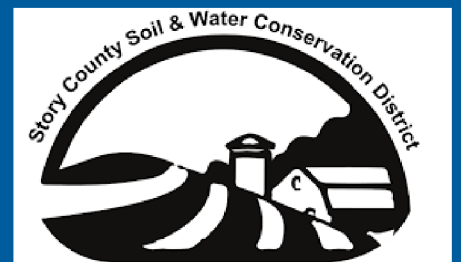


STORY COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

# ANNUAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2022



Our mission is to promote soil conservation and water quality to landowners, operators, and residents of Story County by providing technical information and financial assistance.





# ABOUT

The Story County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is a part of the broader Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Iowa. Story County SWCD focuses on conservation education and awareness.

## TEAM

### Commissioners

Kayla Bergman, Chair  
Alisha Bower  
Selden Spencer  
Mark Tjelmeland  
Susan Upchurch

### Assistant Commissioners

Amber Anderson  
Dale Farnham  
Cindy Hildebrand  
Erv Klaas  
Jerry Radke  
Mimi Wagner  
Matt Woods

### Partner Staff

Doug Ruopp, District Conservationist  
Derek Carter, Soil Conservation Technician  
Laura Wille, Conservation Assistant and District Secretary  
Delaney Williams, Soil Conservationist  
Megan Volkens, Watershed Coordinator  
Lydia Brown, District Intern

## OBJECTIVES

1. Identify problem areas in the county and work to promote conservation practices with landowners/farmers who manage problem areas.
2. Keep abreast of progress towards spending down assistance dollars available in the county and be proactive about promoting programs with available funds.
3. Through better communication create a “culture of conservation” among citizens of the county, both rural and urban.
4. Serve as a conduit of conservation program information for landowners.
5. Reach out to underserved landowners.
6. Enhance SWCD & Story Co. NRCS and IDALS staff networking with other stakeholders.
7. Story Co. SWCD Commissioners are effective local and regional advocates for conservation.

## STORY SWCD CAN ASSIST PRODUCERS AND LANDOWNERS OF STORY COUNTY WITH THE FOLLOWING

- Technical assistance for resource concerns and conservation practice implementation.
- Financial assistance for implementing conservation practices.
- Conservation planning assistance to help address soil and water concerns for their land.

# CONSERVATION TACTICS

## COST SHARE LEVELS

**Federal:** Funds provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS). Cost-share is administered through Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

**State:** Funds provided by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS). Cost-share is administered through Iowa Financial Incentives Program (IFIP), Water Quality Initiative (WQI), and Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP)

## CONSERVATION PRACTICES ENROLLED

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### STATE IFIP

SWCD Commissioners set priorities for practices and field staff assure technical quality of practices

#### 2022 — 3 Participants

Water & Sediment Control Basins  
4 Acres | \$9,563.32 obligated

Grade Stabilization Structure  
2.5 Acres | \$16,715.42 obligated

Multi-Year Cover Crops  
160 Acres | 4 years | \$16,000 obligated

### STATE REAP

Practices target and prevent off-site sediment, nutrient, and livestock waste pollution

#### 2022 — 10 Participants

Forest Stand Improvement  
5 Acres | \$1,392 obligated

Windbreak  
6 Acres | \$8,780 obligated

Conservation Cover  
6.7 Acres | \$1,986 obligated

Tree/Shrub Establishment  
3.8 Acres | \$2,280 obligated

### STATE WQI

Practices include cover crops, conservation tillage, and nitrogen inhibitors

#### 2022 — 18 Participants

Cover Crops | 1,613.54 Acres | \$28,868.10 obligated

### FEDERAL EQIP

Federally-funded practices benefit water quality, soil health, erosion control, and wildlife habitat

#### 2022 — 9 Participants

Bioreactor | 5 Acres | \$92,493 obligated

Prairie Pothole Initiative | 20 Acres | \$38,800 obligated

Cover Crops | 1,042.9 Acres | \$187,639 obligated

Soil Health Initiative | 264.8 Acres | \$129,756 obligated

No-Till | 118.6 Acres | \$6,003 obligated

### FEDERAL CSP

Rewarding farmers for existing conservation and incentivizing them to try additional conservation practices

#### 2022 — 3 Participants

354.2 Acres | \$33,181 obligated



# AWARDS & PARTNERS

## STEVEN L. FALES CONSERVATION AWARD

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The Steven L. Fales Conservation Award honors our late friend and colleague, Dr. Steven L. Fales (March 14, 1947 – April 24, 2017).

Dr. Fales devoted much of his life to environmental conservation. He served as department chair in the Department of Agronomy at Iowa State University, and later the biomass research coordinator of the Bioeconomy Institute. Upon retirement, he became a commissioner for the Story County Soil and Water Conservation District, where he served as chair for four years.

Dr. Fales was a gifted leader who had a knack for bringing diverse groups of people together to engage in developing innovative solutions for a number of issues. To honor his work, we established the Steven L. Fales Conservation Award to recognize producers implementing cover crops for the first time in Story County.

**Congratulations to our 2022 recipients!**

**Moon Howlers LLC, Terry Robinson, James Wright Jr.,  
George Schreiber, John Handsaker, Betty June Runft Survivors Trust,  
Stephen Riggins, and Greg Messerschmidt**

## OUR PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

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National Association of  
Conservation Districts

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Extension and Outreach

# FINANCIAL REPORT

These 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 and Water Quality.

**JULY 1, 2021 – JUNE 30, 2022**  
**FISCAL YEAR 2022**

## **DISTRICT OPERATIONS**

|                                   |            |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Total Allocation                  | \$2,750.00 |
| Commissioners Expenses            | \$2,244.46 |
| Office Expenses                   | \$492.03   |
| Meeting & Workshop Expenses, Dues | \$1,752.43 |

## **WQI COST SHARE**

|                           |             |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| Projects Completed & Paid | \$18,584.00 |
|---------------------------|-------------|

## **IFIP COST SHARE**

|                            |             |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| FY22 Allocation            | \$22,674.81 |
| Carry Over Funds From FY21 | \$18,769.00 |
| Projects Completed & Paid  | \$19,894.50 |
| Obligated funds for FY22   | \$16,715.42 |
| Funds Recalled             | \$4,833.89  |

## **REAP FORESTRY/NATIVE GRASSES**

|                            |            |
|----------------------------|------------|
| FY22 Allocation            | \$2,657.42 |
| Carry Over Funds From FY21 | \$2,976.37 |
| Projects Completed & Paid  | \$600.00   |
| Obligated Fund for FY22    | \$4,483.00 |
| Funds Recalled             | \$551.05   |

## **REAP-PRACTICES**

|                            |            |
|----------------------------|------------|
| FY22 Allocation            | \$7,964.91 |
| Carry Over Funds From FY21 | \$6,983.91 |
| Projects completed & Paid  | \$5,454.42 |
| Obligated Fund for FY22    | \$7,195.00 |
| Funds Recalled             | \$2,299.40 |

# EDUCATION & OUTREACH

## WATER ROCKS! PROGRAM

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Utilizing funds provided by the Story County budget for outreach purposes, Story SWCD sponsored Water Rocks! educational assemblies in elementary schools in Story County on a rotating basis. Water Rocks! is an educational organization based out of Iowa State University that promotes watersheds, water quality, and conservation topics around the state to students and adults. They host assemblies, deliver classroom presentations, and table at events using their conservation trailers.

Water Rocks! visited 5 schools in Story County during the 2021-22 school year.

## PRAIRIE RIVERS OF IOWA

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Utilizing funds provided by the Story County budget for outreach purposes, Story County SWCD funded water quality monitoring through Prairie Rivers of Iowa. The Watersheds and Waterways Program at Prairie Rivers of Iowa has worked with a group of volunteers across Story County to monitor water quality at



various sites. The Story County SWCD sponsored the development of a 10-year monitoring plan and 3 water monitoring backpacks to be used in their partnership with Story County Conservation.



# EDUCATION & OUTREACH

## CALEB AKIN'S CONSERVATION EFFORTS RECOGNIZED

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Northeast of Cambridge, IA, you will find a farm operated by a young farmer named Caleb Akin. When you step foot on this farm, you can sense a focus of conservation as an approach to long-term viability of the operation. Caleb uses many conservation practices throughout his operation. One of those is relay cropping, which is a method of multiple cropping where one crop is seeded into standing second crop well before harvesting of second crop. This practice keeps his soil covered at all times throughout the year with a living root. This diverse relayed crop rotation reduces nutrient runoff, breaks up the pest cycle, and improves water quality.

A unique feature of the Akin operation is the use of compost teas in place of synthetic fertilizers. Compost tea is made by mixing dry compost with non-chlorinated water, which is then aerated in a large vat to multiply the microorganisms.

Also prevalent in the lower yielding portions of his farm, Caleb has seeded down pollinator habitat by utilizing the U.S. Department of Agriculture's financial incentives programs.

Caleb hosted a field day with the Story County Soil and Water Conservation District in June of 2022. This was an opportunity for other farmers and landowners in Story County to tour his operation and learn about Caleb's dedication to conservation while maintaining his productivity.

Because of his dedication to conservation and education, Caleb was recognized as a 2022 Iowa Farm Environmental Leader at the Iowa State Fair. This award was given in partnership by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and the Governor's office.





# BRINGING CONSERVATION PRACTICES TO SCALE IN CENTRAL IOWA

Treating tile outlets through a variety of edge of field practices can intercept nitrogen-rich water before it gets to the stream, creek, or river. These practices play a crucial role in meeting the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy of 45% reduction in total nitrogen and phosphorus loads leaving Iowa land. But what are edge of field practices, exactly? They are wetlands, riparian buffers, oxbows, terraces, drainage water management systems, and in the case of a new program in Story County, bioreactors and saturated buffers.



These two practices have not been widely installed in Iowa due to a variety of factors including paperwork hassles and financial burden for the landowner. In the past ten years, the state has been able to install only 100 of these practices. That changed in 2021 when Polk County scaled up and installed 51 in one year. With the help of federal, state, and private partners, this 'Batch and Build' concept took off, and now has expanded into Story County.

In 2022, five bioreactors and five saturated buffers will be installed in the county to treat 22 tile outlets and over 1,000 acres of drainage. The watersheds where these are going include Bear Creek, Keigley Branch, and East Indian Creek. In addition to us at Story SWCD, other partners involved with this program include Story County Conservation, the City of Ames, Heartland Cooperative, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and Natural Resources Conservation Service.



Surveys of farm fields and project designs are happening throughout the year with a goal to treat at least 50 outlets per year for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, all practices in the Batch and Build program are 100% cost share plus landowners will receive a \$1,000 easement payment per tile outlet treated.

For more information about this program and to see if your land is suitable for these practices, contact Sara Carmichael, Watershed Coordinator for Story County Conservation at [scarmichael@storycountyiowa.gov](mailto:scarmichael@storycountyiowa.gov) or 515-598-1652.

# SUPPORTING YOUNG CONSERVATIONISTS

## DISTRICT INTERN

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In order to support our partners at USDA-NRCS and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Story County SWCD hired an intern named Lydia Brown in early 2022. Lydia is studying Agronomy at Iowa State University with plans to graduate in the spring of 2023 and continue a career in conservation.

Lydia spent the spring semester as our intern, focusing on both outreach efforts and field work. The various outreach efforts she has accomplished include assisting on planning the Akin field day and calling farmers and landowners in Story County that have previously used cover crops to remind them of program deadlines. She also works alongside USDA-NRCS staff to conduct field visits, Conservation Reserve Program field certifications, and conservation practice planning.



## SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

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Every year, Story SWCD financially supports the Conservation Districts of Iowa's annual scholarship fund. In addition during FY22, we also awarded a local scholarship to a student in Story County.

The award recipient for our scholarship in 2022 was Marissa Lindemann, a graduate of Nevada High School. Marissa is beginning her career at the University of Nebraska Lincoln studying journalism alongside agriculture and environmental science communications. She is passionate about advocating for and educating on soil and water conservation as a solution to climate change.





# SUPPORT GENEROUSLY PROVIDED BY STORY COUNTY

The Story County Soil and Water Conservation District meets every third Wednesday of the month at 9:00 AM at the new USDA office at 1524 Fawcett Pkwy in Nevada. These meetings are open to the public, and anyone is welcome to attend. If you have conservation concerns, and would like to be placed on the agenda, please contact the office prior to the meeting.

Story SWCD prohibits discrimination in all their programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status.



We would like to thank Story County residents for their efforts on behalf of soil and water conservation. Without your cooperation, our work would be impossible.

We welcome your input in helping us continue this great work. If you have any questions, suggestions or resource issues, please contact our office at:

(515) 382-2217, Ext.3 in Nevada, Iowa

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This report has been prepared by Ponder This Marketing, LLC in partnership with the Story County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners.