



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS


IOWA NRCS

TO: IOWA NRCS
A.K.A THE G.O.A.T

WINTER 2024



USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

 @IowaNRCS

[NRCS.USDA.GOV/IA](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/ia)

A NOTE FROM THE STATE CONSERVATIONIST

As we wrap up the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2025, I want to take a moment to celebrate the momentous progress we've made together. This year has been a standout year for conservation efforts across Iowa, thanks to your commitment and passion for serving our producers and partners.

In FY24, we hit some incredible milestones:

- CSP: \$29.2 million invested, covering 204,743 acres with 594 contracts
- EQIP: \$65.5 million invested, supporting 164,073 acres through 1,212 contracts.
- ACEP: \$8.5 million invested, protecting 927 acres with 10 easements.
- RCPP: \$8.9 million invested, adding 19,494 acres through 144 contracts.

Altogether, we obligated \$112.1 million, impacting 389,237 acres and completing 1,960 contracts.

More important than any of these numbers or dollar figures are the individual relationships, customer service and conservation benefits that were part of the process. Producers, landowners, conservation partners and the public put their trust in us to deliver, and thanks to you, we did.

You continue to earn their trust by building and renewing relationships and providing excellent customer service. Every interaction during a meeting, phone call, or conservation plan is an



opportunity to show our commitment to our producers' success. Strong partnerships help us achieve our goals and ensure producers feel supported in their conservation journey. Let's continue to prioritize these relationships through FY25. Whether assisting first-time applicants or following up on long-term contracts, your interactions and hard work makes a difference.

Thank you for your professionalism and care. I am proud of our achievements last year and excited about what we will accomplish together this year. Let's keep building relationships, one customer and one partnership at a time. Helping People Help the Land.

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. 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: ANDREW THOMASON

Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) was another step forward for the agency's priorities. Iowa NRCS has continued to expand outreach to urban and small-scale producers and working to reach underserved producers. Iowa NRCS continued to have meetings with the Urban Ag Leadership Team and continued developing relationships with urban and small-scale incubator farm projects such as Lutheran Services of Iowa's Global Greens, Feed Iowa First, and United We March Forward. Iowa NRCS has also continued outreach to women producers through Women Land and Legacy.

Working with National NRCS, there has also been a strong focus increasing report of outreach, so the agency knows where to better focus its efforts and where efforts have been focused in the past. The launch of the Central Outreach Reporting Database (CORD) in addition to updates to the Climate-Smart Mitigation Analysis Dashboard, Urban Agriculture Priority Data Dashboard and Equity in Program Delivery Dashboards, NRCS is poised to hit the ground running in Fiscal Year 2025.

Work with urban and small-scale producers continued in FY24 and will continue for FY25. In FY24, Iowa NRCS provided translated materials to the small-scale urban ag incubator farms who have many migrant producers looking to get back into agriculture here in Iowa. Many of those producers will hopefully find themselves in Service Centers in the near future as they graduate and move on to their own operations. All of those translated materials can be found on the [SharePoint site](#).

The Urban Ag Leadership Team has also been plugging away at addressing the various concerns that face urban and small-scale producers, forming subcommittees that will hopefully chip away at issues such as land



access, regulations, and more. The DC Urban Ag working group has also resumed meeting to discuss challenges that DCs with urban workloads have. If you would like to participate with these meetings, reaching out to [Andrew Thomason, State Outreach Coordinator](#).

There are more tools being created to improve outreach to urban and small-scale producers. CORD will keep track of events that Iowa NRCS participates in and will be managed by Andrew. Events can be submitted via the [form on the SharePoint page](#).

National has also released the [Climate-Smart Mitigation Analysis Dashboard](#), the [Equity in Program Delivery Dashboard](#), and the [Urban Agriculture Priority Data Dashboard](#). For more information on these Dashboards, please refer to [National Bulletin 290-24-02](#).

In 2025, Iowa NRCS will continue to work to better serve all producers. Training and other resources will be developed to improve customer service throughout the fiscal year.



The Urban Ag Leadership Team held a meeting at LSI Global Greens in West Des Moines in June. They discussed the importance of incubator farms for urban and small-scale agriculture.

CIVIL RIGHTS: NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

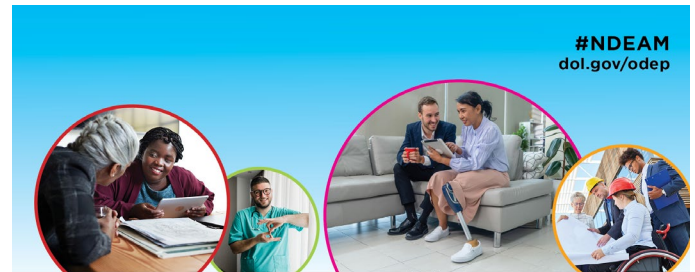
October marked National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), a time to highlight the contributions of workers with disabilities and promote inclusive workplace practices. This year's theme "Access to Good Jobs for All" serves to remind us that good jobs change lives, and all workers—including disabled workers—deserve the opportunity to prepare for, obtain and succeed in them. Several impactful events and trainings were hosted throughout the month to raise awareness and foster a culture of inclusion.

A presentation on the history of disability rights and NDEAM was shared at the Southeast Area meeting, setting the tone for the month. The USDA TARGET Center led the charge with 13 virtual training sessions, covering topics such as:

- Creating accessible virtual meetings
- Low vision and accessibility
- Building diverse hiring pools
- Assistive technology in the workplace
- Inclusive communication and mental health needs
- Universal design, AI, and workplace accessibility
- Ally-ship and fostering a culture of inclusion

USDA also hosted a two-day NDEAM event on October 1 (hybrid) and October 2 (virtual), drawing participation from employees across the agency.

On October 15, the first session of the Disability/Veterans Programs Table Talk Series launched, providing a platform to discuss challenges and opportunities for individuals with disabilities and veterans in the workplace.



The Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) mission area observed NDEAM with a special event on October 16. Later in the month, FPAC and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) teamed up to host a webinar titled "Enable and Engage: The Path to Disability Allyship" on October 24. This session emphasized the importance of active ally-ship and collaboration to create a more inclusive environment for all.

While Disability Employment Awareness Month highlights these efforts, USDA is committed to supporting employees with disabilities year-round. If you would like more information on USDA disability resources or accommodations, please reach out to the USDA TARGET center at <https://www.targetcenter.dm.usda.gov/> or your Iowa Disability Special Emphasis Program Manager, Samantha Gorbet, at Samantha.Gorbet@usda.gov.



WRAPPING UP FISCAL YEAR 2024 IOWA NRCS RECORD BREAKING YEAR

Iowa NRCS obligated a record \$112.1 million in conservation practice funding to Iowa farmers in fiscal year 2024 (FY24), through 1,960 conservation program contracts that will help treat natural resource concerns such as soil erosion and water quality on nearly 400,000 acres. Here are the highlights.

Statewide leaders in CSP:

- Jackson County led the state for the second consecutive year with 41 new and renewed CSP contracts, totaling 7,056 acres, with an obligation of \$1.5 million.
- Winneshiek County was next with 30 contracts, covering 2,844 acres and an obligation of \$790,928.
- Cerro Gordo County had the third most contracts with 25, covering 17,330 acres, obligating nearly \$1.2 million.

Statewide leaders in EQIP:

- Van Buren County led the state with 64 new EQIP contracts that will help treat resource concerns on 5,953 acres at an obligation of more than \$1.6 million.
- Wayne County was second in Iowa with 41 EQIP contracts that will cover 4,817 acres for a total obligation of nearly \$1.4 million.
- Jefferson County had the third most EQIP contracts with 34, covering 3,231 acres, obligating \$2.8 million.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP):

Iowa NRCS provided nearly \$9 million to Iowa farmers in 2024 through RCPP projects that will help treat natural resource concerns on about 20,000 acres. NRCS assisted producers through nine RCPP partnership agreements and 144 contracts.

Easements: During fiscal year 2024, Iowa NRCS obligated \$8.4 million by helping landowners place agricultural land into 10 new conservation easements. They include:

- IRA-Wetland Reserve Easements: Four landowners contracted with NRCS to place 277 acres into new wetland easements through IRA. NRCS paid \$2.1 million for land acquisition and restoration on the four easements.
- ACEP-Wetland Reserve Easements: Two landowners contracted with NRCS to place 181 acres into new wetland easements through ACEP. NRCS paid \$1.4 million for land acquisition and restoration for the two easements.
- ACEP-Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnerships: Four conservation partners entered into agreements with NRCS to carry out high priority wetland protection, restoration, or enhancement to improve wildlife on private lands. Through the four agreements, NRCS obligated about \$4.4 million covering 469 acres for future wetlands.



At-a-Glance

Iowa NRCS • November 2024

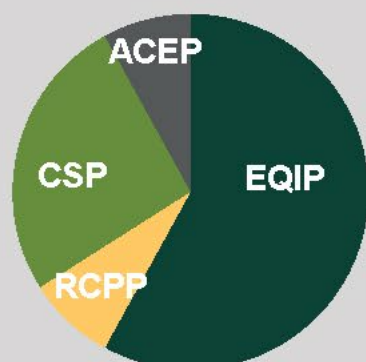
State Conservationist Jon Hubbert

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FY24 Total Program Accomplishments

(by Funds Obligated)



CSP

\$29.2 M

204,743 Ac.

594 contracts

ACEP

\$8.5 M

927 Ac.

10 easements

EQIP

\$65.5 M

164,073 Ac.

1,212 contracts

RCPP

\$8.9 M

19,494 Ac.

144 contracts

TOTAL

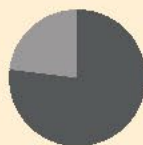
\$112.1 M

389,237 Ac.

1,960 contracts



Farm Bill vs. Inflation Reduction Act Funds



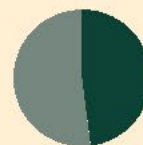
● Farm Bill ACEP

● IRA ACEP



● Farm Bill CSP

● IRA CSP



● Farm Bill EQIP

● IRA EQIP

In addition to traditional Farm Bill funding, the Inflation Reduction Act offers additional conservation funding through ACEP, CSP and EQIP. All projects and practices funded through the Inflation Reduction Act must be utilized by Sept. 30, 2031.

Primary Farm Bill NRCS Conservation Programs

CSP	ACEP	EQIP	RCPP
Conservation Stewardship Program	Agricultural Conservation Easement Program	Environmental Quality Incentives Program	Regional Conservation Partnership Program
Through CSP, NRCS helps proven conservationists help build on existing stewardship efforts while strengthening operations through many conservation enhancement options.	Through ACEP, NRCS helps to restore, protect, or enhance enrolled easement areas. Landowners retain private ownership of their land, but follow certain land use requirements.	Through EQIP, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits.	Through RCPP, NRCS co-invests with partners to implement projects that demonstrate innovative solutions to conservation challenges and provide measurable improvements and outcomes.

For more detailed Iowa NRCS program results and information, go to www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2024-12/2024At-A-Glance.pdf.

THIRD NRCS DC IN 81 YEARS SET TO RETIRE IN KEOKUK COUNTY

By Jason Johnson, State Public Affairs Specialist, USDA-NRCS, Des Moines, Iowa

When Larry Stevens retires as a District Conservationist (DC) for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) at the end of 2024, it will end the tenure of only the third Keokuk County DC in 81 years.

Since 1994, Stevens has been the voice of conservation for NRCS in Sigourney. Driving through the rural southern Iowa county this fall, his legacy – and those who served before him – can be seen as cattle graze green pastures, while farm ponds, terraces, and native grasses line the rolling landscape



Above: Keokuk County farmer Donald Millikin (middle) with NRCS District Conservationist Larry Stevens (left) and his predecessor, Don Borts (right), with his cow/calf herd on his pasture. Millikin has worked with Stevens for 30 years and, before that, Borts for 24 years.

Keokuk County's Conservation Legacy
Keokuk County has a conservation legacy that includes state conservation board members, statewide conservation award winners, and soil and water conservation district (SWCD) commissioners who have been re-elected for decades. "It's good to have commissioners who are using the practices that you're trying to get others to implement," said Don Borts, DC for NRCS in Sigourney from 1970 to 1994.

Before Borts, George Thorburn was the county's first DC, with a 26-year run from 1943 to 1970. Thorburn passed away in 1991.



Above: Many gathered in Sigourney on Dec. 5, 2024, as NRCS Chief Terry Cosby (middle) visited the office he started his career in. (Left) Larry Stevens will retire at the end of 2024 after 30 years in that position.

The Keokuk County conservation legacy includes current NRCS Chief Terry Cosby, who was a student trainee under Borts' tutelage in the early 1980s. Cosby went on to work for Borts as a soil conservationist in Sigourney, before stints with NRCS in Oskaloosa, Burlington, and finally as the Area Resource Conservationist in Council Bluffs. Eventually, Cosby became the State Conservationist for NRCS in Ohio for 16 years before being named Chief of the USDA agency in 2021.

"Coming to Keokuk County, Iowa, from Mississippi was a culture shock. I relied on kind and thoughtful mentors like Don to help me get settled and to learn how to work with different producers on their conservation goals," said Cosby. "As I grew in my career, I used that example when I became a mentor to other young student trainees who were far from home. My time in Keokuk County with Don Borts shaped me as a conservationist and a leader, and I credit Don for helping me in my journey to become the 17th Chief of NRCS."

[Read Full Story](#) | [More Photos](#)

LOCAL YOUTH WINS REGIONAL CONSERVATION-THEMED POSTER CONTEST

Earlier this year, Tama Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) congratulated Alexa Rocha-Ayala of South Tama County Elementary School on being selected the countywide winner in its Stewardship Week Poster Contest. Tama SWCD now has the pleasure to announce Alexa's artwork is also the 2nd-3rd Grade Region 7 Winner of the Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) 2024 Poster Contest, part of the nationwide annual Stewardship Week celebration. CDI's Region 7 includes eleven Eastern Iowa counties.

Alexa's regional award was announced at Tama SWCD's Annual Conservation Awards Banquet on November 13th. She was presented her \$35 regional award and a t-shirt featuring her poster.

The 2024 contest theme was "May the Forest Be With You, Always." The annual art contest is co-sponsored in Iowa by CDI, Grinnell Mutual, and local SWCDs across the state. This year's theme underscored the critical

interplay between soil and water conservation and the resilience of our forests. Forests play multifaceted roles in sustaining our planet, serving as sources of oxygen, carbon storage, and vibrant hubs of biodiversity. They function as steadfast protectors of soil and water resources, preventing erosion, purifying contaminants, and nurturing healthy watersheds.

In today's context marked by environmental challenges, resilient forests are indispensable in fostering a sustainable world. The phrase "May the Forest Be with You, Always" signifies our commitment to responsible forest stewardship, emphasizing their enduring strength and adaptability.

The CDI Poster contest is a colorful way for Iowa youth who wish to turn their artistic talents toward promoting conservation and sustainability practices in their home state. The National Association of Conservation District's (NACD) Stewardship and Education Committee developed a five-year rotation for stewardship topics – water, soil, habitat, forestry, and a topic of interest – and determines the theme each year. Winning posters reflect NACD's annual Stewardship theme and highlight the work of local conservation districts and their state conservation associations, auxiliaries, and agencies to protect and enhance natural resources.

Each year's poster contest is open to public, private and home-schooled students along with youth from clubs, public libraries and churches. For information on the Stewardship Week 2025 Poster Contest, please contact Tama SWCD at 641-484-2702 ext. 3 or melody.bro@ia.nacdnet.net .



Above: Winner of the 2024 Tama County SWCD Stewardship Week Poster Contest, Alexa Rocha-Ayala, Third Grader, South Tama Elementary School, receives award from NRCS District Conservationist Stacie Buhr.

LIFE AFTER RETIREMENT

TERESA STEFFENS



Title: Admin Support Specialist

Retiring: Jan. 10, 2025, after 39 years with NRCS.

College: University of Iowa, 1978-1979, General Studies and Northeast Iowa Community College, 1979-1981, various business and bookkeeping courses

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Northeast Iowa near the West Union area with my large family of 8 siblings. After my parents quit farming in 1971, they owned a supper club/lounge business for 17 years, so I grew up helping and working with people.

How did you get interested in conservation?

My family had a farming background and my husband's family are farmers as well.

What did you like most about your job?

I liked working with diverse groups of people. I guess I like to 'help' people.

What do you enjoy away from work?

I enjoy reading, flower gardening, traveling, and spending time with family.

Life lessons learned along the way?

Enjoy Life, and find the positive and joy in everything. Life is too short to be negative and let work hiccups get you down. Let it go and move on. Try always, to leave your home life at home when at work and your work life at work when you are home.

What will life look like after NRCS?

I am going to spend more time with my family; Gary, my husband, oldest Son, Nick, his wife Heather and their five children, second son Justin, his wife Molli and their four children, my daughter, Becky, and my siblings. I have a couple of trips planned already, one to Port Townsend, Washington area where my daughter lives and one next October to the east coast touring six states with a trip from our bank. Preliminary plans include visiting Ireland with my siblings in 2026. I plan and hope to do as much as we want and can for years to come.

FALL RECRUITMENT



Above: Hayes Durbin, Iowa NRCS Civil Engineering Technician, discusses engineering equipment with a technology student during the Iowa State University Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering (ABE) Technology Industry Night at ISU in Ames on Sept. 23, 2024. This event was held for ABE students studying Agriculture Systems Technology and Industrial Technology.

This fall, NRCS staff attended 11 career fairs. They included:

- Buena Vista University (Storm Lake)
- Indian Hills Community College (Ottumwa)
- Iowa Central Community College (Fort Dodge)
- Iowa State University College Engineering (Ames)
- Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (Ames)
- Marshalltown Community College
- Morningside University (Sioux City)
- Northwest Missouri State University (Maryville, Mo.)
- University of Northern Iowa (Cedar Falls)
- Upper Iowa University (Fayette)
- Western Illinois University (Macomb, Ill.)



Above: Megan Trout, Iowa NRCS Management Analyst; Caroline Olson (Pathways Intern), Jaime Sandoval, Iowa NRCS Management and Program Analyst; Cy, and Jason Johnson, Iowa NRCS State Public Affairs Specialist, before the ISU College of Ag and Life Sciences Career Fair at the Leid Recreation Center in Ames on Oct. 8, 2024.



Left: Iowa NRCS District Conservationist, Larrette Kolbe and Iowa FSA Buena Vista County Executive Director, Samantha Erie spoke with students during the career fair at Buena Vista University in Storm Lake on Oct. 2, 2024.

TRAINING AND EVENTS

NRCS staff from Iowa and Nebraska provided assistance during a subsurface geologic investigation of Dimock Lake Dam in South Dakota on November 19-21, 2024.

During this time, the team conducted several soil borings along the damaged auxiliary spillway to help the South Dakota NRCS assess the feasibility of installing a rock chute to manage the severe grade change caused by erosion. They used tools like solid flight augers, a Standard Penetration Test (SPT) hammer, and split-spoon samplers to collect soil samples at various locations and depths ranging from 2.5 to 20 feet. Those samples were then sent to Lincoln, Nebraska, for laboratory testing. These results will help NRCS engineers develop a design suitable for this dam.

Projects like this provide valuable technical insights and demonstrate how collaboration is essential to the overall mission of the NRCS.



Above: Hayes Durbin, Iowa NRCS Engineer Technician inserts the center bit rod into a hollow-stem auger in preparation to drill test hole during t I am joined by South Dakota NRCS staff. The center bit rod and hollow-stem auger are used to drill a borehole to a desired depth. Once at that depth, the center bit rod is removed and the SPT is performed within the hollow-stem auger.



Above: Roughly 20 ft of soil samples taken directly off the flights of 4" outside diameter solid-flight augers from test hole #1. These samples will be analyzed at the National Design, Construction, and Soil Mechanics lab in Lincoln, NE for their engineering properties and qualities.

Below: The Ida SWCD partnered with Ida Farm Bureau to do the feed the farmer day once again. We made 200 sack lunches and attached the items in the first picture to the bag. Elementary students in Ida Grove decorated the bags. We had happy farmers and helpers with our surprise lunch sacks.



HARVESTING HOPE: IOWA'S FORESTS

By Bailey J. Yotter, Iowa NRCS State Forester

Iowa's timber industry plays a vital role in the state's economy and management of native timber. With 2,851,077 acres of forestland, Iowa produces a variety of commercial timber species, including oak, walnut, maple, and cottonwood. Iowa employs 22,454 people in forestry-related jobs, with a \$1.1 billion payroll, which has nearly \$5 billion in economic impact on the state's economy.

Eighty-five percent of Iowa's forestland is privately owned by 43,184 total landowners. Educating and engaging with these landowners to consider and adopt forest management practices on their properties is extremely important. A timber harvest may be a necessary step towards achieving this.

When managed sustainably, timber harvests offer a multitude of benefits that ultimately improve resources and overall health of the forest stand. Timber harvests target overmature, declining trees. Data provided in the Iowa Forests 2018: Summary Report, showed that 72 percent of the total forest land area in Iowa consists of large-diameter stands and approximately half of Iowa's timber is over 60 years old. The same report also showed a decrease in young forests between 2008 and 2018. If this trend continues, the outlook of Iowa's forests, particularly oak-hickory communities, is not good.

Harvesting trees mimics natural disturbance regimes, like heavy wind events, that would have created openings in the forest canopy and allowed sunlight to reach the forest floor. This sunlight is essential towards establishing new oaks and hickories and cannot be done without major manipulation and removal of the large diameter trees.

It is important to note that several considerations play into a forest stands



Above: Iowa NRCS State Forester, Bailey Yotter, identified this site as an example of where forest management, including a timber harvest, would be beneficial during a staff training on October 15, 2024, at Middle River County Park just south of Winterset, Iowa.

readiness for a timber harvest. Often, there are steps that need to be taken before the harvest can be completed. For example, if invasive plants are present, it's likely necessary to eradicate them before doing anything else. There may be reasons to start with techniques that encourage the establishment of oak and hickory seedlings. These decisions are made with the assistance of professional foresters. Foresters walk the property and use information gathered to develop Forest Management Plans. The Forest Management Plan will also detail actions to be taken post-harvest, like prescribed burning and tree plantings.

When engaging with forest landowners about forest management, timber harvests should be a part of the conversation. Harvests, so long as they're done properly, are an essential silvicultural tool to manage Iowa's timber. Iowa's logging industry, economy, and the future of Iowa's forests depend on it.

For more information or questions about forestry, contact Bailey Yotter at 515-415-8443 or bailey.yotter@usda.gov.

A REASON TO CELEBRATE

Please consider supporting these special observances by participating in local activities

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. Martin Luther King Day is on January 20, 2025.

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. The Lunar New Year in 2025 welcomes the Year of the Snake. Be on the look out for celebrations in your area.

Office Closures

New Years Day, January 1, 2025

Martin Luther King Day, January 20, 2025

FEBRUARY

Black History Month - Special Emphasis Observance

Support and protect pollinator health. Pollinators aren't just bees and butterflies. Birds, bats, beetles, moths, wasps, and small mammals can also pollinate plants.

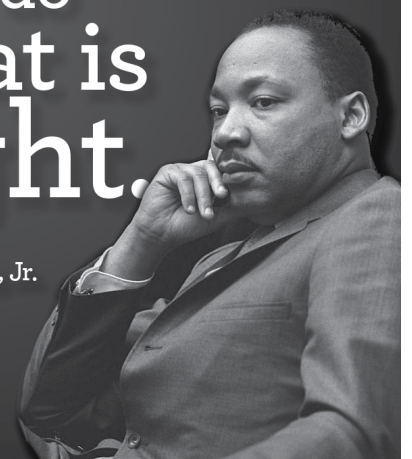
Office Closures

Presidents' Day, February 17, 2025

HERE'S TO AN
AWESOME
NEW YEAR!

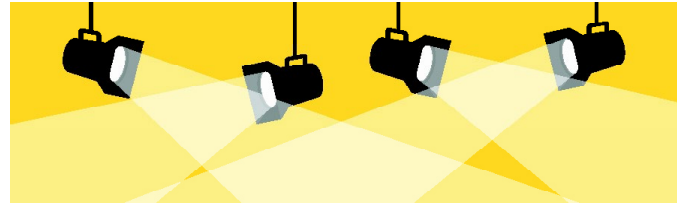
The time is
always right
to do
what is
right.

- Martin Luther King, Jr.



NORTHWEST AREA SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE

PATRICK CARY



Title: Soil Conservationist, Denison Resource Team

College: Des Moines Community College, 2020, AAS Ag Business and Iowa State University, 2022, BS Agriculture Studies.

What is your career background?

This is my first position working for the Government, before employment at NRCS I worked in Operations at a Ag Supplier/ Elevator

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in the Dow City, Iowa area.

How did you get interested in conservation?

My interest in conservation sparked when I realized we only have a limited amount of acres that we need to take care of for us as well as the future generation. In more cases than people realize by adopting conservation practices the ground becomes more productive as well as profitable for the producer.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I like that my job is full of learning opportunities that I can assist other producers with as well as possibly implement in my own small operation.

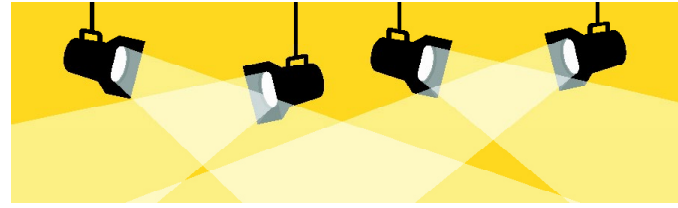
What are your hobbies?

I have a small herd of cattle I enjoy taking care of. I also enjoy woodworking and mechanics.

Any family?

I just got married this past August to my high school sweetheart after dating for eight and a half years.

NORTHEAST AREA SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



JOSHUA HEIMS



Title: District Conservationist, Floyd County

College: Iowa State University, 2019, Agronomy

What other positions have you had?

I interned in Elkader and Winterset, and was on the Charles City Team as a Soil Conservationist for two and a half years.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up on a dairy farm outside of Edgewood, Iowa.

How did you get interested in conservation?

I got my interest in conservation from spending time outside hunting, fishing, and helping on the farm. I learned that to continue having these natural resources we have here in Iowa, that we will need to conserve them for the next generation.

What do you like most about your job?

My favorite part of my job is working with farmers and landowners to help meet their goals in implementing conservation practices. Every individual is different and so is their property and finding what will work best for them is what I enjoy.

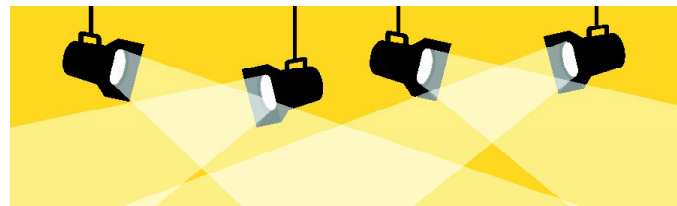
What do you enjoy away from work?

I like to spend my free time hunting, fishing, helping on the farm, spending time with my dog, and spoiling my nephews.

Any family?

My dog Oakley keeps me on my toes!

SOUTHEAST AREA SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



DANIEL SEARS



Title: Easement Specialist, Fairfield Area Office

College: Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 2017, Bachelor of Science in wildlife biology and conservation with a minor in environmental studies

What is your career background?

Before this job, I was a soil conservationist for the Iowa NRCS Waterloo Resource Team and Tama office. Prior to NRCS, I worked for the Illinois Natural History Survey as an assistant botanist with the Critical Trends Assessment Program.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Geneseo, Illinois, east of the

Quad Cities off I-80.

How did you get interested in conservation?

I credit my parents with laying the foundation of my interest in conservation. Growing up, they encouraged my curiosity in nature and were role models for community service and farm-raised frugality. Family road trips brought me to the inspiring stories of state and national parks and their historic conservation.

The more I learned about wildlife and environmental issues, the more I wanted to pitch in and be part of the solutions. In my freshman year of college, my amphibian conservation biology lab team and I spent the summer collecting field data out of Peru's Wayqecha Cloud Forest Biological Station. I was stunned by the incredible biodiversity of the region and impressed by the passionate conservationists and scientists hard at work. After that summer, it all came together, and I knew I wanted to pursue a career in conservation.

What do you like most about your job?

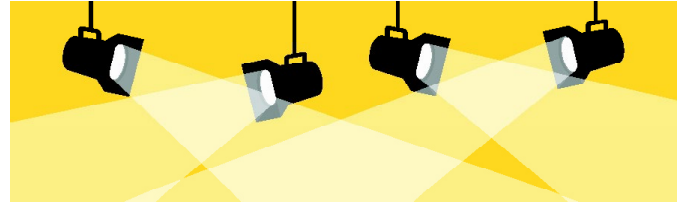
I enjoy helping producers find long-term conservation solutions for their land. It's a privilege to be a part of easement conservation work that I know will outlive me.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy traveling, hiking, gardening, archery, native plant cultivation, and board games.

STATE OFFICE SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE

TALITHA GREEN



Title: Administrative Support Assistant,
Des Moines

College: North Iowa Area Community
College, 2010, AA General Studies

What is your career background?

District Employee in Osage, IA NRCS
office from April 2004 - April 2007; Elyon
employee in Garner, Iowa NRCS office
February 2015-Oct 2017.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up all over the place, but our
constant home was an acreage outside of
Osage, Iowa. My dad had converted an
old Italian delivery van into a mobile home,
and I spent a good chunk of my childhood

traveling the United States with my parents
and 4 siblings. To make it easier to travel,
my mom began homeschooling us my 4th
grade year.

How did you get interested in conservation?

I have always loved spending time outdoors.
When we were home on the acreage, we
spent a lot of time outdoors playing in
the creek, running around, and building
treehouses or forts in the woods. My first
job as a district employee was where my
interest really began.

What do you like most about your job?

The culture and the people, especially the
people. I have worked quite a few different
places and there isn't anything else quite
like it. It is also great to be apart of an
agency

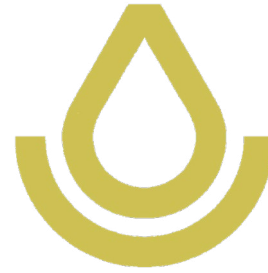
What do you do in your free time?

Gardening, baking, painting, crafting, and
outdoor activities.

Any family information you want to share?

My husband and I have four children (two
girls and two boys ranging in age from two
to 11), two dogs, and two cats. We moved
to the Des Moines metro a little over five
years ago when my husband started his job
with Drake University.

IOWA NRCS PERSONNEL CHANGES



Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
Burkhart, Jessica	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	10/6/2024	Charles City RT
Dixon, Zachary	Civil Engineer	Promotion	10/6/2024	Chariton RT
Moser, Robert	Soil Conservationist	Reassignment	10/6/2024	Indianola RT
Stewart, Shelly	Natural Resource Specialist	Promotion	10/6/2024	Wapello RT
Wachal, Jodi	Program Assistant	Resignation	10/17/2024	Waterloo RT
Cole, Amanda	Engineer Technician (Civil)	Resignation	10/18/2024	Indianola RT
Geib, Darrell	Resource Conservationist	Retirement	10/19/2024	Atlantic Area
Cary, Patrick	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	10/20/2024	Denison RT
Giddings, Spencer	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	10/20/2024	Boone
Johnson, Nickoles	Financial Resource Specialist	Promotion	10/20/2024	Des Moines
Schulte, Joann	Program Assistant	Appointment	10/20/2024	Denison
Shatek, Brandon	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	10/20/2024	Cresco
Beckman, Benjamin	Soil Conservationist Technician	Promotion	11/3/2024	Decorah RT
Luitjens, Heather	Program Assistant	Promotion	11/3/2024	Sibley RT
Werling, Parker	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	11/3/2024	Williamsburg
Whited, Tyler	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	11/3/2024	Sergeant Bluf RT
Bartz, Courtney	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	11/17/2024	Garner RT
Terrell, Karissa	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	11/17/2024	Chariton RT
Miller, Lynna	Soil Conservationist Technician	Retirement	11/29/2024	Denison RT
Cooke, James	Soil Conservationist Technician	Resignation	12/6/2024	Sergeant Bluf RT

IDALS-DSCWQ PERSONNEL CHANGES



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF
**AGRICULTURE &
LAND STEWARDSHIP**

Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
Marrs, Maggie	Conservation Assistant	Appointment	10/2024	Iowa SWCD
Streeter, Melissa	Conservation Assistant	Appointment	10/2024	Woodbury SWCD
Sontag, Aurora	State Conservation Technician	Appointment	11/2024	Plymouth SWCD
Hoogland, Morgan	Conservation Assistant	Appointment	11/2024	O'Brien SWCD
Byrn, Heather	Conservation Assistant	Appointment	11/2024	Appanoose SWCD
Jenkins, Corrine	Conservation Assistant	Reassignment	11/2024	Montgomery SWCD
Schmitt, Jennifer	Conservation Assistant	Appointment	12/2024	Chickasaw SWCD