

CONSERVATION *Showcase*



Conservation Cooperation Protects Iowa Resource

A few years ago conservationists from Dickinson County, Iowa, sent money to help their peers in Jackson County, Minnesota. They are returning the favor by “sending back” cleaner water to the Iowa Great Lakes Watershed.

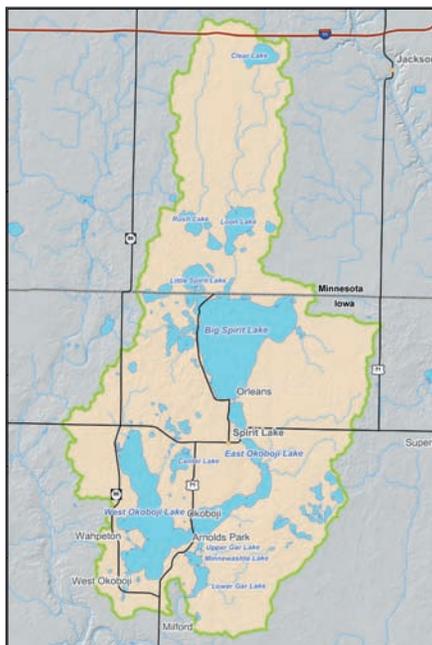
The Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) used the money to hire Justin Hanson to work with Minnesota landowners. He promoted conservation practices that could improve the quality of water draining into the Iowa Great Lakes.

One of the first farmers Hanson met with was Orville Sangl Sr.

Orville and Alice Sangl own a 160-acre farm on the Iowa border north of Spirit Lake. It is within the 78,000-acre Iowa Great Lakes watershed.



Alice and Orville Sangl Sr. stand among the 2,800 trees they planted on their 160-acre farm. The trees provide wildlife habitat and help clean water runoff entering the very popular Iowa Great Lakes.



Iowa Great Lakes Watershed

“Justin really worked with me,” said Orville, “and he brought in help. One thing led to another and now we have the entire farm in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). We are stopping a lot of erosion and water quality is higher.”

District Conservationist Joel Poppe, with U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Jackson County said, “The Sangls have turned their farm into an environmental showcase. They are really protecting the environment. They completed a

34-acre wetland restoration, installed buffer strips and planted 47 acres of a native grass/forbs mix.”

The Sangls got a lot of help. NRCS worked with the couple to determine program eligibility. The Farm Service Agency assisted with CRP. The Jackson County SWCD helped the Sangls purchase 2,800 trees for a farmstead and field windbreak. Poppe and Hanson even helped Orville Sangl plant all 2,800 trees in one day.

Many of the Sangls’ trees, shrubs and native grasses planted five years ago are now maturing. As the plants age Orville Sangl says they offer greater conservation benefits and better rainwater filtration. “Upland ducks and geese are using a pond and a wetland we installed for habitat and breeding. The grasses and CRP are really improving water quality. The pond water is now clear to five feet deep and I’m very pleased.”

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Do the Sangls' conservation practices benefit the Iowa Great Lakes? Carroll Oskvig, NRCS district conservationist in Dickinson County, thinks so.

"It is important that everyone in the watershed works to improve water quality," said Oskvig. "I believe what Minnesotans like the Sangls do on their land can impact Iowa Great Lakes water quality as much as any Iowan in the same watershed. Our Iowa team of district, state and federal conservationists work closely with Joel Poppe and our Minnesota counterparts to coordinate our efforts. We all work with producers to help them meet their needs while benefiting the environment, too."

The Sangls are firmly committed to keeping their current conservation practices.

"The farm is in a trust," said Orville. "We've told the family to keep it that way. With the trustees we've appointed, we are confident it will."

The Sangls say they enjoy the benefits their conservation practices give them. They also say they enjoy sharing those benefits with their Iowa friends across the state line.

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*Dick Tremain, Public Affairs Specialist
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NRCS District Conservationists Carroll Oskvig from Iowa, and Joel Poppe from Minnesota, stand on the shoreline of a flooded former potato field with owners Alice and Orville Sangl Sr. Now called Grover Lake, the 60-acre portion of the lake owned by the Sangls is located in Minnesota and is part of the 78,000-acre Iowa Great Lakes Watershed.