



1000 School Street
(641) 332-2812

Guthrie County Soil & Water Conservation District FY 2023 Report



Guthrie Center,
Iowa 50115

State Funds

(State funds provided to the District by the Iowa General Assembly are allocated to the District by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship)

Commissioner Expense Allocation	\$2,750.00
Commissioner expense/mileage	\$ 572.88
Association Dues	\$1,740.00
Office supplies/postage/printing	\$1,412.42
Expenses covered by District fundraising	\$ -975.30
Balance	\$ 0.00

IIM State Cost Share Funds	
2022-2023 Funds	\$196,453.40
Spent	\$ 63,816.72
Obligated	\$130,375.62
Recalled	\$ -2,261.06
Balance	\$ 0.00

REAP Practices Fund	
2022-2023 Funds	\$19,780.60
Spent	\$ 9,094.28
Obligated	\$ 2,948.25
Recalled	\$ -7,738.07
Balance	\$ 0.00

REAP Forestry/Native Grasses	
2022-2023 Funds	\$ 2,626.03
Spent	\$ 2,277.75
Obligated	\$ 48.29
Recalled	\$ 0.00
Balance	\$ 0.00

(Period 7/1/22 - 6/30/23)

District Revolving Funds Account	
7/1/2022 Balance	\$29,905.02
Total Receipts	\$23,508.75
Total Expenditures	\$32,901.48
6/30/2023 Balance	\$20,412.29

District Payroll Account	
7/1/2022 Balance	\$ 8,646.85
Total Receipts	\$ 6,982.92
Total Expenditures	\$11,255.71
6/30/2023 Balance	\$ 4,374.06
Certificate of Deposit	\$10,088.61
Certificate of Deposit	\$11,007.77

Guthrie SWCD meetings are held the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m.

Guthrie NRCS District Conservationist Kevin Kuhn



Our new District Conservationist Kevin Kuhn will be arriving in December. Kevin is coming back to where he started his NRCS career in 1988 after graduating from Iowa State University. Since then, he has worked as a Soil Conservationist, Water Quality Coordinator, Agribusiness Coordinator, District Conservationist, Area Resource Conservationist, and Resource Conservationist on the State Ecological Sciences Staff in Des Moines for the last 8 years.

In his most recent role, Kevin worked on practice standards, guidance documents, and training of our conservation planners across the state. Subject matter expertise includes, no-till methods, cover crops, nutrient management prairie reconstruction and recent work on organic production. Kevin's interest in ag production includes adding small grains to diversify crop rotations and opportunities to increase additional grazing on cropland.

He is passionate about working with producers and helping them implement sustainable practices that benefit both the environment and their bottom line.

2023 Guthrie Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners



From left to right: Jim Wendl, Bryan Coffman, Jamie Patrick, Dave Dear-dorff and Cletus Steensen



Dennis Hoover
2023 Guthrie
SWCD
Assistant
Commissioner

Dennis Hoover served a commissioner on the Guthrie SWCD board beginning back in January of 1980. He has been very involved in all the District activities over the past 42 years. Even though he has retired as a commissioner, he now volunteers as an Assistant Commissioner to help with various outreach activities and anything else the board needs his assistance with. Guthrie SWCD commissioners and staff celebrated during a small awards ceremony and presented him a plaque to honor his many years on the board. Thank you so much Dennis for all your years of dedicated service to this board and to the Guthrie County farming community!



Long time Commissioner Dennis Hoover and Chairperson Cletus Steensen



2023 Guthrie Field Office Staff:

From the left: Carolyn Schwartz-NRCS Civil Engineering Technician, Kevin Crees-780 Hr State Technician, Cathy Sheeder-State Conservation Assistant, Jon Tesdell-NRCS Field Technician, John Jensen-NRCS Soil Conservationist

Kevin is married to an Iowa State professor and enjoys spending time on his 240-acre farm north of Springbrook Park. He is a season ticket holder for both ISU football and men's basketball, enjoys hunting, traveling, antiques, and brewery evaluating in his free time.

CDI Spring Regional Hosted by Guthrie SWCD



Ruth Blomquist, NRCS Soil Health Specialist for NRCS, presented soil health information to the group.

In the March of 2023, the Guthrie SWCD hosted the Annual Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) Spring Regional. The event was held at the Guthrie Center Christian Church Hall. Those in attendance were staff from CDI, Guthrie SWCD, Iowa Dept of Ag & Land Stewardship, NRCS, DNR, and SWCD commissioners from Guthrie, Cass, East Pottawattamie, Audubon, and Shelby counties.

Annual Guthrie SWCD Scholarship

The Guthrie SWCD commissioners offer a \$500 scholarship annually for a high school graduate who wishes to attend college to pursue an agriculturally related field of study. In 2023 we had 3 applicants and awarded scholarships to all three: Keira Simmons, Jacob Thomas and Trevor Derry.



Kiera Simmons



Jake Thomas



Trevor Derry

Soil and Water Conservation Week

April 30-May 7, 2023

“One Water”



Commissioner Jamie Patrick (right) presenting Michelle Spack with conservation materials for Guthrie Center Elementary students to celebrate Soil & Water Conservation Week.



All programs and services of the Guthrie County Soil and Water Conservation District are offered on a non-discriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status or handicap.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

Poster Contest

The theme in 2023 was “One Water”. Winners were selected in grade categories K-1, 2nd-3rd and 4th-6th. The overall winning poster was created by Dakota Johnson-Dawson.

A great big thanks to all of the kids who participated!



Guthrie SWCD commissioners David Deardorff and Bryan Coffman with Guthrie Center Elementary poster contest winners.

Poster contest winners by category:

Grades K-1: Lenox Smith 1st place; Elana Overton 2nd place; Jameson Glade 3rd place.

Grades 2-3: Cecelia Muell 1st place; Rylee Irlbeck 2nd place; Sarah Kuster 3rd place.

Grades 4-6: Dakota Johnson-Dawson 1st place; Lillie Conner 2nd place; Riley Mathre 3rd place.

Farm Safety Day May 2-3, 2023

Commissioner Jim Wendl and Conservation Assistant Cathy Sheeder attended this annual event at the Guthrie County Fairgrounds to help promote farm safety. This was a two-day event. They assisted on May 2nd. A total of 89 third graders from three of the county schools were in attendance that day. The various safety stations included: Animal Safety, ATV Safety, PTO Safety with Tractor Cab Simulator, Electrical Safety, Grain Bin Safety, and Sun Safety. The kids are always interested and a big thank you to the Extension Staff, Farm Bureau folks, Farm Service Agency staff and other volunteers who give their time to this worthy effort!



Guthrie Center Elementary Students with Kim Durst, Cathy Sheeder, and Mary Ebert at 2023 Farm Safety Event



Commissioner Jim Wendl and Mary Ebert talking to the kids about sun safety

Outdoor Day at Guthrie Center Elementary What is Soil?



Edible Soil and Helping Hands!

Guthrie SWCD Commissioners were invited to the annual Guthrie Elementary Outdoor Day on May 19, 2023. Commissioners Cletus Steensen, Jim Wendl, David Deardorff, and Assistant Commissioner Dennis Hoover were in attendance along with NRCS Soil Health Specialist Ruth Blomquist and Conservation Assistant Cathy Sheeder. Commissioners taught the kids about the various layers of soil. They built “edible soil” by using a whole Oreo cookie for the bedrock layer, chocolate chips for the parent material layer, chocolate pudding for the subsoil layer, crushed up Oreo cookie for the topsoil, and gummy worms as the organic material.

Programs

State Cost Share and REAP funding may be available to qualified landowners to implement conservation practices such as waterways, terraces, certain structures, windbreaks and some seedings. The cost share rates may be up to 50% of the cost of the project. Total project cost share may not exceed \$15,000.00. Windbreaks are cost shared at 75% of actual cost not to exceed \$1,600. The District had 11 State cost share projects totaling \$63,816.72 in cost shared funding. These applications were for 9.08 acres of grassed waterways and 1 Grade Stabilization Structure. The District funded 1 REAP Windbreak for 1.2 acres totaling \$1,600.00 and 1 application for 71.0 acres converting crop ground to pasture totaling \$9,094.28.



This grassed waterway was funded through the State of Iowa's Cost Share program in June 2023.

The State **lowa Water Quality Initiative Program** offers funding on a statewide basis for 3 specific water quality practices. Funding of \$25/ac for up to 160 acres is available for producers trying **Cover Crops for the first time**. Repeat users are eligible for a rate of \$15/ac. First time users of **Nitrification Inhibitor or No-Till/Strip-Till** practices are eligible for \$3/ac and \$10/ac respectively. In FY23 Guthrie SWCD had 42 applications (including 6 first time users) funded for 5162.01 acres and \$84,561.15.

The **Buffer Initiative** incentives program continued in FY23. Eligible producers could receive \$200 per acre for Contour Buffer Strips, Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife, Contour Buffer Strips on Terraces, Cross Wind Trap Strips and Bottomland Timber as they are approved on a continuous CRP contract. Non-CRP practices that were also eligible were Contour Buffer Strips, Filter Strips and Field Borders. Producers were eligible for \$300/ac.

NEED FUNDING TO HELP BUILD CONSERVATION PRACTICES? CHECK OUT OUR NO (0%) INTEREST AND LOW (3%) INTEREST LOAN PROGRAMS!

The **No Interest Loan Program** provides 0% interest loans to eligible landowners for the construction of permanent soil conservation practices contained in a conservation plan. Practices that may be funded include waterways, terraces, and some structures. Landowners may borrow up to \$20,000 and can be used in conjunction with other public funds like REAP, State Cost-share, or EQIP. These are Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality (DSCWQ) funds that are administered through the District. The sign-up period is continuous.



Commissioners Deardorff, Hoover, Wendl and Steensen talking edible soil with GC Elementary students.



NRCS Soil Health Specialist Ruth Blomquist talking with the kids and staff about the Soil Health Tunnel exhibit.

The **State Revolving Loan Program** is a source of **low-interest (3%)** financing available to landowners. This opportunity is available specifically to assist and encourage landowners to address non-point source pollution of Iowa streams and lakes. Loan terms are for \$5,000 to \$500,000. Terms can go up to 10 years. Applications are accepted throughout the year. These loans may be used in conjunction with available cost share programs and can be considered the **owner's share** or may be used as a **stand-alone source to pay for 100% of the cost of the project**. Most practices eligible for State Cost Share/FIP, REAP, and EQIP are eligible for a low interest loan. Such practices include terraces and grade stabilization structures, water and sediment control basins, waste storage structures, pasture and hayland planting, grassed waterways, filter strips, field borders, windbreaks and riparian forest buffers. These loans are available through a lender of your choice. In FY23 we had 1 Low Interest Loan application for \$39,892.25.

USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) 17 contracts and \$1,026,603.00 in funding was awarded to producers in Guthrie County in Federal Fiscal year 2023. This program provides financial assistance to treat high priority erosion and water quality problems. Livestock manure management, grazing land management, soil erosion control, and water quality improvement practices are eligible for cost-share as well as some wildlife practices.

The **Conservation Security Program (CSP)** is a voluntary conservation program that supports ongoing conservation stewardship of agricultural lands by providing payments to producers who maintain and enhance the condition of natural resources. CSP identifies and rewards those farmers and ranchers who are meeting the highest standards of conservation and environmental management on their operations. Applications are accepted on a continuous basis with periodic cutoffs for ranking and awarding of contracts.

The **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)** provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits. The former Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) and Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) now fall under the provisions of this agricultural and wetland easement program.

The **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)** was created to help reduce erosion, increase wildlife habitat, and improve water quality through the application of conservation plans. (Landowners set aside cropland for annual rental payments.) Practices that may be funded include tree planting, grass cover, small wetland restoration, prairie restoration and others. Eligibility for this program varies by soil type and crop history.

In 2023 CRP General Sign Up 56 resulted in contracted acres totaling 813.48 acres.

GENERAL CRP SIGN UP 60

CP-1-Permanent Introduced grasses/legumes ...	492.15 ac
CP-2-Permanent Native grasses/legumes	175.04 ac
CP-3A Hardwood Tree planting	4.8 ac
CP-12 Wildlife Food Plot	26.28 ac
CP-25 Rare and Declining Habitat	115.21 ac

Fundraising



The Guthrie SWCD sells native grass seed as a fundraiser. If you are looking for seed for CRP seedings we can put together a seed mix that meets the necessary criteria.

The District also has a Vicon broadcast seeder that is available to rent to producers who wish to do their own seeding. It fits on a 3-point hitch and has a 15-foot spread.



2023 Federal EQIP livestock pond with cattle ramp

In 2023 Continuous Sign Up 59 resulted in contracted acres totaling 1,489.37 acres.

FARMABLE WETLANDS PROGRAM

CP-27 Farmable Wetland Pilot Project.....	0.63 ac
CP-28 Farmable Wetland Pilot Buffer	2.52 ac

HEL PROGRAM

CP-1 - Permanent Introduced grasses/legumes	446.08 ac
CP-2 - Permanent Native grasses/legumes	132.05 ac
CP-25-Rare & Declining Habitat restoration.....	107.66 ac

CLEAR30 PROGRAM

CP-21-Filter Strips	4.56 ac
CP-22-Riparian Strips.....	12.96 ac
CP-31-Bottomland Timber Est on Wetlands.....	1.2 ac

IA GAINING GROUND SAFE

CP8A - Waterways	86.06 ac
CP9 - Shallow Water area for Wildlife	6.12 ac
CP15A - Contour Grass Strips.....	15.79 ac
CP16A-Shelterbelt Establishment	2.3 ac
CP21-Filter Strips.....	65.2 ac
CP29-Wildlife Habitat Buffer	17.2 ac
CP31-Bottomland Timber Est on Wetlands.....	1.2 ac

IA GAINING GROUND SAFE

CP38E-12-Wildlife Food Plot.....	9.35 ac
CP38E-4D-Permanent Wildlife Habitat.....	597.21 ac

Conservation Milestones and Water Quality Momentum

By Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig

2023 was a milestone year for conservation and water quality in Iowa. Not only did we recognize 10 years of the state's Nutrient Reduction Strategy, 40 years of the state's Abandoned Mine Land reclamation program, and 50 years of the state's conservation cost-share program, but we also set yet another record for conservation implementation in the state.

Department wide, our cost-share programs continue to see record utilization – in dollars spent, dollars leveraged, and in total practices implemented. We've gone from approximately 10,000 acres of cover crops statewide a decade ago to nearly 4 million today. We've completed 132 wetlands and have dozens of additional sites in the design process as we head toward our goal of building 30 per year. We've built hundreds of saturated buffers and bioreactors through our innovative "batch and build" model which modernizes and streamlines the process to install practices on multiple farms at once. With eight active "batch and build" agreements in place and more in development, there's ample room for growth. We have also launched new or expanded Water Quality Initiative projects in targeted watersheds across the state, and this work is making a difference.



MIKE NAIG
Secretary of Agriculture

I want to thank Iowans for saying "yes" to conservation. I also want to thank the hardworking and devoted conservation professionals at the local, state, and federal levels as well as the many supporting public and private partner businesses and organizations. From outreach, design, and layout, to developing watershed and community-based projects, these men and women go to work every day to help us deliver more water quality improvement.

Even though Iowa State University's dashboard measurements show that we are making Nutrient Reduction Strategy progress, we are far from satisfied. Records exist to be broken, and that's what we intend to keep doing. We want to push further every year, continually recruiting more farmers, landowners and partners. Positive changes to the land equals positive impacts to our water.

We need everyone pulling in the same direction – the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, USDA NRCS, Iowa's 100 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, farmers, landowners and all of our private and public partners. Water quality matters to everyone, and everyone has a role to play in conserving our natural resources and improving our soil and water.

Despite challenges ranging from drought to inflation, I remain optimistic and excited about what we can do together in the years and decades ahead. Without question, the investments we are making, the partnerships we are forming, the practices we are implementing, and the water quality momentum we are accelerating will benefit not just the Iowans of today but the generations of Iowans yet to come.

Iowa Farmers Lead The Way in Soil Conservation Efforts For Sustainable Future

By Susan Kozak, IDALS Director of Soil Conservation and Water Quality

As I write this article, I am in the middle of a project looking at soil health and water quality benefits when multiple conservation practices are utilized together. I find myself pondering different ways to implement conservation on the ground. With its expansive fields of corn and soybeans, Iowa has long been a cornerstone of American agriculture. Now, the state is at the forefront of a movement to prioritize soil health and water quality. Farmers across Iowa are adopting conservation practices such as cover crops, no-till farming, and edge of field practices to enhance soil health, improve water quality, and boost overall productivity.



SUSAN KOZAK
Division Director

One of the standout practices gaining popularity in Iowa is cover cropping. By planting cover crops like rye or oats during the off-season, farmers protect the soil from erosion, improve water retention, and contribute to water quality improvement efforts in the state. This not only safeguards the environment but also enhances the long-term viability of the land for future generations. This year, Iowa is approaching 4 million acres of cover crops planted across the state – about 13% of the farmed acres. This is a huge increase in cover crop adoption from 10 years ago, but we still have a long way to go. As cover crops gain popularity, we should also look at integrating them with other conservation practices to offer a multitude of benefits, creating a synergistic approach that enhances overall agricultural sustainability.

The success of Iowa's soil conservation efforts is bolstered by strong partner support and collaborative initiatives. State and federal programs provide financial incentives for farmers adopting conservation practices, making it economically viable to invest in sustainable agriculture. Partnerships with key organizations in the state also play a crucial role in disseminating knowledge and best practices. Here at the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship we are proud of the commitment Iowa's farmers have made to soil conservation and water quality, as we work towards a more sustainable and resilient future for agriculture. If you are interested in trying some of these practices on your farm or layering new practices with what you are already doing, please reach out to your local USDA service center for more information.

Growth in Water Quality Programs Increases Access to Conservation Funding

By Jake Hansen, Water Resources Bureau Chief – IDALS Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality

Since the Iowa Water Quality Initiative was first funded in 2013, the program landscape for conservation funding and options for producers has grown significantly. Farmers have been presented with a charge to voluntarily incorporate cover crops, nutrient management practices, and structural projects aimed at holding nutrients in place and reducing nitrogen and phosphorus losses. This call to action has been well-received- cover crop adoption in the past decade has grown to more than 4 million acres statewide, and landowners are installing nutrient reduction wetlands and edge of field practices at record levels year over year. All of this work is happening in addition to continued commitment to "traditional" soil conservation practice adoption at historic levels.

The success of the Water Quality Initiative has been noticed on a regional and national scale. Some of the programs piloted in Iowa are taking hold in other states in the Mississippi River basin, and the science team led by the Iowa Nutrient Research Center has added several water quality practices to the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy in the last few years, including bioreactors, saturated buffers, and prairie strips, to name a few. Cost-share programs are becoming increasingly flexible, with more ways to support practices than ever before.

Growth in program offerings is not without its challenges. New programs and new funding bring new partners to the table; and local staff, commissioners, and partners find themselves working to understand subtle differences in the wider variety of cost-share opportunities in order to help meet ambitious conservation goals. I am happy to report that local staff and elected commissioners are rising to the challenge and effectively working to help more producers than ever. The Water Quality Initiative has engaged over 250 partner organizations throughout Iowa and beyond over the ten years of its existence, but cooperation and leadership from our Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Iowa Department of Natural Resources partners has been essential to the successful growth we are all experiencing. Thank you so much to all of the staff and local leaders who have helped to make this growth a reality, and to the thousands of farmers who have been willing to embrace new conservation ideas and implement new practices! As interest in water quality programs continues to grow, we look forward to continuing to work with all of you to maintain local conservation priorities and to embrace new opportunities.



Jake Hansen
Water Resources Bureau Chief

"The nation that destroys its soil destroys itself." ~ ~ ~Franklin D. Roosevelt