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# Easement Owner Newsletter

## Iowa NRCS Celebrates Easement Landowners

Iowa NRCS celebrated the more than 1,500 Iowa landowners who have enrolled about 186,000 wetland acres into conservation easements since 1993 at a special event on June 15 at the Dows Welcome Center.

An estimated 100 landowners, conservation groups, and NRCS staff (past and present) gathered to talk about the success of easement programs in Iowa.

NRCS has offered easement options to Iowa landowners through the Farm Bill for the past 25 years. Programs such as the Wetland Reserve Program and the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program have allowed landowners to restore, maintain or enhance their land to benefit the environment.

At the event, Iowa NRCS State Conservationist Kurt Simon thanked the easement program participants who recognized their land's best use. "We're celebrating farmers and landowners protecting water quality and embracing their land's highest and best use as wetland habitat, and not expending time and money on drainage of low producing crop ground," he said.

Iowa leads the nation in the number of conservation easements with more than 1,600. Simon said about 65 percent of the easements remain in private ownership. Many of the other easements have been purchased and are now managed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources or groups such as the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. Iowa DNR easements are open to public access, creating recreational benefits for all Iowa residents.

### Inside This Issue

#### *Celebrating Success*

Stuart & Marian Maas' SW Iowa wetland is providing great educational opportunities after more than 20 years.

Charles Poeltler likes NRCS easement programs so much he enrolled a 2<sup>nd</sup> easement!

#### *No Letup in 2018*

24 Landowners enrolled new wetland conservation easements through NRCS programs this year.



Iowa NRCS State Conservationist Kurt Simon addresses the crowd in Dows, Iowa, on June 15 that gathered to celebrate 25 years of conservation easements.





# Easement Owner Profile: Stuart & Marian Maas

## Fremont County

Stuart and Marian Maas purchased three adjacent “wet farmland” properties in 1997 and enrolled them in the Wetland Reserve Program and Emergency Watershed Protection Program.

The Maases learned about easement opportunities from a Missouri River Bottoms landowner who had already enrolled in a USDA easement program. “We felt there was potential to do likewise if we could find the suitable property that lent itself to creating prime wildlife and waterfowl habitat,” said Stuart.

“Iowa’s rather aggressive approach to cropping every possible acre - even marginal acres - crowds out most wildlife,” he said, “so these 377 marginal acres lent themselves to developing such prime habitat. It has given us immense satisfaction in sharing this wonderful resource with hundreds of guests over the years.”

### Education

More than 20 years later the Maas family continues to enjoy and use their easement for educational purposes. “It fulfills our long-held objective of owning a prime waterfowl hunting place, and with that comes prime habitat for quail, pheasants, turkey and deer,” said Stuart.

Allowing access to the easement for educational purposes is important to the couple, and something they take great joy in. “Watching youth groups learn about the wonders of this ancient valley and the longest U.S. river – its wildlife, the migrations of waterfowl and butterflies – always generates a lot of excitement, wonderment and questions,” said Stuart. “We hope that these youth experiences will carry strongly into adulthood.”



*The Maas grandchildren enjoy their wetland easement in Fremont County.*

### Providing Opportunities

The easements are located less than an hour drive from Offutt Air Force Base near Omaha. This easy access has attracted several wounded warriors to the wetlands for hunting and recreation. Stuart says they love to entertain battlefield wounded military who may not otherwise be able to enjoy hunting. “We have hosted a blinded U.S. Army aviator, a foursome of healing Marines, a paralyzed and chair-bound Air Force Noncommissioned officer, a Vietnam veteran with cancer and malaria, and many military folks stationed at Offutt,” said Stuart.

He says watching all aspects of nature unfolding before his eyes and sharing that experience with others provides great satisfaction. Stuart says they have had bee hives for many years. “Observing these awesome creatures up close with others is fun,” he said. “Having optimal habitat for bees and monarchs is a major objective.”

“This is a 365-day a year task in some aspect. And when native flowers and grasses finally mature and we watch the wildlife flourish, that is priceless satisfaction,” said Stuart.





# Easement Owner Profile: Charles Poeltler

## Muscatine County

Charles Poeltler enrolled 271 acres of former flood-prone Muscatine County cropland in the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) in 1998. A few years later, he enrolled another 162 acres into WRP.

"I wanted to find long-term protection for the ground," said Poeltler. "This land was never viable farm ground, so having income for the property up-front was a welcome bonus on top of gaining pristine hunting ground."

### Recreational Enjoyment

Poeltler said the up-front payment helped cover maintenance needs for firebreaks and food plots on the easement to prepare for hunting season.

Poeltler said he enjoys owning a natural piece of land that benefits all wildlife, such as deer, turkey, pheasants, quail, and waterfowl. "Much of my family are avid outdoorsmen," he said.

"The pride of ownership is a joy in itself," said Poeltler. "We have a tight-knit group that utilizes the property every hunting season, as well as for recreation and hiking the property."

### Program Flexibility

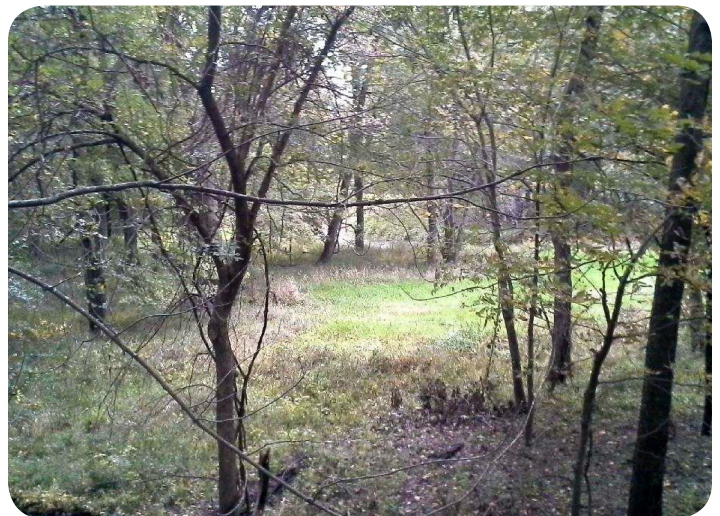
Poeltler said his family has hosted multiple events down by the property, including family reunions and even a wedding.

"I also enjoy the flexibility that the WRP offers," he said. "I like to keep busy by maintaining the firebreaks and planting and upkeeping the food plots."



*A firebreak helps to control prescribed burns in this native planting.*

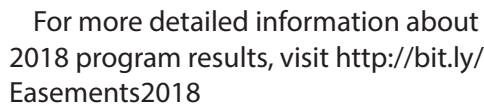
Poeltler said he really enjoys being an easement owner. "I get a sense of pride as a sole proprietor of a large amount of land that is natural and preserved," he said. "I like that this land will never be farmed again and that it will only change for the better. It creates a better quality habitat for wildlife, and hopefully continues to provide an abundance of hunting and recreational opportunities for my family and friends."



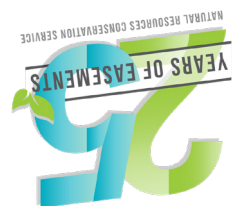
*Poeltler enjoys hunting and other recreational activities in the mixture of trees and native plants and grasses on his WRP easements.*



Iowa landowners enrolled 24 new conservation easements covering 1,800 acres in 14 counties in Fiscal Year 2018 through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).



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