

STORY COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

ANNUAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2023

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
Steve Riggins

Assistant Commissioners

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

Partner Staff

Doug Ruopp, District Conservationist
Derek Carter, Civil Engineering Technician
Laura Wille, Conservation Assistant and District Secretary
Jon Livermore, 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

STATE IFIP

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

2023 — 3 Participants

Water & Sediment Control Basins
3.5 Acres | \$4,781.66 Obligated

Grade Stabilization Structure
7,174 Feet | \$16,715.42 Obligated

Multi-Year Cover Crops
160 Acres | \$16,000 Obligated

STATE WQI

Practices include cover crops, conservation tillage, and nitrogen inhibitors

2023 — 21 Participants

Cover Crops
1,903.67 Acres | \$36,408.10 Obligated

FEDERAL CSP

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

2023 — 1 Participant

73.1 Acres | \$17,087 Obligated

STATE REAP

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

2023 — 12 Participants

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

Windbreak
7.49 Acres | \$10,380 Obligated

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

Conservation Cover
6.7 Acres | \$1,986 Obligated

Tree Planting
6.5 Acres | \$3,656.25 Obligated

FEDERAL EQIP/RCPP

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

2023 — 6 Participants

Bioreactors | 3.9 Acres | \$25,464 Obligated

Soil Health Initiative | 213 Acres | \$28,035 Obligated

Cover Crops | 2,626 Acres | \$320,586 Obligated

Saturated Buffers | 3.2 Acres | \$7,565 Obligated

Energy Assessment | 0.5 Acres | \$2,856 Obligated

AWARDS & PARTNERS

STEVEN L. FALES CONSERVATION AWARD

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 2023 recipients!

George Sandquist, Michael Jacobson, Paul Teig, Thomas Peterson, Paul Risdal, Indian Creek Ranch, Inc., Roger Jacob, and Birchmier and Sons LLC

OUR PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS



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, 2022 – JUNE 30, 2023
FISCAL YEAR 2023

DISTRICT OPERATIONS

Total Allocation	\$2,750.00
Commissioners Expenses	\$2,000.39
Office Expenses	\$300.39
Meeting & Workshop Expenses, Dues	\$1,700.00

WQI COST SHARE

Projects Completed & Paid	\$35,193.55
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IFIP COST SHARE

FY23 Allocation	\$23,497.00
Carry Over Funds From FY22	\$16,715.42
Projects Completed & Paid	\$20,781.66
Obligated Funds for FY23	\$16,715.42
Funds Recalled	\$2,715.34

REAP FORESTRY/NATIVE GRASSES

FY23 Allocation	\$2,326.04
Carry Over Funds From FY22	\$4,483.00
Projects Completed & Paid	\$3,772.00
Obligated Funds for FY23	\$1,600.00
Funds Recalled	\$1,437.04

REAP-PRACTICES

FY23 Allocation	\$7,000.60
Carry Over Funds From FY22	\$7,195.00
Projects Completed & Paid	\$5,155.00
Obligated Funds for FY23	\$7,768.25
Funds Recalled	\$1,272.35

BEYOND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

UPCHURCH RECOGNIZED FOR DEDICATION TO CONSERVATION



Sue Upchurch served as a Story County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner from 2010 to 2022. Her dedication to conservation goes beyond her tenure as a commissioner. She farms with her husband and son in the Zearing area. They utilize several of the financial assistance programs offered through our office to help offset their cost for seeding cover crops every fall. The SWCD showed their appreciation for Sue's dedication to conservation and for her years of service by presenting her with a plaque at the beginning of 2023.

COVER CROP FIELD DAY HOSTED IN STORY COUNTY

The Story County SWCD, in conjunction with NRCS, IDALS, and Iowa Corn, hosted a field day focused on cover crops in Story County in the summer of 2023. The field day, hosted by the Sampson family, focused on integrating cover crops into operations and how that benefits soil health and livestock operations. Participants were also able to watch a soil health demonstration from NRCS and see a drone seeding cover crops by Klemme Agri Air Corp.



EDUCATION & OUTREACH

SAMPSON FAMILY FARMS IS A LEADER IN CONSERVATION FOR STORY COUNTY

Along Dry Creek north of Nevada, IA, you'll find a farm owned and operated by Brian and Deb Sampson of Sampson Family Farms. The farm includes both row crop and beef cattle. Brian's sense of conservation is evident when you step onto the farm.

The Sampsons haven't used deep tillage methods for over 10 years and practice no-till on their soybean acres. They also seed a rye cover crop using a plane on half of their acres every fall.

Being a cattle producer, the Sampsons are focused on nutrient management across their farm. They soil sample every 3 years and follow a nutrient management plan established in 2019. They surface apply composted manure from their 1500 head cattle operation on at least 300 of their acres every year.

Other conservation practices they have established across their operation includes a 1.5 acre buffer strip, 7 acres of waterways, over 60 combined acres of restored wetlands, and a large windbreak along the feedlot.

In addition to their existing conservation practices, the Sampsons are interested in studying the advancement of various practices. They have partnered with Iowa Learning Farms to study nitrogen and phosphorus loss by incorporating oats as a cover crop prior to corn.

The Sampsons hosted a field day with the Story County Soil and Water Conservation District in the summer of 2023. The event included a discussion of their operation and conservation efforts, a presentation of financial assistance programs available through state and federal agencies, a demonstration of soil health by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and a drone cover crop seeding by Klemme Agri Air Corp.

Because of their dedication to conservation and education, the Sampsons were recognized as a 2023 Iowa Farm Environmental Leader at the Iowa State Fair. In addition, they won the 2023 Region 6 Conservation Farmer of the Year Award.



BRINGING CONSERVATION PRACTICES TO SCALE IN CENTRAL IOWA

The Story County Batch and Build project is a multi-partner initiative to install edge of field practices on farm drainage tiles in a way that is cheaper and faster than typical conservation planning processes. 2023 was a busy year for the Story County Batch and Build Project. We started the year with bidding out and constructing saturated buffers and bioreactors on 5 properties in the county. The five bioreactors and five saturated buffers installed this year are treating 16 tiles and about 1080 acres of drainage.



We anticipate our second batch of construction to start in 2024, which includes seven landowners, 16 practices, and 19 drainage tiles.

While the first batch of projects were being installed and the second were being surveyed and designed, we were also able to conduct outreach to landowners in the county for the third batch. Surveys were done on roughly 20 properties for feasibility of edge of field practices for our next batch of installations. This work cannot be done without Story County landowners giving us access to their properties to see what kind of conservation we can fit into their already existing buffer strips and non-farmable areas near their stream banks.

The project has been expanded to Hamilton County by partnering with Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District. This will allow the team to conduct outreach and install practices in the Headwaters of the South Skunk River Watershed. We are excited to see what opportunities lie ahead in that region of the watershed.



The successes of this program are largely in part of the well-coordinated team of partners, as well as the willingness, flexibility, and enthusiasm of the landowners and residents of Story County. Thank you to all involved for another great year of conservation!

Any interested landowner or farmer can contact the Story County NRCS office at (515) 382-4714, Ext. 3 to discuss opportunities for implementing these practices onto their properties. These practices are free to install and organized to be minimal hassle for the farmers throughout the process.

CONSERVATION AWARDS IN STORY COUNTY



STORY SWCD RECEIVES TOP AWARD AT CDI CONFERENCE

The Story County SWCD was honored to receive the Paul Johnson Outstanding Soil and Water Conservation District Award for 2023. The award, sponsored by Conservation Districts of Iowa, seeks to recognize a SWCD in Iowa which has consistently shown innovation and dedication to promoting soil conservation, water quality, and soil health practices. During the award presentation, CDI leadership noted, "With a focus on relationship-building, celebrating local producers, inter-government partnering and embracing innovation, the Story SWCD has demonstrated the spirit of the Paul Johnson Award."



HANDSAKERS RECEIVE WINDBREAK AWARD

Gary and Sue Handsaker were recognized at the Conservation Districts of Iowa Conference in August of 2023 for their windbreak. They received the 2023 Windbreak of the Year Award in the category of Farmstead Windbreak. The award, given by Trees Forever League, recognizes a windbreak that has been well-established and cared for and is an aesthetically pleasing part of the natural landscape. Gary and Sue have spent countless hours establishing and maintaining their windbreak around their farmstead in rural Nevada, IA.

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) 382-4714, Ext.3 in Nevada, Iowa

ponder this *marketing*

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