

## Potter County Conservation District (No. 62)

History from 1969 publication:

Potter County joins the Missouri River on the east and is about 50 miles north of Pierre. This area, too, was involved in the early explorations and the history of the state. Lewis and Clark stopped on the banks of the Missouri River and visited Medicine Rock. The Arikara Indians held a village on Steamboat Creek.

The County was created in 1873 and organized in 1883. The first white settlers were northern Civil War veterans and the early towns were given such names as Gettysburg, Lebanon, Union and Appomattox – the two latter ones have not survived. The County's drainage is to the south and west into the Missouri River through the Okobojo Creek and some smaller branches. The topography of the county, going from west to east, is divided into several areas. A strip along the Missouri is classified as steep rough, steep slopes leading to the River. An area covering about two-thirds of the County over to Lebanon and Hoven may be classified as gently undulating to undulating, with the more level portions toward the east. The soils vary from clays to loams and silt loams. The clays are found on the rough lands along the Missouri breaks. Through the County's middle is an area of silt loam formed largely from wind-blown material and is well suited for general farming. Toward the east, the area is more undulating and suitable for general farming and livestock production.

Potter County is an area of somewhat limited rainfall – the twenty year average being between 17 and 18 inches. About 14 inches of that comes during the growing season; that leaves the moisture a bit short of that needed for abundant production.

The early settlers found a land covered with abundant growth of good grasses, including blue grama, western wheatgrass, niggerwool, needle and thread, prairie sandgrass, and little blue stem. What trees there were could be found along the river and streams and in gullies. As the area was settled, more level areas were plowed and largely planted to wheat and other small grains; then later corn became an important crop. Before the Conservation District was organized, 58 percent of the total area was cropped. The final result was wind and water erosion. Wind erosion has been widespread and extensive. Much of the farmland is over two percent slope and erodes heavily when bare.

These conditions caused people to want to find a way to preserve these land resources. To do this, the people realized that they needed help; in 1954, a committee of farmers called upon the County Agent for help and guidance. They then began working for a soil conservation district and conducted several meetings over the county where conservation district organization and its functions were explained. Petitions requesting a hearing on the matter were circulated and signed. The hearing was held March 4, 1954, where the evidence presented indicated a desire to vote on the proposition. The referendum, which was held May 10, 1954, carried by a vote of 340 to 37. The State Committee appointed Fred Bartels and Chalmer Hottman as supervisors. William P. Hinckley, Oren Munyon and Terrance M. Williams were elected supervisors. The five supervisors met and chose as officers Fred Bartels, Chair; William Hinckley, Vice-Chair; and the county Extension Agent as Secretary. They then prepared and signed the necessary agreements with cooperating agencies and prepared their program and plan of work.

In the plan of work they specified the problems facing the Conservation District as:

- Fertility of the soil was low as the result of continuous use;

- Not enough use of crop rotations;
- More and better distribution of water supplies needed;
- Soil lost from wind and water erosion;
- Inadequate drainage in some areas;
- Need more shelterbelt and farmstead tree plantings;
- Poor wildlife protection;
- Need more water supplies for livestock and wildlife;
- Weeds are a problem.

The supervisors proposed to meet these problems by the use of:

- Improving the soil through the use of legumes, barnyard manure and fertilizers;
- The use of crop rotations with grass and legumes;
- Properly locate and build dams/dugouts for livestock water and wildlife, maintain them;
- Use proper range management – build fireguards, rotate grazing, supplemental pasture;
- Use moisture conservation practices – maintain adequate cover on cropland;
- Encourage contouring and terracing;
- Control gullies and establish grassed waterways;
- Spread run-off water over grasslands;
- Use stubble mulch farming;
- Drain pot holes;
- Establish more farmstead plantings along with some shelterbelts;
- Provide winter protection for wildlife.

Practices and amounts of each established to 1968 are:

Landowners, operators establish first commercial recreation enterprise	2	
Private individuals and groups establish, expand or add to recreation developments or areas for primarily non-commercial use	1	
Public recreation developments or areas established or expanded	7	
Irrigation canal or lateral	689	feet
Chiseling and sub soiling	168,01	acres
Conservation cropping system	4,368	acres
Contour farming	347	acres
Contour furrowing	920	acres
Cover and green manure crop	111,724	acres
Crop residue use	7,201	acres
Diversion	84,719	feet
Farm ponds	1,723	ponds
Farmstead feedlot windbreaks	3,467	acres
Field border plantings	15,000	feet
Field windbreak	135,287	feet
Firebreak	30,000	feet
Fishpond stocking	24	
Grasses and legumes in rotations	10,000	acres
Grassed waterway or outlet	222	acres
Hedgerow planting	15,920	feet
Irrigation system sprinkler	1	
Land clearing	8	acres
Drainage, main or lateral	4,631	feet
Obstruction removal	14	acres
Pasture and hay land management	4,627	acres

Pasture and hay land planting	17,002	acres
Pipeline	41,657	feet
Pond sealing or lining	1	
Proper grazing use	178,702	acres
Range seeding on converted land	1,811	acres
Range seeding	46	acres
Range rotation and deferred grazing	980	acres
Recreation access road	25,000	feet
Recreation area planting	21	acres
Spring development	3	
Strip cropping, contour	3,825	acres
Stubble mulching	34,444	acres
Drainage field ditch	7,920	feet
Strip cropping, wind	15,134	acres
Terrace level	1,265,758	feet
Trough or tank	1	
Water spreading	117	acres
Wells	31	
Wildlife habitat development or preservation	173	acres
Wildlife wetland development or preservation	149	acres
Wildlife water facilities	2	
Land adequately treated	74,326	acres
Cropland to grassland	7,652	acres
Cropland to woodland	453	acres
Cropland to wildlife – recreation	15	acres
Cropland to "other"	90	acres
All other use to cropland	775	acres
Non-cropland to wildlife – recreation	17	acres

The following supervisors served to date: Fred Bartels, Gettysburg; Chalmer Hottman, Gettysburg; William P. Hinckley, Hoven; Oren W. Munyon, Lebanon; Terrance M. Williams, Gettysburg; Marvin Haag, Hoven; A. Willard Zuber, Hoven; Harold Hegerle, Gettysburg; Orlow Eidam, Gettysburg; Randall Stotz, Onaka; Arnold J. Nagel, Gettysburg, Assistant Supervisor; Loyd Keller, Tolstoy, Assistant Supervisor. Marvin Haag served as Secretary of SD Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts while Orlow Eidam has been Vice-President. 1969 supervisors were: Chair Oren Munyon, Lebanon; Vice-chair Ed Sieler, Gettysburg; Treasurer Russell Stone, Gettysburg; Marvin Haag, Hoven; Orlow Eidam, Gettysburg; Randall Stotz, Onaka; and Assistant Supervisors: Lloyd Keller, Tolstoy; Arnold Nagel, Gettysburg; A. William Zuber, Gettysburg; and Francis Buckley, Gettysburg, Secretary (County Agent).

Updated information provided in 2012:

**Original Board Members**

Oren Munyon, Fred Bartels, Chalmer Hottman, William Hinckley, Terrance Williams

**Former Board Members**

Marvin Haag, A. Willard Zuber, Harold Hegerle, Orlow K. Eidam, Leonard Nagel, Lloyd Keller, Randall Stotz, Ephraim Sieler, Finn Dahlquist, Marvin Simon

**Current Board Members**

Bill Zweber, Gary Nagel, Robert Rausch, Art Beringer, Rodney Lemler