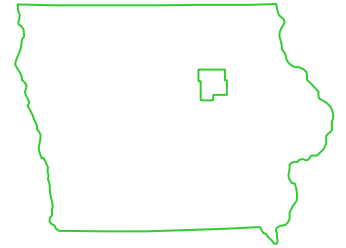


Visit our website at:  
[www.grundyiaswcd.com](http://www.grundyiaswcd.com)



Newsletter provided by the Grundy County Soil Water Conservation District

## Got a Gully? Fix It, Don't Disc It.

### Conservation Compliance Change Requires Treating Ephemeral Gully Erosion on Highly Erodible Land

If you discover areas of ephemeral gully erosion this fall, visit your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office before discing any areas of highly erodible fields. Iowa farmers who participate in USDA programs will now be required to provide additional control of ephemeral gully erosion on their highly erodible fields after recent changes in conservation compliance requirements, State Conservationist Kurt Simon said.

This change is in response to a recent Office of Inspector General (OIG) report comparing compliance review procedures in several states. OIG recommended modifications to NRCS' compliance review procedures to provide more consistency across the nation. Thus, Iowa NRCS has made compliance review procedure adjustments that might impact farmers.

Since the passage of the 1985 Farm Bill, farmers have been required to control erosion on fields that are classified as highly erodible. Each spring, NRCS conducts compliance reviews on a random selection of highly erodible fields to determine if erosion has been adequately controlled. A non-compliance ruling can affect benefits that farmers receive from USDA agencies in a number of ways—from Conservation Reserve program payments to Price Loss Coverage.

"Affected farmers will need to consider installing additional conservation practices to better control ephemeral gully erosion," Simon said.

Typical practices used to control ephemeral gullies include no-till farming, cover crops, grassed waterways, and terraces. Simon said NRCS employees will work closely with farmers to help them meet erosion-control requirements.

"We are available to help farmers identify ephemeral erosion in their fields or where it may occur in the future, and assist them with applying the conservation practices that best fit their farming operations," he said.

If erosion control issues are identified during compliance reviews, producers may be given time to make adjustments and install needed conservation practices. He said Iowa NRCS offers financial assistance to help farmers install or implement conservation practices across the state. Landowners can sign up for voluntary Farm Bill conservation programs on a continual basis.

When in doubt, visit your local NRCS office before performing any tillage that is not part of your conservation plan on any land classified as HEL. For more information, visit NRCS at your local USDA Service Center.

## Fall 2017

### Inside this issue:

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**The staff in Grundy Center urges you to call first before you come in. There may be times when no one is in the office due to field work or meetings.**

## TREE SALE TIME

Our tree sale last year was a great success. Thanks to all who purchased from us. We are again offering for sale this year potted conifers, bare-root shrubs, and trees. Order your trees now for Spring. The order form is inserted in this newsletter. We have trees for cost-share projects such as windbreaks, and riparian buffers. If you need some trees to fill in your existing windbreak, take a look at our listing.

You may mail your order to the Grundy SWCD at 805 W. 4th St., Grundy Center 50638 or stop by the USDA office before November 27, 2017. Orders placed after this date may not be guaranteed due to limited supply and there are no survival guarantees on stock at these prices.

The proceeds provide funds for district programs and educational materials.



**Grundy Soil & Water Conservation District  
Financial Report  
July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017**

<b>District Funds</b>	
Beginning Balance	<b>\$18,308.86</b>
** Income- DSCWQ 1M Funds	\$ 2,000.00
Conservation Club Donations	\$ 4,285.00
Tree Sales	\$ 4,231.00
IMT Insurance refund	\$ 108.00
Cedar Valley RC&D	\$ 3,520.00
Interest	<u>\$ 11.55</u>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$14,155.55</b>
Expenses– Dues/subscriptions	\$ 997.00
Commissioner Mileage/Exp.	\$ 973.83
Tree Sales expense	\$ 2,247.18
Website	\$ 394.98
Petty Cash	\$ 50.00
Newsletter/printing	\$ 965.38
Postage	\$ 736.24
Field Day & Meetings	\$ 892.85
mule/trailer expenses	\$ 344.51
Outdoor classroom	\$ 1,304.19
Office Supplies	\$ 8.67
Parade float expenses	\$ 443.36
Miscellaneous expenses	<u>\$ 221.05</u>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 9,579.24</b>
<b>Ending Balance</b>	<b>\$22,885.17</b>
<b>Savings Account</b>	
Beginning Balance	<b>\$19,348.26</b>
Board of Supervisors	\$ 500.00
Interest	<u>\$ 17.83</u>
<b>Ending Balance</b>	<b>\$19,866.09</b>
<b>District Employee Account</b>	
Beginning Balance	<b>\$46,767.46</b>
Income-Board of Supervisors	\$ 3,500.00
Farm Bill Allocations	\$18,843.48
Interest	<u>\$ 31.42</u>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$22,374.90</b>
Expenses- Payroll & Taxes	\$13,451.27
Accountant Fees	<u>\$ 250.00</u>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$13,701.27</b>
<b>Ending Balance</b>	<b>\$55,441.09</b>
<b>Petty Cash</b>	
Beginning Balance	\$ 8.93
Income-from district ckg.	\$ 50.00
Expenses-office supplies	<u>\$ 34.67</u>
<b>Ending Balance</b>	<b>\$ 24.26</b>

<b>State Cost Share</b>	
Grundy County has been given allocations for use in cost sharing on permanent soil and water conservation practices. Following is a breakdown of FY2017 practices for which certifications have been submitted to the Iowa Dept. of Agriculture Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality for payment, obligated, and paid.	
<u>Iowa Financial Incentive Program</u>	
FY 2017 Allocation	\$27,387.50
Prior years obligated funds	\$15,950.00
Obligated/Spent	\$43,337.50
Recalled by DSC	\$ .00
<b>Balance 6/30/2017</b>	<b>\$ .00</b>
<u>REAP Practices</u>	
FY 2017 Allocation	\$10,091.41
Prior years obligated funds	\$10,133.25
Obligated/Spent	\$ 9,074.40
Recalled by DSC	\$11,150.26
<b>Balance 6/30/2017</b>	<b>\$ .00</b>
<u>REAP Forestry/Native Grasses</u>	
FY 2017 Allocation	\$ 3,363.80
Prior years obligated funds	\$ 5,527.50
Obligated/Spent	\$ 8,414.56
Recalled by DSC	\$ 476.74
<b>Balance 6/30/2017</b>	<b>\$ .00</b>
*****	
<b>Gordon &amp; Evelyn Davidson Scholarship Fund*</b>	
Beginning Balance	\$10,154.45
Ending Balance	\$10,154.45
*****	
* The Davidson Scholarship Fund was set up to use the interest earned for scholarships for students going into the fields of agriculture or nursing. Minimum scholarship amount will be \$500.00.	
**1M funds are provided by the State of Iowa and allocated to the District by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship-Division of Soil Conservation. These can only be used for dues, mileage, office supplies, newsletter, postage, field days, meetings, workshops, and stewardship expenses.	



**Don't Treat Your Soil Like Dirt: Take the 1% Challenge**  
**By Kurt Simon, NRCS State Conservationist**



Many of the benefits from improving soil health don't happen overnight. They build over time, as farmers consistently implement soil health practices like no-till, cover crops and crop rotations. But there is a way to monitor your progress: measuring the amount of organic matter in your soil.

First conceived by the late District Conservationist Brad Harrison from Adel, **The 1% Challenge** encourages farmers to commit to a long-term plan to increase their soil's organic matter by 1 percent. Soil organic matter is decomposed plant and animal material in your soil. This material gives your soil good tilth, a dark color, better water holding capacity, improved water infiltration rates, and it contributes to your overall soil fertility. And it happens to be a very good indicator of improved soil health.

**How much will it take to increase my soil organic matter by 1%?**

Soil organic matter is increased through substantial increases in organic materials, like roots, residue, compost and manure in the soil. Only 10% of the organic material added each year actually remains in the soil. Because of this, building a 1% organic matter increase will require 200,000 pounds of material, or the equivalent of 167 round bales of cornstalks per acre. (Continued on Page 4)



## Don't Treat Your Soil Like Dirt: Take the 1% Challenge

### Why is it worth it?

While each operation's expenses are unique, we've put together these estimates to illustrate the economic impact of improving soil organic matter:

Each year, 1% of soil organic matter per acre releases \$15.70 worth of nutrients.

Eliminating tillage will save approximately \$3.50 in fuel costs per acre per year.

Utilizing cover crops may reduce the need for herbicides by about \$16.20 per acre per year.

An average increase of 5 bu./ac. in soybean yields following cover crops can earn an additional \$50 per acre per year.

Based on these calculations, in an average year of a corn/soybean rotation, your bottom line could improve by more than \$60 per acre. PLUS, this significant increase in organic matter can hold 9/10" of plant-available water, reducing the potential for erosion due to runoff by 15%.

### So, how do you get started?

Establish a baseline by completing a routine soil test with an organic matter calculation. In addition, conduct a soil health assessment in your field by recording soil temperatures, counting earthworms, calculating water infiltration rates, and testing for compaction. We also recommend having a certified lab conduct a soil health analysis, such as the Haney test or the Cornell Soil Health Test.

The next step is to develop a soil health management plan, and that's where NRCS can help. After discussing your goals and evaluating your current operation plan, we can recommend the types of practices and changes in management that will help you improve soil health and build organic matter.

And finally, monitor and document your progress each year. Items to record include crops planted, fertilizer and pesticides applied, weed pressure, yield and soil health assessments results (temperature, earthworm counts, infiltration rates, etc.). Then in year four or five, conduct another soil test battery. Did your soil organic matter increase by a half percent? If so, you are on the right track. If not, take time to evaluate your management (NRCS can help) and make adjustments if necessary.

Interested in taking **The 1% Challenge**? You can find more resources, fact sheets and soil assessment worksheets on the Iowa NRCS website at [www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov).



## *WHO OWNS ANY CREEK?*

By Jacqueline Comito, Director  
Iowa Learning Farms

That is a line from one of my favorite films, *Cross Creek*. Released in 1983, the film is based on a memoir of the same title by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, the author of the classic children's book *The Yearling*. The film is about her life as owner of an orange grove in Florida and all the local residents of "the creek."

### **"Who owns Cross Creek?"**

This line popped into my head when I was talking to Ann about our winter workshops. It was clear from the brainstorming activity that many of the farmers and landowners were more knowledgeable and caring about questions concerning soil health than water quality.

When I pointed that out to Ann, she said, "Soil health happens on the land they own and they directly benefit from it. It's personal. Water is a part of the common good and is less tangible."

The common good is often a hard sell economically. No one owns the water. So no one is really responsible. Or everyone is responsible?

Let's face it: when it comes to water quality, we have been slipping in through the back door, so to speak. As Marty Adkins points out in his blog post (Reducing Nutrient Losses While Building Iowa's Soils and Economy), generally the practices that improve soil health also improve water quality.

That's true. Cover crops are a good example. They are good for soil health, especially where land is highly erodible or degraded. On the water quality side, they play a major role in reducing both phosphorus and nitrogen loss. It is difficult to show a direct return on investment with cover crops in terms of soil health, and it could cost billions of dollars annually to implement the 12 million acres of cover crops needed every year to improve water quality (The Nutrient Reduction Strategy: Creating A More Resilient Iowa ). That kind of investment is going to require a seismic change in attitudes toward water quality if it is going to happen.

In his 2012 book, *Navigating Environmental Attitudes*, social psychologist Thomas Heberlein argues that the way to change attitudes is by changing social norms. Norms are different than attitudes because they are tied directly to behavior, whereas attitudes are based on values and beliefs. In order for norms to change behavior, they must be focused on and activated by how society shapes what we do—i.e., what shapes the status quo. Norms influencing environmental behaviors do change, but it takes years (decades) for norms to emerge, change and strengthen. For norms to function, individuals must feel responsible for their acts.

I am not saying that farmers are deliberately doing wrong—they are following the norms within our current agricultural system. While many farmers could add more conservation practices to their operations, it is the system itself that needs changing. Policies over the last several decades have intensified row crop agriculture and led us to our current water quality and soil erosion challenges. The long-term vision for Iowa must include policies that more readily allow for a diversity of cropping systems and land use (Expand Beyond a Two Crop System, Clean Up Our Water).

Poor water quality is the unintended consequence of agricultural norms that aren't sustainable. To change this is going to require a seismic change in attitudes.

As we try to implement Iowa's Nutrient Reduction Strategy, we need to do a better job of helping farmers see where we are, how we got here, and where we need to go. As we heard from one of the speakers at ISU Extension and Outreach's Agriculture and Natural Resources spring inservice training earlier this year, "Farmers don't need any help to stay the same."

In 1983, I couldn't have imagined how the answer to a question posed at the end of a loved film would become one of the central questions of my career. It has. Who owns Cross Creek? Or any creek?

Here's how Rawlings responds to her haunting question:

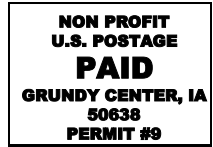
### **"Who owns Cross Creek?"**

*The red-birds, I think, more than I, for they will have their nests even in the face of delinquent mortgages...It seems to me that the earth may be borrowed, but not bought. It may be used, but not owned. It gives itself in response to love and tending, offers its seasonal flowering and fruiting. But we are tenants and not possessors, lovers, and not masters. Cross Creek belongs to the wind and the rain, to the sun and the season, to the cosmic secrecy of seed, and beyond all to time..."*

# Grundy County Soil & Water Conservation District

805 West Fourth Street Ste. 2  
Grundy Center, Iowa 50638-1069  
Phone: (319) 824-3634, ext. 3

Return Service Requested



Planting beans into cereal rye

The "Partners in Resource Management" newsletter is provided free to owners and operators of land in Grundy County, Iowa, and others interested with issues involving resource management.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits the discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20259-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Send questions or comments to:

**Grundy County Soil and Water Conservation District**  
805 West Fourth Street, STE 2  
Grundy Center, IA 50638-1069  
Phone: (319) 824-3634, ext. 3  
Office Hours: 8:00 to 4:30, M-F

#### Reminder...

Please call the office to make sure someone is available before you come. Since some of the staff is shared with another county or may be in the field, there are times when no one is in the office.

#### MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Grundy County Soil and Water Conservation District is to provide leadership to people regarding technical, educational, and financial assistance that conserves natural resources.

#### COMMISSIONERS

Fred Abels (Chairman)  
Jim Kadner (Vice Chairman)  
Don Davidson (Treasurer)  
Jim Everts  
Steve Henze

#### ASSISTANT COMMISSIONERS

Harvin Meyer      John Oltman

#### STAFF

Nicky Williams(DC)  
Jim Allen (SC)  
Denise Freeseaman (Cons. Asst.)  
Peggy Rash-Daniels  
(Soil Technician)  
Dawn Van Dyke (Elyon employee)

The Grundy County Soil and Water Conservation District would like to say THANK YOU to everyone who has already donated to the SWCD Conservation Club this year. To date, we currently have 66 members who have donated a total of 3,740! We would also like to thank the Board of Supervisors for their continued support. We appreciate the support of all of our members!

Donated funds are used to for a variety of projects to promote and educate conservation programs such as educational material for school, stewardship materials, scholarships for a high school seniors, poster contest, Appreciation banquet and Awards program, and conservation programs and tours in the county, field days, along with our newsletter.

If you have not already donated to the Grundy SWCD Conservation Club, you can send or drop off a donation to our office at 805 W. 4<sup>th</sup> St., Ste 2, Grundy Center, IA 50638. Make your check payable to Grundy SWCD. All donations are tax deductible. Thank you all for your continuing support of conservation in our county.

Each year, the Grundy SWCD selects windbreaks to submit for the state Izaak Walton windbreak. There are three windbreak categories, Newly Established (2-5 years of age), Farmstead (at least 5 years old), and Field Shelterbelt. (at least 5 years old)

The windbreak award winners for 2017 are:

Field Shelterbelt-Glen & Vicky Draper, Alice Draper  
Wallace Kitzman – Farmstead Windbreak

In addition, the Draper shelterbelt was selected as the state award winner and presented a plaque at the Soil and Water Conservation District's Annual Conference.

Congratulations to all our award winners!

If you know of someone who has an excellent windbreak, please contact our office.