



United States Department of Agriculture

# IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Spring 2021

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NATURAL RESOURCES  
CONSERVATION SERVICE  
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May is Wetlands Month

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# IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

*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 Public Affairs Specialist Jason Johnson at [jason.r.johnson@usda.gov](mailto:jason.r.johnson@usda.gov). Past issues can be found at [https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/ia/people/employees/nrcs142p2\\_008273/](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/ia/people/employees/nrcs142p2_008273/).



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## a **Message**

from the

## State Conservationist



Jon Hubbert,  
State Conservationist

### **It's Planning Time!**

If the weather in Iowa remains relatively dry, planting season will be finished quickly. An early planting season means more opportunities for our staff to get out of the office and work with our customers to show off your expertise.

Many of us have been cooped up in our homes

and offices for a long time without getting to the field to do what most of us came here to do – to provide conservation planning assistance to our customers.

This is the time to introduce or reintroduce yourself to farmers in your counties. Let them know we provide much more than \$ to bring to the farm. Conservation planning and technical assistance are our “bread and butter.” That’s what sets our agency apart.

Make a list of farmers who you need to reach out to and set up a time to have a conversation with them.

Building relationships and trust with farmers is extremely important. Many of you have been trained on the 9-Steps of Conservation Planning in Conservation for New Employees and Boot Camp trainings, and many of you have attended the Professional Selling Skills course.

NRCS Leadership invests time and resources into these types of trainings because they are the most important aspect of the job. To deliver conservation planning effectively, it requires interpersonal skills, background knowledge, and experience. The best planners I know are good at it because they get to the field and talk to farmers, listen to their needs, and build relationships.

Identifying your customer’s needs and building relationships with them makes the rest of your job easier. So, set a goal for yourself this year to meet with as many local farmers as you can. Get to know them and their farms, have a conversation about their resource concerns, and show them that the local NRCS office staff are the conservation experts.

Sincerely,  
Jon Hubbert, State Conservationist



## PEEK, WATERLOO FIELD OFFICE WIN CIVIL RIGHTS AWARDS



**William Peek**

William Peek won the individual award and the Waterloo Field Office was honored with the group award during the USDA Joint Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights Committee Achievement Awards program held virtually on March 29.

Candidates for the awards are employees who have made a significant contribution or played a vital role in Civil Rights or Equal Employment Opportunity activities. The purpose of the awards is to recognize outstanding contributions to EEO and Civil Rights, promoting workforce diversity, cultural awareness, interagency unity, outreach to the underserved, and special emphasis programs.

Peek, an administrative support specialist on the Farm Bill Programs Team in Des Moines, was nominated for his outreach activities while working in Webster City. He served as the Northeast Area Civil Rights Representative and helped with compliance reviews, called Field Offices for reports on Civil Rights activities, and educated fellow NRCS employees and local college students about Civil Rights.

The Waterloo Field Office in Black Hawk County was nominated for their work as host of the Cedar Valley EnviroFest in 2019. The event attracted about 830 local 5<sup>th</sup> graders.

The EnviroFest focused on teaching water quality, wildlife, and other natural resources and community involvement at several stations across the college campus. About 100 volunteers assisted, helping the event reach many historically underserved communities.



**The Waterloo Field Office** hosted the first ever EnviroFest at Hawkeye Community College in May 2019, attracting about 830 5<sup>th</sup> graders from the Cedar Valley area.



**Allison Soil Conservationist Michael Luebbbers** (left) shows EnviroFest participants a soil demonstrations during the May 2019 EnviroFest.



## JOINT AGENCY SUPPORT OF WOMEN LAND AND LEGACY



### *Women, Land & Legacy*

The leadership of NRCS, FSA and IDALS-DSCWQ recently reinforced strong support of Women, Land and Legacy (WLL) and promotion of outreach to women landowners and operators through a joint agency memo. Outreach to underserved customers is a key priority as identified by Iowa NRCS leadership as well as national NRCS and USDA leadership.

Iowa NRCS is currently taking the lead role of coordinating WLL. Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen, NRCS State Outreach Coordinator, serves as the WLL coordinator and works closely with all partners involved in WLL efforts at the statewide and local levels.

The joint agency memo provides clear and consistent guidance for those counties (current and future) implementing WLL, as summarized below:

- » Staff will conduct WLL actions on official time, as approved by their supervisor.
- » Postage for WLL mailings will be provided by NRCS or FSA locally (as approved by the DC/CED and as budget allows). Postcards will be used for WLL Listening Sessions and non-postage forms of communication will be utilized as much as possible.
- » USDA Service Center printers can be utilized for

printing of WLL materials. See the joint agency memo for possible options to use for large printings.

- » Supplies such as paper, envelopes etc. at the USDA Service Centers may be utilized for WLL efforts and events.
- » NRCS and FSA staff may earn credit leave and/or comp time when working beyond core hours to conduct WLL events with advanced approval from their supervisor and following the guidance in the joint agency memo. IDALS staff may utilize a flexible schedule when conducting WLL events that take place outside of core hours, with advanced approval and following the guidance in the joint agency memo.

When pandemic restrictions begin to lift and in-person events are possible, expansion of WLL into new counties will be a priority as well as the continued support and enhancement in current WLL counties. Tanya will assist all WLL counties as they either begin this successful outreach effort locally or continue to expand existing WLL efforts and events.

The WLL joint agency memo can be found on the NRCS Partnerships Sharepoint and also can be viewed on the WLL website by clicking on this link, <https://womenlandandlegacy.files.wordpress.com/2021/04/joint-agency-memo.pdf>. Contact Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen at [tanya.meyer@usda.gov](mailto:tanya.meyer@usda.gov) or 515-323-2265 with questions or requests related to WLL.





## DUBUQUE, DELAWARE OFFICES 'PARTY FOR THE PLANET'



*Submitted by Theresa Weiss,  
District Conservationist, Dubuque County*

The Dubuque and Delaware County Field Offices participated in the "Party for the Planet" 2021 Earth Day event hosted by the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium in Dubuque on April 24.

They demonstrated the Rainfall Simulator Trailer and the Soil Health Tunnel with a scavenger hunt for kids. The museum estimated more than 700 guests attended the event.

Workers include Neil Sass, NRCS Area Resource Soil Scientist; Mike Freiburger, Dubuque SWCD Commissioner/volunteer; Karen Weece, Delaware SWCD CCG Grant Project Coordinator; and Theresa Weiss, NRCS District Conservationist in Epworth.

It was a fun day and many guests learning about Soil Health! It was great to be back out doing in-person outreach to the public!! Happy Earth Day!

**Northeast Area Resource Soil Scientist Neil Sass** (left) talks to a couple "Party for the Planet" attendees about soil aggregate stability by demonstrating a Slake Test at the April 24 event.



**Epworth District Conservationist** helped lead discussions for attendees walking through the NRCS soil health tunnel at the "Party for the Planet" Earth Day event on April 24.



## NRCS SAYS GOODBYE TO FORMER CHIEF, NATIVE IOWAN JOHNSON

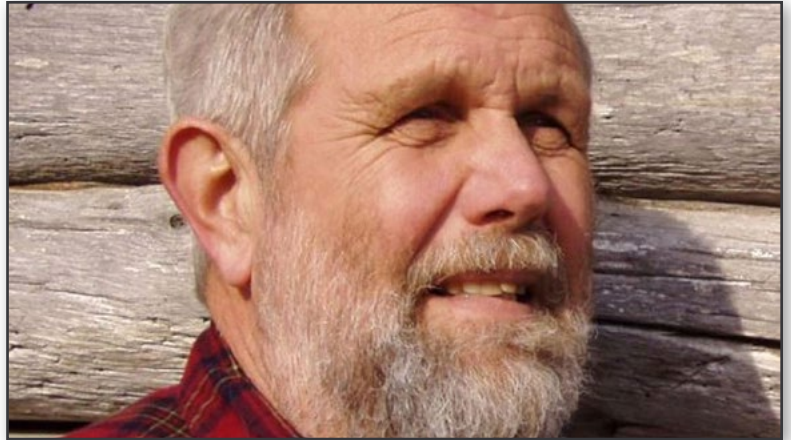
Former NRCS Chief Paul Johnson passed away on Feb. 15, surrounded by his family at his home outside of Decorah. Johnson served as NRCS Chief from 1994 to 1997.

Following Johnson's passing, former USDA Farm Production and Conservation Acting Deputy Under Secretary Kevin Norton said, "Chief Johnson made incredible contributions to conservation in our country, both nationwide as chief of NRCS as well as in his home state of Iowa. Paul was a visionary, leading the agency through its growth from the Soil Conservation Service to the NRCS, which had a broader mission focused on conservation of all natural resources on private lands.

"He was also credited with expanding available conservation programs, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, which today continues to serve as the agency's flagship program that provides resources to help farmers and ranchers bring to life the conservation plans for their working lands. We will keep his family and friends in our thoughts and prayers, and we will continue to cherish Paul's many contributions to the conservation movement."

Johnson was a farmer, legislator, public servant, educator, and tireless advocate for conservation. He grew up in rural South Dakota and earned a BS and MS in forestry from the University of Michigan. In the 1960s, he served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ghana and taught forestry at the University of Michigan and in the Ghana Forest Ranger School.

Johnson married Pat in 1965. The couple raised three children: Eric, Andrew and Annika. The Johnson family has owned Oneota Slopes Farm outside Decorah since 1974. In the 1996 NRCS publication, *America's Private Lands, A Geography of Hope*, Chief Johnson wrote, "Our farm, our neighbors' farms, and all other private land comprise a majority of the American landscape. As we use our land, we paint our individual and community portraits on the land. Done well, those portraits can be a source of pride." Situated in Iowa's scenic Driftless Area, the Johnson farm stands as a portrait of agriculture in harmony with the environment and a testament to a man who suited his actions to his words.



Elected to the Iowa State Legislature three times from 1984 to 1990, Johnson co-authored the state's 1987 Groundwater Protection Act, the 1989 Resource Enhancement and Protection Act (REAP) and the 1990 Iowa Energy Act. In 1993, President Clinton asked Johnson to serve as the Chief of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, a post he held from 1994-1997. After his time in Washington, Chief Johnson returned to Iowa to serve as the Director of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources from 1999-2000.

As leader of NRCS, Chief Johnson helped develop and implement the conservation title of the 1996 Farm Bill. He implemented the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program to help landowners develop and improve high quality wildlife habitat for species of local and national significance. Under Chief Johnson's tenure, the Soil Conservation Service became the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Chief Johnson's conservation philosophy served as a guidepost for an agency grappling with serving an American public increasingly disconnected from working the land. For the NRCS, Chief Johnson's inspiring call to remember the deep connections between America's private farm, ranch, and forest lands and the health and prosperity of the whole nation is a lasting reminder to employees that the agency's conservation work is of vital, national importance.



## HEALTHY SOILS, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES: SWCW, APRIL 25-MAY 2

*Submitted by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship-Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality (IDALS-DSCWQ)*

**Iowa Soil and Water Conservation Week**, April 25-May 2, was an opportunity to recognize the important conservation work placed on the Iowa landscape and bring attention to the ongoing work by farmers, landowners and urban residents to protect the state's soil and water resources.

Iowa Soil and Water Conservation Week this year was coordinated with national Stewardship Week, sponsored by the National Association of Conservation Districts.

This year's Stewardship Week theme is "Healthy Soils, Healthy Communities" and is designed to focus the nation's attention on the stewardship and importance of our natural resources.

The severe erosion during the "Dust Bowl" years of the 1930s brought about the first efforts to prevent soil erosion, which also helped protect water resources. Iowa passed a law in 1939 to establishing a state agency and the means for soil and water conservation districts to organize. This legislation declared it the policy of the State of Iowa to: preserve soil and water; protect the state's tax base; and promote health, safety and public welfare of people of Iowa.

Today, Iowa is a national leader in the implementation of water quality and watershed projects, soil conservation and buffer programs. Iowa currently leads the nation in the continuous conservation reserve program buffer initiative with



**Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds signed a proclamation on Tuesday, April 27**, stating Soil and Water Conservation Week in Iowa is April 25 through May 2. Attendees of the ceremonial signing included (Front Row): NRCS State Conservationist Jon Hubbert (far right); Lieutenant Governor Adam Gregg (next to Hubbert); and IDALS Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality Director Susan Kozak (left of Gov. Reynolds). The back row (L to R) includes: Matt McDonald, IDALS Water Quality Initiative Projects Coordinator; Shane Wulf, IDALS Water Quality Initiative Edge of Field Coordinator; John Whitaker, Conservation Districts of Iowa Executive Director; Kate Bussanmas, IDALS-DSCWQ Asst. Director; and Vince Sitzmann, IDALS Mines & Minerals Division Director.

more than 600,000 acres. Iowa also has more than 60 active watershed and water quality projects across the state.





# PLANTS ARE WHAT THEY EAT

## Healthy garden soil is important for growing quality produce

by Ruth Blomquist,  
NRCS SW IA Soil Health Specialist



You have probably heard the saying, “You are what you eat.” But have you ever considered that plants are what they eat? Healthy soil provides plants with everything they need to make high quality, nutritious and delicious products.

Soil is a large community of living organisms that depend on each other for energy and cycling nutrients. From earthworms to microbes, managing the soil to benefit this ecosystem can improve production in gardens, yards, or fields. This living portion of the soil builds an excellent environment for roots to grow for plant support as well as gather nutrients, water, and air.

Microorganisms are essential for the decomposition of plant residues and breakdown of organic matter. These natural fertilizers are an ideal food source for the soil biology and reduce the need for synthetic inputs. This provides plants with easy access to high quality nutrients, resulting in nutritionally dense produce.

Have you ever noticed how slimy an earthworm is? The slime from earthworms and other soil microbes glue the particles of sand, silt, and clay together to form stable soil aggregates. Larger soil organisms create channels and pore spaces in the soil. These aggregates and pore spaces create good soil structure which improves water infiltration and water holding capacity and makes the soil more resistant to erosion and compaction.

To improve soil health, it is important to create a good habitat for microbes to flourish. Follow these tips to create healthy soils with high microbial activity:

- » **Minimize soil disturbance** by using hand tools instead of tilling up the entire garden bed. Soil disturbances are very disruptive to the biological system. Tillage destroys the soil pore spaces and

microbial habitat, leading to erosion, reduced water infiltration, hard compacted soils, and reduced microbial populations.

- » **Keep the soil surface covered as much as possible.** Crop residues, mulch, straw, or grass clippings protect exposed soil from erosion and suppress weeds. As these residues decompose, they add organic matter and nutrients to the soil that will be available for plant growth.
- » **Add compost to your garden.** Compost is a great way to boost microbial populations and add organic matter to the soil. This will improve soil structure and water holding capacity of the soil.
- » **Use cover crops.** Cover crops provide many benefits, even on small garden plots. Continuous, growing plant material provides a food source for soil organisms. Cover crops protect the soil surface from erosion. Deep rooted cover crops can break up compacted layers and improve soil structure.
- » Over time, using a **combination of practices** to boost microbial activity and improve soil health will result in a highly functioning, healthy soil. Improving soil health will not happen overnight, but with a little patience you can enjoy working in a light fluffy soil. You can then reap your rewards by eating delicious, high quality, nutritious garden produce.



## BOTTOMS RETIRES FROM NRCS AFTER NEARLY 32 YEARS OF SERVICE

Soil Conservation Technician Thomas Bottoms retired after nearly 32 years of service to NRCS on March 12.

Earniece Young, Resource Team Leader for the Oakland Resource Team, only knew Bottoms for a short time, but was impressed with what he said during his exit interview.

"His words of advice for any new or current employee is to keep an open mind and be willing to work together no matter the grade or series," said Young. "He hopes to see the agency continue to improve upon its mission of customer service, especially returning to face-to-face contact with our customers as health guidelines permit."

Bottoms spent most of his time in Pottawattamie County in the Council Bluffs Field Office. He started his career as a temporary full-time employee in Denison and worked in Carroll for a short time before moving to Council Bluffs.

Thomas' twin brother, Tim, worked in the Des Moines NRCS State Office for a while before moving to Lincoln, Neb. He retired from NRCS a couple of years ago, says Margaret Henderson, Administrative Management Assistant in Atlantic. "You'd have to find some real old timers who would remember Tim working for us," she said.



**NRCS Soil Conservation Technician Thomas Bottoms** retired March 12 after 32 years of service.

FPAC Public Affairs hosted a training on April 28 to help field office staff better tell their success stories through written articles and photography. If you missed the live event, you can access a recording of the half-hour training at the link below:

[FPAC Success Story & Photography 101 Training](#)



### FPAC Success Story & Photography 101

Wednesday, April 28 at 3-4 p.m. Eastern (Teams Live)

Join us as the FPAC Public Affairs team and national photographer talk about how to show and tell our stories. You'll hear practical writing and interviewing tips along with what it takes to capture impactful images—even with your cell phone! This training will be recorded and posted online for on-demand viewing.

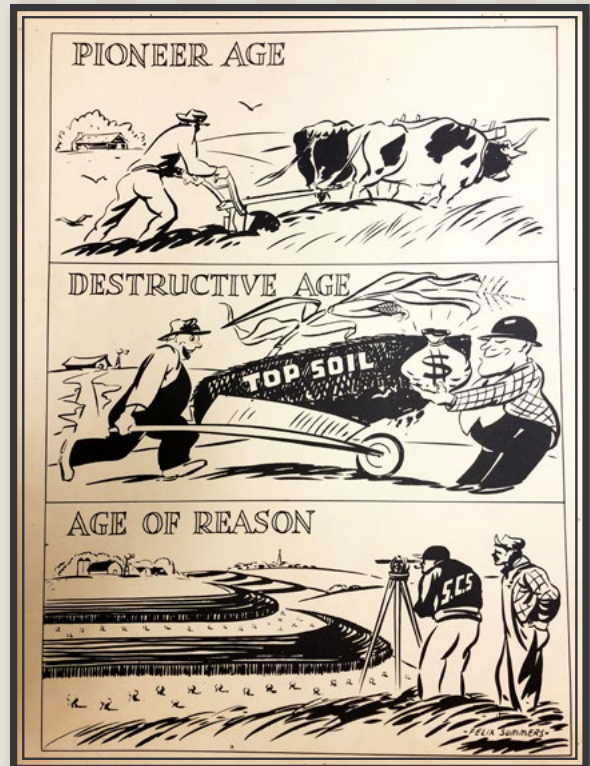
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# BACK IN THE DAY

## WINNEBAGO COUNTY FIELD OFFICE UNCOVERS VINTAGE PICTURES

IDALS Conservation Assistant Sharyl Anderson was recently cleaning out a storage unit at the library in Thompson where the field office was once located. She found several old Soil Conservation Service (SCS) marketing materials that they guess dated back to the 1950s.



**EMPLOYEE  
SPOTLIGHT**

**Wade  
Klooster**



Wade Klooster

**Title:** Civil Engineer (Des Moines)

**Education:**

B.S., Iowa State University (2015),  
Civil Engineering

**Where did you grow up?**

I grew up in Clinton, IA, on the “East Coast” of Iowa. My family lived on a small acreage on the edge of town and operated a small horse stable. We also grew a sizable field of sweetcorn and had chickens. It was a great place to grow up, and I’m glad I got a small glimpse at what it might be like to grow up on a farm.

**Career Background:**

I started my career in 2015 as a project manager/civil engineer with Naval Facilities Engineering Command in Philadelphia, PA. I was primarily working in a project manager role on a multitude of facilities and infrastructure projects. It was a great opportunity to serve at the birthplace of the US Navy, in a shipyard that has played a vital role in our Nation’s history. However, I was really looking to get more design experience and get back to a place that felt like home.

**Tell us how you started working for NRCS.**

I studied civil engineering because I have always been interested in creating infrastructure that benefits society. My course work in geology, geotechnical engineering, and hydrology all briefly mentioned the NRCS, so I had an idea that this organization existed. However, when taking an environmental engineering class at ISU I did a semester report on constructed wetlands and their ability to remove nutrient loads. That assignment really led me to learning more about the NRCS and its mission. My education coupled with the fact that I wanted to work in the public sector guided me to the NRCS.

**Has anyone strongly influenced your career?**

My senior design professor at Iowa State University, Beth Hartman, was the person who really helped

me discover engineering jobs with the government; I owe her a lot of credit for the professional path I have taken. Additionally, I had a pseudo-mentor at NAVFAC, Leo Vaccaro, who imparted on me a lot of his on-the-job knowledge he had gained during his 45-year engineering career.

**What are some of your hobbies?**

I played a lot of sports growing up – football, basketball, soccer – and I still enjoy playing recreational sports as often as I can. I took up cycling when I was in college, so I am glad to be able to take advantage of the abundance of trails that Central Iowa has to offer. I also spend a lot of time playing guitar and listening to music, reading (mainly about history), and I dabble in photography.



EMPLOYEE  
SPOTLIGHT

**Becky  
Hanson**



*Becky Hanson*

**Title:** District Conservationist  
(Northwood)

**Education:**

B.S., Northland College (2004),  
Natural Resources

**Where did you grow up?**

I grew up on a farm in north-central Iowa. We raised corn and soybeans on about 1,000 acres and we had about 40 head of cows/calves on pasture. There was a time when we had a farrow to finish hog operation and fed out hundreds of head of beef cattle as well.

**Career Background:**

In the summers during college I worked for our local Soil & Water Conservation District promoting filter strips and grassed waterways, as well as doing CRP status reviews. It was through that work that I got introduced to NRCS. As college graduation neared, there weren't many NRCS jobs advertised in the Midwest so I broadened my search. I accepted a Soil Conservation Technician position in Idaho. After about a year and a half and working primarily on irrigation system improvements, I felt the urge to take another look at job openings in the Midwest! From there, I took an SCT position in Wisconsin, then a couple years later I took one in

southern Minnesota. Eventually, the SCT position in my home-county opened up and I had to try for that. After being in Iowa as an SCT for a few years the management unit approach took hold and more Soil Conservationist positions were advertised, so I was able to get into that series without having to move again.

**Why did you become a District Conservationist?**

The position opened up in the right place at the right time and felt like I could do the job well! I had 5 years of SC experience and 9 years of SCT experience. I had already moved so much earlier in my career that once I was in north-central Iowa I really wanted to stay pretty close by.

**What influenced you to get into conservation?**

My family loved to hunt and fish and farm. It was important to them to have conservation practices like filter strips and grassed waterways where they were needed. They had CRP in other marginal spots, too. My plan when I started college was

to get a degree in natural resource management then get a job managing public lands. However, while I was in college I grew more passionate about helping private landowners manage their land and natural resources.

**Has anyone strongly influenced your career?**

I've been lucky to work with a lot of great people in my previous positions. Brenda Tenold-Moretz has been someone I've known since my start with the local district and has been a great mentor ever since.

**What are some of your hobbies?**

I enjoy hiking, fishing, camping, road trips to see national parks across the country, helping my parents at the farm, and spending time with my family.

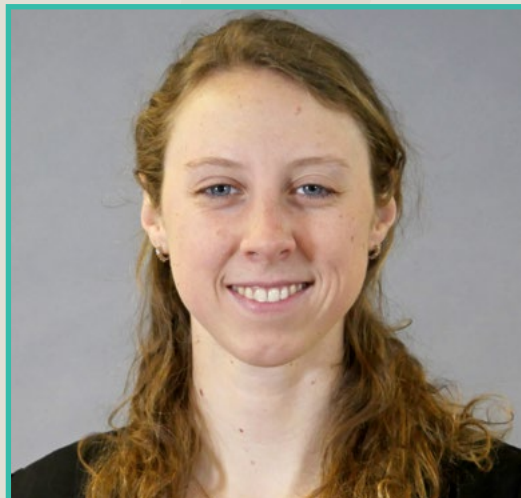
**Tell us about your family.**

My husband, Jim, is the Director of the Worth County Conservation Board. He and I continue to help my parents on the farm as needed. We have 3 children: Merrin (13), Henry (10) and Ruby (6).



EMPLOYEE  
SPOTLIGHT

**Brittany  
Decker**



*Brittany Decker*

**Title:** Soil Conservationist  
(Fort Dodge)

**Education:**  
B.S., Iowa State University (2018),  
Agronomy

M.S., University of Nebraska-  
Lincoln (2020), Agronomy

**Where did you grow up?**

I grew up in Bode, IA, which is a  
small farming town in North Cen-  
tral Iowa.

**Career Background:**

I began with the NRCS in June  
of 2020 as a Soil Conservationist  
on the Sgt. Bluff Resource Team.  
In late 2020, my husband and I  
moved to Fort Dodge where I  
joined the Fort Dodge Resource  
Team, continuing as a Soil Con. I  
would eventually like to become a  
Resource Conservationist.

**Why did you become a Soil  
Conservationist?**

My interest in conservation led me  
to apply as a soil conservationist.

**What influenced you to get into  
conservation?**

Many of my extended family  
members farm and that led me  
to want a career interacting with  
farmers. I became more interested  
in conservation practices in college  
and through extension field  
days that I participated in. This  
combination of interests led me to  
look for careers in conservation.

**Has anyone strongly influenced  
your career?**

My family influenced my career  
choice by inspiring me to pursue  
a career in agriculture and being  
supportive of me every step of the  
way.

**What are some of your hobbies?**

I enjoy crocheting, ju-jitsu, and  
riding bicycles with my husband,  
Matt.



EMPLOYEE  
SPOTLIGHT

Connor  
Geib

**Title:** Soil Conservationist  
Technician (Oakland)

**Education:**  
Exira-Elk Horn-Kimballton High  
School (2017)

**Where did you grow up?**

I grew up in a small town in western Iowa, Onawa, then moved to Elk Horn for about 7 years. I now live in Harlan Iowa. Living in Onawa had a lot of memories to it. A great time being with my dad and family. When I moved to Elk Horn, it was a whole new start on life and a great way to meet all kinds of new people. I wanted to learn all about the NRCS growing up so I did two summers of volunteer work with them and it was definitely an adventure.

**Why did you become a Soil Conservation Technician?**

I applied because it's what I've wanted to do for a very long time. I enjoy every bit of helping farmers achieve their goals while keeping the right conservation practices. It

is a really good way to get to know people and how their ideas can influence the way a lot of people think about things.

**What influenced you to get into conservation?**

What influenced me to go into the NRCS has to go completely to my father, Darrell Geib (Area Resource Conservationist in Atlantic). I always enjoyed talking to him about what he did that day at work and what ways to better conservation to keep soil health alive.

**What are your career goals?**

The career path I would like to take would be staying in my position for about 5 years and then move

up to a CET (Civil Engineering Technician) for a long, amazing career ahead of me.

**Has anyone strongly influenced your career?**

If there is anybody who has influenced me it would have to be my dad, Darrell Geib. He always pushed me to become better and better so I could become successful.

**What are some of your hobbies?**

The things I like to do in my free time are hunting, fishing, Trapping, camping, hiking, and just being outside while the weather is so nice.



Connor Geib

**EMPLOYEE  
SPOTLIGHT**

**Bryce  
Snakenberg**



*Bryce Snakenberg*

**Title:** Soil Conservationist  
(Mount Pleasant)

**Education:**  
B.S., Iowa State University (2018),  
Agricultural Studies

**Where did you grow up?**

I grew up on a small cow/calf operation near Sigourney, IA. This is where I found my passion for agriculture. As I grew more into the operation, I found myself consistently looking for more efficiency within the operation which I found predominately with conservation practices.

**Career Background:**  
Working closely with the

local NRCS office while in college, I began to get a better understanding of the importance of soil health through cover crops and pasture management practices and how they benefited more than just my bottom line.

As I was finishing up college at Iowa State, I started working at the NRCS office as a 780 State employee the summer of 2018. I was able to work two surveying

seasons as a 780 before being hired as a Soil Conservationist the summer of 2020 in the Fairfield NRCS Field Office.

**What influenced you to get into conservation?**

It was the Sigourney NRCS staff that with their patience and commitment to me, guided my way through college and provided the stepping stones to a Career with NRCS.

## **INCREASING OFFICE SPACE FOR RESOURCE TEAMS A TOP PRIORITY**

The 2020 Iowa NRCS staff reorganization is forging ahead, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and available office space as obstacles.

As most of you know, offices are slowly transitioning back to normalcy from the pandemic. Likewise, increasing office space for Resource Teams is beginning to take shape. Below are some Resource Team office space updates, as well as some other office updates:

- » New furniture has been installed in Williamsburg, Sergeant Bluff, and Epworth. Twelve more offices are scheduled for a furniture refresh this year.
- » New office buildings are being constructed in Webster City, Nevada, Mount Ayr, and Estherville,

with tentative completions of September 2021. New furniture will also be purchased for these offices.

- » Building modifications are being completed in Humboldt, Anamosa, Marshalltown, and Greenfield.

For the latest staffing changes, check out the Iowa Personnel Changes report on page 18. If you have questions about the reorganization, including office space or staffing issues, contact your immediate supervisor, the assistant state conservationist for field operations (ASTC-FO) at the Area Office, or Jaia Fischer, assistant state conservationist for management and strategy (ASTC-MS), at the State Office (515-284-4525).





## Zach and Mitchell's Excellent Conservation Adventure

*Courtesy of the Field Work Podcast:*

In some parts of the country, farmers who try out conservation practices run the risk of getting pegged as hippie farmers. But then there are some clusters of farmer communities, like Washington County, Iowa, where Field Work podcast co-host Mitchell Hora hails from.

Conservation is all the rage there, and they're not exactly granola-y, hippie types. What gives? How did the culture there turn out so different from where fellow host Zach Johnson farms in Minnesota? Zach and Mitchell embarked on a mission to figure it out, and they met some risk-taking farmers and insightful experts along the way.



## Gabe Brown Discusses How Regenerative Agriculture is a Solution to Global Challenges

The Carbon Series kicks off with Gabe Brown, legendary Rancher from Bismarck, North Dakota. US Energy had the opportunity to visit the Brown Ranch where Gabe supports 17 enterprises on his 5,000 acres. He tells his story of how and why he made the transition to Regenerative Agriculture and why the industry should embrace this model.

Gabe believes Regenerative Agriculture provides solutions for building capacity and resilience while combating challenges around climate change, desertification, poverty, and food security. Visit [www.UnderstandingAg.org](http://www.UnderstandingAg.org) to get more information and resources on how and why Regenerative Agriculture is a sustainable solution.



The Carbon Series will be hosting the Carbon Summit on June 16th-17th, 2021 at the College of Idaho (Caldwell) in the heart of the Treasure Valley. Visit [www.CarbonSummit.org](http://www.CarbonSummit.org) for more information or to get involved!

## Changes In IOWA NRCS PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Hassebrock, Brent	Biologist (Wetland Specialist)	Appointment	2/14/21	Indianola
Martinson, Judy	Resource Conservationist	Retirement	2/27/21	Des Moines
Fetting, Brenton	Biologist (Wetland Specialist)	Appointment	2/28/21	Red Oak
Klump, Michaela	District Conservationist	Promotion	2/28/21	Sac City
Nelson, Willie	Area Resource Soil Scientist	Promotion	2/28/21	Atlantic Area
Bottoms, Thomas	Soil Conservation Technician	Retirement	3/12/21	Oakland/Co. Bluffs
Asche, Adam	Resource Team Leader	Promotion	3/14/21	Webster City RT
Brady, Benjamin	District Conservationist	Promotion	3/14/21	Le Mars
Friedrich, Madison	District Conservationist	Promotion	3/14/21	Onawa
Gleaves, Terry	District Conservationist	Promotion	3/14/21	Oakland
Gravel, Lee	Resource Team Leader	Promotion	3/14/21	Sgt. Bluff RT
Timmerman, Katherine	Asst. State Conservationist for Programs	Temporary Promotion/Detail	3/14/21	Des Moines
Zaiger, Lucas	District Conservationist	Reassignment	3/14/21	Logan
Miller, Thomas	Biologist (Wetland Specialist)	Retirement	3/27/21	Anamosa
Golson, Joshua	Biologist (Wetland Specialist)	Appointment	3/28/21	Creston
Gilles, Chad	Resource Team Leader	Promotion	3/28/21	Waterloo RT
Rogers, Jacqueline	Soil Conservationist	Retirement	3/31/21	Mt. Pleasant
Green, Talitha	Administrative Support Specialist	Appointment	4/11/21	Des Moines
Moen, Kathleen	Resource Conservationist	Promotion	4/25/21	Charles City RT
Prichard, Randi	Resource Conservationist	Promotion	4/25/21	Sgt. Bluff RT
Kitzman, Heather	Resource Conservationist	Promotion	4/25/21	Waterloo RT
Baxter, Nichole	Resource Conservationist	Reassignment	4/25/21	Newton RT
Willenbring, Alycia	Resource Conservationist	Promotion	4/25/21	Epworth RT

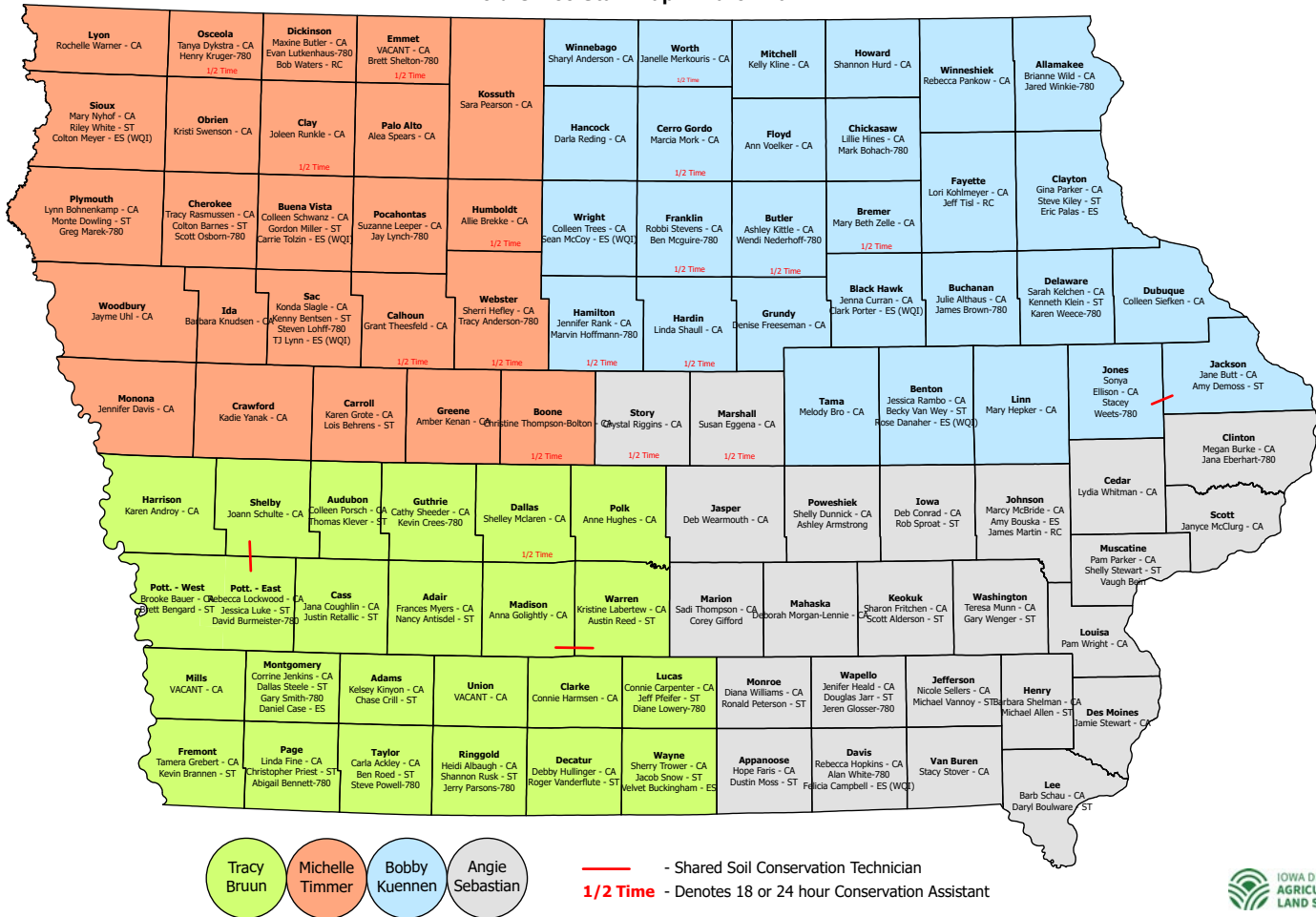
RT = Resource Team



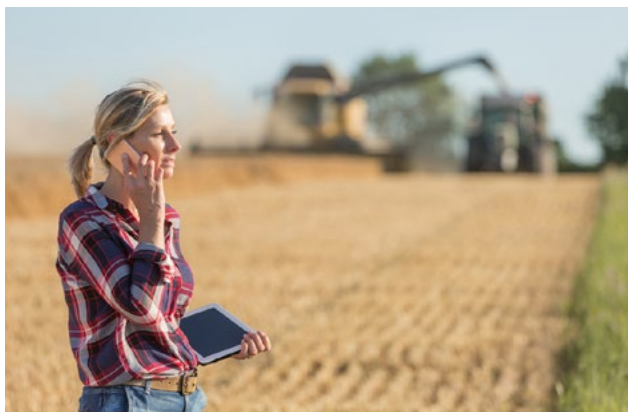
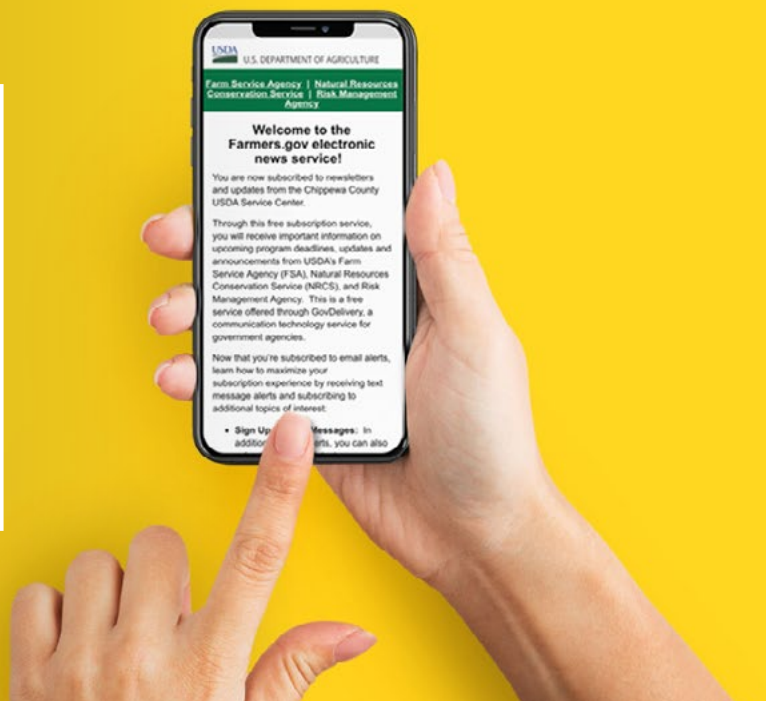
## Changes In IDALS-DSCWQ PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Golightly, Anna	Conservation Assistant	New Employee	2/19/21	Madison SWCD
Baker, Dixie	Conservation Assistant	Retirement	3/4/21	Union SWCD
Druhl, Cassie	Urban Environmental Specialist	Contact Change	4/2/21	Central Office - Des Moines
Myers, Frances	Conservation Assistant	Transfer	4/16/21	Adair SWCD to Union SWCD
Jarr, Doug	State Conservation Technician	Retirement	4/29/21	Wapello SWCD
Vanderflute, Roger	State Conservation Technician	Retirement	4/29/21	Decatur SWCD

**IDALS - Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality**  
**Field Office Staff Map – March 2021**



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#### **Exercise at Your Desk**

**Thursday, April 29, 2021, 12:00 to 1:00 PM EST**

*The impact of a sedentary lifestyle is significantly increasing our risk of cardiovascular disease and decreasing our physical wellness. Join Dawn Orso, Integrative Health Coach, to learn how to incorporate physical activity into your daily routine at home to keep you on the path to staying healthy.*

#### **Well-being Through Meditation**

**Thursday, May 13, 2021, 2:00 to 3:00 EST**

*People can learn to manage stress and lead happier, healthier lives. Join Alfred Santos a certified clinical hypnotherapist and Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) practitioner, to will learn and practice effective coping skills through meditation.*

#### **Returning to Work During COVID-19**

**Thursday, June 10, 2021, 2:00 to 3:00 PM EST**

*As businesses across the country begin moving employees back into office spaces, conversations among employers and employees alike are determining what it means to return or to continue working during the COVID-19 pandemic. Join Jenny Edwards, MA, LAT/ATC, WCP, CWC, GEHA's Health & Wellness Program Administrator, share ways the pandemic has impacted the workplace and what precautions employers and employees can take when transitioning back into traditional office spaces.*

**Farm Production and Conservation**

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