



ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEARS 2019 & 2020

Mission Statement:

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

Story County SWCD Team

Commissioners

Alisha Bower - Chair
Jerold Fitzgerald
Selden Spencer
Mark Tjemeland
Susan Upchurch

Assistant Commissioners

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

Staff

Dana Holland
District Conservationist
Doug Ruopp
District Conservationist
Crystal Riggins
Conservation Assistant
Hillary Olson
Soil Conservationist
Arlene Santiago-Lopez
Soil Conservationist
Derek Carter
Soil Conservation Technician

ABOUT

About the Story County Soil and Water Conservation District

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

Conservation Districts were established to promote conservation opportunities throughout Iowa's counties and to support Iowa's National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) efforts.

Story SWCD focuses on conservation education and awareness.

Our goals include:

1. To increase the adoption of conservation practices to reduce erosion, improve water quality, and restore wildlife habitat.
2. To support and administer state and federal conservation programs.
3. To foster collaboration with other groups.
4. To improve the professional development of our commissioners.

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 PRACTICES

COST-SHARE LEVELS

County: Funds provided by the Story County budget to assist with special conservation circumstances when other programs aren't available.

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).

Federal: Funds provided by the US Department of Agriculture 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).

CONSERVATION PRACTICES ENROLLED (FY19 & FY20)

State WQI

Practices include cover crops, conservation tillage, and nitrogen inhibitors

2019:

12 Participants; 1519.45 Acres
\$30,536.25 obligated for practices

2020:

12 Participants; 1805 Acres
\$29,112.00 obligated for practices

State IFIP

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

2019:

2 Participants; 159.1 Acres
\$1,765.00 obligated for practices

2020:

2 Participants; 145 Acres
\$5,698.00 obligated for practices

State REAP

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

2019:

2 Participants; 1.25 Acres
\$2,453.43 obligated for practices

2020:

4 Participants; 22.4 Acres
\$5,285.50 obligated for practices

Federal EQIP

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

2019:

14 Participants; 2284 Acres
\$412,429 obligated for practices

2020:

2 Participants; 276.3 Acres
\$33,284.00 obligated for practices

County Cost-Share

SWCD Commissioners provide county funds to assist in practices which may not qualify for other programs

2020:

1 Participant; 156.7 Acres
\$3,917.50 obligated for practices

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.

Steven 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 producers implementing cover crops for the first time in Story County.

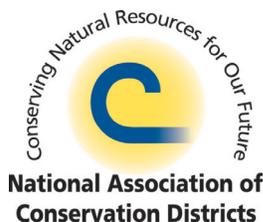
**Congratulations to our 2019 and 2020 recipients:
Randy Brekke and Nickolas Baker**

Our Partner Organizations



**IOWA DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE &
LAND STEWARDSHIP**

**IOWA STATE
UNIVERSITY**
Extension and Outreach



NRCS
Natural Resources Conservation Service



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, 2018 - June 30, 2019

District Operations

| | |
|--------------------|------------|
| Total Allocation: | \$2,725.00 |
| Commissioners Exp: | \$955.11 |
| Office Exp: | \$121.00 |
| Dues Paid: | \$1,625.00 |

FY19 Iowa Financial Incentive Program

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| Allocation: | \$22,542.00 |
| Spent: | \$1,765.00 |

FY19 REAP Practices

| | |
|-------------|------------|
| Allocation: | \$5,822.73 |
| Spent: | \$1,498.87 |

FY19 REAP Forestry/Native Grasses

| | |
|-------------|------------|
| Allocation: | \$1,940.91 |
| Spent: | \$954.56 |

County Budget

| | |
|------------------|-------------|
| FY19 Allocation: | \$15,000.00 |
| Spent in FY19: | \$14,748.32 |

District Accounts

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| District Checking & Savings 7/1/18: | \$13,275.51 |
| Deposits: | \$12,547.21 |
| Disbursements: | \$12,551.27 |
| Balance 6/30/19: | \$13,271.45 |

July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020

District Operations

| | |
|--------------------|------------|
| Total Allocation: | \$2,750.00 |
| Commissioners Exp: | \$822.90 |
| Office Exp: | \$158.51 |
| Dues Paid: | \$1,655.00 |

FY20 Iowa Financial Incentive Program

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| Allocation: | \$21,260.00 |
| Spent: | \$5,698.00 |

FY20 REAP Practices

| | |
|-------------|------------|
| Allocation: | \$6,863.02 |
| Spent: | \$5,285.50 |

FY20 REAP Forestry/Native Grasses

| | |
|-------------|------------|
| Allocation: | \$2,266.62 |
| Spent: | \$0.00 |

County Budget

| | |
|------------------|-------------|
| FY19 Allocation: | \$15,000.00 |
| Spent in FY19: | \$14,100.00 |

District Accounts

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| District Checking & Savings 7/1/19: | \$13,271.45 |
| Deposits: | \$16,934.87 |
| Disbursements: | \$14,851.17 |
| Balance 6/30/20: | \$15,549.54 |

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Water Rocks! Program

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. *Water Rocks!* hosts assemblies, delivers classroom presentations, and tables at events using their soil health trailer.

Water Rocks! visited 5 Story County Schools in 2019 and 6 schools in 2020.



Prairie Rivers of Iowa

Utilizing funds provided by the Story County budget for outreach purposes, Story SWCD funded several outreach events and activities through Prairie Rivers of Iowa. The Watersheds and Waterways Program at Prairie Rivers of Iowa has provided education and outreach centered on nutrient reduction and wildlife habitat restoration throughout Story County. The Story SWCD sponsored the following efforts in 2019 and 2020:

Field Days on the topics of wetlands, pollinator habitat management, nutrient reduction, and saturated buffers. In FY19 and FY20, three field days were held with over 100 participants.

Water Quality Monitoring in the Squaw Creek and Indian Creek Watersheds. Monitoring results are posted online at www.prrcd.org/water-quality-monitoring and are used for tracking the progress of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy.



CONSERVATION

Conservation Farmer Stories

Justin Hanson farms near Roland in Story County, Iowa where he has farmed with his family since he graduated from Iowa State University as an undergraduate. He raises corn and soybeans on a variety of different soils and slopes ranging from good quality, flat soils to sandier and sloped fields next to creeks. Recently, he answered some questions for the SWCD about his conservation journey from reduced tillage to saturated buffers, cover crops to pollinator habitat - at a safe distance of course!

Justin's history with conservation practices goes back nearly a decade. He first experimented with strip-till and no-till about 10 years ago on a farm that also bordered a creek and had some slope to it. At that time, he was challenged with getting his strips made ahead of spring planting. Since then, he has expanded his strip-till to over half of his acres, as he is better able to have his strips built in the fall in a timely manner. Justin also has CRP areas, pollinator habitat, and waterways on his farms. In the last three years, he has begun using cover crops as well.



A newer practice that Justin recently implemented were a pair of denitrifying bioreactors. “These have been great to work with as they have very little impact on our farming practices, but are extremely beneficial to the drainage tile water that gets cleaned before being discharged into the stream,” says Hanson.

Hanson was initially drawn to buffer strips and saturated buffers as they were both initiated by Iowa State University. “Our close distance to Ames has been valuable for us to see these practices in action and the benefits they provide. It has also been great to talk with the faculty and students that have done research associated with these projects and be able to learn from each other,” says Hanson. Additional concerns with erosion led him to also install grassed waterways and CRP in vulnerable areas.

By working with Story SWCD and NRCS staff, Justin was able to implement conservation practices easily. Hanson recalls “We found the staff very helpful after we sat down and had an initial meeting to share our ideas as to what we were interested in doing. It quickly became evident which programs were best suited for our operation.” Using the advice from NRCS, Story SWCD, and even some fellow farmers, Justin eventually decided to apply for EQIP and WQI cost-share for his saturated buffers and cover crops.

When asked about what advice he has for farmers that want to get involved with conservation, Justin said to start small, “It can be hard to change the farming practices you use all at once. Not only from an equipment standpoint but also from a mental perspective. Several things might need change and it’s not always the way we used to do things.” Justin also recommended listening to fellow farmers who have utilized these programs before. His final piece of advice was to keep in contact with the local USDA office especially when it comes to application dates and deadlines, “Communication with our local USDA office is important as changes are made to these programs. Keeping current is essential. I put it on my calendar to check in with the Story County office every June to reapply for the next year’s funding.”

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 USDA Service Center in Nevada, Iowa. 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



This report has been prepared by Prairie Rivers of Iowa, in partnership with the Story County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners