



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

# CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

IOWA NRCS WINTER 2023



USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

 @IowaNRCS

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## A NOTE FROM THE STATE CONSERVATIONIST

Happy Holidays! It's great to be back serving as State Conservationist for Iowa NRCS. After serving in a detail as the Regional Conservationist for nearly 10 months, I am getting caught up with all the changes that took place throughout 2023.

Thank you all for your patience and focus as we transitioned Acting State Conservationists – from Jaia Fischer to Neil Dominy and back to Jaia – during my absence. They did a wonderful job. I appreciate their leadership, collaboration, and hard work.

So much was accomplished by our staff in 2023. On the periphery, the record \$85.8 million in conservation funding obligated to Iowa farmers through Farm Bill programs is awesome. But I am just as proud of the work our staff did to onboard so many new employees, the training we conducted for our young staff, and the outreach to find and work with new customers.

The next year promises to be another interesting one, full of challenges and opportunities that will test us and enable us to make a major difference.

We are an evolving agency, being asked to take on and produce about as much as we can handle. The best part about our work is the mission. That's why I am still here after 36 years. Like most of you, I have a passion for helping our customers take care of their land for future generations.

I look forward to getting out to visit many of you during the early part of 2024. Over the next few weeks, I hope you are able to spend quality time with your friends and family. I am wishing all of you a blessed holiday season.

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 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](mailto: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



As one approaches retirement after a long career, it is a time for reflection. As I write this, I would like to reflect on my years as the State Outreach Coordinator, although I held numerous other positions with NRCS. I had a unique situation of serving as the State Outreach Coordinator twice, from 1998-2010 and again from 2020 until my retirement this month.

NRCS outreach is very different in 2023 compared to my first time in the position. Chief Terry Cosby shares a clear message of the priority placed on outreach and equity. The Outreach and Partnerships Division as well as the Equity Division have been created and leadership offers tremendous support, staffing and resources. Every state now has (or will have) at least one full-time Outreach Coordinator and many states have more than one. Iowa is one of those states that will have two outreach coordinators soon.

Another difference is the focus on urban agriculture and small-scale production including specialty crops. For a state like Iowa, this brings about a significant change compared to our traditional customers of corn and soybean farmers on a larger scale. It has been a steep learning curve here in Iowa and honestly, the Nation, how to best assist urban agriculture and small-scale producers. USDA established

the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production, which is led by NRCS. Over the past year or more, NRCS programs have adapted to allow more assistance to these customers including the EQIP small-scale scenarios, new EQIP practices, and the required urban agriculture funding pool, plus the increase in minimum CSP payment to \$4,000. There are more changes yet to come.

Iowa NRCS has found that our work with urban agriculture requires partnership. The Iowa Urban Agriculture Leadership Team was established this year and includes a tremendous group of over 30 partners working in this arena. The State Technical Committee now includes an Urban Agriculture Sub-committee and the Urban Agriculture Steering Committee (established in early 2022) includes NRCS technical staff working on the noted changes in EQIP as well as training and tools for staff to better implement the practice of micro-irrigation in the future.

The DC Urban Ag Working Group provides a network for District Conservationists with urban workload as well as the opportunity for them to share what they encounter in the field for a better understanding at the state office level. Polk County conducted the first Specialty Crop Producers Series last spring with an educational



*Jenny Quiner, owner of Dogpatch Urban Gardens in Des Moines tends to her crops growing in early spring.*

## OUTREACH REPORT: TANYA MEYER-DIDERIKSEN



event that included numerous partners sharing resources and a soil health field day on an urban farm. There will be more such events coming soon.

Chief Cosby is focusing his priority to reach New Customers, see National Bulletin 270-24-1 IRM-Capturing New Customers and Brief Technical Assistance Requests in Conservation Desktop. The bulletin defines New Customers as those who have not worked with NRCS before and never received direct assistance from NRCS. The bulletin shares several examples of New Customers and explains that capturing new customers and recording brief technical assistance requests are now required to meet agency priorities and be entered in Conservation Desktop. Training materials are available in the NRCS State, Field & Technical Staff SharePoint. There is more to come on this at the state and national level.

Iowa NRCS and FSA have had the wonderful opportunity in recent years to partner with Lutheran Services of Iowa and Iowa Valley RC&D – GROW Johnson County and to meet with immigrant and refugee urban farmers to share information about NRCS and FSA programs and services. And finally, as I close out my career, Iowa held the first Iowa Farmers of Color Conference on Dec. 16 in Des Moines. District Conservationist Shaffer Ridgeway worked with farmer Todd Western III, a 6th generation black farmer, and others to plan the conference that included Dr. Dewayne Goldmon, USDA Senior Advisor for Racial Justice & Equity.

Efforts and expectations for outreach and equity, as well as tools and resources, will continue to grow within NRCS and USDA. It is an exciting time for the agency, staff and customers, with many opportunities coming in the future!



*Above: Tama County Women, Land & Legacy's fall social at Buzzed Bee Meadery, rural Melbourne. Wayne Spohnheimer shared about his family's business, meadmaking and bees during Tama County WLL's Fall Social last night. 24 folks were there to enjoy a beautiful fall evening, snacks, conversation and some great mead.*



*Above: Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen, Carolyn Christian, Alan Lauver celebrated their retirement with state office staff on Dec. 6, 2023. Good luck! You will all be missed.*





## TOP POST!

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

This quarter we’re featuring an early December Post from Lee Tesdell, who shows us a picture of his acres covered in living roots.

We’re featuring Tesdell’s Post because it shares the importance of tagging our partners and diversity in the field.

Currently, Iowa NRCS has increased to 2,662 Followers on X (formerly Twitter) @IowaNRCS!

Poll: Should it be called a “Post” or a “Xeet” (zeet)? Jolene thinks they should just X the whole thing.

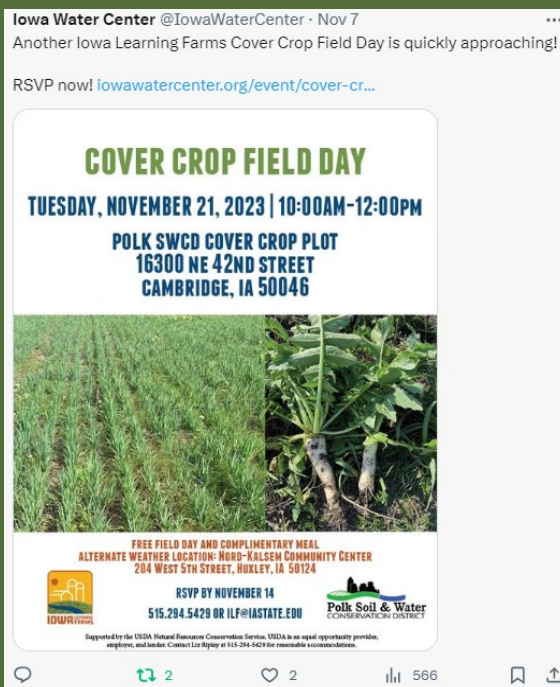


Lee Tesdell  
@leetesdell

#WorldSoilDay2022 All my acres in Iowa are covered in living roots today: alfalfa/orchardgrass hay, kernza, prairie strips, cereal rye & stream buffers. @IowaNRCS @prairiestrips @practicalfarmer #PolkCoIASWCD @ialearningfarms @Iowa\_Env @IowaSoybeans @NatureAsMeasure



## 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: Post from @IowaWaterCenter for a cover crop field day event.



# TRAINING AND EVENTS



**Above:** A CSP IRA funded Cereal Rye and Camelina cover crop after corn harvest to improve soil organic matter and build soil health. Delaware County. Photo by Dave Mack, DC Manchester, Nov.17, 2023.

**Right:** Patrick Nachtman, Soil Conservationist with Epworth RT, assists to survey a proposed EQIP project site to reduce streambank erosion and increase aquatic organism habitat in Delaware County on Nov. 8, 2023. Photo by Dave Mack, DC Manchester.



**Above:** Russ Overton, CET; Joe Thompson, Geologist; Landowner; Ken Klein, IDALS Tech; Luke Hirsh, SCT; Hayes Durbin, CET; conducting a geologic investigation for a proposed manure storage structure to ensure it protects groundwater quality in Delaware County on Nov. 30, 2023. Photo by Dave Mack, DC Manchester.



**Above:** Angie Lemke, SC Manchester FO; Patrick Nachtman, SC Epworth RT; and Dave Pasker, District Tech Manchester FO; conduct a cultural resources field investigation on Nov. 4, 2023 near a proposed streambank stabilization project in Delaware County. Photo by Dave Mack, DC Manchester.



# ISU COLLEGE OF AG AND LIFE SCIENCES CAREER FAIR

The biggest recruiting opportunity of the year for Iowa NRCS is Iowa State University's College of Ag and Life Sciences Career Fair, held annually in the fall on the Ames campus. This year, the fair was on Oct. 10 at the Lied Recreation Center.

Management Analysts Megan Trout and Jaime Sandoval joined State Public Affairs Specialist Jason Johnson to take questions from students and provide information about our agency.

Johnson said Iowa NRCS saw a very good turnout. "I have attended this fair for several years and this year was one of the best – in terms of student interest in NRCS," he said. "We actually ran out of folders and other materials for the students."

Johnson estimates 75 students stopped by the NRCS booth for information. "The timing was great because the Pathways Student Trainee vacancy announcement came out on the 12th, so we were able to prepare the freshmen and sophomores for that," he said.

Johnson says he hopes this year's recruiting efforts pay off down the road. "We need staff right now, but we also need to increase the

number of summer student trainees to build that bridge to the future," he said. "There is a lot of competition out there, particularly in Iowa, for a lot of these students and we have to do all we can to get them to join our team."



**Above:** Megan Trout, Management Analyst (right, facing) and Jaime Sandoval, Acting Assistant State Conservationist – Management and Strategy, talk to ISU students about opportunities with NRCS at the Iowa State University Career Fair Oct. 10 in Ames.

**Below:** Cultivating Future Leaders met in Red Wing, MN, at the end of October to continue their training.





# FALL COVER CROP TRAINING



*Southeast Area Soil Health Specialist JD Hollingsworth (right) shows trainees one of the grasses that were part of the ID quiz.*

*By Hillary Olson, State Soil Health Specialist*

About 50 Iowa NRCS and partner field office employees gathered on Oct. 24 at the Iowa State University Field Extension Education Laboratory in Boone for Fall Cover Crops Training. Cover crops have been the most implemented practice through NRCS conservation programs in Iowa for the past several years.

The agenda included:

- Background information about cover crops from Iowa NRCS State Soil Health Specialist Hillary Olson, covering such topics as "Motivation for Using Cover Crops" and "How Cover Crops Improve Soil Health."
- A presentation from Iowa State University Assistant Professor & Extension Cropping Systems Specialist Mark Licht about "Matching Goals with Species Establishment and Termination."
- A breakout session from Saddle Butte Ag's TJ Kartes discussing "In-Season Establishment and Termination Considerations" outside on ISU's research plot.
- A breakout session from Iowa NRCS Southeast Area Soil Health Specialist JD Hollingsworth and Regional Soil Health

Specialist Candy Thomas where they conducted a Cover Crop ID Quiz, discussing ways to differentiate cover crop grasses, legumes, and brassicas.

The event was sponsored by the Midwest Cover Crop Council, ISU Extension, Iowa NRCS, and Saddle Butte Ag.



*Half the training group listens to TJ Kartes with Saddle Butte Ag talk about different types of cover crops, application, and termination methods.*



*State Soil Health Specialist Hillary Olson shows the audience an example of soil with good aggregate stability due to years of no-till and cover crops.*



# PARTNER PROJECT: ECONOMICS OF SOIL HEALTH SYSTEMS AND BENEFITS

*By Jolene Bopp, Public Affairs Specialist*

NRCS has partnered with the Soil Health Institute (SHI) and the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) for a project called "Economics of Soil Health Systems to Enhance Adoption and Environmental Benefits." This initiative is all about understanding the financial and environmental upsides of soil health practices.

The purpose is to encourage more farmers to adopt these practices for the betterment of their land and livelihoods. NACD has gathered insights from 30 farmers across 20 states who have implemented soil health management systems to create educational fact sheets and videos. The farmers experiences provide valuable lessons on how these practices impact farm income and soil health.

For instance, Levi Lyle from Keota, who's been no-till farming and using cover crops, has seen remarkable soil improvement and effective weed control. Then there's Don Elsbernd from Allamakee County, with 38 years of experience, who has observed numerous benefits from his conservation practices, like improved soil structure and reduced fertilizer use.

According to their website, key findings from

the soil health management systems research included:

- On average, it cost producers \$14/acre less to grow corn, \$7/acre less to grow soybeans, and \$16/acre less to grow all other crops after implementing an SHMS.
- Adopting an SHMS not only reduced expenses, but also increased net farm income.
- Across 29 farms, SHMS increased net farm income by an average of \$65/acre.
- Yield increases due to SHMS were reported for 42% of farms growing corn, 32% of farms growing soybean, and 35% of farms growing other crops.
- Cover crop seed costs averaged \$21/acre for corn, \$16/acre for soybean, and \$25/acre when used with other crops.
- Four farms grazed cover crops, allowing them to increase revenue by an average of \$26/acre.

Additional reported benefits of adopting SHMS included decreased erosion and soil compaction, earlier access to fields in wet years, and increased resilience to extreme weather, among other benefits.

Check out and share the [video, producer narrative, and fact sheet](#) about the farms.



Don Elsbernd



Levi Lyle



## LEASING UPDATES

Several field offices are going through a renovation or expansion, getting new carpet and furniture, or moving altogether as building leases expire. Below is a list of leasing updates for Iowa NRCS field office

### Current Lease Actions

1. **New Build:**  
**Charles City, Floyd County**  
Furniture Installation mid-January, planned occupancy by the end of January
2. **New construction:**  
**Albia, Monroe County**  
In early phases of NEPA approval and design
3. **New construction:**  
**Sibley, Osceola County**  
In early phases of planning/design
4. **Renovation:**  
**Garner, Hancock County**  
Floorplan design, early phase of renovation
5. **Renovation:**  
**Oakland, Pottawattamie County**  
In early phases of planning/design
6. **Renovation:**  
**DeWitt, Clinton County**  
Final walk-through in late December.
7. **Renovation:**  
**Clarinda, Page County**  
Near completion except for additional security requirements
8. **Renovation:**  
**Washington, Washington County**  
Floorplan reviews
9. **Renovation: Chariton, Lucas County**  
Request for lease proposals released in November
10. **Renovation: Vinton, Benton County**  
Drafting Request for Lease Proposal

### Requested Lease Actions

1. **Newton, Jasper County**
2. **Indianola, Warren County**
3. **Decorah, Winneshiek County**
4. **Epworth, Dubuque County**
5. **Algona, Kossuth County**

### Completed Leases

1. **Rockwell City, Calhoun County**  
Completed: Nov. 22, 2023
2. **Corning, Adams County**  
Completed: Nov. 11, 2023



# SPECIAL OBSERVANCE

By Megan Trout, Management Analyst

While December has not been bestowed with a special heritage designation, it does contain days recognized nationally and internationally that deserves their own celebration.

On Dec. 10, 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the Nations General Assembly. This document set forth basic civil rights standards that should be guaranteed to every person, such as economic, political, and social rights.

Dec. 3 has been designated as the International

Day of Persons with Disabilities. The establishment of this observance aimed to promote an understanding of various disabilities and mobilize support for persons with disabilities. This observance also seeks to foster awareness of these disabilities and the importance of integrating persons with disabilities into all aspects of life.

If you have questions or comments about resources for [employee wellness](#), please send an email to [megan.trout@usda.gov](mailto:megan.trout@usda.gov).



## A REASON TO CELEBRATE

### January

#### Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. - Special Emphasis Observance

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a tireless advocate for racial equality, working classes, and the oppressed around the world.

#### Lunar New Year and Lantern Festival

Lunar New Year is a festival typically celebrated in China and other Asian countries that begins with the first new moon of the lunar calendar and ends on the first full moon of the lunar calendar, 15 days later.



### February

#### Black History Month - Special Emphasis Observance

Black History Month has become an annual tradition in February and serves as a chance to honor the diverse impact of Black Americans throughout the nation's history. This includes the lasting impact Black farmers, landowners and communities have had on agriculture throughout the country.

#### American Heart Month

American Heart Month is a time when people across the nation advocate cardiovascular health and raise awareness about heart disease. Feb. 5, 2024 is National Wear Red Day.





# FABULOUS FIELD PHOTOS!



## Field Photos

Some staff were able to grab photos during the hustle and bustle of the harvest and holiday season during field visits.

1. Dexter Yaddof, District Conservationist in Osceola, shared a producer's drone photo of a GSS project built with IFIP funds.
2. Winnebago County farmer Mark Kingland began strip-tilling some of his cropland this year for the first time to help reduce soil erosion and better target fertilizer to his crops. (Jason Johnson, Des Moines)
3. A large turnip survived low nighttime fall temperatures as part of a cover crop mix on Ray Gaesser's cropland in Adams County. (Jason Johnson, 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=aKV9q](https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/:f:/r/sites/nrcs_iowa/PA/Shared%20Documents/Photo%20Submission?csf=1&web=1&e=aKV9q).





# WE'RE HALFWAY THERE

## Do you suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder?

*By Jolene Bopp, Public Affairs Specialist*

Have you been living on a prayer? The longest nights of winter are wrapping up and more light is coming our way, I swear. Some people love winter and the holidays while others might find the shorter days and longer nights a bit challenging. This is where understanding Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and embracing a lifestyle concept known as Hygge (pronounced hoo-ga) can make a difference.

SAD is not just about feeling a little gloomy when it's gray outside. It's a type of depression that's related to changes in seasons. Symptoms can range from feeling lethargic to experiencing mood swings. It's especially relevant for people who work outdoors.

Hygge is a Danish concept that encompasses a feeling of contentment and well-being through enjoying the simple things in life. Nordic countries consistently make the top 10 in the annual World Happiness report despite having short daylight hours and harsh winters. They must be onto something.

People can even implement small comforts at work! Think about adding a small plant, some personal photos, or even a soft desk blanket. Let's also consider Hygge-inspired activities: how about a shared lunch, a book club, or wellness workshops? These can foster a sense of community and support among colleagues.

Remember, life is about balance. Creating comfortable and inviting environment at home, where we can unwind and disconnect, is equally important. This might mean designating a cozy corner for relaxation or spending quality time with loved ones.

While Hygge is a wonderful tool, it's important to remember professional support is available for those struggling with SAD. NRCS offers resources, and there are many external counseling services, too, through the [Employee Wellness Program](#).

As we navigate the winter months, let's embrace Hygge and support each other. Remember, it's okay to seek help if you're feeling down. Together, we can make our community a little warmer and a lot brighter.

### Ideas for the indoors:

- Find a group activity to try in your community
- Try a new winter recipe with in-season fruits or vegetables
- Slow down and stay in the moment
- Listen to your favorite music
- Bring nature inside
- Declutter

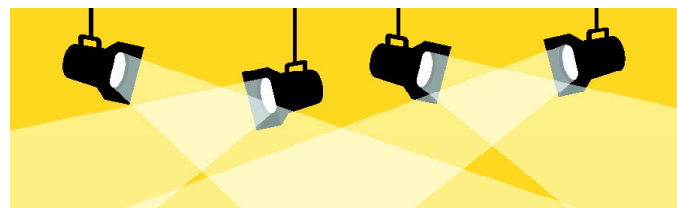
### Ideas for the outdoors:

- Take a winter walk or hike
- Go enjoy the holiday lights
- Try a new winter sport





## NORTHEAST AREA SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



# GATLIN HEMANN



**Title:** District Conservationist, Osage

**College:** Iowa State University, graduated in 2019 with a degree in Agronomy.

**What other positions have you had?**

I was a soil conservationist trainee in Bemidji, MN, and a soil conservationist in Marshal, MN.

**Where did you grow up?**

I grew up on a family farm in Howard County, IA, involved in both crops and a variety of livestock over time (cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, and chickens). It's the picture

background of being a small-town kid from a small family farm.

**How did you get interested in conservation?**

I had a general interest in conservation early on which was discovered through my farming background and time spent in high school agriculture / FFA. Those experiences helped me want to pursue some form of natural resource preservation.

This led to the mindset of finding ways to have agriculture and conservation coexist, and ultimately finding a career related to that idea after some schooling.

**What do you like most about your job?**

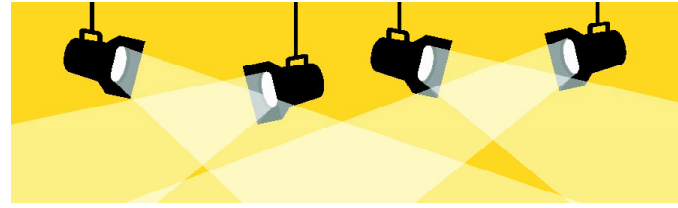
Working and designing plans with producers motivated to make a change on their operation!

**What do you enjoy away from work?**

Assisting the family farm, gym / weightlifting, and gaming!



## NORTHWEST AREA SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



# CAITLIN MULLER



**Title:** Area Easement Specialist, Sioux City

**College:** SUNY ESF in Syracuse, NY,  
Majored in Forest Health with a minor in  
Urban Forestry

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

I've worked for The Nature Conservancy from 2015 to 2020 in as a seasonal employee New York, Ohio, Indiana, and as an Assistant Land Steward Iowa. I then

worked for the Iowa DNR in State Parks as a Park Manager.

**Where did you grow up?**

I grew up in New York on Long Island. Growing up in an urban area we didn't have large outdoor areas to explore. We would frequently take trips to visit family in the capitol region where my cousins and I would spend time outside fishing and hiking around the Mohawk River.

**How did you get interested in conservation?**

I grew up in a very urban area, and realized through spending time outdoors and classes in school that I had a passion for conservation. I took AP Environmental Science in high school which only further confirmed I wanted to pursue conservation as a career.

**What do you enjoy most about your job?**

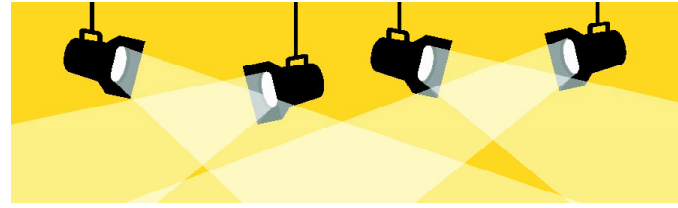
I've only been on for a short time, but I've enjoyed working with my team and learning more about the wetland reserve easement process.

**What are your hobbies?**

In my off time I enjoy hiking, kayaking, and reading.



## SOUTHEAST AREA SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



# JACOB THOMPSON



**Title:** Grazing Specialist, Fairfield

**College:** William Penn University, Graduate of 2010, Environmental Biology

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

- Ducks Unlimited, Rangeland Technician - South Dakota
- IADOT, Highway Technician - Sigourney, IA
- IDALS, State Technician - Knoxville, IA
- NRCS, Civil Engineering Technician - Ankeny, Newton, and Des Moines (State Office)

**Where did you grow up?**

I grew up in rural Mahaska County along the South Skunk River. Once I got old enough to drive my four-wheeler to the neighbors, I started

doing chores for all the local producers. I was never the kid that asked to be paid, I just wanted to be there. If I wasn't working or going to school, you would find me fishing along the river or hiking in the woods.

**How did you get interested in conservation?**

Just working on neighboring farms, I acquired an eye for trying to improve different aspects associated with the land. I was always drawing up new ideas or talking about ways to improve operations for my neighbors, even though I knew they all probably thought I was nuts.

My family also introduced me to the outdoors at a very young age. I have very fond memories of camping, fishing, and hunting.

**What do you enjoy most about your job?**

I love the challenge that everyday brings and how I can share my experiences and knowledge with others.

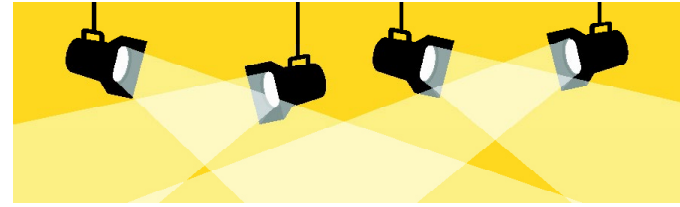
**What are your hobbies?**

Most weekends during the summer you will catch me attending auctions buying random junk that my wife loves. I enjoy tinkering on things, so I have lots of small odd and end projects going on. Otherwise, I tend to be hunting fall through spring somewhere.

**Any family?**

My wife and I are expecting our first child (girl) in late May/early June.

## SOUTHWEST AREA SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



# TROY COUCHMAN



**Title:** District Conservationist, Wayne County

**College:** Northwest Missouri State University from 2006-2010. Graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Business.

### **What is your career background?**

I started my career in conservation as a District Technician in Putnam County, Missouri. I fell in love with conservation and helping landowners with improvements on their farms and decided to get on with NRCS. I applied all over the Midwest and was able to land in Lincoln, Nebraska, as a Soil Conservation Technician. I spent 3 years there, then was able to transfer to Mt. Ayr as a Soil Conservation Technician, and eventually went to in Schuyler County, Missouri, as a Soil Conservation

Technician. While in Schuyler County I was able to transition to the planning side and became a Soil Conservationist and then transferred to Sullivan County, Missouri. I was offered a Resource Conservationist position in Memphis, Missouri, before ending up in Corydon, IA, as the District Conservationist.

### **Where did you grow up?**

I grew up in Unionville, Missouri, on a cow calf operation.

### **How did you get interested in conservation?**

Being raised on a farm, conservation has always been important to me, but being in Future Farmers of America introduced me to farming practices that our farm was lacking. We were able to introduce these practices while I was growing up and I still use them on my farm today.

### **What do you like most about your job?**

I love the opportunities to get out and visit with landowners, to see their operations and being able to offer advice I have learned over the years across three states.

### **What are your hobbies?**

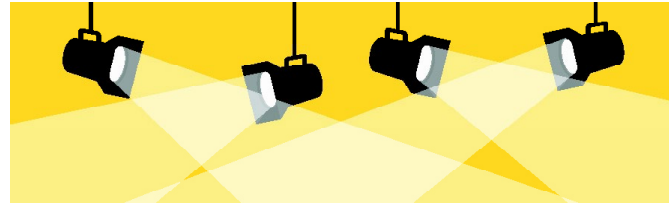
My hobbies are metal detecting, shooting sports, and serving at the First Christian Church in Unionville, MO.

### **Any family?**

My wife and I have four wonderful children, three girls and a boy. We enjoy spending time working on our farm that my wife and I bought off her uncle that has been in the family since the Civil War.



## STATE OFFICE SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



# BRIAN SCHMIDT



**Title:** Business Services Specialist, Des Moines

**College:** University of Iowa (1990) Bachelor of Science (Probably the only Hawkeye in the entire office)

Drake University (2001) Masters of Public Administration (MPA)

Army Command and General Staff College (2012)

**What is your career background?**

Thirty-one years in the Iowa Army National Guard, in which I retired in 2022 as a Lieutenant Colonel and was both an aviation and logistics officer.

**Where did you grow up?**

I was born in Wisconsin but grew up in Marion. Growing up I played a lot of sports and had a lot of jobs.

**How did you get interested in conservation?**

Position not related to conservation, but I have worked in government for essentially over 25 years

**What do you like most about your job?**

So far, the people have been wonderful and very dedicated to their mission.

**What do you do in your free time?**

Scoutmaster for Troop 182 in Waukee for the last six years. Attend Lutheran Church of Hope in West Des Moines. Love to read, travel, spend time with family and I'm a huge history and trivia buff. I enjoy watching a lot of sports but played football, basketball and soccer in high school, and intramural flag football, basketball, and soccer in college. Latest obsession is pickleball with my wife!

**Any family information you want to share?**

Married to my wife, Penny, for 30 years as of last May. We have three children ages 26, 22 and 18.

# IOWA NRCS PERSONNEL CHANGES



Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
Muller, Caitlin	Natural Resource Specialist	Appointment	10/8/2023	Sioux City
Stewart, Shelly	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	10/8/2023	Wapello
Moen, Kathleen	District Conservationist	Promotion	10/8/2023	Cresco
Ronnebaum, Evan	District Conservationist	Promotion	10/8/2023	West Union
Schwartz, Levi	District Conservationist	Promotion	10/8/2023	West Union
Wegehaupt, Catherine	District Conservationist	Reassignment	10/8/2023	Sioux City
Castro, Sarahy	Program Assistant	Resignation	10/20/2023	Denison
Sampson, Keiko	Executive Assistant	Appointment	10/22/2023	Des Moines
Cary, Patrick	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	10/22/2023	Denison
Toenjes, Makenzie	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	10/22/2023	Epworth
Swanson, Joel	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	10/22/2023	Ottumwa
Reed, Austin	Civil Engineer Technician	Promotion	10/22/2023	Indianola
Brinegar, Courtney	Civil Engineer Technician	Name Change	10/24/2023	Ottumwa
Eppling, Dennis	Soil Conservation Technician	Retirement	10/27/2023	Sergeant Buff
Dugan, Shelley	Program Specialist	Retirement	10/31/2023	Des Moines
Adamson, Ethan	Soil Conservationist Technician	Resignation	11/3/2023	Williamsburg
Bechtold, Brooks	Soil Conservationist Technician	Appointment	11/5/2023	Tipton
Kline, Jessica	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	11/5/2023	Tipton
Nachtman, Patrick	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	11/5/2023	West Union
Hemann, Gatlin	District Conservationist	Promotion	11/5/2023	West Union
Heidebrink, Laurie	Soil Conservationist Technician	Appointment	11/19/2023	Charles City
Snyder, Tammy	Program Assistant	Appointment	11/19/2023	Ottumwa
Martin, Victoria	Civil Engineer	Appointment	11/19/2023	Des Moines
Hobbs, Lisa	Administrative Support Assistant	Retirement	11/30/2023	Des Moines



# IDALS-DSCWQ PERSONNEL CHANGES



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF  
**AGRICULTURE &  
LAND STEWARDSHIP**

Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
Stewart, Shelly	State Technician	Resignation	October 2023	Washington SWCD
Warner, Rochelle	Conservation Assistant	Resignation	Oct. 10, 2023	Lyon SWCD
Swenson, Kristi	Conservation Assistant	Transfer	Oct. 23, 2023	Emmet SWCD
Hirsch, Luke	State Technician	Resignation	November 2023	Dubuque SWCD
Koch, Meghan	Conservation Assistant	New Hire	Nov. 11, 2023	Grundy SWCD
Bonwell, Michele	Conservation Assistant	New Hire	Nov. 27, 2023	Dickinson SWCD
Smith, Rowen (Nicole)	Conservation Assistant	New Hire	Nov. 27, 2023	Johnson SWCD
Behrens, Lois	State Technician	Retirement	Nov. 30, 2023	Carroll SWCD
Shoop, Jeanette	Conservation Assistant	New Hire	Dec. 8, 2023	Linn SWCD
Weed, Tara	Conservation Assistant	New Hire	Dec. 8, 2023	Taylor SWCD