

Story County Soil & Water Conservation District



**Annual Report 2018**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

03	Commissioners Responsibilities	12	Watershed Research Tour
04	Secretary's Thoughts	13	Arbor Day Project
05	Bureau Chief Notes	14	Water Rocks!
06	Meet the Commissioners	15	Other Initiatives
08	Meet the Staff	16	In the News
09	Partnerships	18	Conservation Awards
10	2018 Practices	19	Financial Review



## OUR MISSION



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

The Story County Soil and Water Conservation District is a part of the broader Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Iowa. These organizations were established to promote conservation opportunities in the county and to support Iowa NRCS efforts.

The Story SWCD focuses on conservation, education and awareness. Our goals include:

- Increase the adoption of conservation practices to reduce erosion, improve water quality, and improve wildlife habitat
- Support and administer federal and state conservation programs
- Foster collaboration with other groups
- Improve commissioner development

# COMMISSIONER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

As elected officials responsible for managing the activities of your District, District board members are expected to perform the following duties:

- 1.** Hold regular meetings that conform to the state's Open Meeting Law, Iowa Code Chapter 21.
- 2.** Develop an understanding of Iowa Soil Conservation Laws as listed in Chapter 161A.
- 3.** Be aware of soil and water conservation conditions in the District.
- 4.** Keep in contact with IDALS-DSCWQ through correspondence, phone calls, and meeting attendance.
- 5.** Cooperate with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and other federal, state, and local organizations.
- 6.** Establish acceptable soil loss limits for soil types in the District.
- 7.** Administer state and federal cost-share programs. This includes the Iowa Financial Incentive Program (IFIP), Resource Enhancement And Protection (REAP), and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) programs as well as various federal programs that may be available such as Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).
- 8.** Adjudicate soil loss complaints.
- 9.** Develop and implement annual work plans.
- 10.** Assist IDALS-DSCWQ with the selection of the Conservation Assistant and any other state employees that may be located in the District office, such as the state soil conservation technician and the state environmental specialist.
- 11.** Publish an annual report of the District accomplishments.
- 12.** Manage all funds, both state and District, facilities, and equipment consistent with the best interests of the District.
- 13.** Enter into maintenance agreements for conservation practices.
- 14.** Employ and manage District personnel.

# SECRETARY'S THOUGHTS

Mike Naig, Secretary of Agriculture of Iowa



As I travel the state I see Iowans both on the farm and in town who take being good stewards of the land very seriously. Iowans in communities across the state care deeply about protecting our state's natural resources. They want to leave the land better for their children and grandchildren.

I'm proud of the work of our team at the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and the many partners across the state committed to soil conservation and improving water quality.

For example, just in the last year we saw:

- 2,800 farmers signed up to invest an estimated \$9 million in funding to match \$5 million in state cost share funds to adopt cover crops, no-till or strip till, or use a nitrification inhibitor when applying fall fertilizer
- 760,000 acres of cover crops in Iowa in 2017, an increase of 22 percent from the year before
- \$420 million in funding for programs with a water quality benefit, a \$32 million increase from the prior year
- 64 demonstration projects located across the state to help implement and demonstrate water quality practices

We are seeing improvements within the small watersheds that have been a focus of our efforts and now moving beyond demonstration projects to focus on implementation efforts within larger targeted watersheds.

We are also looking at new ways to expand adoption of proven practices such as cover crops. Last year we began a three-year demonstration project that provides a crop insurance premium reduction for farmers who use cover crops. We are pleased by the initial response and are working toward continued expansion of cover crops across in the state.

Thanks to the hard work of the Legislature and Governor Reynolds, we are fortunate to now have long-term water quality funding in place. The legislation that was passed and signed into law commits more than \$280 million to water quality efforts in Iowa over the next 12 years

The Department will receive \$2 million this year, \$4 million next year and then \$15 million annually through this legislation. We are targeting this new funding towards conservation infrastructure practices such as wetlands, saturated buffers and bioreactors

We are on the right path but have more work to do. I look forward to continuing to work with our incredible farmers and hundreds of partners throughout Iowa to make even more significant water quality improvements in our state.

# BUREAU CHIEF NOTES

Vince Sitzmann, IDALS-DSCWQ Field Services Bureau Chief



When I was a kid growing up on the farm I remember mom and dad used to take us kids for an evening drive around the countryside. At the time I never really understood the purpose, but I enjoyed them none the less. My dad was in his own little world, arm out the window, commenting once in a while how great Jim's beans looked or what a great stand of corn Roy had. Mom even seemed to get a little peace and quiet during these drives as my brothers and I were mesmerized by the cool breeze and the orange glow of the sunset in the horizon. On one of these excursions I remember asking my dad what those grass lines in the field were. "Those are terraces" he replied without hesitation. At the time, his explanation of why they were out there didn't make much sense to a 10-year old, but he was my dad and he knew everything.

Now that I'm older and work in the conservation field I've seen lots of new technologies that make farming and livestock production much more efficient and productive. Technology and research has led to the development of new practices such as bioreactors, saturated buffers and nitrogen mitigating wetlands, but technology and research has also confirmed that many of the practices that farmers and landowners were building back in the early forties are still effective today.

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship has partnered with farmers and landowners for more than four decades to support the adoption of proven conservation practices. Recently, the Department partnered with Iowa State University, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Iowa Nutrient Research and Demonstration Council, Iowa Nutrient Research Center, and the National Laboratory for Agriculture and the Environment to complete a statewide effort to identify and map six types of common conservation practices. The study is the most comprehensive inventory of conservation practices in the nation. An analysis of the results shows the value of this public and private investment in conservation would be 6.2 billion in today's dollars. Additional analysis work is underway to quantify the water quality impacts these practices are having in terms of reduced sediment and phosphorus loads to Iowa's lakes, rivers and streams.

The initial number of practices identified throughout the state by the mapping project include:

- 114,400 pond dams
- 327,900 acres of grassed waterways
- 506,100 terraces stretching 88,874 miles
- 246,100 water and sediment basins stretching 12,555 miles
- 557,700 acres of contour buffer strips
- 109,800 acres of strip cropping

These numbers reflect a tremendous amount of conservation work that has been completed on Iowa's productive farm ground. Today, as I'm driving down the highway with my kids, I'm always quick to point out the cover crops and conservation practices I see in the countryside, particularly the newly constructed ones. I'm not sure if I do it to educate my kids about agriculture and conservation or if it's more for my gratification knowing that conservation work is still being done. I suppose it's a little of both.

# MEET THE COMMISSIONERS



**Jerald Fitzgerald**  
Commissioner

Jerald Fitzgerald served as the 2018 chair of the Story SWCD. His focus has long been on water quality and keeping nutrients in the soil and out of streams. He has worked in agricultural retail for 30 years, making recommendations to producers regarding fertilizer needs, chemicals, and lime in a wide variety of soil management practices. He and his wife Pat have been married for 38 years and have two sons.



**Selden Spencer**  
Commissioner

Selden Spencer has lived in Huxley, IA since 1990, when he came to work as a physician at McFarland Clinic. He has been interested in environmental issues, specifically in regards to water quality, since 2000. He first ran for Story SWCD Commissioner in 2014 and currently serves as co-treasurer for the organization. He was reelected in 2018 and is liaison to the Squaw Creek Watershed Authority.



**Mark Tjelmeland**  
Commissioner

Mark Tjelmeland is in his 9th year as a Soil & Water Commissioner. He farms near McCallsburg with his wife Connie and son John. Fifty percent of the farm is a 3-year organic rotation of corn, oats, and hay. The remainder is a non-organic corn and soybean rotation. Some farm conservation practices include CRP, grassed waterways, permanent hay strips, and side dressing nitrogen on corn after nitrate tests.



**Sue Upchurch**  
Commissioner

Sue Upchurch lives in Zeoring, Iowa. She, her husband, and son operate a cattle feedyard and corn-soybean rotation operation. They typically put cover crops on about 20 percent of the farmland. She is in her third term as a Story SWCD Commissioner and currently serves as co-treasurer.



**Alisha Bower**  
Commissioner

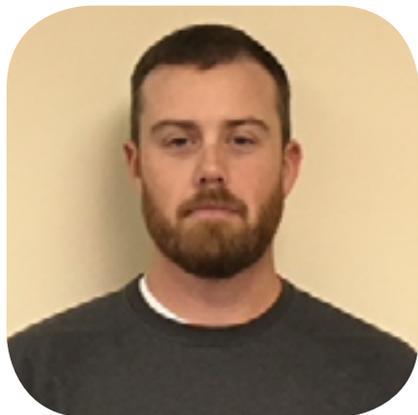
Alisha is the Strategic Initiatives Manager at Practical Farmers of Iowa, where her work supports cover crops and small grains programs. She grew up on a small farm in Wisconsin and has degrees from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Alisha served as the 2018 vice-chair of the SWCD.



**Erwin Klaas**  
Assistant Commissioner

Erv retired in 1999 as a wildlife biologist with the Biological Resources Division of the U.S. Geological Survey. He is a founding member of Prairie Rivers of Iowa and continues to serve on the board. Erv served for 12 years as an elected Commissioner. He worked for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Iowa Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit at Iowa State University, where he is a Professor Emeritus.

# MEET THE COMMISSIONERS



**Matt Woods**

Assistant Commissioner

Matt is an Iowa native currently living in Collins. He graduated in 2002 with a B.A. in biology from Simpson College and worked for Pioneer (DuPont) from 2002-2013. He currently works as an Agricultural Specialist for the Department of Agronomy at Iowa State University. His conservation interest areas include diversified crop rotations, reduction of farming inputs using sustainability practices, and strategic use of native prairie for in-field nutrient retention.



**Cindy Hildebrand**

Assistant Commissioner

Cindy and her husband Roger live near Ames. They own and manage permanently-protected Story County land with original prairie and oak savanna areas, along with restored prairie and wetlands. Cindy is a former volunteer conservation lobbyist at the State Capitol. She has been working on prairie restoration, biodiversity protection, water quality, and Iowa land use issues for 37 years.



**Dale Farnham**

Assistant Commissioner

Dale grew up on a farm near Gowrie. He holds a B.S. in Agribusiness Management from Arizona State University, and his M.S. and Ph.D. in Crop Production & Physiology from Iowa State University. He has previously worked for Webster Co. Extension, the ISU Dept. of Agronomy, Monsanto Inc., and Farmers Mutual Hail Insurance Company of Iowa. He is currently co-owner of Farham Aviation Services, LLC in Boone. In 2017, Dale was appointed to his 3rd term on the State Soil Conservation Committee.



**Jerry Radke**

Assistant Commissioner

Jerry retired as a soil scientist with the Agricultural Research Service of the USDA after 35 years of service. He received his B.S. and PhD in soil physics from the University of Wisconsin and his M.S. in soil physics and mathematics from Iowa State University. Jerry served as a Story SWCD Commissioner for 12 years. Upon stepping down, he took on the role of Assistant Commissioner in 2013. He lives in Nevada with his wife, Susan.



**Mimi Wagner**

Assistant Commissioner

Mimi received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in landscape architecture from Iowa State University. She worked as a practicing landscape architect in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Mimi joined the landscape architecture faculty at ISU in 1999, where she currently serves as an Associate Professor. She teaches courses and studios related to ecological design and the social theories of sustainability.



**Amber Anderson**

Assistant Commissioner

Amber's interest in soils started at a young age, growing up on a farm in northwest Iowa. She received her B.S. in Agronomy and Plant Health & Protection and her M.S. in Sustainable Agriculture, both from Iowa State University. After graduation, Amber worked for a number of nonprofits, including the Iowa Farmer's Union. She returned to ISU in 2014 and currently teaches courses in soil science and world food issues.

# MEET THE STAFF



**Dana Holland**  
District Conservationist

Dana is a West Bend native who received his B.S. in Earth Science/Agonomy from Iowa State University in 1981. He has been a NRCS District Conservationist for 30 years, serving Hamilton, Story, and Marshall Counties. He currently maintains shared management of both Marshall and Story Counties. Soil health and water quality remain his primary focus in assisting landowners with improving environmental stewardship.



**Hillary Olson**  
Soil Conservationist

Hillary was raised on a small row-crop and livestock farm in Story County. She graduated from Iowa State University with a B.S. in Animal Science and a M.S. in Soil Science. She has worked in multiple counties for the NRCS since 2006 and has been in the Nevada office since 2014. She and her husband have a cow-calf herd and row-crop farm. They have three kids, Owen (7), Brady (4) and Grace (2).



**Jayne Smith**  
Conservation Assistant

Jayne and her family have lived in Boone, IA since 1996. She has worked for the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality for the past 14 years. She assists producers to improve soil health and water quality through conservation practices and state cost-share opportunities in both Boone and Story County.



**Ava Haun**  
Resource Conservationist

Ava is a North Carolina native who spent much of her life on a dairy farm. After high school, she joined the U.S. Army and spent 6 years as an Apache Helicopter Mechanic. She earned a B.S. in Agricultural Systems Technologies from Iowa State University. Ava started with NRCS as an intern in Boone and Greene Counties, and joined NRCS full-time in 2014. She currently serves as a soil conservationist in Marshall and Story Counties.



**Kristi Hartwell**  
Clerical Specialist

Kristi is an ELYON contracted employee and has been working in both Story & Marshall County NRCS Field Offices for 3.5 years as a clerical specialist. When not at work she enjoys spending time with family and friends. She resides in Montour with her two sons Klayton and Koleton.



“The Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) informs, educates and leads Iowans through our local soil and water conservation districts to promote conservation of natural resources.”



Conservation Districts  
of Iowa



@ConsDistIowa

Website: [www.cdiowa.org](http://www.cdiowa.org)  
Phone: 515.289.8300

# PARTNERSHIPS

## Story County Conservation (SCC)



Story County Conservation's mission is to enhance the quality of life for all Story County citizens by wisely managing our natural resources, by providing recreational and leisure opportunities, and by educating citizens to be wise caretakers of our natural environment. SCC manages over 3000 acres of parks and natural areas and takes an active role in developing and managing wildlife habitat, including assistance to private landowners.

Story County Conservation's mission is to enhance the quality of life for all Story County citizens by wisely managing our natural resources, by providing recreational and leisure opportunities, and by educating citizens to be wise caretakers of our natural environment. SCC manages

## Conservation Districts of Iowa



district perform at its most effective level.

CDI is a non-profit organization that represents the interests of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Commissions in Iowa. CDI focuses on augmenting the work of the 100 local conservation districts by providing programs and services that helps each individual

## Iowa State University Extension



a county extension education director that serves as the local contact for Soil and Water Conservation Districts is located in all 99 counties.

Iowa State University Extension (ISUE) is responsible for providing leadership for the educational programs of the USDA. Field specialists are located throughout the state, and

## Natural Resource Conservation District



write conservation plans and apply conservation practices to their land. They provide financial assistance, develop soil surveys, monitor soil and water resources, and assist with conservation compliance.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is the technical agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that helps landowners and operators on a voluntary basis to

## Prairie Rivers of Iowa



development through the restoration and conservation of Iowa's cultural and natural resources.

Prairie Rivers of Iowa is a 501(c)3 nonprofit located in Ames whose mission is to promote economic

## Iowa Department of Agriculture (IDALS)

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship-Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality (IDALS-DSCWQ) is responsible for the administrative functions of soil and water conservation laws. Staff members advise and assist with local resource management programs, allocate state financial incentive program funds, and provides assistance to landowners in reducing non-point source pollution and the protection of groundwater quality.



## Practical Farmers of Iowa

Practical Farmers of Iowa's mission is to strengthen farms and communities through



farmer-led investigation and information sharing. They are an inclusive organization representing a diversity of farmers who believe in nature as the model for agriculture and are committed to moving their operations toward sustainability.

## Iowa Department of Natural Resources

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is the state agency that administers parks, lakes, recreation and wildlife areas, forests, natural and cultural preserves and the associated user facilities and services. They help coordinate the activities of county conservation boards and are responsible for coordinating statewide water pollution abatement and water quality management programs funded by the EPA.



## National Association of Conservation Districts

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) is the nonprofit organization that represents America's 3000 conservation districts and 17,000 men and women who serve on their governing boards. NACD's mission is to serve conservation districts by providing national leadership and unified voice for natural resource conservation.



# CONSERVATION PRACTICES

## COST-SHARE LEVELS

- **State** – Funding at the state level comes from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship budget and administered statewide to all of the counties annually. State cost-share is administered through Iowa Financial Incentives Program (IFIP) and Water Quality Initiative (WQI) programs.
- **Federal** – Funding at the federal level comes from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) budget. Federal cost-share is administered through Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).



## CONSERVATION PRACTICES AVAILABLE

### Cover Crops

Cover crops are plants that protect the soil during the off-season of row crop season here in Iowa. These plants are seeded in the fall (into the existing crops or immediately after harvest) and will either die during the winter or will need to be killed in early spring before planting the next crop.



### Conservation Tillage (No-Till/Strip-Till)

Strip-till is a system in which residue-free strips of soil are tilled ahead of planting, either in fall after harvest or in spring. No-till is a system in which the soil is not disturbed before planting, except for injecting fertilizer nutrients (liquid manure or anhydrous ammonia).



### Grassed Waterways

Grassed waterways are constructed graded channels that are seeded to grass or other suitable vegetation. The vegetation slows the water and the grassed waterway conveys the water to a stable outlet at a non-erosive velocity. Grassed waterways significantly reduce gully erosion.



### Pasture and Hayland Planting

Establishment of native or introduced forage species applied on cropland, hayland, pastureland, or other agricultural lands where forage production is planned. Benefits include reduced soil erosion, improved water quality, improved or maintained levels of livestock nutrition..



### Windbreaks

A single row or more of trees and shrubs in lines that protect areas from wind. Benefits include reduced wind erosion, protection for crops and plants from wind damage, improved irrigation efficiency, increased carbon storage in biomass and soils, and food and shelter for wildlife and pollinators.



### Timber Stand Improvement

Eliminating selected trees and vegetation to promote desired forest conditions and/or achieve improvements in the local ecosystem. Benefits include improved forest health and productivity, reduced damage from pests and stress, and restore natural plant communities and habitat.



# 2018 PRACTICES

## CONSERVATION PRACTICES FUNDED

### STATEWIDE WATER QUALITY INITIATIVE (WQI)

- Established during the 2013 legislative session to assist in implementing the Nutrient Reduction Strategy. This strategy provides ways to reach a 45 percent reduction in nitrogen and phosphorus in Iowa waters using approaches that include point and non-point sources working together to improve water quality.
- Practices include cover crops, no-till, strip-till and nitrogen inhibitors.

#### 2018 STORY SWCD PRACTICES:

- **Cover Crops** (9 farmers; total acres = 806.63). See page 10 for information about cover crops.
- **No-Till** (1 farmer; total acres = 160.00). See page 10 for information about no-till.

### REAP WATER QUALITY PROTECTION PROJECTS (REAP)

- Bring landowners and other partners within a watershed together to protect the state's water resources from point and non-point sources of contamination.
- Goal is to target and prevent off-site sediment, nutrient and livestock waste pollution.
- SWCDs set priorities for practices to fund including terraces, waterways, erosion control structures, along with other conservation practices.
- Funding for technical assistance within the project may also be provided.

#### 2018 STORY SWCD PRACTICES:

- **Windbreak** (1) – See page 10 for information about windbreaks.

### IOWA FINANCIAL INCENTIVES PROGRAM (IFIP)

- Fund allocations are made to soil and water conservation districts, commissioners set priorities for their use, and field office staff assure the technical quality of practices built.

#### 2018 STORY SWCD PRACTICES:

- **Cover Crops** (1 farmer; total acres = 11.60). See page 10 for information about cover crops.

### RESOURCE ENHANCEMENT AND PROTECTION (REAP)

- State program that invests in the enhancement and protection of the state's natural and cultural resources
- Funds go into 8 different programs, including conservation education, roadside vegetation, historical resources, public land management, city parks and open space, soil and water enhancement, county conservation and state open space.
- These funds for soil and water enhancement are managed by Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS).



### SOIL CONSERVATION COST-SHARE

- Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) receives appropriation from the Iowa Legislature.
- Funds are distributed to Iowa's 100 SWCD based on land use, soil erodibility, and landowner demand.
- Farmers and landowners apply for cost-share by visiting their local SWCDs.



# WATERSHED RESEARCH TOUR

In late August, Assistant Commissioner Matt Woods led a tour for his fellow commissioners at the Iowa State - operated Marsden and South Reynoldson Farms. He showcased the Biofuel Systems Experiment he works on professionally. The experiment is investigating how cropping system diversification and livestock integration affect productivity, profitability, soil health, and water quality.



Participants included: Selden Spencer, Jerald Fitzgerald, Mark Tjelmund, Matt Woods, Jayne Smith, and Dana Holland

# ARBOR DAY PROJECT

Every year on Arbor Day since 1985, the Story SWCD has distributed trees to all third and fourth grade students of Story County (except Ames and Gilbert whom have their own tree program). In 1985, Martin Adams, a Story County Soil and Water Conservation District supporter, donated \$5,000 to establish the Martin Adams Tree Program. The commissioners elected to invest the money into a certificate of deposit (CD) to grow the money into a larger sum which ensured the program would last for decades. Each year for the past 33 years, commissioners and staff have purchased and packaged Iowa native tree seedlings for delivery to five elementary schools on Arbor Day. In 2018, this tradition came to an end as the funding ran out.



**1985 - 2018**

# WATER ROCKS! PROGRAM

Utilizing the generous funds given by the Story County Supervisors for outreach purposes, Story SWCD began a program in 2018 to bring Water Rocks! educational assembly in the elementary schools in Story County on a rotating basis. Water Rocks! is an educational organization based out of Iowa State University and help promotes watersheds, water quality, and conservation topics around the state to students and adults. They host assemblies, deliver classroom presentations, and table events and county fairs with their soil health trailer and activities.



# OTHER INITIATIVES

Story SWCD sponsored Prairie Rivers of Iowa's educational efforts in 2018 in the following ways:

**Field days and workshops** on the topics of denitrifying bioreactors, cover crops, and native plantings management.

Installing **watershed signage** on the HUC-10 watershed boundaries county-wide. Other partners on this project include Story County Conservation, Story County Board of Supervisors, and Story County Community Foundation.

**Water quality monitoring** in both Squaw Creek and East Indian Creek Watersheds. These monitoring results are posted online at [www.prrcd.org](http://www.prrcd.org) and used for progress tracking of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy practices promoted and facilitated by our district.



## Wallaces Farmer.

Cooper, a longtime teacher at Nevada High School, purchased farmland in 2001. Although much of Story County is known for its flat topography, Cooper's farm ground is located in the southeast part of the county where gently rolling hills are prone to soil erosion.

According to soil conservationist Hillary Olson, with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and one of Cooper's former students who helped him develop his conservation plan, the oats are Cooper's introductory lesson to farming with cover crops. "The oats will help with erosion control and keep living roots in the soil for a longer period of time," says Olson. "Radishes or turnips might be other options to help break soil compaction and to help with soil biology."



*Published November 29th, 2017  
Wallaces Farmer Cover Crops Section*

### Learning about cover crops

Olson says once Cooper gets comfortable managing cover crops on the 30-acre portion of his farm, she recommends seeding all 122 acres to a winter-hardy cover crop, such as cereal rye, or to a cover crop mix that will provide many benefits.

Cooper conventionally tilled his soils until 2004, a year in which heavy rains caused visibly disturbing silt fans at the bottom of Cooper's 12% slopes. That's when he decided to make a change. "I had been watching other farmers no-till with good success," says Cooper, whose FFA chapter's no-till test plots always performed well. "It was like, 'I've got to do something different.'"

Cooper adds that eliminating tillage activities has made a big difference in his life. He runs the school's FFA program; his ag class enrollment has increased; he started the Iowa High School Renewable Energy Conference; and he recently spearheaded a \$1 million facilities expansion of Nevada High School.

### Rewarded for conservation efforts

Although Cooper began no-tilling just a decade ago, terraces and grass waterways provided some erosion protection for years. He also has many trees to help with wind erosion and to attract wildlife.

Cooper plants soybeans between cornstalk rows. "If it's too wet or cold in the spring, the stalks act like a 'wick' — taking excess moisture out or bringing heat into the ground," he notes. "In the fall, any standing stalks are cut off easily with a combine sickle and go out the combine like confetti."

Cooper's conservation ethic and smart agronomic decisions over the past decade allowed him to qualify for a Conservation Stewardship Program contract through NRCS in 2017. CSP helps farmers build on existing conservation efforts by providing an annual payment to maintain current levels of conservation and implement new conservation practices to help take farm operations to another level.

- Jason Johnson



## Letter: This is a good time to try cover crops

Published August 17th, 2018  
Ames Tribune Opinion Section

Fields everywhere are lush with soybeans and corn and we are all taking a final pause before school starts and the combines rev up for harvest.

July and August are the best time to consider putting in a cover crop to hold the soil through the fall, winter and spring.

A cover crop is one of the best ways to hold soil, retain nitrogen and help keep our rivers and lakes clean.

Story County has more than 6,000 acres already committed to a cover crop this year, and there is still money for cost share for more farmers to try cover crops.

At a time of low commodity prices it is hard to consider spending more money without immediate return.

You can still experiment with a small number of acres. Seeing some green through the fall, winter and spring will reassure you that the precious topsoil is still there and your waterways are clean.

Please contact NRCSS and FSA offices in Nevada before Labor Day with any questions. Consider trying cover crops this year.

— *Selden Spencer, Huxley*

## Letter: Mindful, involved in protecting our soil

Published December 4th, 2018  
Ames Tribune Opinion Section

Yes it is that time of year again. No, not Christmas but International Soil Day.

What will you do on Dec. 5? You don't have to go shopping. but maybe take a moment to reflect on our world and the blessings we share. Just like water and air, we didn't create soil.

Soil indirectly provides more than 90 percent of what sustains and nourishes us. This complex system of fungi, bacteria, minerals and so much more not only feeds us but holds the promise of sequestering carbon and helping to reduce the carbon heading up into the atmosphere where it is destabilizing and altering the climate. Can you say cover crop?

Like water and air, we all need to be mindful and involved in protecting our soil on Dec. 5 and every day.

— *Selden Spencer, Huxley*



# CONSERVATION AWARDS



## 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 as 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.

Steve was a gifted leader who had a knack for bringing diverse groups of people together to engage in developing innovative solutions to a number of issues. To honor his work, we have established the Steven L. Fales Conservation Award.

### Congratulations to our 2018 recipients:

Mark Hanson

Kimberly Flynn

Ryan McKinney

William Buerckley

Justin Hanson



*Pictured is Hillary Olson, Kevin Cooper, and Jerald Fitzgerald  
Published April 18th, 2018*

Kevin Cooper, Nevada High School agriculture education instructor and FFA advisor, was recently presented with the Steven L. Fales Conservation Award.

The award is in recognition of land stewardship where Cooper has implemented cover crops to improve both soil and water quality on farmland. Cooper has also farmed his land with no tillage for ten years.

The award is named posthumously after Steven Fales who served as a Story County Soil & Water Conservation District Commissioner for many years, and was passionate about environmental conservation.

*Kevin Cooper recieved the Steven L. Fales Conservation Award in 2017.*

# FINANCIAL REVIEW

## FINANCIAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2017 – JUNE 30, 2018

These funds are provided by the State of Iowa and allocated to the District by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship- Divison of Soil Conservation and Water Quality.

### DISTRICT OPERATIONS

Total Allocation.....	\$2,000.00
Commissioners Expense.....	\$1,065.09
Office Expense .....	\$164.76
Dues Paid .....	\$1,625.00
Total Funds Spent.....	\$4,854.85

### FY18 IOWA FINANCIAL INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Brought Forward.....	\$0.00
Allocation .....	\$20,795.00
Spent .....	\$8,953.87
Obligated .....	\$0.00
Recalled by State .....	\$11,841.13

### FY18 REAP PRACTICES

Brought Forward.....	\$0.00
Allocation .....	\$7,274.59
Spent .....	\$1,500.00
Obligated .....	\$0.00
Recalled by DSC .....	\$5,774.59

### FY18 REAP FORESTRY/NATIVE GRASSES

Brought Forward.....	\$0.00
Total Allocation.....	\$2,424.87
Spent .....	\$1,500.00
Obligated .....	\$0.00
Recalled by DSC .....	\$924.87

### COUNTY BUDGET

#### *Provided by the Story County Supervisors*

FY18 Allocation.....	\$15,000.00
Funds Spent in FY18.....	\$15,000.00

### DISTRICT ACCOUNTS

District Checking & Savings 7/1/17 .....	\$17,567.15
Deposits.....	\$28,141.62
Disbursements.....	\$32,433.26
Balance 6/30/18.....	\$13,275.51

The Story County Soil and Water Conservation District (Story SWCD) meets the second Tuesday of each month at 9:00 AM at the USDA Service Center. These meetings are open to the public. 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 all 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

**Support provided by Story County Board of Supervisors**