

# Holt Soil and Water Conservation District Gives Annual Report

This is the report of the Holt Soil and Water Conservation District activities and accomplishments during the year 1959. The following table is given to show an outline of the accomplishments for the past year on some of the major conservation practices carried out by District cooperators:

Practice	Unit	1959	To Date
Strip cropping	Ac.	568	128,991
Cover Cropping	Ac.	769	104,109
Proper Use	Ac.	5681	245,271
Permanent Seeding	Ac.	3292	28,782
Dune Stabilization	Ac.	64	5,050
MI.	MI.	129	11,526
Terraces and Diversions	Ac.	18	66.3
Waterway Development	Ac.	8.2	318
Pond Construction	No.	29	220
Land Leveling	Ac.	215	258

Grass seeding increased with 3,292 acres being accomplished by cooperators. 1,539 acres of this was done with the two-District owned Nesbit drills. Grass seedings were more successful than before due to the use of the Nesbit drill and to the fact that more and more ranchers and farmers are making better seed bed preparation by seeding in a cover crop stubble.

Fourteen Great Plains contracts written this year brings the total to 18 for this program to date.

Four livestock dams, two erosion control dams, six livestock wells, 34 acres of land leveling for irrigation, 1 mile of waterway, 22 acres of shelterbelt, 4 miles of fencing, 544 acres of native grass seeding and 170 acres of tame pasture seeding are practices which have been completed to date under the Great Plains Program. All 18 farmers and ranchers have considerable more work to be accomplished in 1960 in addition to work to be done on new contracts to be written.

Dam construction, 29 of them, took a marked increase over the past several years. 18 of these dams were for livestock water and 11 for erosion control. 16 of these dams were constructed in intermittent spring flow which will provide recreation facilities and fishing as well as livestock water.

## OTHER AGENCIES

We of the District appreciate all the effort expended by the technical staff of the United States Soil Conservation Service in assisting our District. It is through their efforts and cooperation and the good work of our cooperators that conservation continues to expand in Holt county.

The need for technical assistance continues to increase. It is our hope to be able to maintain and expand our organization so that the people of Holt county can be served promptly and efficiently. The understanding of conservation today is better than it was when Districts were first organized. So many of the practices have proven themselves in conserving our soil and water, that applications for assistance in carrying them out exceed our ability to comply with all the requests. Conserving our natural resources is a continuing and never ending job.

The technical staff includes: Orville Indra, soil scientist who serves several districts; Bob Hill, unit conservator; Weston D. Whitver, conservator; Vernon Wortman, conservator and Willis Sanders, conservation aid. Mrs. Deane Reed has continued to serve as part time clerk. Funds provided by the county and the state committee have provided this cler-

Conservation Practice	Farms	Extent
Gradient and level terraces	2	12,650 Linear ft.
Diversions	2	820 linear ft.
Sod waterways	5	7,841 linear ft.
Erosion control dams	7	23,354 cubic yds.
Livestock water dams	11	32,480 cubic yds.
Leveling irrigable cropland	3	708 acres
Wells for livestock water	64	72 structures
Initial establishment or improvement of permanent cover	13	31 acres
Establishment of permanent cover	19	616 acres
Protecting field borders, dams, dikes and ditch banks	1	4 acres
Vegetative cover for crop rotations	31	497 acres
Summer cover crops	2	125 acres
Treatment of cropland by liming and required fencing	49	3,834 rods; 120 acres
Forestry improvement	2	3.8 acres
Field strip cropping	2	235 acres
Deferred grazing	14	4,706 acres
Controlling blow-out areas	19	71 acres

The above listed practices are carried in five different groups for budgeting purposes. These groups are listed with an estimated amount paid for each group in the 1959 program year.

Group A (practices 1 through 12) \$15,578.08  
Group B (practices 13 through 17 and practices 32 A and 31A) 22,964.43  
Group C (practices 18 through 24) 9,804.84  
Group D (practices 26 through 28) 7,273.04  
Group E (practice 30) 411.60

Total \$56,031.99

Part of these payments were paid by a CMS Purchase order form and a few used assignment form of payment. The Holt Soil and Water Conservation District received no payments through the CMS plan and nine payments through the assignment plan.

ries out another important phase of wildlife conservation in cooperation with the Holt district. Bruce McCarragher, fisheries manager inspects most ponds before stocking by Federal fish is made.

This has done much in passing on fish pond management information and assists in improving fish ponds in Holt county.

There were 38 news releases made during the year. These were printed in either one or all four of the newspapers in Holt county. The O'Neill radio station has also been cooperative in presenting a number of conservation programs. Responsibilities for these releases and the radio program rest on county extension agent Weston Whitver and Bob Hill with the occasional assistance of Vernon Wortman and a district supervisor.

The clergy of the county are always very cooperative in creating a general awareness of the need for conserving our soil and water. The district purchased booklets and church bulletins for all clergy who requested them, to use in their work.

A meeting was held with local native grass seed producers. A number of cooperators are producing switchgrass, sandhog grass, blue stem, Indian grass and vetch in quantities large enough to handle all of our local needs. In addition, considerable amounts of little bluestem, side oats grama, crested wheat grass and intermediate wheat grass were consigned.

Items from the Holt district took the first and second places in the area range judging contest and first and third places in the state contest. They are now eligible to participate in the national contest to be held in Oklahoma.

On September 17 and 18 in cooperation with Miss Alice French, the county superintendent of schools, the district held a conservation workshop for school teachers. This was a very successful venture and we received the assistance also from the State Soil and Water Conservation committee, the University Extension Service and other agencies.

In addition to sharing the cost of conservation practices, the county also helped provide technical services necessary to the success of the practices by transferring \$3,006.49 to the Soil Conservation Service.

The program was designed so that—along with conservation education, technical services and other conservation efforts—it would be most useful in meeting local conservation problems.

Most of the practices carried out on farms with ACP cost-sharing were needed land treatment practices in the program of the Holt Soil and Water Conservation District.

During the 1959 program year about \$56,031.99 of ACP cost-sharing was used on 212 farms in the Holt Soil and Water Conservation District to help solve particular problems by establishing needed conservation practices. This represented about 8 percent of the farms in the District. These practices included:

During 1959 the district purchased a second native grass seed drill. This was a great deal to help get better stands of native grasses. This drill will sow seeds of different sizes and weights at the same time with controlled rates of seeding on all seeds individually. We also have a scalper to clean bluestem and Indian grass seeds and other bulky grasses.

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Assignment form of payment was also eligible under the conservation reserve program. The Holt Soil and Water Conservation District received seventeen assignment payments under this program.

The district has had good cooperation from both the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service and the State Game Commission. The district places orders for cooperators desiring Federal fish to stock farm ponds. During the year bass and bluegill were delivered to stock six ponds in Holt county.

The State Game Commission has supplied planting stock and fencing material for a number of wildlife plantings. Gerald Chafin, land manager or the Game Commission which has headquarters at Bassett in this area, has spent considerable time in the Holt district taking care of requests of cooperators for wildlife areas.

The Game Commission also car-



Range inter-seeder purchased by the Holt SWCD. Its use last year was very successful and prospects are for considerable use of this new machine this year.

Program. An outstanding conservation farmer and his wife are chosen and an aerial photograph is taken of their farmstead. This photograph, along with 87 others is always displayed at the annual meeting of the Nebraska Association of Soil Conservation districts.

The award photograph was sponsored this year by the O'Neill National Bank. The farm of Mr. David Keidel of Stuart was chosen for the award. The picture is now on display at the O'Neill National Bank and it will be presented to Mr. Keidel at the annual meeting.

The Holt Soil and Water Conservation district entered the following contests: The Goodyear contest with Ivan Minshall of Page being the cooperator chosen to represent the district.

The Sioux City Permanent Agricultural Program with Carroll C. Summerer of Ewing, Darel Bright of Atkinson and Edward Stearns of Atkinson being the cooperators chosen to represent the district.

The Holt district also participated in the Omaha World-Herald contest.

The general attitude of the cooperators and of the public is very favorable especially when the individual understands the function of the district program.

Most cooperators are aware that the office staff must schedule their work a week or more in advance and are willing to request help in advance so that they can be worked into the schedule.

Local businessmen are always willing to sponsor our awards program. We feel that meetings with the businessmen, the ministers, our Soil Stewardship Sunday program,



Dam under construction on Harvey Krugman farm. This was a part of Mr. Krugman's Great Plains contract. Smith and Son of Verdigris, contractor.

and good farming know-how.

Before entering the Great Plains program, Harvey built 4 earthen dams with the financial assistance of the County Agricultural Conservation Program, planted 11 acres of trees for field windbreaks and 2 acres of trees to protect the farmstead. However, there were so many more conservation practices he wanted to put on his farm that he was unable to do it by himself.

In May, 1959, Harvey signed a Great Plains contract and obtained the technical assistance of the Soil Conservation Service in making a plan of operations and cost-sharing from the Federal Government on conservation practices planned on his farm.

Last October a livestock water dam and an erosion control dam consisting of 10,000 cubic yards of dirt moved and approximately 150 feet of metal tubes were completed with 75 percent of the total costs paid by the Great Plains program.

In the next four years Harvey plans to build nearly 4 miles of terraces, 1 mile of diversions, seed 100 acres of native grass for pasture and meadow, seed 90 acres of cool season tame grass pasture, construct nearly 2 miles of fence, drill 1 livestock well, plant 3 acres of trees for a livestock windbreak and construct and seed approximately three fourths of a mile of waterways. Also included in the plan will be the proper use of the native and tame pastures, deferred grazing and contour farming.

Harvey is very enthusiastic about the Great Plains program and what it is doing for his land. He says, "The program has made it possible for me to put all the conservation practices on the land that will conserve the soil and water and make an efficient and profitable operating unit."

Area V-P Gives Ideas For Good ASC Plan

Tony Krebs, area vice president of the National Association of Soil Conservation Districts and a member of the Great Plains Action committee from South Dakota, said this about a complete Soil and Water Conservation plan:

"Once, I watched with great interest, the building of a small business house in the town where I live. The owner hoping to cut corners, did not get an architect to draw up a plan. As a result, there have been many times when such things as doors and windows had to be re-located, new electrical out-

lets installed or old ones moved, some as many as four times.

"A farm or ranch plan is even more important. Damage to the land can be very costly before man catches up with the mistakes of doing the right thing at the wrong time.

"A complete farm or ranch plan will do these things that you can't be sure of any other way. It sets up a sequence of projects so as to get the most out of time and material (and of course out of any money spent). It gives the operator a goal toward which he can work, knowing that when he has reached it he will have accomplished something worthy of his best as an owner of agricultural land; it gives a farmer or rancher a chance to grasp the full meaning of soil and water conservation, to understand the reasons behind every step he takes in getting his plan done; it gives him a finished product when the parts fitted together for the best in land protection and efficiency in operation that modern know-how, both a scientific and experience stand point, has been able to come up with.

Like the felloe and his building, you may sometimes be able to achieve a high degree of soil and water conservation on your land without a complete farm or ranch plan, but it probably will be at a price you can't really afford. And it won't have been the best deal for your land, either."

In Holt county there are to date 18 farmers and ranchers with plans of operation and contracts in the Great Plains program extending from 1958 through 1966 that cover 19,646 acres and \$48,876.30 in estimated cost-share funds obligated.

The conservation practices included in the 18 contracts that are planned by 1967 are:

1414 acres of cropland being planted to native grass. 481 acres of range inter-seeding. 51.5 acres of 33,768 trees to plant. 16 miles of fence construction. 7 acres of waterway development. 4 miles of terraces. 3 miles of diversions. 3 erosion control dams. 5 livestock water dams. 2 irrigation dams. 17 creek wells. 83 acres of land leveling.

The list of non-cost practices included in the plans are 12,164 acres of proper use on pasture. 180 acres of irrigation water management. 124 acres of contour farming and 154 acres of stubble mulch tillage.

Two local ranchers E. J. Revell of Opportunity, and Ernest Billstein of Swan Lake, will be the first to receive the Tree Farm Awards in Holt county.

They will be presented certificates and Tree Farm signs at the Conservation Awards Night sponsored by the Soil and Water Conservation District on Friday March 11.

These two ranchers are recognized as having made outstanding tree plantings on their ranches. Along with this they have displayed a good deal of interest in forestry, according to Dick Gavit, District Extension Forester of Pierce.

The Tree Farm program that is given recognition to persons that have made forestry plantings and follow the best recommended forestry management practices in maintaining these tree plantings on their ranches.

The tree planting on both ranches are multiple purpose plantings as they furnish food and cover for wildlife as well as protection for the soil from wind and water erosion. In addition these plantings serve as protection for livestock.

Mr. Billstein planting of Jack pine was made in the early 1920's on a quarter section to control a blow-out area and has proved very successful. He is planning to start the removal or thinning of the trees and utilize them as fence posts after treating with pentachlorophenol. He also plans to re-plant these areas to Ponderosa pine.

Mr. Revell has made two different types of tree plantings thru the years. He has a good farmstead windbreak which protects his feedlots and farm buildings. He also has plantings surrounding some of his fields which furnish protection for his fields.

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT Management practices or wind-

breaks are very important to you, according to Dick Gavit, District Extension Forester at Pierce.

Following recommended management practices increases the benefit you receive from your windbreak in relation to your farm lots and buildings. You can increase the yield and the value of your timber if you use good management practices.

E. J. Revell of Opportunity has completed some forestry management work in his older windbreaks. He has released the volunteer young red cedar to produce better growth in the windbreak. He has accomplished this by grading and poisoning some of the cottonwoods. The cedar which was growing under the cottonwood will have a chance to make better growth as a result of more sunlight and available moisture. The cedar is preferred in the windbreak as it gives a compact, dense formed tree and the foliage is retained close to the ground.

Another part of his windbreak did favor the growth of red cedar.

Bob Hill of O'Neill has harvested mature maple and cottonwood from his windbreak for the lumber to be used on the farm. The remaining trees will provide another supply of lumber in several years. Several rows of red cedar has been added on the north of the old windbreak for wind protection on the ground level.

Benefits can be received by proper management in many other areas in the county.

"The killing or removal of undesirable species and possibly the planting of evergreens in many windbreaks will make them more efficient," Gavit states.

Evergreens are the backbone of a windbreak as they give maximum wind protection. They are dense to the ground and permanent. Evergreens will grow in practically all soils and mixed with other trees but thrive better in open sunlight conditions.

Miss A. French Commends SCS Area Workshop

The Soil Conservation Workshop held in O'Neill last September was considered one of the best by the teachers. Conservation has been studied in our schools for years but at this workshop many practical things were provided which could be taken home and used.

All schools were asked to work on conservation in the social studies class for two weeks and correlate it with other classes where possible. It was a valuable experience for the small and the large to work together as a group. Research was introduced to many pupils. They used pamphlets, text books, encyclopedias, etc., to solve their problems. Some materials were found at home and parents assisted in many ways.

Correlation to some extent was possible with all subjects. The vocabulary of participating children was enlarged. Letters were written for materials. Arithmetic problems were solved pertaining to conservation. Art was very closely related including murals, sand table displays and bulletin boards. Many experiments were performed so there was a close correlation to science. Readings of many references took the place of regular reading assignments. Completing the work books was a practical English project.

To high light the study of wild life and natural resources several schools arranged a wild life sanctuary. They have continued to feed and watch the birds and other small animals all winter. To other children the high light was the tour when they saw erosion, contouring, terracing, dams, various grasses and shelter belts.

Other schools had a program for the parents when the study was completed. Here they had a chance to give the pleasure of the work done and demonstrate the experiments learned.

Many students were asking at the end of the unit: Why would anyone be so dumb as to ignore soil conservation? Why can't people see they are wasting soil? Why would people overgraze pastures? Why would anyone plow up and down hills?

To all of us this has been a very worthwhile experience and I'm sure the children will notice and discuss the good and bad practices of conservation which they observe from time to time.

Alice L. French, Co. Superintendent

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