



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

IOWA NRCS SUMMER 2023



USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

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A NOTE FROM THE STATE CONSERVATIONIST

I am closing in on two months as the Acting State Conservationist in Iowa, as Jon Hubbert continues in the capacity of the Acting Northeast Regional Conservationist for NRCS. It has been a very busy couple months!

In mid-June, I had an exciting opportunity to kick off the Cultivating Future Leaders program (cohort three) here in Des Moines. It is great to see the talent within NRCS across Minnesota, Nebraska, and Iowa.

Iowa hosted Secretary Vilsack in late June where he announced more opportunities through Rural Development. He noted assistance through NRCS and Climate Smart commodity projects to help producers reach conservation goals is important to all our successes!

I was also able to attend the party for retiring Southeast Area Engineer Doug Morningstar. I was told by a former SCE that Doug was a great employee and a wonderful person. It was great meeting Doug. I wish him all the best in his retirement.

Iowa NRCS submitted our Road Map for Success to help provide thoughts and vision on the future of NRCS over the next 5 years. At the upcoming National Leadership meeting in

early August, we will review the plans and make recommendations for change. Thanks to all of you that were involved in the development and review of our Road Map.

I recently attended the Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Summer Meeting in Bismarck, ND. It is evident by the communication at this event and many other events that Iowa NRCS has a strong relationship with our partners. Within the partnerships across Iowa there is a great ability to find sound and new ways to support conservation opportunities on all lands.

I am excited to participate with the Iowa Conservation Team for our 20th year handing out bananas, conservation-themed postcards, and water to cyclists during RAGBRAI. I hear this year's ride will be one of the largest ever, as RAGBRAI turns 50!

Personally, my time in Iowa has been wonderful and I look forward to meeting new people every day. Baseball/softball seasons are over for my family, so we are planning to relax and enjoy a slower pace of life before the school season kicks back up!

In closing, I appreciate the extra effort shown by the field offices to visit with clients about the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) to help with conservation needs. Please keep up the good work as the year ends. As we get to the end of the Fiscal Year we will be working on a lot of closeouts and deadlines to ensure we end the year on a good note. All your hard work amid our internal and external challenges is appreciated and seen at all levels. A sincere Thank You to everyone for doing your part for IA NRCS and serving our customers to meet their conservation goals.

Sincerely,

Neil Dominy, Acting 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 quarterly 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/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/iowa/current-developments>.

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OUTREACH REPORT: TANYA MEYER-DIDERIKSEN



Building Capacity for Urban Agriculture

In early 2022, as discussions began about urban agriculture with Iowa NRCS, it became apparent that more capacity was needed with some practices that would be of interest to urban agriculture, specialty crop and small-scale farmers, a significant one being the practice of micro-irrigation. This is a practice not widely utilized in Iowa, and now we will be contacted by new customers interested in applying for this and other practices through EQIP.

This led to the development of the Urban Ag Steering Committee, which includes state office staff representing outreach, engineering, ecological sciences, and programs. Two District Conservationists are also members, Clint Miller in Polk County and Shaffer Ridgeway in Black Hawk County. The Committee has expanded to work on additional practices and the new small-scale payment scenarios in EQIP.

Recently, progress was made toward building engineering and planning capacity with the practice of micro-irrigation. Christian Osborn, State Conservation Engineer, contacted Phuc Vu, Agricultural Engineer in Fort Worth, to seek assistance. Phuc brought in Rachel Wilden, also an Agricultural Engineer in Fort Worth, to assist. Both traveled to Iowa June 20-22 to assist Iowa staff utilizing two pilot projects, one small urban farm in Des Moines and a larger urban project in Johnson County.

Sweet Tooth Farm in Des Moines is owned and operated by Monika Owczarski. She currently farms on three urban lots near her home. She donates the food she grows to local food pantries.

GROW Johnson County is managed by Jason Grimm, Director of Iowa Valley RC&D and his staff. This is a community-focused educational farm located at the Johnson County Historic

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Monika Owczarski, owner and operator of Sweet Tooth Farm in Des Moines discusses micro-irrigation.

OUTREACH REPORT: TANYA MEYER-DIDERIKSEN



Building Capacity for Urban Agriculture Cont. from pg. 4

Poor Farm in Iowa City. GROW trains growers who are under-represented in our food system, many are new lowans from Africa, who then have the opportunity to “graduate” to their own plot of land on the Poor Farm to grow a business. GROW produces over 30,000 pounds of food every year that is donated to partner agencies in the county. They also host 2-4 apprentices per year.

On June 20, Vu, Wilden, Samantha Gorbet (Civil/Agricultural Engineer in the state office), Sarah Anderson (Agricultural Engineer in the state office), Tori Martin (Civil Engineer in the state office), Clint Miller (District Conservationist in Polk County), Bennie Taylor (Thurgood Marshall intern in Polk County) and Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen (State Outreach Coordinator) visited Sweet Tooth Farm to learn about Owczarski’s current irrigation systems and



Monkia Owczarski, owner and operator of Sweet Tooth Farm in Des Moines discusses micro-irrigation.

what improvements are needed. Owczarski even demonstrated how she irrigates from city fire hydrants.

On June 21, the same group, minus Anderson, Miller and Taylor, met up with Abby Beltz (District Conservationist in Johnson County), Nick Schaefer (Acting Area Engineer for the SE Area) and Jason Grimm (Director of Iowa Valley RC&D) at the GROW farm. Grimm presented on the operation of the entire farm and then provided a tour to demonstrate the current irrigation systems. He explained the interest and probable future grant funds to capture rainwater and utilize that in a micro-irrigation system.

Through both field visits, the engineers gained information to begin identifying staff training needs and to begin to formulate training, resources and tools needed to meet this future need. Staff also discussed how NRCS will assist on these urban farms that provided the needed pilot project sites. As this develops, more will be shared statewide.



Jason Grimm, Director of Iowa Valley RC&D discussed irrigation assistance and needs for the GROW farm with Agricultural Engineers from Fort Worth, Phuc Vu and Rachel Wilden.

OUTREACH REPORT: TANYA MEYER-DIDERIKSEN



High Tunnel Racial Equity Project in Waterloo Concludes

A national NRCS racial equity grant project in Waterloo recently held their final event to conclude the project that utilized tremendous community support and involvement to build a 30 x 72 high tunnel on an empty urban lot in a food desert. This project, made possible by a grant secured by Bunchology LLC, a non-profit organization out of Cordova, TN, worked in partnership with Antioch Baptist Church, a predominantly black church in Waterloo. The church owns the lot where the high tunnel was built in July 2022. In partnership with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach (Extension), approximately 10 black youth from the church were instructed on how to grow food in the high tunnel, an effort that continues beyond the project.

The project included two workshops for the youth and others from the church, with the first taking place Oct. 15, 2022, and the final

on April 28, 2023. During the April workshop, Shaffer Ridgeway, District Conservationist in Black Hawk County, discussed programs and assistance available through NRCS and how the church could access these resources. Stephen Eilers, Urban Agriculture Specialist with Extension in Waterloo, discussed additional resources for the church. Dan Fillius, with Extension in Polk County and a statewide expert on high tunnels, provided helpful information about high tunnels, including maintenance. At the end of the evening, six of the youth “graduated” from the program and were honored.

Dan Fillius traveled back to the site on May 31 and, with assistance from Shaffer Ridgeway and Stephen Eilers as well as members of the church, repaired some of the extensive wind damage that resulted from high winds in the winter and spring. This is true partnership! Even though the official project has concluded, the priceless results will continue.



Waterloo youth gathered to conclude the High Tunnel Racial Equity Project and learn what programs and assistance are available through NRCS.

TAKE BACK YOUR GARDEN AND TIME: THE POWER OF LASAGNA GARDENING

By Jolene Bopp, NRCS Public Affairs Specialist

There are two types of gardeners; those who find weeding therapeutic and those who will do everything possible to avoid weeding. Alisha Sedlmayr is the latter, which led her to Lasagna Gardening. Now she is unveiling the secrets of suppressing garden weeds to local farmers and their families.

Sedlmayr is a soil health specialist with NRCS in West Union. She hopes to shed light on the benefits of lasagna gardening on a small scale or urban operation and the climate-smart practices involved.

She says the primary benefits of lasagna gardening are reduced weeding and better manageability. "The number one reason we started lasagna gardening was for weed control, watering, and learning. The bonus was soil health and waste reduction," said Sedlmayr. "In 2020 we planted our garden but were unable to tend to it during the summer. When we got home, we were amazed to see the garden had taken care of itself."

Lasagna gardening is a process of decomposing layers of recycled waste materials, such as cardboard, newspaper, leaves, grass clippings, food, and mulch to create a new layer of soil without using any tillage. No-till farming is a climate-smart agricultural practice that has many benefits for the environment. It helps keep carbon in the soil and reduce emissions. Once the new soil layer is created it is almost pure compost and provides the nutrients needed without having to add fertilizer. The soil is also easier to work with because it is loose.

The first layer of materials is typically cardboard or newspaper to suppress the weeds



Alisha Sedlmayr, Northeast Iowa Area Soil Health Specialist layers mulch on top of cardboard as the next layer of her lasagna garden.

and attract worms. The worms convert food scraps and cardboard materials into nutrient-rich vermicompost. In addition to suppressing weeds, this process may also reduce the amount of water and fertilizer needed. The layers work together to hold water in the soil. Instead of fertilizer, Sedlmayr uses a compost extract made from her worm compost bin. Diluting the compost ensures maximum coverage to boost plant health. The bin is also used as an educational tool, allowing her to share the bin with schools and promote sustainable waste management.

"I started my first worm compost bin in 2018

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after our turning piles didn't work. It was a disaster," she said. "Originally, we placed the bins in our laundry room not thinking about fruit flies that would be attracted to it. I made some adjustments to the storage location and haven't had any problems. It is fun to teach kids about soil health and show how beneficial the worms are."

Gardening with conservation practices, even at a small-scale, has many benefits for gardeners and their land. Lasagna gardening is an example of what farmers are doing on a large-scale operation. NRCS can help small-scale and urban producers by providing technical and financial assistance with conservation practices included in lasagna gardening such as weed and pest management, irrigation, and soil health.

Sedlmayr used a penetrometer to witness the contrast between areas where lasagna gardening was implemented and the areas left untouched. In the lasagna garden, the penetrometer easily penetrated the earth, whereas only a few feet away in the compacted areas, it was difficult to insert the penetrometer into the ground.

"When my husband and I first started the lasagna garden it was hard to leave it alone," said Sedlmayr. "The microscope showed the soil was anaerobic and the plants showed all the nutrient deficiencies in our original soil." Anaerobic soil in a garden means it has little to no oxygen. When a plant isn't receiving oxygen, root growth stops and eventually dies. Anaerobic soil can be caused by over-irrigating or soil compaction. These conditions are more common in dense, heavy clay soils. However, the soil can be amended by introducing more plants and building organic matter.

When farmers use climate-smart conservation practices it helps retain carbon in the soil, increase water infiltration, improve wildlife and pollinator habitat, increase yield, and maximize profits no matter how big or small the operation.



Hillary Olson, NRCS State Soil Health Specialist uses a penetrometer to test the extent and depth of subsurface compaction in Alisha Sedlmayr's garden.

INGREDIENTS:

Browns:

Cardboard
Leaves
Shredded newspaper
Peat
Pine needles

Greens:

Vegetable scraps
Garden trimmings
Grass clippings

Other materials include:

Coffee grounds
Tea leaves and bags
Weeds (if they haven't gone to seed!)
Manure
Egg shells
Seaweed
Dead flowers

Instructions:

Fall is the best time to start layering your lasagna garden.

1. Place cardboard or three layers of newspaper directly over the grass or weeds.
2. Wet this layer to help stay in place and encourage breakdown.
3. Add a layer of browns, then greens.



TOP TWEET!

“Top Tweet” highlights an interesting, popular and beneficial Tweet from over the last several months.

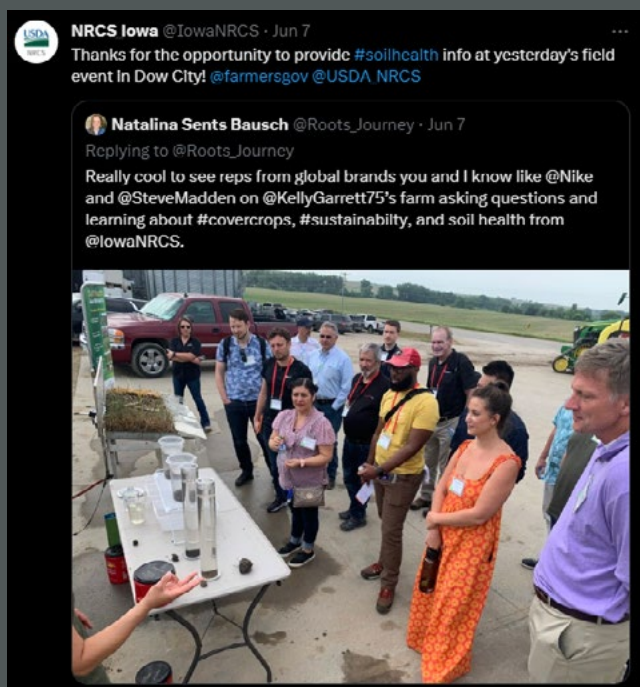
This quarter we’re featuring a late-June Tweet from Jered Finley, who shows us a picture of interns gathered for a field day event in Northeast Iowa.

We’re featuring Finley’s tweet because it shares how interns get involved out in the field to learn about the importance of what they can do in their communities.

Currently, Iowa NRCS has increased to 2,626 Followers on Twitter @IowaNRCS!



PLANT THE SEED



Iowa NRCS is leading events across the state through local offices and partnerships. We enjoy sharing what we are doing to help spread the word about the importance of conservation and how we can help our producers.

If you are holding an event or know of an event in your area, please submit the information so your public affairs team can add it to the website and promote on social media.

Send information and photos to Jolene Bopp, Jolene.Bopp@usda.gov or Jason Johnson, Jason.R.Johnson@usda.gov.

LEFT: Tweet from @Roots_Journey on Twitter sharing a field day event in Dow City.

A REASON TO CELEBRATE

World Nature Conservation: July 28

Celebrate and raise awareness about the importance of protecting our natural resources: air, soil, and water.

National Honey Bee Day: August 21

Raise awareness of pollinators and the threats they face by reminding our landowners NRCS can help develop conservation plans that provide quality honey bee habitat and livestock forage. What is your favorite suitable bee forage species?

Women's Equality Day: August 26

Women's Equality Day is celebrated and reconfirms the importance of ensuring equity and opportunity for women throughout the United States. On this day in 1920, Congress signed the 19th Amendment into law, which granted American women the right to vote. Be on the lookout for the annual proclamation webinar.

Hispanic Heritage Month: Mid-Month September - October

Each year, Americans observe National Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15 by celebrating the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America.

Quick Facts:

- The United States has the 2nd largest population of Hispanic people in the world, second only Mexico.
- 61.4% were of Mexican background, 9.6% Puerto Rican, 3.9% Cuban, 3.9% Salvadoran, and 3.5% Dominican (in 2019).
- 13 states have over 1 million Hispanic residents: Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas & Washington.
- 3.1% of Veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces were Hispanic (in 2021).
- 6% of businesses in the U.S. were Hispanic-owned (in 2019).
- 21% of Hispanics have a bachelor's degree or higher.

Please support the activities taking place locally in commemoration of National Hispanic Heritage Month and the many contributions Hispanics have made to the United States.



TRAINING AND EVENTS



Above: NRCS staff in southwest Iowa recently completed a refresher archaeology training course in Pottawattamie County. Students learned about soil profiles, excavation, and screening material from the test area.

Right: Bathymetric Surveying on a watershed structure in NW Area. This is one of three surveys completed during the week of June 19, 2023. A bathymetric survey was conducted to determine if the erosion extended below the water level and if it would impact the repair of the wave erosion.



Left: Rubyana Neely, Conservation Stewardship Program Coordinator with NRCS, and Dr. Jean Eells, E Resources Group, LLC traveled to Rapid City, South Dakota for Improving Conservation Delivery to Women Landowners and Producer training.

Neely was able to learn about different techniques for working with women in agriculture. Women producers shared their stories and the group visited their farms.



DRESS FOR SUCCESS: TRANSMIT A PROFESSIONAL IMAGE

With the warm weather outside this time of year, this is a reminder for all our staff and partner staff that are housed in USDA Offices to dress professionally for work, whether you are in the office or out in the field.

Dress professionally to match the occasion

NRCS generally has an office dress code policy that is professional business casual. However, you should and are responsible to dress properly for the occasion. Your office, work environment and supervisor will influence

your dress style. Always be neat and clean in whatever you choose to wear. Clothing should be clean and free of rips, tears, or holes. Your dress style will project a positive or negative image about "you". You broadcast a message in what you wear.

Shorts, short skirts, crop tops, t-shirts and caps with advertising (equipment, COOP, Ag companies), etc. are not appropriate dress.

We suggest you make an accurate statement in your appearance and transmit a positive, professional image always. Remember that your dress reflects you and the Agency.

TRAINING AND EVENTS

SOIL AND WATER STEWARSHIP WEEK



"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." – The Lorax

Students in Ida County planted trees as a part of Soil and Water Stewardship Week, April 30 – May 7, 2023.

Some of the trees offered this year were sugar maple, red oak, balsam fir, black hills spruce, and dogwood to be planted across Iowa.

Students learned about wildlife, soils, prairies, water quality, erosion and flooding. Thank you to the Soil and Water Conservation Districts who helped instruct and plant.

#PLANT23



Above: J.D. Hollingsworth, Area Soil Health Specialist, plants his corn in standing cereal rye because his soil biology is so active, it consumes all of the residue if they terminate the rye early. This can help to suppress weeds, improve soil health, and boost yields.

Right: Paul Ruger is using cover crops and no-till for the first time this year on his family's farm just northeast of Fenton. Fenton is a beginning farmer and his local NRCS Service Center helped guide him through getting started with cover crops and no-till/strip till.



BECOME A FORCE OF NATURE

Twenty agency leaders from across the nation gathered in Dallas, TX, in May for a resiliency training program, focusing on “The Regimen” – a life-practice developed by former martial arts champion Scott Sonnon.

The practice includes five pillars of resiliency: sleep restoration, stress mitigation through applied breath sciences, return to pain-free mobility, nutrition timing for health and performance, and exercise modulation in support of optimal physical performance.

One of the training attendees was Jaia Fischer, Iowa NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Management and Strategy. “We’re excited to offer more opportunities to improve our employees’ health,” she said. “We know that taking care of our physical and mental health is essential for our overall well-being, and we want to provide our team with the tools they need to be their best.”

NRCS is taking a proactive approach to employee wellness, and the resiliency training is just one part of that effort. Iowa’s new wellness point of contact is Megan Trout, Management



Top: Jaia Fischer, Assistant State Conservationist – Management & Strategy with Iowa NRCS attended a resiliency training program on March 28-30, 2023 in Dallas, TX.

Analyst with Iowa NRCS. Fischer and Trout will be discussing the updated wellness policy and provide guidance soon so participants can implement these resources in their own lives.

Trout says she finds it important to be open and discuss ideas regarding all aspects of wellness with her friends, coworkers, and family. As the new wellness point of contact, she hopes to help aid employees and partners in overall wellness conversations, ideas, and implementations to improve their health and happiness across Iowa.

“Everything is connected – our mind, body, environment. We cannot just address one to operate smoothly,” said Trout. “My inspiration comes from observing family and friends and their wellness journeys in one or more of these areas, observing my dog and the change in his behaviors when he gets the physical and mental exertion he needs to be happy, and my own realization when I consistently make time for fitness and the things I love to do and how that positively affects how I act and feel at work.”

She wants others to know it isn’t necessarily how you decompress that matters but that people take time to do so. This can range from physical activity to watching a favorite show. Some may find working on their hobbies or learning a new one helps them to reset and relax. NRCS has begun providing guidance and resources to help.

In addition to the resiliency training, the NRCS Wellness Team has also released three new Growing Wellness guides:

- Take 5! The Importance of Work Breaks
- The Emotional Wellness Pathway
- Water for Wellness: Drink Your Way to Better Health

Take 5! The Importance of Work Breaks offers insight on how taking breaks can help you mentally and physically. The information also

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BECOME A FORCE OF NATURE CONT.

offers science-based facts about the benefits of taking work breaks, and tips on how to make the most of your break and exercise options.

The second guide, “The Emotional Wellness Pathway,” offers tips and resources to help NRCS employees improve their physical, emotional, and mental wellness. It is designed to help employees explore different emotions by asking how they feel. Are they tired, motivated, frustrated, calm, tired, or isolated? The information presented highlights the benefits of daily self-affirmations, giving gratitude, journaling, and coloring meditation. It also includes a guide to mindful breathing with an instructional video created by an NRCS employee. View the guide on emotional wellness.

The NRCS Wellness Team presented the third guide on World Water Day. Water for Wellness: Drink Your Way to Better Health emphasizes the importance and benefits of hydration. Participants can learn more about why drinking water is important, tips to help drink more water, and how to recognize when you have not had enough. It also provides the facts to



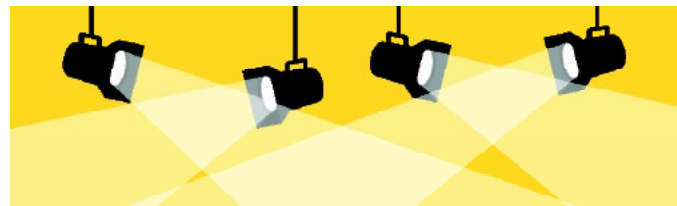
Top: Megan Trout, Management Analyst with Iowa NRCS, enjoys hikes with her dog, JoJie.

clear up seven myths about hydration. The document also provides an activity guide for a Hydration Bar which may be used in the office to promote hydration during work breaks.

The NRCS Wellness Team is committed to helping NRCS employees live healthier and happier lives. They are excited to offer these new resources and to continue to provide support to employees on their wellness journey. If you have questions or comments, please send an email to megan.trout@usda.gov.



NORTHEAST AREA SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



HEATHER KITZMAN



Title: Resource Conservationist, Waterloo Resource Team

College: Iowa State University, Bachelor's Degree in Geological Sciences

What other positions have you had?

I was a District Technician for Grundy and Hardin County SWCDs for about 5 years. After that, I held the position of Soil Conservationist in Sac County, Grundy County, and then on the Waterloo Resource Team. I was also Acting District Conservationist in Bremer County for a little while.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up on a small cow/calf, row crop farm in southern Grundy County, Iowa. I was actively

involved in 4-H and FFA, and I showed cattle with my family around the state and country.

How did you get interested in conservation?

I have always had a love for the outdoors, but my interest in conservation became more solidified while working for the Grundy and Hardin Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

What do you like most about your job?

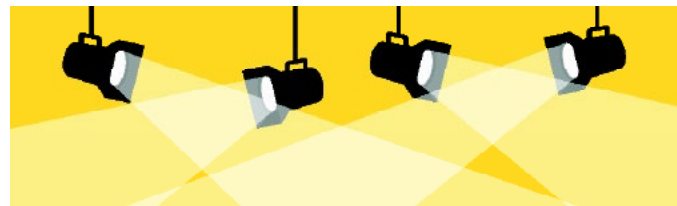
There are several things that I like about my job, including, but not limited to: going out to the field, building a working relationship with producers and staff, utilizing technology to make the job more efficient, and being able to see conservation practices that I worked on implemented out in the field and having the opportunity to see those conservation practices still in affect years later. However, what I find to be the most rewarding part of my job would be training newer staff and having the opportunity to share the knowledge and skills I have gathered over the years from working for the agency.

What do you enjoy away from work?

I pretty much enjoy any outdoor activity (camping, fishing, hunting, hiking, and going on bike rides), but I also enjoy reading, and solving various types of puzzles.

Any family? I currently live in Marshalltown with my fiancé, who has a wonderful daughter. I also love spending time with my niece and nephew.

NORTHWEST AREA SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



DYLAN BARTELS



fishing when he was a kid, and went on to continue that tradition with me. My great-grandma also gifted me bird feeders and bird books when she was still living. I'd say those formative experiences were what drew me to conservation.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I like talking with producers and being outside.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy climbing, cycling, running, fishing and hunting.

Any family? My wife and I currently live in Sioux Center.

Title: Wetland Specialist, Lyon County

College: BS, Dordt College (University), 2017;
MS, North Dakota State University 2021

What is your career background?

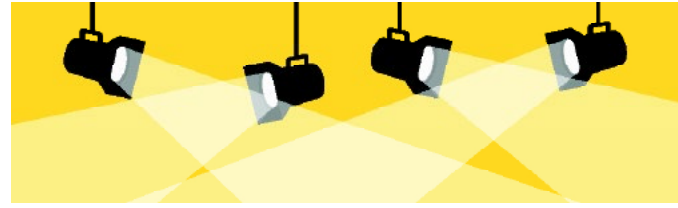
I worked as the Soil Conservation Technician and Soil Conservationist in Pipestone, MN; District Conservationist in Luverne, MN.

How did you get interested in conservation?

I grew up in Orange City, IA, and have enjoyed being outside from a very young age. My great-grandma used to take my dad



SOUTHEAST AREA SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



ANDY POTHOVAN



Title: District Conservationist, Mahaska County

College: Iowa State University, 2015-2019,
Agronomy and Kirkwood, 2013-2015,
Biotechnology

What other positions and locations have you worked prior to this?

I was a Soil Conversationist in Grundy County and then I was an Acting District Conservationist in Greene County.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in New Sharon, IA, in the northern part of Mahaska County. Both of my grandfathers and my father were involved in farming. My father used to take me along to go out and feed cattle and sheep in the pastures which sparked my interest to pursue a career that had some relation to

agriculture.

How did you get interested in conservation?

My interest came from my hobbies of hunting, fishing and wanting to preserve those hobbies for the future. The other reason for my interest in conservation was through my grandparents and parents both having an involvement with CRP on each of the farms that they own and being able to see the different types of wildlife that occur on each of those farms. Plus, all through college I spent my time researching how to better improve the habitat for deer, turkey, pheasants, and quail on my parents farm.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I would say either meeting with landowners/producers to talk about their goals to preserve their land in a way that best fits them is one highlight, or being able to be out doing status reviews on landowners/producers CRP and seeing all the wildlife out there and just seeing the difference between each CRP and how it's managed slightly different from one CRP to the next and seeing the difference in vegetation that happens throughout the county.

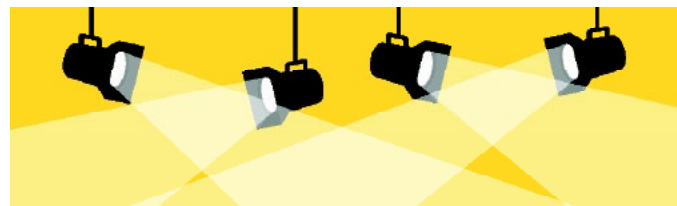
What are your hobbies?

My hobbies involve hunting, fishing, camping, slow pitch softball, weightlifting, golfing, playing bags, and my newest addition to fishing is learning how to fly fish for trout.

Any family?

My wife Morgan and I just got married in September of 2022. We live in the town of Elkhart in Polk County. Currently don't have kids but hope to have kids in the future.

SOUTHWEST AREA SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



LAURA LECUYER



Title: Soil Conservationist, Pottawattamie County

College: University of Nebraska-Lincoln, B.S., Environmental Restoration Science w/ Soil Science focus, Minor in Water Science, 2020

What is your career background?

I started out with NRCS as an Earth Team Volunteer/Student Employee during college, at the National Soil Survey Center in Lincoln, NE. I worked on scanning historic soil maps and surveys, and later assisted graduate student researchers in the soil chemistry laboratory. I started as a Soil Conservationist in the Oakland Field Office in July 2020. Currently, I am Acting Day-to-Day District Conservationist in the Council Bluffs Field Office.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Columbus, Nebraska. I spent many weekends of my childhood at the family farm near Linwood, NE, and enjoying time outdoors.

How did you get interested in conservation?

I have always loved spending time in nature and learning about our environment. During college, I became involved in environmental research, participated in soil judging, and developed connections with other like-minded folks also passionate about our natural resources.

What do you like most about your job?

I love spending time in the field and getting to work with producers & landowners. It is so rewarding to see conservation get put on the ground, and to talk with producers who are excited about the work they are doing. Another part of my job that I have enjoyed is being involved with the Southwest Iowa Soil Health (SWISH) Team, and help organize soil health field days in SW Iowa.

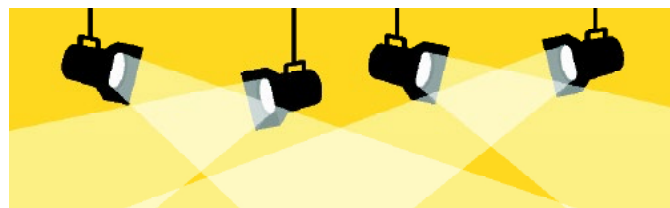
What are your hobbies?

I like to spend my free time hiking in the Loess Hills, camping, birding, and playing piano and saxophone with the community band.

Any family?

My fiancé, Shawn, is a software developer. We live in Carson, IA, with our two cats, and have a wedding coming up this fall!

STATE OFFICE SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



SCOTT BREACH



Title: Administrative Support Specialist (Programs), Des Moines

College: Associate of Science in Ag Business, Iowa Western Community College, 2002-2004

What is your career background?

I was a district employee in Atlantic for 6 years before working as a Farm Bill Specialist out of the Ankeny FO beginning the fall of 2013 until this spring. I recently started as an Administrative Support Assistant for programs.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up on an acreage in Atlantic, Iowa. My parents continue to live on an acreage in the Atlantic area and raise a dozen sheep.

How did you get interested in conservation?

I have always wanted to be a farmer. I have helped several farmers throughout my life that have done good conservation work. I began working for the NRCS after responding to a newspaper ad during the winter. I was looking for jobs to balance the times I was unable to work on local farms.

What do you like most about your job?

I have enjoyed meeting my new co-workers in this position and seeing the bigger picture of conservation goals for the whole state.

What do you do in your free time?

I like to go on family bike rides on the trails around Des Moines. I also like photography. I have a large garden and can spaghetti sauce, salsa, and vegetables for my family to enjoy all year long.

Any family information you want to share?

My wife and I will be married for 9 years this year and have three kids. Ben (7), Nathan (4), and Emily (1).

IOWA NRCS PERSONNEL CHANGES



Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
Barber, Kevin	District Conservationist	Promotion	4/9/2023	Clarion
Buhr, Stacie	District Conservationist	Promotion	4/9/2023	Toledo
Hansen, Abigail	District Conservationist	Promotion	4/9/2023	Greenfield
Hiher, Christopher	District Conservationist	Promotion	4/9/2023	DeWitt
Meyer, Bill	District Conservationist	Promotion	4/9/2023	Epworth
Portz, Abbie	District Conservationist	Promotion	4/9/2023	Webster
Welch, Andrew	District Conservationist	Promotion	4/9/2023	Malvern
Galer, Rochelle	Wetland Biologist	Appointment	4/23/2023	Des Moines
Breach, Scott	Administrative Support Specialist	Promotion	4/23/2023	Des Moines
Young, Theresa	Administrative Support Specialist	Promotion	4/23/2023	Des Moines
Brink, Corey	District Conservationist	Reassignment	4/23/2023	Decorah
Reichter, Jeffrey	Soil Conservationist	Reassignment	4/23/2023	Des Moines
Reams, Tyler	Area Soil Health Conservationist	Appointment	5/7/2023	Indianola
Campbell, Nicholas	Civil Engineer	Promotion	5/7/2023	Des Moines
Mickle, Corey	Civil Engineer	Promotion	5/7/2023	Des Moines
Grimm, Hannah	Administrative Support Specialist	Transfer	5/7/2023	Des Moines
Jones-Hughes, Patrick	Soil Conservationist	Resignation	5/17/2023	Garner RT
Baxter, Edmond	Civil Engineer	Appointment	5/21/2023	Fairfield
Bollman, Machele	Soil Conservation Technician	Appointment	5/21/2023	Decorah RT
Geib, Connor	Soil Conservation Technician	Appointment	5/21/2023	Creston RT
Coffman, Sage	Student Trainee	Appointment	5/21/2023	Wapello RT
Hatfield, Logan	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	5/21/2023	Chariton RT
Langbein, Joe	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	5/21/2023	Storm Lake
Waters, Austin	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	5/21/2023	Creston
Grove, Mitchell	Civil Engineer	Promotion	5/21/2023	West Union
Holmes, Brian	Natural Resource Specialist	Promotion	5/21/2023	Red Oak
Monroe, Bailey	Civil Engineer	Promotion	5/21/2023	Sioux City
Rhodes, Christine	District Conservationist	Promotion	5/21/2023	Jefferson

RT = Resource Team

Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
Bolsinger, Trace	Soil Conservationist	Resignation	5/26/2023	Wapello
Schnoor, Caleb	Soil Conservationist	Resignation	5/29/2023	Mount Ayr
Hackley, Gabrielle	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	6/4/2023	Webster City
Noeth, Ronan	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	6/4/2023	Creston
Neideign, Erica	Civil Engineer	Promotion	6/4/2023	West Union
Wiest, Rachel	Resource Team Leader	Promotion	6/4/2023	Spencer
Filloon, Hunter	Soil Conservation Technician	Appointment	6/18/2023	Waterloo
Tweeten, Luke	Soil Conservation Technician	Appointment	6/18/2023	Vinton
Austin, Robert	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	6/18/2023	Indianola
Leavenworth, Helen	Resource Team Leader	Promotion	6/18/2023	Epworth
Olsen, Nicole	Resource Team Leader	Promotion	6/18/2023	Charles City
Prassas, Anastasia	Resource Team Leader	Promotion	6/18/2023	Ottumwa
Morningstar, Douglas	Civil Engineer	Retirement	6/30/2023	Fairfield
Steffes, Kay	Engineer Technician	Retirement	6/30/2023	Red Oak
Beckman, Benjamin	Soil Conservation Technician	Appointment	7/2/2023	Decorah
White, Riley	Soil Conservation Technician	Appointment	7/2/2023	Spencer

IDALS-DSCWQ PERSONNEL CHANGES



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF
**AGRICULTURE &
LAND STEWARDSHIP**

Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
Kimsey, Belinda	Conservation Assistant	New Hire	April 17, 2023	Mills SWCD
Kollasch, Pam	Conservation Assistant	New Hire	May 1, 2023	Kossuth SWCD
Anderson, Sharyl	Conservation Assistant	Retirement	May 11, 2023	Winnebago SWCD
Rank, Jennifer	Conservation Assistant	Resignation	May 23, 2023	Hamilton SWCD
Mether, Deb	Conservation Assistant	New Hire	May 30, 2023	Harrison SWCD
Schultes, Kelli	Conservation Assistant	New Hire	June 9, 2023	Audubon SWCD
Stanevicius, Brianna	Conservation Assistant	Resignation	June 12, 2023	Grundy SWCD
Thacker, Cody	State Technician	New Hire	June 23, 2023	Des Moines SWCD
Trowers, Sherry	Conservation Assistant	Retirement	June 30, 2023	Wayne SWCD