



United States Department of Agriculture

IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS


August/September 2017

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CASH CROPS
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NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION SERVICE

www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov

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Fog reflections at sunrise at Lake Warren, about 30 miles west of Burlington, IL. Photo by Jon Hubbert.

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a **Message** from the **State Conservationist**



Kurt Simon,
State Conservationist

No Tillage in November

Back in August Neil Sass, Area 3 agronomist, shared a wonderful idea for a no tillage campaign this fall. Based on the annual men's health No Shave November campaign, he suggested NRCS could promote soil health through a No Tillage November promotion.

Promoting No Tillage in November fits well as part of the 1% Challenge, which stresses that fall tillage leads to other problems like increased soil erosion, loss of top soil and organic matter, decreased water infiltration and a breakdown of soil structure. "No Tillage November" can also help keep farmers in compliance for USDA program benefits.

By mid-October each office will receive a kit of promotion materials from the public affairs staff to help spread the word and encourage farmer participation



Every year, November should be a time to keep the tillage equipment in the shed to help improve soil health, and keep Iowa waterways clean and free from sedimentation and nutrients.

Kurt Simon
State Conservationist

IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Current Developments is a product of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in Des Moines, Iowa, published bimonthly by the Iowa NRCS Public Affairs Staff in cooperation with NRCS and partner agency employees from across the state.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS STORIES AND PHOTOS

Please submit your Current Developments story ideas and photos to State Public Affairs Specialist Laura Crowell at laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov. Past issues can be found at www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/ia/people/employees/?cid=nrcs142p2_008273



@IowaNRCS



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CONGRATULATIONS! STEELE HERITAGE FARM HONORED AT FAIR



Jason Steele's family farm in Packwood was recently recognized as a Century and Heritage Farm at the Iowa State Fair in August. The farm, currently owned by Jason's parents Kay and Terry Steele, was first homesteaded in 1865. The Steele family has farmed it ever since. The Ottumwa Courier recently published the following article about the Steele Farm: <https://bloximages.chicago2.vip.townnews.com/ottumwacourier.com/content/tncms/assets/v3/>

AREA 5: GOES PINK FOR #HAMSTRONG



Kate Timmerman and Jason Steele

Area 5 shows support at a recent DC/SC Meeting for fellow co-worker and friend, Sarah Ham, soil conservationist in Washington County. She was recently diagnosed with breast cancer.

COVER CROPS AS CASH CROPS? TRY GRAZING

It can be hard to justify the costs of cover crops when the benefits aren't always evident in the first few years of using them. However, when those cover crops are put through a cow, value is instantly added and can often exceed the cost of establishment.

Grazing cattle, or any ruminant animal, on cover crops makes sense. Cover crops extend the fall and spring grazing season. In the fall, they provide forage when pastures have stopped growing and when you'd otherwise be feeding hay or silage. In spring, they provide a clean calving pasture and relief to perennial pastures, allowing them to grow a little longer before turning cows out. While grazing covers, manure is deposited where it's needed. Most significantly, grazing cover crops saves cattle farmers money.

On-farm research

An ongoing study with Practical Farmers of Iowa has been documenting the economic benefits of using cover crops as forage. "We started planting cereal rye because it was easy to calve in those fields. Now, most all of our covers are grazed as a way to justify the costs," says Mark Schleisman of Lake City.

For the last 10 years, he has planted a variety of cover crops on 1,000 acres, including cereal rye, triticale, jackhammer radish, purple top turnip and dwarf essex rape.

Schleisman's best-producing cover crop field yielded 3.8 tons of dry matter per acre in fall 2016. He seeded triticale at 100 pounds per acre, radish at 1 pound per acre and rapeseed at 3 pounds per acre on Aug. 15, 2016, into 150 acres of standing popcorn.

Through sampling and drying down the biomass produced by this cover crop mix, PFI determined the mix produced 3.8 tons of dry matter per acre. This directly translates to saving money in winter feed costs.

More dry matter

Schleisman grazed 89 cows on cover crops for 67 days, from Nov. 15 to Jan. 21. If cows eat 2.5% of their body weight in dry matter each day, those 89 cows need 103 tons of dry matter over that 67-day period. In total, the cover crop produced 570 tons of dry matter, far exceeding what the cows needed.

Schleisman supplements cows with other feed sources when they're grazing stalks, but with the cover crop mix, he didn't need to. "With the high protein of the brassicas, I felt the cows were covered. They only received salt and mineral," he says.

If Schleisman was feeding hay over those 67 days, it would have cost him \$8,229 (hay at 85% dry matter and \$80 per ton) to provide the same amount of dry matter as cover crops did.

When you subtract the \$41-per-acre cost for cover crop seed and application, you arrive at a total savings of \$2,079 in winter feed costs. In other words, the value of the cover crop when used as forage amounted to \$13.86 per acre. Keep in mind this value doesn't account for the values that grazing and cover crops add to the soil.

Challenges to consider

It's crucial to consider the obstacles a farmer will face when incorporating cover crops into a grazing plan. Fencing, water access, liabilities and contracts between row croppers and cattle owners should be planned out before livestock are given access to cover crop fields. Also, remember to read the labels on corn and soybean herbicides, as some do not allow for grazing a subsequent cover crop. When you start putting numbers on the forage produced by cover crops, it's easier to determine if grazing makes sense for your operation.

By Meghan Filbert, livestock coordinator for PFI.
Source URL: <http://www.wallacesfarmer.com/cover-crops/cover-crops-add-value-when-grazed>

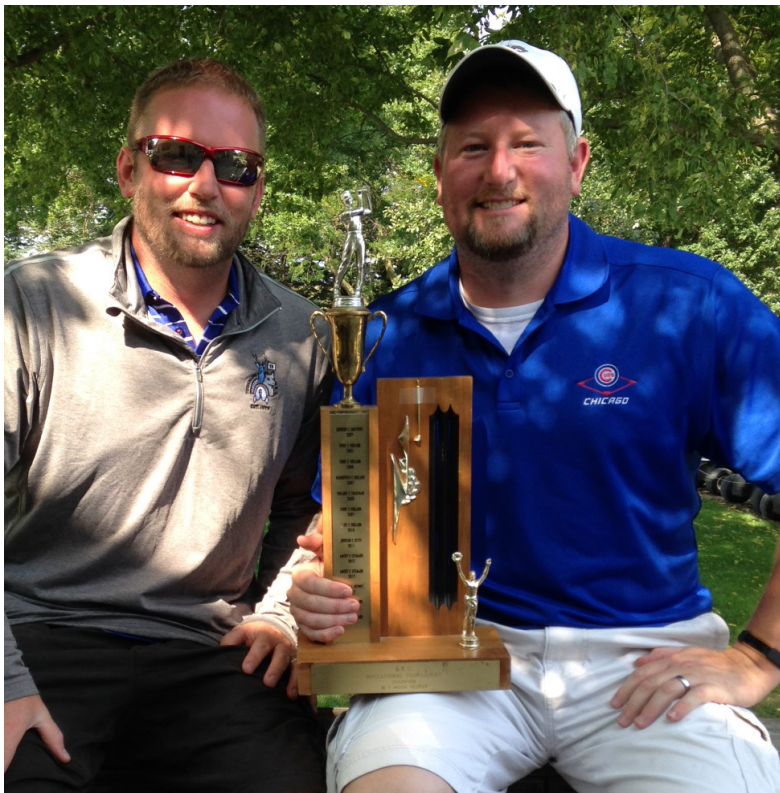




Did you know you can request free, in-person training to learn more about organic farming? Ben Bowell, Organic Farming Specialist, has a shared position with NRCS and Oregon Tilth, and can provide training for NRCS field staff on conservation planning for organic farms. He can be reached at: Benjamin.Bowell@por.usda.gov

Many conservation practices are the same or very similar to those used on conventional farms (cover crops and crop rotation) and some have organic considerations (pest and nutrient management). The NRCS Organic Farming Handbook also supports NRCS conservation planners and other agricultural professionals who work with organic producers. <https://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/OpenNonWebContent.aspx?content=37903.wba>

Additional and contacts include the Iowa Organic Point of Contact Kevin Kuhn and the national organic technical lead, Lindsay Haines.



TUMEY BROTHER DUO: **TAKE FIRST PLACE AT TOURNEY**

More than 30 golfers hit the links at Lincoln Valley Golf Course in State Center on Aug. 25. This year's tournament was organized by Jason Johnson and Nicky Williams. Here are the results:

1st flight

1st place – Scott and Brian Tumey (70)
2nd place – Vince Sitzmann and Kyle Ament (73)
3rd place – Jason Johnson and Lynn Betts (76)

Coincidentally, the winning Tumey brothers were paired with the last place finishers: Hillary Olson and Nicky Williams (111).

"We challenged the Tumey bros to do their best!," said Nicky Williams, winner of the best sport award.

BACK IN THE DAY



NRCS American Gothic

Jim Phillips and retired hydrologist Laurel Foreman pose at the American Gothic house in Eldon for a fun photo (1990's). They were working on a flood control project in the city of Eldon and had traveled to Eldon to complete a topo survey with regard to creek flooding.



Do you have a photo for Back in the Day? Please send it to Laura Crowell at 210 Walnut Street, RM 693 Neal Smith Federal Building, Des Moines, IA, 50309 or laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov.

MEET LINDA KING: NEW CDI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Linda, a native of Des Moines, was previously employed at the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) as the Volunteer Coordinator and AmeriCorps Program Director. She has extensive experience with writing, administering and managing grants and state-wide programs.

She has 25 years of experience in the environmental arena. In addition to the IDNR, she also worked for the Iowa Office of Energy Independence and the US Department of Energy's Chicago Regional office as a contractor.

Linda received her Associate in Arts degree from Cottey College in Missouri and a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology with an emphasis in Environmental Studies from Iowa State University.

She loves to garden and travel with family and friends. Fishing is another favorite pastime as well as being a novice pheasant hunter and trapper. Linda is also a 29-year member of P.E.O., an international philanthropic education organization supporting women's educational opportunities.

Linda says she is excited for this new opportunity to work with the CDI board and members to further its mission protecting Iowa's soil and water through conservation and grant initiatives.



The Maquoketa Field Office partnered with their local Conservation Board to host an outdoor classroom for 120 seventh graders. The half-day event included stations featuring soil health, conservation practices, soil biology and other naturalist topics. According to DC Lori Schnoor, "The kids LOVED digging for earthworms."

HURRICANE HELP: FEMA DETAIL



Public Affairs Specialist Jason Johnson is back after serving a two-week detail with FEMA in Austin, Texas, to help coordinate USDA's response to Hurricane Harvey relief efforts. "This place was pretty crazy. About what you'd expect for a temporary setup...wires everywhere, very loud, getting pulled into meetings, etc. I coordinated sharing USDA Hurricane Harvey information with FEMA and other government partners." He served along representatives from other federal agencies including HUD, USGS, Army Corps of Engineers, GSA, etc.



Thank you to all the summer state, district and NRCS interns! We wish you the best this school year. Photo cutline: IDALS Intern Charlotte Reilly (pictured center) assisted District Conservationist Jackie Kragel (right) and State Public Affairs Specialist Laura Crowell during a success story video shoot for #FridaysontheFarm.

EMPLOYEE
SPOTLIGHT

Corey
Brinks

Title: District Conservationist, Cresco and Osage Management Unit

College Education: He earned a Bachelor's degree in Agricultural Studies from Iowa State University in 2002 and later attended Graduate School at Iowa State University earning a degree in Agricultural Education with a minor in Soil Science in 2004.

Younger Years: Corey grew up in Elkader, Iowa where his family's farming operation consists of roughly 1000 acres of crops, 150 head of beef cattle and a 600 head sow farrow to finish swine operation. Corey was very active working on the family farm as well as 4-H and FFA during his high school years.

Conservation Career: Corey began his NRCS career in Iowa as a Soil Conservationist (The Old STEP Intern Program) in Allison 2002, Nevada in 2003 and then Iowa City full time in 2004. In 2007 he relocated to Maryland as a Soil Conservationist, working primarily with dairy farmers within the Chesapeake bay watershed. In 2010, Corey accepted a position as a District Conservationist in Vermont where his wife previously attended college. In Vermont, Corey worked primarily with dairy, maple sugaring and vegetable operations. He also served a stint as acting ASTC-FO and a Boot Camp instructor.

NRCS Mission: As a Graduate Assistant at the Iowa State Agricultural Study Abroad Center he was able to work and learn more about agriculture in a variety of places such as Ireland, Cuba, Uruguay and Australia. During the summer between his undergraduate and graduate years, Corey

worked as a detasselling Supervisor for Pioneer Hybrid. "While the Pioneer Internship was a great experience it really proved to me that my real passion lies where conservation and agriculture meet", Corey states. "To me, working for NRCS has allowed me to realize that passion, the NRCS mission means so much to so many employees, it is important that I work to bring that enthusiasm to the landscape."

In His Free Time: He is interested in craft beer, traveling and outdoor activities like hiking and canoeing.

Family: Corey is married to his wife Courtney and they have two daughters who are 3 and 1 years old. Corey notes that he feels very fortunate to be back home in Iowa to be closer to his family where he has interest in staying involved in the family farm.



Corey Brinks



MODERN DAY DUST BOWL: STORM ENGULFS PHOENIX



The Dust Bowl of the Great Plains is often cited in the origin story of how NRCS was “born”. Many of us have heard how our first chief Hugh Hammond Bennett timed his famous Congressional testimony with the arrival of a massive dust cloud in Washington D.C.

But unfortunately these massive dust storms are not a thing of the past. And are a reminder of how important conservation is to the future of agriculture and the health of our country.

Here’s a news story that includes impressive footage of a dust storm engulfing downtown Phoenix: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RD5I9UhbRgg>

IOWA ONE CALL: IT’S THE LAW (AND OUR POLICY).



Excavations performed when investigating a site or installing a conservation practice are covered by the Iowa One Call law. The law requires that any person doing excavation must contact Iowa One Call and provide notice of the planned activity.

This notice must be given at least 48 hours prior to the commencement of the excavation, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays.

Iowa One Call can be contacted by calling their toll free number at (800) 292-8989. However, Iowa is also covered by the national 811 locate system. Therefore, persons can contact Iowa One Call by calling 811 instead of the toll free number. They can also be contacted online at www.IowaOneCall.com.

Iowa’s current policy, conservation practice statements of work, and standard drawings all state that the toll free number must be called prior to starting any excavation work.

If you have any questions concerning this information, please contact Christian Osborn, State Conservation Engineer, at christian.osborn@ia.usda.gov or at (515) 323-2220.



Changes In IOWA NRCS PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Altheide, Lori	Asst. STC-Field Operations	Promotion	8/20/17	Atlantic AO
Beebe, Miranda	Program Asst.	Promotion	8/6/17	Fairfield AO
Blodgett, Kelsey	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	8/20/17	Sidney MU
Carter, Derek	Soil Conservation Technician	Promotion	7/23/17	Toledo FO
Chase, Patrick	Soil Scientist	Reassignment	8/6/17	Fort Dodge AO
Gilles, Chad	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	8/6/17	Waterloo MU
Godwin, Jeffrey	Civil Engineer	Voluntary Retirement	7/31/17	Atlantic Engineering Office
Grube, Derek	Pathways--Soil Conservationist	Promotion	8/20/17	Tipton MU
Kragel, Jackie	District Conservationist	Promotion	8/20/17	Onawa FO
Olson, Cole	Pathways--Soil Conservationist	Resignation	8/4/17	Malcom FO
Schulte, Denis	District Conservationist	Voluntary Retirement	8/31/17	Sac City MU
Solheim, Kelsi	Program Assistant	Promotion	8/6/17	West Union AO
Stephen, Taslima	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	8/6/17	Clarion FO
Wilhelm, Kelly	Soil Conservationist	Resignation	8/2/17	Mount Pleasant MU
Wolf, Russ	Soil Conservation Technician	Promotion	8/20/17	Maquoketa FO

Changes In IDALS-DSCWQ PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Holan, Ruth	Conservation Asst.	New Hire	9/8/17	Adair SWCD

IMPORTANT OCTOBER DEADLINES

- Iowa performance appraisal deadline - **October 16**
- Iowa performance plan deadline - **October 16**
- Performance Award submissions for FY17 ratings deadline - **October 30**

Thinking about retirement?

Please send your retirement request to Carolyn Christian or Jaia Fischer to forward to the Benefits team. Priority will be given to estimates for employees who are within 6 months of their retirement date. (Eligible to retire.)

**M&S
CORNER**