



United States Department of Agriculture

IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

NOVEMBER 2014



Natural Resources Conservation Service

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A Message from the: **State Conservationist**



Time for Thanks

I recently participated with other agency leads and USDA Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden at a Veteran Farmers roundtable at Drake University. I was inspired by the courageous men and women who fought to protect this great nation and were seeking USDA assistance to return to the land and its "healing properties".

During the event, I proudly spoke of our field offices and the many talented and passionate staff who also inspire me every day as they work to provide assistance for conservation planning and implementation.

I find inspiration all around NRCS.

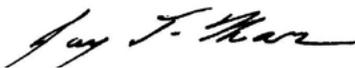
I see the dedicated NRCS support staff who come to work every day to handle our financial, contracting, human resource, and property and procurement to ensure our staff doesn't need to worry about having the vehicles, equipment, office space or other support needed to help people help the land.

I am grateful for our program staff, who comb through the 2014 Farm Bill to ensure we can effectively deliver assistance, and the eco-science and engineering staffs, who make sure our technical services are science based and our structures meet established performance and safety standards.

I see leadership who make hard decisions daily to ensure that our financial capital resources are utilized efficiently and accountably and our people are safe and productive. I engage with dedicated conservation partnerships who are willing to work side-by-side with our staff to amplify the assistance provided to producers and the public. I see a public who is getting more interested and more engaged in the importance of conservation because of our individual and marketing efforts.

And I see a future where soil health and conservation are firmly supported through a strong relationship with agricultural producers who know their farm and their conservation plan. I am thankful to live in a time and place where there is so much opportunity to make a difference and build a future for Iowa.

Happy Thanksgiving and Thank you! The Mars.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jay T. Mar". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jay T. Mar
State Conservationist

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Current Developments is a product of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in Des Moines, Iowa, published bimonthly by the Iowa NRCS Public Affairs Staff in cooperation with NRCS and partner agency employees from across the state.

Current Developments Stories and Photos

Please submit your Current Developments story ideas and photos to
State Public Affairs Specialist
Laura Crowell at laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov.

Past issues can be found at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/currentdevelopments.html.



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ECO-SCI News



Barb Stewart
State Agronomist

Microclimate and Soil Health

Did you know that 20 percent of our yield loss occurs 80 percent of the time due to water availability? We all know that good soil equals good yields but did you know that high yielding crops require more moisture in the soil reservoir? World population estimates indicate farmers will need to substantially boost production to meet the world demand. If farmers are to grow a 300 bu. corn crop they will need 5 more inches of water moving through the plant.

So how do farmers manage fields so that they can get 5 more inches of water? Improved water availability comes with improved management of the soil. Increasing the soil organic matter will increase water availability. Increasing organic matter 1 to 4 percent will double available water holding capacity. This means water availability is increased by 1-2 inches when water is most limiting during a crop's grain fill period.

To learn more about how conservation practices such as no-till, strip-till and cover crops can help in managing the microclimate watch Dr. Jerry Hatfield's presentation [Soil and Microclimate](#) on the NRCS training YouTube channel.



Eric Hurley
State Nutrient Management Specialist

ISU's P & K Recommendations Change

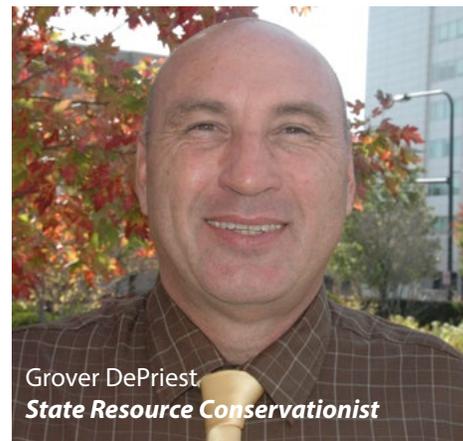
Iowa State University's recommendations for phosphorus and potassium fertilizer applications to field crops have changed as described in [PM1688: A General Guide for Crop Nutrient and Limestone Recommendations in Iowa](#).

Perhaps the most critical change is a new potassium soil test. The dry soil test is not as reliable, so a new field-moist or slurry test was added. The dry test remains, but with a significantly different interpretation.

Two other changes:

- P interpretation of the test no longer uses subsoil P information
- new table with specific recommendations for a corn-soybean rotation in which P and K are applied every other year.

A detailed description of the changes is available in the article, [Update to Iowa Phosphorus, Potassium and Lime Recommendations](#) by Antonio Mallarino and John Sawyer. Also, check out the [Nutrient Management Planning section](#) on the Iowa Sharepoint for resources.



Grover DePriest
State Resource Conservationist

Meet Grover DePriest

Grover DePriest joined Iowa NRCS on Oct. 19 as the state's new State Resource Conservationist. With more than 30 years of NRCS experience, DePriest was most recently a supervisory district conservationist for the Paola Management Unit in Paola, Kansas. He and his wife own a farm in Missouri and farm in partnership with their son.

Earth Team: Does Your Office Have a Volunteer?

How do you know if you have an Earth-Team Volunteer? Here are 4 questions that will help you in determining if you have an Earth Team volunteer:

- Is the individual at least 14 years old and do they have parental or legal guardian permission if under 18?
- If they are an NRCS employee, CD employee or district board member, is the job outside of the scope of the paid or elected position?

- Is the job they are performing one that an NRCS employee can or would perform?
- Is your state conservationist willing to extend workers compensation and tort coverage to the volunteer?

If you can answer **YES** to all four questions then you have an Earth Team volunteer.

To get help for your office, contact your area Earth Team Volunteer coordinator.

- **Area 1** – Gregory Marek, DC in Orange City
- **Area 2** – Becky Scott, AMA in Fort Dodge
- **Area 3** – Teresa Steffens, AMA in West Union
- **Area 4** – Margaret Henderson, AMA in Atlantic and Debbie Brakin, State Secretary in Leon FO will be co-sharing this responsibility
- **Area 5** – Jenny Steward, SC in Fairfield FO
- **State Office** – vacant

Back in the Day



A farmstead near Council Bluffs is surrounded by floodwaters in 1952. Western Iowa is home to many flood protection PL-566 projects to prevent similar scenes. If you have photos for Back In the Day please send them and a cutline to State Public Affairs Officer Laura Crowell at laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov.

Happy Thanksgiving!

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VIP Visit: Deputy Sec. Krysta Harden

Earlier this month, USDA Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden visited the Iowa NRCS State Office for a short meet-and-greet. She was in Des Moines to attend a veteran farmer event at Drake University.

In addition to her brief visit at the State Office, she met with the Women, Land and Legacy State Team and Women Food and Agriculture Network Executive Director Bridget Holcomb to learn more about outreach efforts to Iowa women farmers and landowners.

Video Spotlight: Soil Health and Drought Mitigation



Check out this 10-minute video on soil health and drought mitigation from the National Young Farmers Coalition. Click the link to watch the video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ab_TbN0or60

PFI Cover Crop Study: Winter Cereal Rye Affects on Cash Crop Yields

A recent Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI) study shows that a winter cereal rye cover crop can usually be added to a corn- soybean cropping system without significantly affecting yield, however proper management of the cover crop is important. Corn yield was reduced in three out of 22 site-years and soybean yield was reduced in one out of 18 site-years in the strips with cover crop compared to the strips without cover crop. Insufficiently terminating a cover crop in the spring is considered an explanation for yield reductions.



In the majority of site-years, however, corn or soybean yields were either not affected or were increased in the cover crop strips. Corn yield was not affected by the rye cover crop in 19 out of 22 site-years. Soybean yield in the strips with cover crop was greater than soybeans in strips without cover crop in four out of 18 site-years. No firm relationship between cash crop yield and spring cover crop growth was detected. This study will continue to evaluate any effect of a winter cereal rye cover crop on corn and soybean yields in 2014 with eight cooperator sites participating.

View the full report at: http://practicalfarmers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/REVISED_Winter_Rye

[Effect on Yield Yr5.pdf](#)

Summary

- Cover crops are an important addition to any farming system to improve soil quality and decrease soil erosion and nutrient loss.
- When this project began, farmers were concerned that a winter rye cover crop could negatively impact their cash crop yields.
- Farmers reported that in 36 of 40 trials, properly managed cover crops had little or no negative effect on corn and soybean yield (and actually increased soybean yield in 4 trials).

Article provided by PFI.

Save the Date: Iowa Women in Natural Resources Conference



**One Person
Makes a Difference**
**2-DAY CONFERENCE
IN SIOUX CITY**
Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center
January 29th AND 30th

Check out www.iwinr.com for more information about this two-day conference in Sioux City. Attendance would be on personal time and expense.

Changes In: NRCS Personnel

Name	Official Title	Nature Of Action	Effective Date	Location
KLEIN, JOHN C	Biologist	Retirement	9/30/14	CARROLL FO
STRIEF, ROBERT C	Soil Conservation Technician	Retirement	9/30/14	SAC CITY FO
BRINCKS, DEVIN	Soil Conservation Technician	Convert to Career Cond Appt	10/5/14	WEST UNION FO
EVANS, CHRISTINE M	District Conservationist	Name Change from Chafa	10/5/14	SERGEANT BLUFF FO
FOSTER, CRAIG WENT-WORTH	Soil Conservation Technician	New Hire	10/5/14	CENTERVILLE FO
HARRIS, ARIS ANTHONY	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	10/5/14	AUDUBON FO
HOUCK, TARA L	Office Assistant	Promotion	10/5/14	ATLANTIC AO
MCNEES, AMANDA MAE	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	10/5/14	CRESTON FO
DEPRIEST, GROVER DOYLE	State Resource Conservationist	Promotion	10/19/14	STATE OFFICE
FRERK, RODNEY J	Soil Conserv Techncn	Promotion	10/19/14	POCAHONTAS FO
GOTTEMOELLER, ADAM T	Soil Conservationist	Reassignment	10/19/14	MT AYR FO
RAHE, NATHAN H	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	10/19/14	KNOXVILLE FO
ZMOOS, NICHOLAS CHRISTOPHER	Soil Conservation Technician	New Hire	10/19/14	ELKADER FO
HOPP, RUSSELL A	Engineering Techncn (Civil)	Retirement	10/31/14	SIBLEY FO
ROBSON, RICKIE L	Soil Conservation Technician	Retirement	10/31/14	GUTHRIE CENTER FO
SHAFER, RICK LYNN	Soil Conservationist	Retirement	10/31/14	INDIANOLA FO
GOEMAAT, JUSTIN DAVID	Engineering Techncn (Civil)	Promotion	11/2/14	CLARION FO
HOLCOMBE, KEVIN E	Engineering Techncn (Civil)	Reassignment	11/2/14	ADEL FO
WESTON, ANNE R	Office Assistant	Promotion	11/16/14	ROCKWELL CITY FO
WICKMAN, STACY L	Resource Conservationist	Promotion	11/16/14	STATE OFFICE

Changes In: DSC Personnel

In order of Effective Date

Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
Rebekah Benson	Soil Technician	New Employee	10/10/2014	Sioux SWCD
Barbara Schau	Secretary	New Employee	10/14/2014	Lee SWCD

Central Office Change:

Judie Krebsbach transferred from Mines & Minerals Bureau to Water Resources Bureau – Environmental Specialist Senior – October 24, 2014

judie.krebsbach@iowaagriculture.gov

Phone: 515-725-1298