



United States Department of Agriculture

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

IOWA NRCS

SUMMER 2022



USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE



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A NOTE FROM THE STATE CONSERVATIONIST

I hope everyone is having a great summer so far and with good planning you have been able to take a break from work to enjoy some time off. After a relatively cool spring and resulting planting delays for most of the state, temperatures outside are heating up and the crops are generally growing nicely as scattered showers supply the necessary moisture. I am hopeful that our producers will have the opportunity to bring in a bountiful harvest.

The weather can be a farmer's best friend at times and their worst enemy at other times – frequently in the same growing season. There are ways to help our customers through extreme weather conditions and protect their natural resources. Summer is a great time to visit with producers to discuss ways to plan for future heavy rains and gusty winds.

Admittedly, conservation programs and special initiatives have driven conservation planning and implementation over the past couple decades. Conservation programs often dictate what practices receive funding and are implemented. In contrast, the conservation planning process remains relatively unchanged and continues to serve as a foundation for implementing conservation on the land. If we are proactive with our producers and help them to develop a conservation plan for their land, more practices can be implemented strategically.

The planning process should be individualized, fit the customer's goals, and the land's unique features. Our planning efforts should include a suite of practices that address resource concerns and help lead to the greatest return on investment for the producer and environment. These practices should help the land rebound after extreme weather events, such as drought and floods, improve soil health, and reduce energy and input costs for the producer.

We implemented the 2020 staff reorganization to help expand the level of expertise at the Field Office and Resource Team level. Our goal continues to be to ensure our field staff have the right expertise, are stationed in the right locations, and have time to work one-on-one with our customers. If you don't feel you are at this level, there are upcoming trainings designed to help staff confidently plan and communicate with our customers about the natural resources on their land. Take advantage of our experienced staff and learn as much as you can this summer!

If you haven't already taken the time, I hope each of you has an opportunity to get away and take a vacation this summer. Enjoy your family and friends and the outdoors!

Sincerely,

Jon Hubbert, State Conservationist

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Current Developments

Current Developments is a product of 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.

Stories and Photos

Please submit your Current Developments story ideas and photos to State Public Affairs Specialist Jason Johnson at jason.r.johnson@usda.gov. Past issues can be found at https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/ia/people/employees/nrcs142p2_008273/.

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Max Pitt (left), Associate Professor of Business with Graceland University, and Ruth Blomquist (right), NRCS Soil Health Specialist, examine soil in a field across from Graceland University in Lamoni.

SOIL EVALUATION INSPIRES STUDENTS TO LEAD EFFORTS IN CONSERVATION

By Jolene Bopp, Public Affairs Specialist

Decatur County Future Farmers of America (FFA) students gathered at Graceland University in Lamoni on May 19 for the 2nd Annual Soil Health Evaluation, sponsored by the Dekko Foundation.

Students listened to a brief presentation before beginning the soil test plot evaluations. Ruth Blomquist, Soil Health Specialist with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), shared educational information about soil health and how teams would participate in the competition.

"NRCS's involvement adds resources, credibility and expertise to the soil health evaluation," said Max Pitt, Associate Professor of Business with Graceland University. "Together, we were able to include tests

that don't involve expensive equipment. For example, in the flag test, when you push the flag in the ground you can measure the compaction level compared to an expensive meter to evaluate the compaction of the soil in the field."

Students were split into teams to evaluate five different test plots in a field across from Graceland University. They evaluated soil compaction, soil structure, cover crop stem count, earthworm midden count, and residue percentages.

Pitt also worked with NRCS District Conservationist Lance Porter to create and implement the evaluation. "When we discussed how NRCS and Graceland could work together we saw the opportunity and importance of reaching out to students," said Porter. "When students potentially takeover an operation they might remember what they learned about conservation and try implementing these practices to protect and improve soil health."

After evaluating the test plots, Blomquist presented a slake test and rainfall simulator demonstrated for students. These tests visually show how combining conservation practices like no-till and cover crops can make a significant difference in how the soil absorbs water and reduces erosion.

Cont. on next page...

SOIL HEALTH EVALUATION CONT...

Teachers scored the team's evaluation sheets using a reference key created by Porter and Pitts. Results of the test showed the plots have a high nutrient density. At the end of the day, each team that landed in Tier one received \$50, Tier two received \$30, and Tier three received \$15 for their FFA chapter which will help with further youth leadership and development.

"Field days like this are important because I believe these students are the future of farming," said Pitt. "The hope is some of these students will be engaged in crop production and using no-till and cover crop practices at a higher percentage in Iowa's history."



Graceland students with Ty Couchman, Soil Conservation Technician on the Chariton Resource Team (in back); Lance Porter, District Conservationist in Leon (middle); Chansé Mathes, District Technician (now with Missouri NRCS); and Ruth Blomquist, SW Area Soil Health Specialist (right).

IOWA NRCS ATTENDS SUMMER AG EDUCATORS CONFERENCE

Iowa NRCS promoted the value of our agency at the 2022 Iowa Agriculture Educators Conference at the FFA Enrichment Center in Ankeny on June 28.

Rubyana Neely (left), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Coordinator, and Jolene Bopp (right), Public Affairs Specialist, discussed soil health, backyard composting, lesson plans and other opportunities NRCS has available for educators.

"Teachers were enthusiastic about adding conservation education to their middle school and high school classrooms," said Bopp.



OUTREACH REPORT: TANYA MEYER-DIDERIKSEN



WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BECOME AN ACTIVE WOMEN, LAND AND LEGACY COUNTY?

If the county that you work in is not shaded on the current Women Land and Legacy (WLL) map, that means your county is not involved with WLL. If you are interested in changing that, what must be done? The steps are shown below:

1. Contact NRCS State Outreach Coordinator, Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen, at tanya.meyer@usda.gov to share your interest, learn more about WLL and to get your questions answered. Determine if you are interested in WLL involvement as an individual county or as a group with one or more surrounding counties. If you are interested in a multi-county WLL chapter, be sure to discuss and get agreement from the additional counties.
2. Begin to form the core of your WLL Local Team, which ideally includes representation from the local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), ISU Extension & Outreach and the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). If all these local partners are not able to participate, it is important to have several and especially some USDA membership. The agencies provide valuable support, resources, and are key to success.
3. The core team determines who will serve as the local team lead contact. The lead contact is shown on the WLL website (www.womenlandandlegacy.org) and is the person contacted related to WLL activities and questions. The lead contact serves as a team facilitator, sharing information with the rest of the team and assists in delegating tasks. The core team determines additional potential local team members. The team might include local government, non-profit organizations, agricultural businesses, and it is imperative to include one or several local farm women.
4. Once the entire team is formed, Tanya meets with them and further explains WLL before leading a meeting that involves detailed planning for the Listening Session. This session is the first event held by every new WLL chapter.
5. Planning continues for the Listening Session in the coming months.
6. On the day of the Listening Session, Tanya provides facilitation. Local team members are expected to attend and assist as needed, including providing the opening and closing remarks for the Session.
7. Tanya will take the input provided by the Listening Session participants and develop a report for the local team to use as a guide for future planning. She may also create a summary of the session evaluations.
8. The local team will then meet to plan their first Learning Session. They will determine the frequency of their Learning Sessions. Quarterly or even twice per year is typical but can happen

OUTREACH REPORT: TANYA MEYER-DIDERIKSEN



WLL CONT...

more often. The topics of Learning Sessions are based on the local input provided during the Listening Session. Tanya can assist as needed during the planning of Learning Sessions and will attend Sessions as her schedule allows.

- After each Learning Session, the local team lead contact reports the event in a Google Form (as prompted by Tanya).

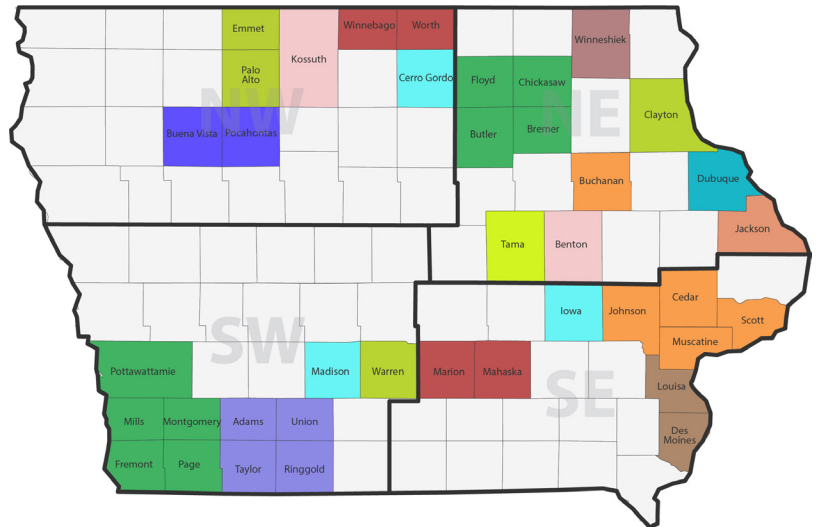
DO YOU NEED A LANGUAGE INTERPRETER FOR MEETINGS OR CUSTOMER CONVERSATIONS?

In some parts of Iowa, there is a need for language interpretation either at meetings or one-on-one customer communication. Interpretation, whether in person, by phone or virtual can be requested from FPAC through a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Request and is provided at no cost to the customer, partner, or Iowa NRCS.

If your office could benefit from interpretation service, refer to the FPAC LEP Interpretation Poster displayed in each office for available languages, although interpretation in additional languages can be requested and provided. Follow the process below, based on the type of interpretation being requested:

Telephone (or Virtual) Language Interpretation Service:

- Identify the customer language
- Call 1-888-331-0185 (available 24 hours per day) and identify the language needed, your agency, and office location.



In-person Language Interpretation Service:

- Identify the customer language
- Use [this link](#) to submit an LEP Request.
- Identify location and a local contact person in the comment box.

Tip: For in-person interpretation, adequate lead time prior to the meeting or interaction is required for the interpreter to schedule and travel to the event.

For questions related to language interpretation, please contact Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen, State Outreach Coordinator, at tanya.meyer@usda.gov.

EARTH DAY 2022

Buena Vista County

In honor of Earth Day on April 22, the Buena Vista County USDA Service Center participated in *High Five Friday* at Storm Lake Elementary School. NRCS staff participating were Bailey Monroe, Ross Frederiksen and Colleen Schwanz. The District also handed out tattoos and lilac shrubs to the 3rd grade students.



HAPPY
Earth
Day
APRIL 22



HAPPY EARTH DAY

APRIL 22

EARTH DAY 2022

Cedar County

Bailey Yotter (Forester based out of the Fairfield Office with the National Wild Turkey Federation) and Mark Schutt (Team Lead for Tipton/Davenport/Iowa City/DeWitt) shared information about planting native trees with 3rd Graders from Durant Elementary School.

Their efforts are part of an annual Arbor Day/Earth Day/Soil Week effort coordinated through Cedar SWCD, Cedar ISU Extension and Outreach, Cedar County Conservation, Tipton NRCS and others to get each 3rd grader in the county their own tree. This tradition has been going on for over 30 years! This year we are focused on the habitat needs of the Rusty Patch Bumble Bee, which is endangered, and found to live in parts of Cedar and Johnson Counties.

NRCS staff and friends passed along knowledge and trees to over 325 3rd graders, and wrapped up the week helping youth volunteers plant over 40 larger burlaped trees in the Tipton City Park.



Fremont County

Curtis Barclay, district technician in Fremont County, organized an Earth Day event with Matt Dollison from the DNR and Rhonda Almquist, a science teacher at Sidney High School. The students picked up trash and remnants from two old farmsteads. They also went on a hike to the top of the bluff (Loess Hill) and toured the Riverton Wildlife Unit.



Ida County

Barb Knudsen, Conservation Assistant in Ida Grove, talked with second graders on April 25 about soil erosion. She used tabletop rainfall simulators to demonstrate soil erosion.

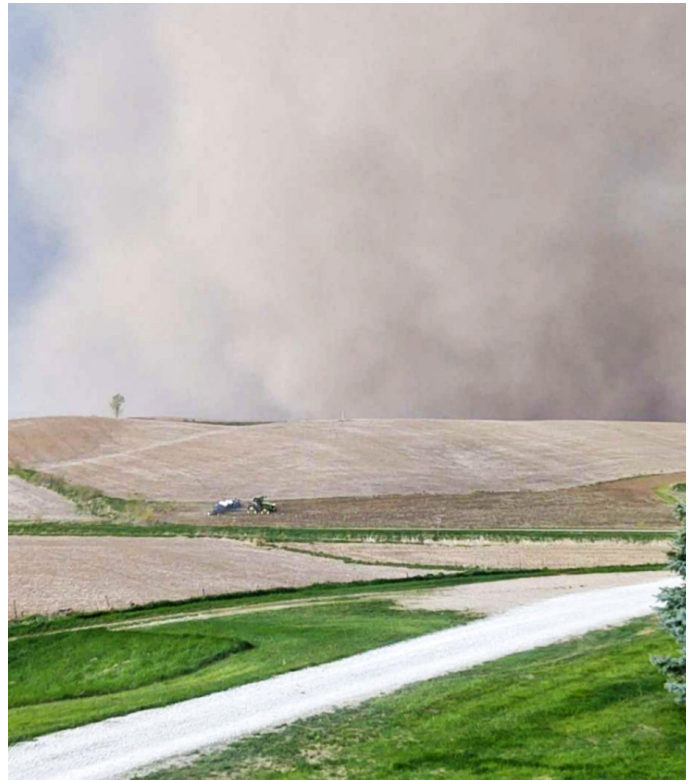


DUST BOWL 2022: SPRING WINDS HIGHLIGHT CONTINUED NEED FOR SOIL CONSERVATION

Dust Bowl-like conditions in northwest Iowa this spring showcased the need for many of the erosion control practices that we sometimes take for granted, or that we often implement with erosion from water in mind.

Moderate to severe drought in many northwest Iowa counties led to Dust Bowl conditions for several days in April and May. Parts of Nebraska and South Dakota encountered similar conditions. Heavy winds blew millions of tons of soil from unprotected crop fields through the air, causing near blackout conditions in Sioux Falls, SD, and other nearby communities.

Management practices like no-till and cover crops help anchor and cover the soil, protecting it from easily blowing away - even in super dry conditions. Farmers in these areas who till the soil learned the hard way the importance of using the erosion control practices the NRCS has promoted for over 87 years.



A farmer plants near Climbing Hill in Woodbury County on May 13 when a dust storm rolls through. (Submitted by Dan Mahoney, Soil Conservationist)



Troy Davelaar, Soil Conservationist in Rock Rapids, measures the depth of sediment deposits in a Lyon County crop field on April 18. The field was worked in the fall, disked and field cultivated that spring, then drilled to alfalfa and rolled. The farmers replanted, but the soils then blew away again in the next wind storm.

(Submitted by Dawn Henderson, Soil Conservationist)



Soil Conservation Technician Alex Ahders shoots a picture of a dust storm along a Lyon County highway on April 14. (Submitted by Dawn Henderson, Soil Conservationist)



Submitted by Shannon Hurd, Conservation Assistant in Howard County

In recognition of Soil and Water Conservation Week (April 24-May 1), the Howard Soil and Water Conservation District (HSWCD) distributed 88 Spruce trees on Arbor Day to Howard County third graders at the Howard-Winneshiek, Notre Dame, and Holy Trinity schools. Students were given instructions on how to plant their new trees and reminded about the importance of trees for soil health and water quality.

The HSWCD also hosted its 43rd annual Natural Resources Day Outdoor Classroom at the Prairie's Edge Nature Center, near Cresco, with 78 fifth graders from the Howard-Winneshiek and Notre Dame schools in attendance. Stations included *Entomology* presented by Angela Bries, Howard County Conservation; *Tree & Plant Identification* with Neil Shaffer, Howard SWCD; *Beekeeping* with Jed Becker, volunteer; *Backyard Conservation* with Corey Brink, NRCS District Conservationist; and a *Soil Health* presented by Neil Sass, NRCS Soil Scientist, Jess Stevens and Sam Franzen, NRCS



NRCS District Conservationist Corey Brink presents information on Backyard Conservation to elementary students from Howard County during Natural Resources Day Outdoor Classroom on May 5.

Soil Conservationists. Thanks to our station leaders, Howard County Conservation for use of their Nature Center grounds, the fifth grade teachers, and bus drivers.

Submitted by Melody Bro, Conservation Assistant in Tama County

Tama SWCD distributed white pine seedlings to 288 sixth graders in six school districts on April 28.



Shannon Hurd, IDALS Conservation Assistant, (Back Right) with 3rd grade students from Holy Trinity Catholic School.



North Tama students with their white pine seedlings.

RETHINKING SYNTHETIC FERTILIZERS: THE RACE FOR ALTERNATIVES IS ON!

Courtesy of Successful Farming, Laurie Bedord

The discovery of synthetic fertilizer revolutionized food production for a growing population, but its use has also gained growing criticism in recent years. While these products provide critical nutrients to crops throughout the season, not all fertilizer applied is used by the plant. It's also spurring increasing demand for alternatives.

Founded in 2013, Sound Agriculture has developed technology that activates the soil microbiome to give plants access to important nutrients that exist in the field, allowing growers to optimize fertilizer inputs. It is also exploring accelerated breeding technologies.

"We believe growers need new tools to not only help them adapt to the changing environment, but to consumer and regulatory preferences as well. Our goal is to develop reliable, effective tools that increase production, improve food quality, and reduce waste," says Travis Bayer, co-founder and

chief technology officer at Sound Agriculture. "From the science side, we also saw an opportunity to take what we've learned about how plants and microbes interact in the soil and how that drives a lot of agronomic factors. Our understanding in this area has really increased in the past 10 to 20 years, and we wanted to get it out of the lab and into the field."

Ahead of his *Rethinking Synthetic Fertilizer: The Race for Alternatives* session at the 2022 World Agri-Tech Innovation Summit, Bayer talked to **Successful Farming** magazine about disrupting traditional input-intensive techniques.

For that interview, visit: <https://www.agriculture.com/technology/crop-management/rethinking-synthetic-fertilizers-the-race-for-alternatives-is-on>.



SPRING SOIL HEALTH PHOTO CONTEST

Submitted by Ruth Blomquist, SW Area Soil Health Specialist

During April, Southwest Iowa offices participated in a spring soil health photo contest. Photos were assigned points based on the practices photographed and the correctly identified soil health principles. I ended up with a good variety of soil health practices and supporting conservation practices, and I think offices had fun competing. Cass County was the winning office, they won a pizza party and worms in dirt soil health dessert.



Bryan Shupe, Montgomery County



Dexter Yaddof, Clarke County



Jenae Waters, Cass County



Darcy Brunner, Page County

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Lynn Betts



Lynn and Candy Betts family. Jennifer Christy (back right) and Nathan Betts (in back behind Lynn) and their families in May 2021.

Lynn Betts retired from Iowa NRCS in 2005 after a 38-year career in NRCS and SCS. He was a student trainee, spent a year in Lincoln, NE at the Technical Service Center, and then became the Public Affairs Specialist for Iowa NRCS. He also spent a few years working for the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Institute.

Betts has continued to work in conservation as a freelance writer, photographer and communications consultant for the past 17 years. His focus has been on soil health, submitting stories to Farm Progress publications, Corn and Soybean Digest, and Progressive Farmer and other magazines. He's also been contracting with South Dakota NRCS and conservation organizations there for a good deal of work.



Lynn Betts (right) invited Iowa NRCS Soil Health Specialist Patrick Chase out to his family farm in 2017 to conduct some soil health tests and, of course, to get some pictures.

"My brother Les and I know fewer and fewer current NRCS employees every year," Betts says, "but I was fortunate to inherit a few acres of farmland which allowed me to experiment with cover crops and other soil health practices. That has led me to the Guthrie County office occasionally."

Lynn and Candy have two grown children with 6 grandchildren, who live in the Chicago area. There were monthly trips to see them until COVID hit in earnest in early 2020. Candy was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia in May of that year and that and COVID have significantly changed their lives and activities, he says.

Betts plays golf whenever he can and has enjoyed seeing NRCSers at the annual golf tournament over the years. He's a Kansas City Chiefs fan and ISU fan—in both cases through all their tough years as well as recent good times.

IOWA OCIO TEAM DONATES 140 COMPUTERS TO ATLANTIC SCHOOLS

Submitted by Margaret Henderson, Atlantic Area Office

Iowa staff with the Office of the Chief Information Officer-Client Experience Center (OCIO-CEC) donated 140 out of warranty computers to the Atlantic Community Schools technology department earlier this year.

Roger Warne, Atlantic Community School District Technology Coordinator, says they will put them to good use. "We will use most of them to set up a CADD lab for the high school Industrial Technology class," he says.

OCIO has donated computers to Atlantic Schools before. "It has been a great partnership with USDA and the local school district," says Margaret Henderson, Administrative Management Assistant (AMA) in the Atlantic Area Office.



OCIO-CEC IT Specialist Emery Rahrs (right) peels stickers off an out of warrant computer before handing it off to Atlantic Community Schools Technology Coordinator Roger Warne (left).

PRIDE MONTH

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Month (LGBT Pride Month) is celebrated annually in June to honor the 1969 Stonewall riots, and works to achieve equal justice and equal opportunity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) Americans. In June of 1969, patrons and supporters of the Stonewall Inn in New York City staged an uprising to resist the police harassment and persecution to which LGBT Americans were commonly subjected. This uprising marks the beginning of a movement to outlaw discriminatory laws and practices against LGBT Americans. (Source: youth.gov)



The USDA Service Center in Tipton showed their support for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community in June by taking a picture with the LGBT flag outside the Field Office. The colors on the flag reflect the diversity of the LGBT community.

FABULOUS FIELD PHOTOS!



Field Photos



Spring planting was delayed in some parts of Iowa, so many farmers planted directly into cover crops that were taller than they would normally plant into.

1. Dave McLees plants corn into 20" cereal rye on May 12 in Jones County. *(Alisha Sedlmayr, West Union Area Office)*
2. Justin Nolan plants soybeans into standing cereal rye in farmland near Cedar Rapids on May 11. *(Jon Gallagher, Marion)*
3. Rainfall simulator jars during an FFA event at Graceland University in Lamoni on May 19. *(Jolene Bopp, Des Moines)*

Thank you to those who submitted photos. For the next Current Developments, submit images at: https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/:f:/r/sites/nrcs_iowa/PA/Shared%20Documents/Photo%20Submission?csf=1&web=1&e=aKV9s9q.

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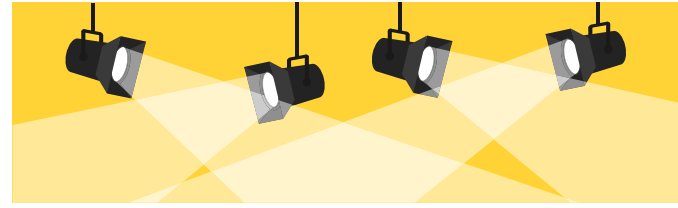
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3



NORTHEAST AREA SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



MATTHEW WANG



Title: Area Easement Specialist

Location: West Union Area Office

College:

B.S., Bemidji State University, 2014-2019
Major: Wildlife Biology Minor: Wetland Ecology
Major: Aquatic Biology Minor: GIS

What is your career background?

2020-2022: Wetland Easement Technician in New Hampton

2018-2019: Natural Resources Technician for Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources (Waterfowl Banding Team Lead) in Talcot Lake, MN

Where did you grow up?

I was born and raised in Hudson, Wisconsin. I am a huge dog person. At no point growing up did we ever have fewer than two dogs (7 dogs currently in the family between my mother, brother and myself). I

grew up spending a lot of times in the northwoods of Wisconsin, as we have a cabin on the Chippewa Flowage. I spent a lot of time in the summers in Gallatin Gateway, MT visiting family. I graduated from Hudson High School in 2014 where I was very involved in football throughout high school and college.

Why did you get into soil and water conservation?

I have been interested in conservation for as long as I can remember. Growing up spending so much time outside in the woods in Wisconsin, visiting the mountain rivers in Montana, and annual trips to lake country of Northwest Ontario captured my admiration for the amazing natural wonder that we enjoy on this continent. Growing up in a very fast growing city, I watched some of my favorite wild areas disappear from development, wetland drainage, and land clearing. From a very young age, I wanted to do something about it and down the road that translated into wildlife and land conservation.

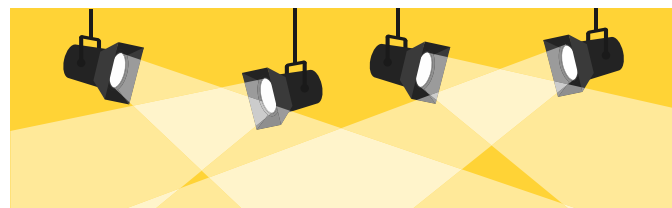
What do you like most about your job?

The easements that we put in place today are guaranteed conservation in perpetuity. Hopefully in 100 years or even further, people will look back and be thankful that natural and wild places created by conservation easements are around and be thankful to the landowners who enrolled their ground in such a program.

What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

I am an avid outdoorsmen all-around. I love to fish, whether it be casting shorelines for smallmouth in Ontario, fly fishing for trout in the Gallatin River, or deep jigging for Amberjack of The Keys. I am what my family calls obsessed with waterfowl hunting. I have a seven-year-old yellow lab named Benelli who I spend all of my free time with from September to January chasing ducks, pheasants, and rabbits.

NORTHWEST AREA SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



MICHAELA HAWKS



Title: District Conservationist

Location: Sac City

College: Bachelor's Degree in Conservation and a Minor in Soil Science, University of Wisconsin-River Falls

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Ringle, Wisconsin (1 hour and 15 minutes west of Green Bay, WI.... GO PACK GO!) I did not grow up on a farm per say, but more of a hobby farm in the woods. I had horses, chickens, rabbits, a dog, and cats.

What is your career background?

Earth Team Volunteer in Sac and Calhoun counties part of the summer in 2016, Pathways intern the summer of 2016 at the Clarion FO in Wright County. I went on to be the Soil Conservationist for Buena Vista County from 2017-2021. Then, in 2021, I became the District Conservationist for Sac County.

How did you get interested in conservation?

The reason I decided to major in conservation sounds kind of cliché and cheesy, but I have always

had a passion for the outdoors and for agriculture. I have always loved to be outside and be active since I was little. It all started with hunting and fishing with my dad when I was little to riding our horses to milking cows on a local family dairy farm in college.

While trying to figure out an internship for my junior summer of college, I had two professors tell me about NRCS. They encouraged me to apply for an internship through NRCS. I applied and got the pathways internship for Wright County. While I was waiting for everything to get processed for my internship, I became an Earth Team volunteer for Sac and Calhoun Counties. I really enjoyed my time in Iowa that summer and learned a lot. I was able to get hired on full-time after college and the rest is history.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

Do I have to pick just one??? One thing I like most about my job is I am constantly learning something new. There are so many things that are evolving and constantly changing in the agriculture industry, especially on the soil health side of things, that there is always something out there to learn. Another thing I really enjoy is working with producers and building those relationships. I like to work with producers to better their operations through conservation practices.

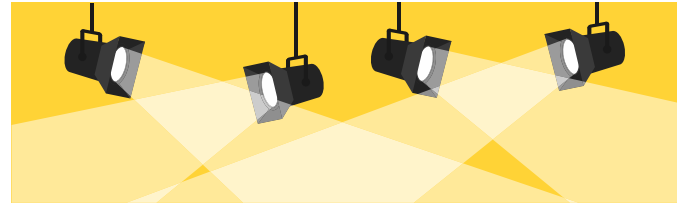
What are your hobbies?

My hobbies really include anything that allows me to be active and outside! I love going for walks/runs, horseback riding, working out, hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, going to concerts, boating, and enjoying time with my kiddos.

Any family you want to share about?

My husband Josh, who also works for NRCS, and I have two kids named Emma (5) and Wyatt (4 months old). We live in a small town in northwest Iowa with our two horses and two dogs.

SOUTHWEST AREA SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



CLINT MILLER



Title: District Conservationist

Location: Ankeny

College: Iowa State University, Forestry, 1998-2002

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Hamburg in Southwest Iowa.

What is your career background?

I was an NRCS summer intern in Sac City and Iowa City. I previously worked as a Soil Conservationist in Jefferson, Osceola, and Toledo, and a District Conservationist in Carroll.

How did you get interested in conservation?

My grandfather was a professional nurseryman and had a big influence on my love of nature. As a kid he would take me fishing and I was always helping

around his large home garden. As a teen, I was in Boy Scouts and every year our Scoutmaster Dave Owen took us camping at least once a month (besides winter). All that time in the outdoors taught me to appreciate how our actions can influence our environment, both positively and negatively. In college, I was a summer intern for the Iowa DNR AmeriCorps Trails Crew at Waubesa State Park and learned from retired Trails Coordinator Mark Edwards how truly rare and threatened Iowa's remaining wild lands are.

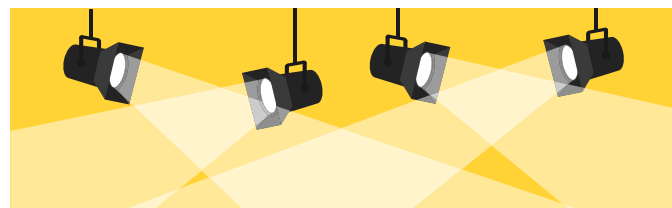
What do you enjoy most about your job?

I feel I have one of the few jobs that has a direct and measurable positive effect on the environment of Iowa. Because we influence land managers to make decisions for the betterment of our natural resources when otherwise they might not, I know I am doing my part to protect our ecosystem for future generations. Plus, I am truly grateful to have my evenings and weekends free to do other things I am passionate about.

What do you do in your free time?

I am an active Amateur Radio Operator (Ham) and serve as the Emergency Coordinator for the Story County Amateur Radio Emergency Service. I volunteer time to provide communications assistance to public safety agencies and serve as an advisor to the Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System Board. I also enjoy hammock camping, being part of the Maker Movement, and spending time with my wife of 21 years and our 8 year old daughter.

SOUTHEAST AREA SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



LEANN WINTERS



Title: District Conservationist

Location: Donnellson

College: University of Missouri-Columbia, B.S. Degree in Agricultural Education-Leadership and Communications with minors in Agricultural

Economics, Agronomy, and Animal Science, and a M.S. in Agronomy with an emphasis in Forages and Grazing Management.

Where did you grow up? I grew up on a family farm in northeast Missouri, near Kahoka which is just across the Lee County border. We produced corn, soybean, and wheat, and raised farrow to finish hogs, commercial beef cattle, and Suffolk sheep.

At an early age, I developed a passion for genetics, livestock grazing and diversified cropping systems. My parents made sure my brother and I were active in University Extension events, 4-H, FFA, and Church. Today, my parents, Garyl and Michele Meinhardt, both work full-time on the farm and still have cattle and row crops. My brother, Clinton, started out as an Agronomy Extension Agent and is now a Senior Research Specialist at the University of Missouri.

What is your career background?

Throughout my college education, I worked as a research specialist performing grazing trials on perennial and annual forage with harvesting and grazing with dairy and beef cattle. By the time I completed my Master's, I was involved in many projects and educational events – most notably I published 2 articles in the Journal of Animal Science, presented at the ASA, CSSA, SSSA International Meeting in

Utah and a poster presentation at the International Grassland Congress in Dublin, Ireland.

In 2006, I decided to return home to start my family farm and apply the practices I learned. I also filled in as an Agricultural Instructor and FFA advisor for my local school district and then began a career with Pioneer International Hybrids. Prior to accepting the position with Pioneer, I interviewed for a position for the Hancock County SWCD in IL and gained the respect of the District Conservationist. I was later requested to apply for an NRCS position and was selected! I started my career with the NRCS in August 2010 and was a Soil Conservation Technician for nearly 9 years in Illinois and Missouri. In 2019, I was excited to transition my career to a Soil Conservationist in Donnellson, IA. Shortly after, Iowa NRCS began the reorganization process and I felt blessed to accept my current position as the District Conservationist in 2020.

What do you like most about your job?

Spending time with landowners and operators and aiding to improve natural resources and helping them solve a concern. I have to say that grazing practices are my favorite practices however working with producers and providing assistance to help them achieve their goals is so much more important – no matter the practice.

What do you like to do in your free time?

Outside of spending time with family and raising livestock, I enjoy gardening, canning, rock collecting, and showing livestock with the family, but I joke that my favorite hobby is taking down and building fence.

Tell us about your family.

My husband, Brandon, and I raise Dorper sheep and commercial beef cattle and share crop hay. Brandon was an Assistant Shop Foreman for 13 years before transitioning to farming full-time. We have two kids – Wyle, 12, and Ally, 10. They enjoy spending time with the grandparents and hanging out on the farm. They have their own flock of White Dorper ewes and a few Red Angus cows. I hope they continue to enjoy being part of the farming operation.

IOWA NRCS PERSONNEL CHANGES



Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
Schmidt, Mark	Soil Conservation Technician	Retirement	3/28/2022	Epworth RT
Stoltze, Madison	District Conservationist	Name Change from Friedrich	4/3/2022	Onawa
McLellan, Alec	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	4/10/2022	Fairfield
Gardner, Bradley	District Conservationist	Reassignment	4/10/2022	Centerville
Zapata, Rachel	Program Assistant	Resignation	4/22/2022	Mt. Pleasant RT
Downey, Jessica	EQIP Coordinator	Promotion	4/24/2022	Des Moines
Evans, Christine	RCPP Coordinator	Reassignment	4/24/2022	Des Moines
Abban, Rosemary	Soil Conservationist	Resignation	4/25/2022	Webster City RT
Dettmann, Shawn	Asst. State Conservationist for Field Operations	Retirement	4/30/2022	West Union Area Office
Friedrich, Norman	Civil Engineer	Retirement	4/30/2022	West Union Area Office
Strauser, Carly	Student Trainee	Resignation	5/4/2022	Greenfield
Beebe, Miranda	Program Assistant	Resignation	5/5/2022	Ottumwa RT
Elder, Tracy	Program Assistant	Appointment	5/8/2022	Creston RT
Duncan, Todd	District Conservationist	Retirement	5/13/2022	Decorah
Perkins, Penny	Soil Conservationist	Resignation	5/16/2022	Guthrie Center
Dobrovolny, Cynthia	Soil Conservation Technician	Retirement	5/31/22	Creston RT
Pavlovec, Michael	Soil Conservation Aid	Retirement	5/31/2022	Decorah
Giddings, Spencer	Student Trainee (Soil Con.)	Appointment	6/5/2022	Manchester
Koopmeiners, Tresajo	Student Trainee (Soil Con.)	Appointment	6/5/2022	Elkader
Stocking, Elijah	Student Trainee (Soil Con.)	Appointment	6/5/2022	Orange City
Ulrich, Julia	Student Trainee (Economics)	Appointment	6/5/2022	Des Moines
Hertling, Desirae	Soil Conservationist	Resignation	6/9/2022	Algona RT
Freed, Marvin	Soil Conservationist	Retirement	6/17/2022	Red Oak RT
Schaeffers, Michelle	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	6/19/2022	West Union Area Office
Gravel, Lee	Natural Resource Specialist	Appointment	6/19/2022	Sioux City Area Office
Richardson, Bradley	Resource Conservationist	Promotion	6/19/2022	Oakland RT
Sandoval, Jaime	Management and Program Analyst	Reassignment	6/19/2022	Des Moines
Colbaugh, Jessica	Biologist	Appointment	6/19/2022	Sioux City Area Office
Koenig, Kelly	Soil Conservation Technician	Resignation	7/1/2022	Oakland RT
Fopma, Curt	Civil Engineering Technician	Retirement	7/2/2022	Newton

IOWA NRCS PERSONNEL CHANGES

Personnel Changes

Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
LaGrange, Olivia	Biologist (Easement Program Specialist)	Appointment	7/3/2022	Des Moines
Zipf, Hunter	Biologist	Appointment	7/3/2022	Atlantic Area Office
Hawes, Jacob	Resource Conservationist	Promotion	7/3/2022	West Union Area Office
Merical, Wesley	Resource Conservationist	Promotion	7/3/2022	Webster City RT
Elliott, Michelle	Resource Conservationist	Promotion	7/3/2022	Decorah RT

IDALS-DSCWQ PERSONNEL CHANGES



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF
**AGRICULTURE &
LAND STEWARDSHIP**

Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
Nammany, Derek	Program Planner in Field Services Bureau	New Hire	4/7/2022	Central Office
Hawk, Sadi	Administrative Assistant II in Field Services Bureau	New Hire	5/13/2022	Central Office
Druhl, Cassandra	Urban Conservationist	Resignation	5/20/2022	Des Moines
Freeseaman, Denise	Conservation Assistant	Retirement	5/31/2022	Grundy SWCD
Mathes, Chanse	Clarke County State Technician	Resignation	6/3/2022	Osceola
Dollison, Amanda	Conservation Assistant	New Hire	6/10/2022	Fremont SWCD
Hepker, Mary	Conservation Assistant	Retirement	6/10/2022	Linn SWCD
Rieken, Heather	Conservation Assistant	New Hire	6/10/2022	Butler SWCD
Rush, Susan	Conservation Assistant	New Hire	6/24/2022	East Pottawattamie SWCD