

Grundy SWCD Partners with County Conservation Board and Pheasants Forever for Winter Habitat Workshops

Seeing an interest in more habitat in Grundy County, three local organizations partnered to offer the first ever winter habitat workshops. The workshops were a free Lunch n' Learn format hosted at the Grundy County Museum in Morrison in February and March. Lunches were purchased with donations from Pheasants Forever Ringneck Chapter 52 and SWCD Conservation Club dollars.

Ideas to improve winter cover were presented by Greg Schmitt, Iowa DNR private lands biologist. Ideas ranged from simple improvements like using brush and tree trimmings for cover in grassy areas to selecting good conifers and shrubs to provide long term structure.

Jason Auel, DNR biologist from Sweet Marsh near Sumner, presented information on providing food sources for wildlife all year long. Annual food plots can be a fun and interesting way to provide diversity in the diet of pheasants, deer, and other game. On public land, DNR employees use cover crops as a source of food AND to keep weeds minimal before planting a summer annual like sorghum or millet.

Lastly, Sarah Nizzi from the Xerces Society taught the group about pollinators—native bees and other bugs that serve as our mail pollinators in the Midwest. Sarah followed up with practical information about starting a wildflower pollinator planting.

About 25 people attended each event and the organizations are planning to offer the events again in 2023. Please let us know if you are interested in a topic by emailing courtney.myers@usda.gov.

Greg Schmitt, from the Iowa DNR, presents information to the crowd on February 2, 2022 at the Grundy County Museum



Spring 2022

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The staff in Grundy Center urges you to call first before you come in. Field work is starting and staff may not always be in the office.

Office updates—

Cover Crop sign-up is happening now. If you are planning on doing cover crops this fall, please call or stop by the office to sign up for cost share assistance, available on a first-come basis.

“The Earth is a fine place and worth fighting for.” – Ernest Hemingway

**2021 Conservation Club Members**

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Zern Farm Corp.	Harlen Persinger	Darrell & Kristen Sents
Wayne & Shirley Holland	K & A Acres	Leon & Sharon Harms
Goodman Agri-Co. Inc.	Bob & Pat Abels	Noel & Dottie Rewerts
Hogle Farms Inc.	Dr. and Mrs. Robert Morrison	Harvin & Esther Meyer
Frazer Farms		Jim Ahrenholz

The SWCD Commissioners would like to thank everyone who donated to the district. Your funds are used to help with the district's activities and programs in education, classroom activities, scholarship, Envirothon, field days, and Stewardship Week, etc. Remember all donations are tax deductible. The SWCD commissioners are elected officials but to not receive any compensation for their duties.

Membership Form (clip and return to our office to make a donation)

2022	MEMBERSHIP	2022
GRUNDY COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION CONSERVATION CLUB		
Name _____ Donation Amount _____		
CONSERVATION CLUB MEMBER		
Address _____		



Cultural Resources and Your Conservation Plan

by Megan Messerole,

USDA-NRCS Cultural Resources/Archaeologist, Des Moines, Iowa



Iowa NRCS staff conduct archaeological shovel tests in Washington County during the planning stages of a water and sediment control basin – an earthen structure across the slope of a field that forms a sediment trap and water

It's easy to look at a farmstead and notice and appreciate a beautiful historic barn or hear the creaking of a 100-year-old windmill. It's much more difficult to look around the landscape and see a 6,000-year-old Native American village archaeological site buried deep below the surface. However, both cultural resources represent significant pieces of our human past, worthy of protection.

Cultural Resources are tangible remains of past human activity. These could include:

- Historic or prehistoric objects
- Buildings
- Structures
- Historic districts
- Archaeological sites
- Statues or sculptures
- Rock art or carvings
- Earthworks, such as ditches, canals, or landscapes

These nonrenewable resources may yield unique information about past societies and environments and provide answers to modern day social and conservation problems. In Iowa, there are about 30,000 recorded archaeological sites and about 2,000 properties listed on the National Register of Historic places. Despite the large numbers, there are likely thousands more forgotten, unreported, or undiscovered cultural resources in Iowa.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) seeks to identify, evaluate, and avoid the destruction of cultural resources. Projects utilizing NRCS funding to implement an activity in a conservation plan must follow several Federal, State, and local laws enacted to preserve cultural resources. The most important of these is the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966. The NHPA requires Federal agencies to consider significant cultural resources during project planning.

NRCS considers cultural resources in its conservation planning for the same reason it protects natural resources — the soil, water, air, plants and animals — on your property. Keeping natural resources in balance helps provide the basis for a healthy and profitable farm environment. Protecting cultural resources provide the basis for understanding our human past. Once archaeological sites and historic structures are destroyed, they are gone forever. The stewardship of these non-renewable resources is an important link in the conservation ethic that underlies the NRCS mission.

If there is a cultural resource within your NRCS conservation project area, the local field office will work with you to find alternatives to avoid the cultural resources. This may involve moving the practice to a different location or utilizing a different practice that will cause little to no effect on the cultural resource. If you have more questions about cultural resources on your property, contact your [local USDA Service Center](#).

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Snirt= Snow + Dirt. Our Best Ground is Blowing Away.

By Courtney Myers, District Conservationist



Driving around in mid-January sparked an idea for an experiment. We have all seen black snow in the ditches over the years and I decided to see WHAT was in it. Fall chisel-plowed cornstalks seemed to be the worst with larger clods and more surface area exposed. I dug up a tote full of snow chunks from the ditch, melted it in my bathtub, siphoned off the water, and sent the dried soil into Waypoint Labs in Atlantic.

Picture of a snowdrift on January 12, 2022

Whoa, was I surprised at the results! Our best ground (95 CSR) is blowing away, and this is just a snapshot from one mild and windy week in January. What do we lose in May when it's so dusty you can't stand to be outside? What have we lost the last 150 years?

The soil in this sample had 7.2% organic matter. For non-farmers, normal soil tests are often in the range of 4-5% around here. The phosphorus was 69 parts per million and normal is often in the 25 ppm range. The nitrogen released from this sample would have provided 188 pounds/acre. These nutrients have real value. Just for nitrogen and phosphorus this year, many farmers have spent almost \$250/acre. I hear often that we have to use more fertilizer than we used to because we're getting bigger yields. I would ask, do we need more fertilizer because our most productive soil is in the ditch?

As a native of Grundy Center, I have always believed that we have the best, most productive land in the world. Judging by land sales recently, many people still agree, and I don't want that to change. Here's the basics: for starters, leave the cornstalks alone and let them anchor the soil. In the future, let plant roots, like rye cover crops, glue soil together and don't disturb those glues with tillage. Let's take care of our best asset- our soil.

Happy Retirement Denise Freeseaman!

It is with mixed emotions to let you know that I will be retiring from my position as Conservation Assistant with the Iowa Dept. of Agriculture on May 31, 2022. While I have enjoyed my work here, meeting and talking with all of the producers who have stopped by the office or at field days, I look forward to spending more time at home on the farm and playing with our grandkids and going to their activities. I've been blessed to work with a great bunch of people over the years. Thank you!



Snirt= Snow + Dirt. Our Best Ground is Blowing Away, Lab test results.



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SOIL ANALYSIS

Client : Courtney Myers	Grower : Courtney Myers	Report No: 22-020-0509
		Cust No: 04906
		Date Printed: 01/21/2022
		Date Received : 01/20/2022
		PO:
		Page : 1 of 1

Lab No: 80492

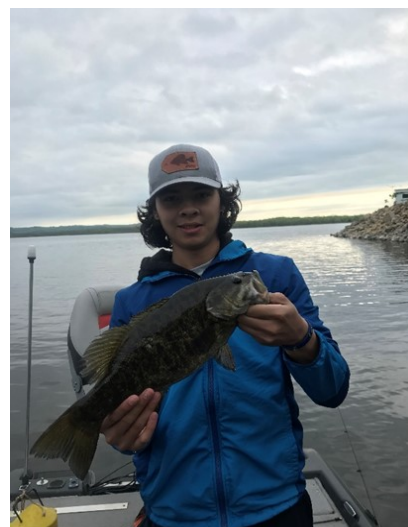
Field:

Sample ID: Snirt

Test	Method	Results	SOIL TEST RATINGS					Calculated Cation Exchange Capacity
			Very Low	Low	Medium	Optimum	Very High	
Soil pH	1:1	7.3						25.9 meq/100g
Buffer pH								%Saturation
Phosphorus (P)	M3	69 ppm						%sat meq
Potassium (K)	M3	246 ppm						K 2.4 0.6
Calcium (Ca)	M3	4302 ppm						Ca 83.1 21.5
Magnesium (Mg)	M3	449 ppm						Mg 14.4 3.7
Sulfur (S)	M3	14 ppm						H 0.0 0.0
Boron (B)	M3	1.2 ppm						Na 0.2 0
Copper (Cu)	M3	2.4 ppm						
Iron (Fe)	M3	163 ppm						K/Mg Ratio: 0.17
Manganese (Mn)	M3	63 ppm						Ca/Mg Ratio: 5.77
Zinc (Zn)	M3	4.6 ppm						
Sodium (Na)	M3	10 ppm						
Soluble Salts								%Sand %Silt %Clay
Organic Matter	LOI	7.2%						38 50 12
Estimated N Release		188 lbs/acre						Textural Class
Nitrate Nitrogen	NO3N	23.6 ppm						Silt Loam

Meet Hunter Filloon

Hello, I am Hunter Filloon the district technician for Grundy SWCD. I have come into this role to help with the edge of field practices push within the Middle Cedar Watershed. I graduated from Mount Mercy University with a double major in outdoor conservation and biology. I have worked in county conservation for Benton and Tama counties and most recently was a 780-hr technician for Poweshiek County. I will be working with all coordinators within the Middle Cedar watershed and will be based out of Grundy. Some of my hobbies include hunting, fishing, trapping, camping, and dirt racing. Feel free to say hello if you see me out and about!





Meet our commissioner, Fred Abels and Field Day June 11

The Soil and Water Conservation District Board has at times talked about each of the board members writing a article for the spring or fall mailing. And all the fingers pointed at me. Let me introduce myself, Fred Abels and my wife Vicki. I live west of Holland a couple miles and farm there. We are pretty much split between corn and soybeans right now, if I wrote this 2 years ago, I would have included our beef cow herd. Going on almost 20 years ago, we converted cropland acres to rotationally grazed pasture paddocks. We started out with 50 fall calving cows and grew from there. We eventually got to 90 cows, and that was in the drought year of 2012. I didn't feed any hay that summer till September, which I can point to giving our rotational grazed pastures rest.



I knew the first year or two I needed to develop fall grazing to really make this system shine and I learned of using cover crops to fill the void in between late summer grazing and cornstalks during winter. We hosted a field day here the week before the hailstorm that hit Eldora on August 9, 2009. I seeded turnips into corn that was taller than my head and after that Sunday morning storm, I was left with waist high corn. It created too much shade for the turnips to sprout. I used Practical Farmers of Iowa's Hagie high boy, broadcasting the seed into the corn.

Next up we tried flying on cereal rye into the corn about Labor Day, that worked really well. The cereal rye germinated and provided a reasonable amount of grazing in the fall. By now I was learning how to make cover crops work for you and maybe not against you. One of the things we started doing was planting green with the soybeans. We didn't always terminate before we planted the soybeans. I got the hang of planting into waist high to chest high cereal rye and saw how it helped shade the weeds out and help feed the bugs in the soil.

About 5 years ago we started using the Haney Soil Test and seeing the results of what our no-till, strip-till, and cover crops were doing to the health of the soil on our farm. I used this test to apply less Phosphorus and Potassium to the crop ground, which this year is a huge savings. We also noticed when planting the soybeans into tall rye it helped to lay down a thick mat that the soybeans would come up through and weeds didn't seem to germinate under the thick mat of cereal rye residue. This year we'll be using a Roller Crimper which will terminate the Cereal Rye instead of herbicides and laying the cereal rye down into the thick mat.

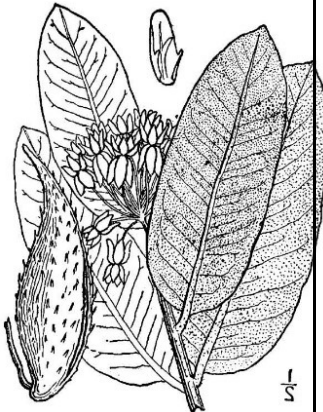



Which leads me up to Saturday, June 11th, we'll host a field day at our farm located at 20902 J Ave., Holland, where we'll touch on the Haney Soil Test and my Rookie Season using the Roller Crimper. Aaron Anderson from Fayette County NRCS will be helping explain the Haney Soil Test and Lea Vereecke from the Rodale Institute will be talking about Roller Crimping. Grundy County SWCD will be hosting the event, and Practical Farmers of Iowa are helping with the field day too. It starts at 11:30-12:30 with a mid-day meal, followed by the field day at 12:30. Hope you can come.



Food for Humbled Royalty

by Dan Sears, NRCS soil conservationist

On December 15th, 2020, the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) became a candidate species for protected listing under the Endangered Species Act. This signaled that America's famous, cross-country migrating butterfly is in dire decline and in need of intervention. A key driver in their decline is the loss of native milkweed plants across their spring and summer ranges. Monarch butterflies only use milkweed plants to lay their eggs and feed their young. Keep an eye out for Iowa's four most common milkweed species that might be present on your land: common milkweed on well drained soils, swamp milkweed on moist wetland areas, whorled milkweed on well drained soils and open areas, and butterfly milkweed on well drained soils. Milkweeds are well-known for their closed pods full of fluffy seeds.

Common Milkweed (<i>Asclepias syriaca</i>): faded pink flowers, broad opposite leaves, milky sap	Swamp Milkweed (<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>): pastel pink flowers, narrow opposite leaves, milky sap	Whorled Milkweed (<i>Asclepias verticillata</i>): white flowers, thin whorled leaves, milky sap, smallest height at ½-2' tall	Butterfly Milkweed (<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>): orange flowers, alternate leaves, no milky sap, fine fuzzy hair on leaves/stem
			

USDA Plant Database

Simply mowing around these plants, avoiding herbicide application on them, and encouraging their survival can help the monarch butterflies inspire future generations. The NRCS EQIP program offers cost share for establishing special native prairie mixes formulated to meet monarch butterfly habitat needs. Unlike the CRP program, cropping history is not required when planning prairie establishment through EQIP. Check with your local NRCS office to see if you are eligible for funding.

Black Hawk Creek Watershed Update: Working with Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, City of Cedar Rapids and Benton, Black Hawk, Buchanan, Grundy, Linn and Tama Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Black Hawk Creek Watershed has secured funding to install saturated buffers in Black Hawk Creek at no cost to the landowner, as well as offering a \$1000 temporary construction easement per tile outlet treated.

Saturated buffers reduce nitrates by 53%, improve drainage of field and are designed to ensure proper drainage and prevent flooding of fields and updated outlet to stream.

- If you have a field with at least 15 acres of patterned tile, vegetated filter strip or CRP along waterway or are willing to install one, give us a call.

-If you are interested in getting involved please give us a call at 319-824-3634 or email at faith.luce@ia.nacdn.net.

Grundy County Soil & Water Conservation District

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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.

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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 staff is out of the office. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, please call the office to make an appointment.

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.

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(Conservation Asst.)
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(BHCWS Project Coordinator)

Cover Crop Seeders

The SWCD office is compiling a list of cover crop contractors to provide to producers. This list will include contractor's name, contact information, and type of equipment used and will be posted in the office as well as distributed to producers. If you are interested in being on this list please call the office at 319-824-3634 ext. 3 [or email Courtney at courtney.myers@usda.gov](mailto:courtney.myers@usda.gov).

