

## Union County Conservation District (No. 9)

History from 1969 publication:

The northern two-thirds of the Union County District is mostly windblown or loessial soil--hilly soil, subject to wind and water erosion but a highly productive soil. It is particularly well suited to livestock production and feeding.

The western edge of Union County District is glacial till soil. This highly productive black soil is characterized by potholes and, of course, has some rocks left by the glacier. The southern 1/3 to 1/4 of the district is mostly alluvial or waterlaid soil varying from pure sand to fine clay or gumbo. Because there is very little soil drainage, the south end of the district is mostly grain farmed.

There are wide and varying soil, water, management, and production problems in Union County District. That was one of the reasons why an intensive land use study was undertaken in the late 1930's under the leadership of L. V. Ausman, county extension agent, as a part of a state program by the Extension Service. This was the forerunner of the Soil Conservation Program which evolved one step at a time in the years that followed, starting with the CCC Camp in Alcester which was established to start work on soil conservation.

In charge of Land Use Planning in the Union District was Alex Chicoine, sr., chairman, Jefferson; R. T. Collingwood, vice chairman, Elk Point; J. C. Dawson, Hawarden, Iowa; William Lyle, Beresford; Mrs. Tom Harrington, Elk Point; and Mrs. L. S. Twedt, Elk Point.

It is very significant that William Lyle, Beresford, and John Dawson, Hawarden, Iowa, were part of the first board of supervisors of the Sioux-Brule Soil Conservation District which was organized June 25, 1940. The following description of one educational event was typical of hundreds that have been conducted in the past 25 years to spread the gospel of soil management and conservation practices.

Soil Conservation Service of Co. 2746, CCC-SCS-3, Alcester, S. D., held a tour which was arranged by County Agent L. V. Ausman on July 25, 1939, in Union county, for Bon Homme and Charles Mix county farmers, to show practices. Farms visited in the forenoon were those of Anders Nelson and Andrew Eggen. Dwight Morrow, assistant soil conservationist, explained and pointed out the differences between contour strip cropping and terracing. Ralph E. Hansen, extension soil conservationist, Brookings, showed pasture furrows and a dam on the Eggen farm. Mr. Butler showed and explained a windbreak tree planting.

In the afternoon the farms of H. B. Bartlett and C. T. Johnson, Alcester, Union County, and Tilman Lappegard, Lincoln County, were visited to see stockwater dams, tree plantings, wildlife protection areas, pasture furrows, strip cropping and rubble masonry drops for gully control. Farmers who understood the program were very enthusiastic about soil and water conservation practices of all kinds.

There were no guide lines or previous experiences or rules to go by in the first soil conservation

programs. These all had to be worked out year by year by trial and error. Engineering procedures, adequate machinery, organization techniques, education, delineation of responsibilities, all had to be worked out slowly, a step at a time, beginning with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), Alcester, South Dakota, in 1937, up to the present time. The work is now well organized in Union County Soil and Water Conservation District and assisted by the Soil Conservation Service which supplies two to five regular resident employees and several part-time men for special projects such as watersheds and drainage.

Community leaders active in promoting early soil conservation work were: Elvin Bjorklund, Soil Conservation Service, Alcester; Lee Stoutenburg, Akron, Iowa, member of the first board of supervisors(now deceased); E. F. McKellips, Alcester; Silas Thompson, Beresford; Earl L. Petersen, Beresford; Eric Erickson, Hawarden; Einar Anderson, Alcester; Elmer and Leonard Swanson, Hawarden; S. A. Nilson, Hawarden; E. A. Johnson, Hawarden; Matt Schmitz, Jefferson; and Frank Benton, Jefferson.

The original Sioux-Brule Soil Conservation District included 186,359 acres in the northern part of Union County which is hilly and subject to serious gullying and other water erosion on loess soil. It was in this area that the CCC Camp workers did their work prior to organization of the Soil Conservation District.

The first referendum was May 31, 1940; votes for the district - 496, votes against - 218. The Sioux-Brule Soil Conservation District was declared legally organized by the State Soil Conservation Committee on June 20, 1940.

The members of the first board of supervisors, elected June 25, 1940, were: Eric Erickson, Hawarden, Iowa; William M. Lyle, Burbank; Earl L. Peterson, Beresford; Lee Stoutenburg, Akron, Iowa; and J. C. Dawson, Hawarden, Iowa (appointed).

In 1942, an area in the Big Sioux and Missouri River bottoms in the southeast corner of the county, covering 46,968 acres, was added to the Conservation District. Then in 1946 another addition of 41,367 acres was added. With these two additions, the entire county was included in the Sioux-Brule Soil Conservation District. And in 1950, the name was changed to the Union County Soil Conservation District.

As the Conservation District became ready for operation, the supervisors developed their program with problems and procedures. The problems named were:

- Serious water erosion and gullying;
- Both wind and water erosion has damaged most soils;
- The west side of the area has pot holes;
- The south part of the district has poor drainage on the heavy soils;
- Very severe wind erosion on the sandy areas along the Missouri River;
- Flooding along all of the creeks and river bottoms.

The supervisors propose to attack these problems by the use of:

- Pasture furrows on sloping pastures;

- Terraces on crop and grass lands;
- Shape and grass the smaller gullies;
- Building diversion terraces to carry water away from the larger gullies;
- Strip cropping;
- More grass in rotations;
- Diversion dams and stock water dams;
- Shelterbelt and farmstead tree plantings.

At the close of 1965, the district accomplishments were:

Terraces	611	miles
Grassed waterways	762	acres
Contour strip cropping	3,232	acres
Tree plantings	2,401	acres
Farm ponds	98	ponds
Conservation cropping	148,555	acres
Land leveling	450	acres
Erosion control structures	8	units

Others who have served as supervisors previous to 1966 and the dates of election are:

M. E. Schmitz -August 25, 1943	F. F. Kerr, Jr. -March 2, 1954
Frank E. Benton -March 16, 1944	Herbert Bergdale -March 5, 1957
Osmond Twedt -September 26, 1946	James Mansfield -March 5, 1957
George E. Erickson, April 25, 1950	Carl Blanchard -March 25, 1959
Leonard E. Dailey -1952	Donald W. Anderson -March 1960
Stanley R. Anderson -February 14, 1953	Harold DeMers -March 6, 1962
S. A. Nilson -March 2, 1954	Laurence Daugaard -March 1964

The 1969 supervisors are: Stanley R. Anderson, Akron Iowa; George Erickson, Beresford; Chuck Norby, Elk Point; Donald W. Anderson, Alcester; William Lyle, Jr; Beresford; and Victor Jensen, Beresford.

The conservation work done in the districts has resulted in the establishment of six watersheds, as follows: Scott Creek watershed in Union County; Green Creek watershed in Union County; Richland Creek watershed in Union County; Brule Creek watershed in Union and Lincoln counties; Union Creek-Sayles Creek; and Lower Big Sioux watershed.

Some other district accomplishments have been the:

- 1947 winning district in the south Dakota Soil and Moisture Conservation Program, GSDA
- 1954 and 1955 state winner, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company Award
- 1955, 1960, and 1964 area winner, Sioux City Permanent Agriculture Program

Updated information provided in 2012:

Board members:

Steve Sommervold 1985-1992  
Dennis Ludwig 1985-1992  
Craig Akland 1993-1997  
Curt Winquist 1983-2008  
Arden Wiksen 1985-current

Dean Bosse 1988-current  
Kevin Wurtz 1993-current  
Gene Ericson 1998-current  
Richard Green 2009-current

In 1991 the board made the decision to offer weed barrier service along with tree planting. The Conservation District started out in 1991 with a homemade machine and in 1993 purchased a new machine which was replaced in 2006 with a new heavier high quality fabric laying machine. To increase Conservation District efficiency and shorten response time, the Conservation District purchased a John Deere 5400 Utility tractor in 2006, along with a 20-foot gooseneck flatbed trailer to haul Conservation District equipment from site to site.

The Conservation District tree cooler is located in the Union County Highway Department machine shed and by 1994 the old refrigeration unit was no longer adequate and the Conservation District replaced it with a new cooling unit before the 1995 tree season.

In 1992, Linda Rosenbaum was hired as the administrative secretary and in 2006 the position was changed to district manager. Ms Rosenbaum is currently still with the Conservation District.

The Union County Conservation District has always believed the future of conservation lies with today's youth. In 1993, the Conservation District began offering Black Hills spruce seedlings, South Dakota's state tree, to all 6th graders participating in the Arbor Day Essay contest held every spring. Each Arbor Day the Conservation District manager delivers the Black Hills spruce seedlings to Alcester-Hudson, Elk Point -Jefferson, Beresford, and Dakota Valley schools.

The Conservation District implemented a college scholarship program in 1997. Every year, six \$250.00 scholarships are offered to senior high school students living in Union County. Union County seniors are enrolled in four schools in South Dakota and two in Iowa and each school receives one of the six scholarships. The students must be entering college in the fall of the year they graduated with a declared major in an Ag related field.

Over the years the Conservation District has partnered on grants and cooperative agreements from the State of South Dakota and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. In 1993, SD Dept. of Ag provided a cost share grant for a 30 mile terrace project in Brule Creek Hydrologic Unit. In 1994, the Conservation District entered into two cooperative agreements with the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) to assist the SCS with terraces and to complete all HEL conservation plans in the county by September of 1995. A third NRCS cooperative agreement in 1996 was to enter data in the Field Office Computing System (F.O.C.S.). The Union County Conservation District received a \$12,000 grant from the SD Dept. of Ag in 2004 to cost-share a concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) design. The latest cost-share grant was for terrace restoration from the DENR through the SDACD.