

Narrative Report

The following is our report on the 1954 activities of the Holt Soil Conservation district. We hope the report will prove interesting, informative and inspirational.

The following table shows the accomplishments of the technical staff for the year, the total amount of each practice applied today in Holt county and the amount estimated that is remaining to be done.

Practice	Unit	1954	To Date	Amt. to Be Done
Contour farming	Ac.	215	2,922	92,728
Cover cropping	Ac.	2,951	98,728	284,553
Strip cropping	Ac.	1,816	103,321	247,601
Conservation crop rotation	Ac.	1,882	112,520	320,413
Proper use, grazing	Ac.	9,071	204,269	800,504
Deferred grazing	Ac.	4,321	100,489	904,284
Range seeding	Ac.	1,212	16,414	120,704
Interseeding meadows	Ac.	395	9,165	166,252
Pasture seeding	Ac.	2,780	2,959	12,226
Tree planting	Ac.	314	11,020	12,070
Wildlife area improvement	Ac.	21	2,564	7,075
Drainage	Ac.	314	11,020	12,075
Terraces	Mi.	.8	40.3	5,276
Diversions	Mi.	1.6	6.9	182
Waterways	Mi.	51	245	5,177
Pond construction	Ac.	13	152	59
Livestock wells	No	47	1,149	317

A study of the above chart will show that some of the practices such as tree planting are about half completed. Ponds and wells are fairly well established where needed, but much remains to be done on such practices as terraces, waterways and proper use of grazing land and seeding of grass.

Cooperation with Other Agencies

Commendable teamwork marked the service and district's relationships with other agencies. The local soil conservation service personnel again had an active part in the agricultural conservation program (ACP). The SCS men were required to inspect and approve most of the docket practices in 1954. These duties were not as heavy as previously due to a light sign-up in 1954. However, a greater sign-up was attained for 1955. SCS will be responsible for determining need and feasibility for grass seedings, and will also supervise and check all permanent practices listed in the ACP docket. Although not required by state directive the county committee requested that SCS personnel make seeding recommendations and feasibility determination for all seedings in the 1955 docket. We are pleased that they saw fit to give the district this increased responsibility and believe that it exemplifies excellent cooperation between the agencies.

In 1954, the state game, forestation and parks commission, with the district as a "go-between", planted several wildlife areas, a few of which included the addition of cedar trees to the north of existing shelterbelts. The same practice will be followed for 1955. Bruce McCarragher of the commission, stationed in the new district office at Bassett, has been working with many cooperators in improving their fish ponds.

The extension service and the district cooperated closely on several events in 1954. Most noteworthy was the joint annual meeting in March. To many, this meeting seemed to be the high point in a series of very successful joint annual meetings. Main speaker was the world-famed Everett Mitchell of NBC radio. Other noteworthy events in which the district gave the extension service its support were the grassland days at Stuart, crop improvement tour and the irrigation tour. The crop improvement tour covered scattered points which showed

marked results from fertilizer used on native grassland.

The agreement of state and county highway officials to provide adequate culverts, properly located for drainage problems of cooperators, still holds.

District Equipment and Labor

Any employer can testify to the difficulty in securing a competent employee, acquainting him with his duties and then retaining this competent employee. Such was the case when the district lost the services of Virgil Laursen, who went into private business in June. Duane Gray was hired to replace Mr. Laursen and has been fairly busy with various operations of the district equipment.

It should be mentioned here that the district's business operations, that is, seed cleaning, combining, tree planting, machinery rental, etc., will be seriously, if not entirely, curtailed by a recent USDA directive which will prohibit the local SCS personnel from participating in or directing any district business. Even though they are ultimately responsible for the district's business operations, the board of supervisors has relied heavily on the local SCS staff, especially the unit conservationist, C. R. Hill, in helping to oversee the district's business.

In view of the above-mentioned tendency of good employees to shift to private business, and with the probable loss of managerial help from the local staff, the district board of supervisors is both non-pleased and disgusted. It is true the SCS personnel may have been called upon to spend too much time supervising the district's business but the board views with dismay the inevitable curtailment of the tree planting operation, rental of district equipment for grass seeding, and the district's activities in general. It should be pointed out that the business operations were never designed to use up the free labor provided by the SCS personnel, but rather to promote conservation in the district. The present board of supervisors sincerely believes that the district's activities serve the latter purpose.

Readers of last year's report and other district publicity will recall the remarkable account of the vetch and native grass plots on the depleted field south of Page, along U.S. highway 20. Af-

ter a highly successful first year harvest of vetch seed in 1953, there was no volunteer growth of vetch in the fall of 1953 (moisture conditions being the deterring factor). However, a good stand vetchseeded again in the fall of 1954, and the native grass seedlings (sand lovegrass, Indiangrass and switchgrass) give promise of becoming seed producers next season. The local SCS staff and the supervisors view the progress of the vegetation on these plots with special interest. The project is a field experiment in the rejuvenation of a worn out field with a naturally light soil. One of the main objectives was to determine if vetch should be seeded prior to grass, with grass or after grass was established. Although results are not conclusive as yet, it appears that vetch seeded with the grass or after the grass is established is superior to seeding the vetch first and then following with grass seeding a year later.

The use of this field was made possible in the spring of 1953 through the efforts of Raymond Heiss, then a supervisor on the Holt Soil Conservation district board.

Less Use of Cleaner

The seed cleaner was used less than it has been the last several years. However, about 2,000 pounds of bluestem was harvested locally, about 450 pounds of switchgrass and about 400 pounds of sand lovegrass were also harvested.

The Shelhamer Equipment company furnished the district with a new International fertilizer spreader at 10 percent of the list price for the first year's use. This machine was used considerably both as a fertilizer spreader and as a seeder. The skew treader and seeder treader also saw considerable use.

All of the equipment owned by the Holt district is operated under the supervision of the local board of supervisors. The district employees are paid from the district funds, not the U.S. treasury, and are responsible to the board. The present board of supervisors consists of Merwyn French, sr., chairman; Elmer Allyn, vice-chairman; Stanley Lambert, secretary-treasurer; Elmer Juracek, member, and Clarence Ernst, member.

The local staff provided by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service consists of C. R. Hill, Weston Whitner and Harold T. Young, C. B. Crook, soil scientist, was transferred to Minnesota in December and his successor has not as yet been relieved of his present duties so that he can be transferred to O'Neill. These men are government employees loaned to the local district to carry out the technical phases of the conservation program.

Educational Activities and Publicity

All the Holt county newspapers have cooperated generously in promoting conservation agriculture in 1954. For the sixth year in a row The Frontier will print this annual report in its conservation special edition. The Holt district board has arranged to have the weekly newsletter of the National Association of Soil Conservation Districts sent to every editor in the county.

Nine films on conservation were shown at the Atkinson and O'Neill schools during the year. Two meetings were held with the Atkinson vocational agriculture class and a grass judging and identification contest was held with the Atkinson group last fall. Soil Conservation Service technicians appeared and assisted with Boy

Scout work for the camp at Atkinson and the one held at Goose lake. At Atkinson tree planting was done and the district furnished a few trees that were planted in the Atkinson park. At Goose lake the boys were taken on a tour of the surrounding area and emphasis was placed on grass and plant identification. The district plans to carry out an all-conservation day program for the seventh and eighth graders in the county in 1955. As originally planned this is a biennial affair held in connection with the students' study of geography of Nebraska.

A tape recording was made with Mrs. Willa Schollmeyer and her pupils and was used on one of the broadcasts over WJAG. Mrs. Schollmeyer had previously attended the Doane college conservation short course and is doing a marvelous job of teaching conservation in rural schools. Regular broadcasts were made each month from February to September over WJAG, covering a variety of subjects.

In November a member of the board attended a soil conservation banquet in Sioux City sponsored by the Sioux City Journal-Tribune and the Sioux City Chamber of Commerce where plaques and certificates of merit were awarded to farmers and ranchers in the Sioux City trade area. The Sioux City group sponsors a contest based on permanent soil conservation. In our district certificates of merit were awarded to Leonard Juracek of O'Neill, E. J. Revell of O'Neill and Richard Trowbridge Page.

The district carried on no special drive for associate memberships this year. However, one affiliate membership was received from D. E. Bowen of Page, former board member, at our annual meeting in March. A more concerted effort to bring in associate memberships of businessmen will be carried out this spring. These membership proceeds will be used for scholarships and other promotional purposes.

Highlights

It is hard to name one outstanding occurrence in the Holt district's year of activities. Perhaps the one highlight which gave the board of supervisors and office staff the most satisfaction was that of receiving the Goodyear soil conservation award. The district received a handsome plaque and each supervisor received a shield which bears his name in gold letters.

Goodyear sponsors a contest based on soil conservation board activity. For the purpose of this contest, Goodyear divides the United States into 50 areas with two areas in Nebraska. The Holt Soil Conservation district won first in the western area of Nebraska and the grand award was an all-expense paid trip to the Goodyear Farms at Litchfield Park, Ariz., for one member of the board and one outstanding conservation farmer. The board chose E. J. Revell of O'Neill as the farmer and Elmer Juracek of Star, the member of the board, to make the trip. They had 100 farmers at the Goodyear Farms from all over the United States.

When they arrived at Litchfield Park each farmer was given a complete outfit of western clothes to wear, including levis, shirt, belt, tie and a 10-gallon hat. The clothes then were given to them to keep as souvenirs.

Goodyear deserves much credit for promoting conservation of our most important natural resources. Goodyear has reclaimed about 16,000 acres of desert land, they have 70 irrigation wells and they now raise some of the highest yields of crops per acre in the United States. The county that Goodyear Farms are in is now the second richest agricultural county in the United States. However, all those irrigation pumps are lowering the water table 10 feet a year, so you can see their future is very limited unless they can bring in water from the Colorado river, which they are trying to do to supplement their water supply.

Another highlight of 1954 was, of course, the joint annual meeting with the extension service. Those present will long remember the stories of our speaker, Everett Mitchell. He brought to the listeners an intimate understanding of agriculture and people in the many lands he had recently visited.

Clarence Ernst, Elmer Juracek, Merwyn French and E. J. Revell attended the state conference in Lincoln from November 30 to December 2. Recognition of the Holt district's winning of the Goodyear award was given at this meeting. A slight change in the state conference meeting was planned with towns more centrally located selected for meeting places in the future years.

Still another highlight of 1954 was the attendance of the Northern Great Plains Area meeting at Sheridan, Wyo., by Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Juracek. This was a meeting of soil conservation district supervisors from six states. The problems of soil and water conservation were compared, national legislation and state laws pertaining to soil conservation districts were discussed and recommendations made. Elmer Juracek carried to the Sheridan conference an authorized and well-planned invitation from the O'Neill Chamber of Commerce for the area conference to consider our own soil districts like States. No supervisors, not even the national president, get any wages or salary. Their reward is seeing conservation of our basic resources being applied. The United States is divided into seven areas. We are in Nebraska are in the Northern Great Plains area. This area is made up of six states—Kansas, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska.

The Northern Great Plains area meeting this year will be held at O'Neill June 1, 2 and 3. This is a meeting of the soil conservation district supervisors from all these

states. However, this is an open meeting and we invite and urge everyone whose welfare is dependent on agriculture, which is everyone, to attend all or any part of this meeting. We especially invite you to attend the banquet on the evening of June 2.

Methods and Accomplishments

Personal contact, as always, is the missionary's best means of making a convert. Such is the case with the local staff in their endeavor to convert Holt county farmers and ranchers to conservation practices and confirm them in that way of treating their soil. As before they will appreciate, whenever possible, contacting small groups and even large ones in an effort to make more total gains in conserving our natural resources.

Since 1900 the percent of farm population has dropped from 90 to 12. In other words, 12 percent of the people feed themselves plus the remaining 88 percent. How much more can this shrink? What will be the effect of this shrinkage on farm legislation, the national economy, and basically what effect will it have on the conservation of our soil? It is our belief that only by having an active part in the local self-governing organization (the Holt Soil Conservation district) and a large voice through the state and national associations that proper emphasis will continue to be placed on agriculture. Who is not dependent on agriculture? Yet how few realize the basic methods of conserving the soil? We have a moral obligation to our Creator to leave this land (which we use for a term of years) in a condition to provide livelihood and food products for untold generations.

Technical Services

The local staff is year-by-year being given more responsibility in the agricultural conservation program. In addition to aiding in the annual farm program sign-up, the soil conservation service men are to lay out, check and approve all permanent docket practices requiring engineering assistance. Most other permanent practices require a concern of soil conservation service personnel, too.

Now the U.S. government's "task force" on inter-governmental relationships suggests disrupting the relationship between the soil conservation districts and their soil conservation service staffs. This trend is toward placing all soil conservation efforts under each individual state. In view of the need of nationwide promotion of soil conservation and because of the inability of the states to finance a conservation program, the Holt district board of supervisors wishes to express displeasure and tendency to belittle the specialized conservation efforts. At the same time we shall favor the state and federal government economizing wherever possible to avoid wasteful overlapping of the various agency duties.

This annual narrative report is respectfully submitted by your Holt Soil Conservation district board of supervisors.

Must Manage to Get Grass You Want

By L. F. BREDEMIEER, Range Conservationist, SCS (North Platte)

You can have the kind of grass you want if you manage for it. An increasing number of ranchers in Nebraska are conscientiously and effectively managing their grasses in such a way as to give them the kinds they want. In the final analysis, most ranchers want the kinds of grasses that will enable them to market the maximum of livestock at a minimum cost.

One Way

An outstanding example of the effect of management on the kinds of grasses was observed last year on the Wolfe brothers' ranch in Wheeler county. Two pastures contained an abnormal abundance of porcupine grass (*stipa spartea*). This is the larger of the two needlegrasses in Nebraska which have sharp needlelike seeds and a long awn. It is a bunch-forming grass that grows in cool seasons, namely early spring and late fall. It is relished by livestock and is readily grazed. If permitted, cattle will graze it so much that it will begin to disappear. Heavily grazed pastures seldom contain this grass. Yet these pastures in Wheeler county contained it in profusion. The amount of grazing and the degree of intensity was such that the abundance of porcupine grass could not be justified. Consideration of the time of grazing pointed to the cause.

The Wolfe ranch runs steers which are not turned on the pastures until around May 15. They are taken off the pastures and marketed the latter part of August.

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ter and the first part of September. This grazing program allowed the porcupine grass to produce a good amount of leaves in the spring before being grazed. It also permitted this grass to make a growth in the fall after the cattle had been sold.

Grass Feeds Grass

The time or season of grazing is only one of the management techniques that can be used to influence the grasses. Their behavior under grazing is closely associated with a simple physiological process of plant growth. All plant food is manufactured in the leaves of plants. The plant takes the elements for plant food from the soil and the air. In the green leaf it transforms these elements into plant food which it uses for its growth and reproduction.

A perennial grass that is allowed to keep enough of its leaves to manufacture more food than it needs for growth is strong, vigorous and very productive. It stores the excess plant food in its roots for future growth, building up a reserve storage much like some people build up an endowment fund.

The grass whose green leaves are grazed off as soon as they can be nibbed by livestock never has a chance to manufacture food. Such a grass must keep drawing food from the roots. If very little had been stored the previous year, there is very little to draw from.

Soon the reserve is depleted and the grass is so weak that it cannot compete with less palatable or shorter grasses. These less palatable or shorter grasses begin to take over and frequently the preferred grass is so severely weakened that it dies.

What Happens

Tall, medium and short grasses grow in mixtures on the range land in Holt county. In heavily grazed pastures the cattle will take 60 to 90 percent of the leaves of the tall grasses and 30 to 60 percent of the short grasses. This weakens the tall grasses proportionately more than it does the short grasses. At the same time it

reduces the forage production accordingly.

Whether you want a certain kind of grass or whether you want more forage per acre and, in turn, more pounds of beef from your ranch, the way you manage your grass offers you these possibilities. This approach has the added advantage of requiring no large financial expenditures. Take care of your grass and your grass will take care of you.

Monday Callers—
Mrs. Mabel Shobe and Marjorie of Page were Monday afternoon guests of Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Kraft.

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VISIONS are elusive sometimes. But they have a way of coming down to earth. This thing called soil conservation on the land was once a vision—little more than the seed of an idea, the idea that farmers could work together to solve their mutual problems. The seed proved to be remarkably viable, for the soil conservation district idea has settled down like a protective blanket over our good earth.

There is more than physical resemblance between a contour-stripped field and the red and white stripes of Old Glory. The soil conservation district embodies the very essence of the rights and freedoms for which our flag stands. Cherishing those rights and freedoms, farmers have organized soil conservation districts that are of local people, by local people, for local people.

A soil conservation district is composed of local people who see their own problems and solve them, who see their own responsibilities and shoulder them. They are local people doing that which they should do, voluntarily, with no infringement of rights and liberties, with scarcely a law, rule, regulation, or tax. The soil conservation district, in action, is literally a bit of the freedom of enterprise that made America a land of opportunity and abundance.

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