



MITCHELL SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

MSWCD Newsletter featuring the Rock Creek Watershed

July 2016

When baking: It's best to teach, not preach

By Matthew Wilde, ISA senior writer

You have to break a few eggs, and sometimes try something new, to bake a great cake.

Farmers will have to rapidly ramp up adoption of conservation practices if they want the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy to work and stave off more regulations, according to Iowa Soybean Association President Wayne Fredericks. The strategy is a science and technology-based approach to reduce nitrogen and phosphorous loads entering Iowa waterways and the Gulf of Mexico by 45 percent from point and nonpoint sources.

The Osage farmer has implemented numerous in-field and edge-of-field practices to lead by example. Planting all his soybeans into tall, green cereal rye this year is just one innovative, yet rare practice he's adopted.

Rye cover crops reduce nitrate and phosphorous loads, on average, by 31 and 29 percent, respectively, according to strategy documents. Allowing cover crops to grow as long as possible, or terminating right before planting, maximizes their ability to sequester nutrients, which will keep more in fields where they belong and out of waterways.

"If we really want to meet the strategy's goals, we will have to do practices like this," Fredericks said. "We will need to teach, not preach. And most of all, we will need encouragement and signs of success."

The veteran farmer likens planting soybeans into rye and adopting conservation tillage — in his case, no-till for soybeans and strip-till for corn — to baking a cake.

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Wayne Fredericks—Rock Creek Watershed Landowner

**It's Time to
Apply for Cost
Share on
Cover Crops:**

***State Cost—Share
Covers \$25/acre
up to 160 acres
for first time
cover crop users
and \$15/acre for
2nd time cover
crop users.***

**NRCS &
Mitchell County
SWCD**

**1529 Main St
Osage, IA 50461
641-732-5504**



Izaak Walton League Windbreak Award Recipient Robert Rasmussen
If you are interested in planting a windbreak on your land please contact the NRCS office for cost-share opportunities • 1529 Main St. Osage, IA • 641-732-5504

When baking: It's best to teach, not preach
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Continued:

Fredericks recently used the analogy to explain the method and the benefits of conservation tillage at the One Water Summit in Atlanta. He was one of several presenters at the conference — attended by 450 people, of which most didn't have an ag background — focusing on water issues facing communities.

"A cake mix is powdery, similar to soil with no structure. The cake has structure. It's porous like soil after adopting conservation tillage and using cover crops," Fredericks said.

"I've been baking the cake for years. It doesn't get any better," he adds.

Fredericks invites farmers to ask himself and other no-till, strip-till and cover crop users how they work and glean advice. Walking through Frederick's soybean fields in mid-June, the success is evident.

Here's the proof:

- * A robust stand of 5- to 8-inch soybeans have emerged amongst a thick mat of dead and decaying brown cereal rye, which builds organic matter.
- * The soil is black and moist under foot. The rye shades the ground, slowing soil evaporation, which helps plants during hot, drying days.
- * Hardly a weed can be found. Rye all but choked them out.
- * Earth worms are thriving, making the soil porous like a sponge, which improves water infiltration. Water ponded in some nearby conventional tilled fields earlier this week after recent heavy rains, but Fredericks' ground soaked it up.
- * Soil compaction is minimized promoting root and plant development. Soil structure is improved.

"I get excited just thinking about it," Fredericks said.

Become a Commissioner

Are you eligible to vote in a general election?

If so, you're an eligible candidate for election to the county Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) Board of Commissioners!

Each district is governed by five commissioners who are elected at the general elections on a non-partisan basis for four-year terms. Only one commissioner may reside in any single township.

You'll need a nominating petition from the county Auditor. At least 25 eligible voters must sign the petition, and you must file it with the Auditor no later than the 68th day before the general election. You must also file an affidavit stating your name, residence and an assurance that you are an eligible candidate. No political party is designated.



Congratulations!
Mitchell SWCD 2016
Scholarship Recipient:
Bailey Dohman of Riceville, IA

The Rock Creek Watershed News



Photo credit to Lynn Betts

Goals of the Rock Creek Watershed:

- Reduce in-stream nitrogen loading by 41%
- Reduce in-stream phosphorus loading by 29%
- Increase soil organic matter by 1%
- Maintain or increase agricultural productivity and revenues
- Reduce flood risk
- Maintain or increase upland wildlife habitats
- Maintain or improve aquatic life

Rock Creek Watershed Wraps Up Year 2 of the Project!

Total Results from Year 1 and Year 2

Practice	Installed FY2015 July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015	Installed FY2016 July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016
Cover Crops	291.31 acres	686.64 acres
Residue Management (no till/strip till)	774.17 acres	517.88 acres
Nitrification Inhibitor	0 acres	395.58 acres
Grassed Waterways	3.6 acres	1.2 acres
Tree/Shrub Planting	0.6 acres	0 acres
Streambank Stabilization	1030 feet	680 feet
Bioreactor	0 structures	1 structure

Thank You to all Rock Creek Watershed Producers and Landowners for helping us take the necessary steps to reach the goals of the Rock Creek Watershed Project.

Bioreactors/ Saturated Buffers being installed in the Rock Creek Watershed!

Iowa Soybean Association has received funding to install 25 bioreactors/ saturated buffers in the Rock Creek Watershed! Bioreactors remove approx. 32% of nitrogen from the water and saturated buffers remove approx. 55% of nitrogen.

**The first bioreactor in the watershed was installed on
June 28th, 2016.**

If you are interested in having a bioreactor/saturated buffer installed on your land please contact Tracy at 641-732-5504 or Tracy.Church@ia.nacdnet.net



ONE STOP COVER CROP SHOP

ROCK CREEK WATERSHED PRODUCERS!

Interested in cover crops this year?

The Rock Creek Watershed Project offers cost – share of \$20/acre up to 200 acres for cover crops!

Whether you are a 1st time user or not, let us help make it easier for you to get your cover crops applied! The Rock Creek Watershed Project (MSWCD) has teamed up with **Sponheim Sales & Services of Nora Springs, IA** and **Osage Co-op Elevator of Osage, IA** so you can come to one place to complete the process of preparing for your cover crop application! **Stop in to MSWCD - 1529 Main St, Osage IA to get started!**

You will:

- *Complete your Rock Creek Watershed cost-share application
- *Determine which fields on which you would like cover crops applied
- *Choose between aerial or drilled cover crop application
- *Choose which company you would like to provide your services
 - *Osage Co-Op Elevator provides aerial application only*
 - *Sponheim Sales & Services provides both aerial and drilled applications*

We will:

- *Provide your seeding plan
 - * All plans are for cereal rye unless otherwise requested*
- *Furnish the company of your choice with maps, seeding plan, and all other necessary information so that they can prepare the seed and arrange for the cover crop application process
- *Contact you with the date of planned cover crop application

**Please stop in by August 15th for aerial application
and by September 15th for drilled.**

Contact Tracy Church at 641-732-5504 or Tracy.Church@ia.nacdnet.net



Cover Crop Benefits

1. Erosion Control
2. Nitrate Loss Reduction
3. Phosphorus Loss Reduction
4. Weed Suppression
5. Soil Health Improvement
 - a. Increase organic matter
 - b. Increase biodiversity of organisms in the soil
 - c. Disrupt soil compaction
6. Cover Crop Grazing





Conservation in the Cab



Numerous farmers in the Rock Creek Watershed are generously opening their cab doors to anyone interested in conservation practices such as no till, strip till, cover crops, and more. These farmers are inviting you out to their fields to ride along, talk conservation and see the practices first hand. Learn why and how these farmers are implementing conservation into their practice and how you can too.

To schedule a ride along please contact Tracy with the Mitchell County Soil and Water Conservation District at 641-732-5504 or e-mail Tracy.Church@ia.nacdn.net

Rock Creek Watershed Education and Outreach Programs

Visit our Mitchell SWCD webpage at:
www.mitchellswcd.org

“Like” Mitchell County Soil & Water
Conservation on Facebook

Submit your e-mail to
Tracy.Church@ia.nacdn.net to receive information about the Watershed via e-mail

Join us for meetings on conservation
practices and field days!



COFFEE! With Your Coordinator

All of this talk about conservation have your head spinning? Are you ready to start using conservation practices but just have no idea how or where to begin? Please join me – your Rock Creek Watershed Project Coordinator - for coffee (my treat)!

Together we can:

- Discuss the Rock Creek Watershed Project
- Describe the types of conservation practices
- Introduce some learning opportunities that we offer to get you started
- Create a conservation plan for you
- Explain the application process
- Explore cost share opportunities
- Identify possible conservation practice locations on your land
- Answer questions

Tracy Church

Mitchell County Soil & Water
Conservation District
Rock Creek Project Coordinator

1529 Main St.
Osage, IA 50461

641-732-5504
Tracy.Church@ia.nacdn.net

If you are in the Rock Creek Watershed and you are interested in conservation practices but would like help getting started or just need more information please call or e-mail me to set up a time for “Coffee with your Coordinator.”

We can meet at a location that is convenient for you. This meeting can be specifically tailored to you and your land by providing aerial maps and a possible list of practices that are well-suited for your land or can be very general, answering any questions you may have.

I look forward to opportunity to work with each of you!

~ Tracy Church

MITCHELL SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT (CON'T.)

Pollinator Habitat (The new buzz word)

By Dan Borchardt, Pheasants Forever

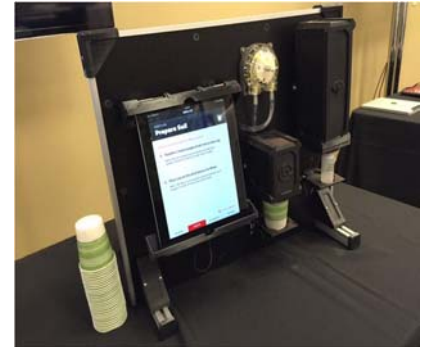
In recent news we have heard that monarch butterflies and honeybee populations are declining at an alarming rate. Habitat loss, pests, disease, pesticides, extreme weather events and other factors have caused a dramatic decline in our native pollinator populations and honeybees. With these decreasing populations of pollinator species there has never been a greater need for installing quality diverse habitat. From large native prairie plantings in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), to flowering shrubs in shelterbelts, roadside plantings, and butterfly gardens on the home landscape, there are a variety of ways that homeowners and landowners can help plant pollinator habitat.

Pollinators, which include native birds, bats, and insects, help transfer pollen from one plant to the next, which maintains genetic diversity, sustains plant populations, and is essential to crop production. 75% of the flowering plants worldwide rely on pollinators. One third of our food can directly be attributed to pollinator species including apples, pumpkins, alfalfa, and almonds. The annual value of honey bee production to the U.S. agriculture is between \$14-\$18.9 billion.

Designing quality habitat is essential to maintain pollinator populations in the future. Three important things to consider are the size, shape and color of the flowering species in your habitat. Another aspect that is important to consider is including flowering plants that will bloom throughout the entire growing season. Pollinators need food in the form of nectar and pollen in the spring, summer, and fall. Different species may be attracted to one or more of these components such as the monarch caterpillar's exclusive use of milkweed as their only food source. By offering a greater variety of flowering plants we will in turn attract a wider variety of insect and wildlife species to these habitats. I often think of it in this way: as a society would we like to only have two or three choices in our diet like black licorice, lima beans and oatmeal or would we rather have many choices of fruits, vegetables, grains, and proteins? The answer is clear- having diversity in our habitats will offer the greatest benefit to the widest variety of species.

Diverse, quality native plantings provide critical pollinator habitat. It is important to note that great pollinator habitat equals great wildlife habitat. The USDA offers a wide variety of programs through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) which will assist landowners with the cost of establishing the habitat and provide an annual rental income on the acres that are set aside. Programs such as Pollinator Habitat, Filter Strips, and Riparian Buffers are available for continuous signup.

For more information or to line up a site visit, please contact Dan Borchardt at (641) 430-3354 or dborchardt@pheasantsforever.org or contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office for assistance.



360 Soil Scan

Ever wondered how much nitrogen is leaving your field through tile water? Mitchell County NRCS now has a 360 Soil Scan machine that can measure nitrate levels in water or soil. If interested, contact our office for instructions on how to collect samples and to schedule an appointment to stop by and get your soil or water tested.

Soil & Water Conservation Week April 24th-30th

Mitchell Soil & Water Conservation had a coloring contest for Pre-K thru 3rd grade students and a poster contest for 4th and 5th graders.

Prizes were given to 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners and Casey's General Stores donated ice cream cones to everyone who participated.



Trees For Kids:

Mitchell Soil & Water Conservation District donated Norway Spruce trees to the 5th graders in Mitchell County



Booster Club Members

Supporter \$5-\$24

Bob Koenigs & Family
Construction Co

Saver \$25—\$49

Gail & Sharon Gordon
Leon & Mary Thomas
James Kondes
Rabinowitz Family Farms
Emily Barnum
Smithland Corporation
Emily Barnum & Allen Clark

Steward \$50-\$99

Eugene Sellon Trust
Stephen McCarthy
Ed Souder
Clarice R Bartz
Jackie Armstrong

Sustainers \$100– UP

Schwarck Agency
Gordon & Johnanna
Anderson
Mayer's Digging Company
Dale & Cindy Hemann
Jean Biederman
LR Falk & Construction



To become a Booster Club Member please submit form on the last page.

SUPPORT CONSERVATION

The Mitchell Soil & Water Conservation District (MSWCD) programs are made possible by your support. Donations are accepted at any time of the year. Any amount you can give is appreciated. Checks should be made payable to "Mitchell SWCD" and you will receive a receipt for your donation. The MSWCD Commissioners thank you for your generosity. Chair Karen Damjanovic, Eric Jellum, Jarod Gasteiger, Dale Hemann, C John Schwarck and Assistant Commissioners: Milt Owen, Sandie Adams, Chelsea Ewen, Kristin Newton.

Booster Club Membership		<i>The following levels of support have been established:</i>	
Name:	<input type="text"/>	SUPPORTER	\$5 — \$24
(as you would like it to appear in our report)		SAVER	\$25 — \$49
Address:	<input type="text"/>	STEWARD	\$50 — \$99
	<input type="text"/>	SUSTAINER	\$100 — SUP
Donation enclosed:	\$ <input type="text"/>		
	(payable to Mitchell SWCD)		
Mail to: Mitchell SWCD—1529 Main St.—Osage, IA 50461			

Please mail or drop off form to MSWCD at 1529 Main St. Osage, IA 50461

Mitchell Soil & Water Conservation District
1529 Main St.
Osage, IA 50461

PLACE
STAMP
HERE