-568-2246 ext. 3, or email Sara at Sara.Berges@ia.nacdnet.net.

Aerial Seeding Cover Crops

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 tillage 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 part of Iowa, 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 kills the cover crop or stops growth 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 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 plants maturation. Four different mixes were offered to meet the producers' different goals and objectives. The mixes used and the costs per acre were as follows:

2 bu winter rye/ac @ \$27.90/ac for seed

2 bu oats and 5# tillage radish/ac @ \$33.25/ac for seed

15 lbs ryegrass and 2# tillage radish/ac @ \$21.00/ac for seed

45 lbs winter rye and 6 lbs red clover and 3 lbs tillage radish/ac @ \$31.50/ac for seed

The cost for the aerial application was \$15/ac with a 10 acre minimum.

The service was offered in Allamakee, Clayton and Winneshiek Counties with a total of 1,514 acres seeded into standing corn and soybeans from August 22 to August 27. 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.

Seed counts were completed in standing corn to alleviate concerns of the seed being caught in the corn canopy. Counts were completed on the 2 bu. of winter rye mix and the oats and tillage radish mix. There was an average of 22.3 winter rye seeds per square foot and 20 oat seeds and 2.9 radish seeds per square foot. Some seed was observed on the corn leaves, but most of it had fallen to the ground within a few days. The distribution of seed appeared to be very uniform across the fields that were checked.

Approximately 10 days after the seeding was completed, a rainfall of 1 to 4 inches over 2 days occurred over the entire area. Germination was observed within 2 days of the rain fall event. Ten days after the rainfall, the oats and winter rye were 4-6 inches tall and the radishes were at the second leaf stage. Seedling counts were completed on September 15 in standing corn on the winter rye and oat radish mixes. The winter rye mix averaged 11 seedlings per square foot. The oats and tillage radish mix averaged 15.9 oat seedlings and 1.7 radish seedlings per square foot. The number of seedlings is less than the seed counts because not all of the seeds had germinated or had been moved or consumed by seed predators. Stand counts will be completed on all the mixes after harvest to evaluate the seeding rates and advise changes for next year.

The initial results from this program are encouraging and, if there is sufficient interest, we will offer the program next year. If you are interested in adding cover crops to your operation, whether through aerial seeding or conventional methods, please contact us 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.

The Allamakee SWCD would like to thank the Waukon, Decorah and Monona airports, Hall Robert's Son Inc., and Klinkenborg Aerial Spraying for their cooperation in this effort.

Aerial Cover Crop Seeding for 2013

The Allamakee SWCD would like to know if there is any interest from producers to aerial seed their cover crops this year. Last year a total of 1,514 acres of cover crop were aerial seeded between Allamakee, Clayton, and Winneshiek counties. If you are interested this year in doing the aerial seeding of cover crops and would like some more information or would like to discuss cost-share options available please contact our office.



Sodbust Regulations

The Allamakee Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners have revised their current policy regarding sodbusts. According to the Board, “In response to an increase in the number of requests to turn very steep and often shallow pasture and timber land into row crop production, we have determined we will not approve the plan if it meets one of several criteria.”

- 1 – If the ground has a class 6 or higher. According to the *Soil Survey of Allamakee County* soils in these classes are generally not suited to the mechanized production of commonly grown field crops without special management, but they are suitable for plants that provide a permanent cover such as grasses and trees.
- 2 – If the ground is predominantly an E slope or greater. According to the *Soil Survey of Allamakee County* soils with an E slope designation are generally 14 to 18 percent.
- 3- If the ground has a corn suitability rating, CSR, of 30 or less. According to the *Soil Survey of Allamakee County*, the CSR provides a relative ranking of all soils mapped in the State of Iowa based on their potential to be utilized for the intensive production of row crops. The CSR’s in Allamakee County range from 95 to 5.

According to board chairman, Lynn Stock, “People are simply not using good judgment regarding ground they want to bring into production. Many landowners are looking for every acre they can rent due to high rentals. They aren’t paying any attention to how steep or shallow the ground is.”

According to the *National Food Security Act Manual, Fifth Edition*, in order to receive farm program benefits a producer agrees to the following on any farms in which such person has an interest: Not plant or produce an agricultural commodity on highly erodible fields unless actively applying an approved conservation plan or maintaining a fully applied conservation system.

Stock adds that there are appeal rights regarding their new policy. These can be discussed with the SWCD staff.

Sodbust and Threatened and Endangered Species

As commodity prices have increased over the last few years some farmers are changing their farming operations to maximize the amount of corn and soybeans they produce. These changes include bringing land that was in pasture or trees into row crop production, a practice known as sodbusting. Most of these areas are considered Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and they must be farmed according to an approved conservation plan to be eligible for USDA program benefits. People planning to sodbust land must fill out a 1026 form with FSA. NRCS will then make a determination if the land is considered HEL and will work with the producer to develop a conservation plan. Sodbusted areas have stricter soil loss rules and larger penalties for non-compliance with these rules.

It is critical that producers do this before they remove trees, till grass lands, or fill in a sinkhole because changes in NRCS policy will prevent NRCS from providing conservation plans or other technical assistance on areas that may affect federally listed threatened or endangered species. If an area has the potential to affect the habitats of threatened or endangered species, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will need to approve the project before NRCS can provide conservation planning assistance. In our county, sinkholes and native prairies are the 2 types of habitats that have the highest potential of being classified as threatened or endangered species habitats. Destroying threatened or endangered species habitats is a Federal crime punishable by fines or jail time.

Producers that plan to add drainage tile to their fields or remove trees must also fill out a 1026 with FSA to get a wetland determination before starting the work. Wetlands may not have trees removed, be filled, or be drained by either surface or subsurface methods. Draining wetlands is a violation of USDA program rules and any producer associated with the land will be ineligible for USDA program benefits until the wetland is restored or mitigated. If a wetland is drained, the producer is ineligible for benefits starting at the time it was converted, not the year the violation is discovered. If a wetland was converted in 2010, the producer is responsible for repaying all benefits they received from 2010 until the wetland is restored.

If a producer is making changes to their crop rotations and tillage operations, they need to revise their conservation plans with NRCS to ensure they remain compliant with HEL rules. All producers receiving USDA program benefits are subject to random spot checks every year. If you are found in violation, you will be required to pay a penalty or will be ineligible to receive USDA program benefits.

PROTECT THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

Threatened and endangered species are protected by both Iowa and Federal laws. The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) cannot assist with projects that may harm a protected species or critical habitat.

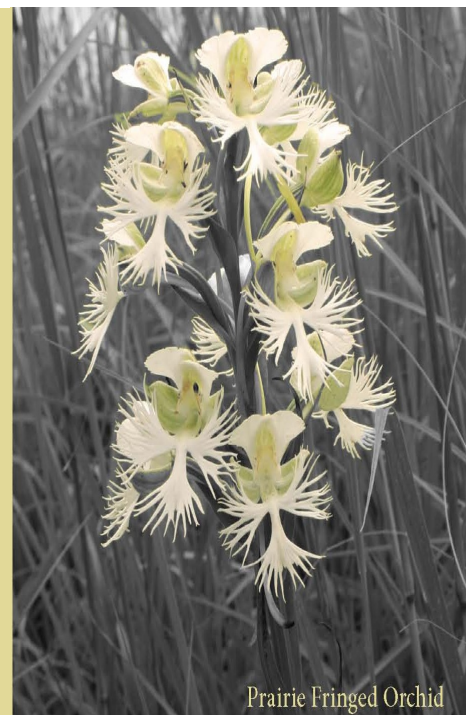
Bald eagles, although not a threatened or endangered species, are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Tree canopies should be inspected for bald eagle nests prior to clearing. If a nest is present, consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prior to clearing.

To find out if your project may affect state protected species, contact the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to request an Environmental Review. To find out if your project may affect federally protected species, contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Rock Island Illinois Field Office
1511 47th Avenue, Moline, Illinois 61265
Phone: (309) 757-5800 FAX: 309-757-5807
Email: RockIsland@fws.gov
www.fws.gov/midwest/RockIsland/te/index.html



Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Environmental Review for Natural Resources
Conservation and Recreation Division
502 East 9th Street, Des Moines, IA 50319-0034
Phone: (515) 281-8967
www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/ThreatenedEndangered.aspx



Prairie Fringed Orchid



**Allamakee Soil & Water
Conservation District
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(563)568-2246 ext. 3**

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JOIN THE CONSERVATION CLUB—YOUR SUPPORT IS NEEDED

Landowners and area businesses:

We hope that the Allamakee County Soil and Water Conservation District can count on your support again in fiscal year 2012-2013. We thank you for your generosity in the past. For 70 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 6th grade conservation education day, CDI and NACD dues, cash prizes for poster contests and awards for conservation leaders.

We believe promoting soil and water conservation is everyone’s job and we invite you to help. Please consider a donation.

Categories are as follows:

- SUPPORTERS \$5-25**
- SAVERS \$26-50**
- STEWARDS \$51-UP**

PLEASE ATTACH THIS SLIP TO YOUR DONATION

THANK YOU!

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

RETURN TO:
Allamakee SWCD
635 9th Street NW
Waukon, IA 52172

CHECK HERE IF YOU WANT YOUR DONATION TO GO TO THE SCHOLARSHIP FUND