

IOWA'S SOIL LOSS LIMITS

Enforced by Iowa's 500 Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners



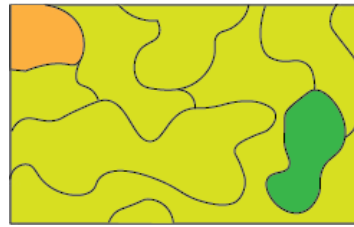
HISTORY AND METHODS

In 1971, Iowa established a soil loss limit which mandates soil conservation if a complaint is filed and the district and others determine soil loss is greater than established limits.



The first law of its kind in the nation, Iowa's soil is so valuable, the Iowa Supreme Court upheld a challenge to the law in 1979, when the first complaint was filed and found valid.

There are 450 soil types in Iowa! Iowa has some of the most productive soil in the world.



Pictured here are three different soil types mapped in a field.

The soil loss tolerance rate (T) is the maximum rate of annual soil loss that will permit crop productivity to be sustained economically and indefinitely on a given soil. "T" ranges from 1-5 tons/acre/year and is assigned to each soil type in the state.

FILING A COMPLAINT

A landowner or tenant brings concerns about soil erosion from a neighboring property to the district.

Staff or commissioners ask if mutual discussion has been held between neighbors or if there is the ability for a mutual discussion to occur about the problem and potential solutions.

Soil loss complaints can be filed on land subject to public interest. Examples include parks, roads, ditches and even lakes and streams receiving damage from soil erosion. Soil loss complaints can be filed in urban settings as well.



Next, a letter is submitted to the commissioners from the landowner/tenant.



Land ownership can be verified at the County Courthouse.



An example letter can be obtained from the local field office.

Dear Commissioners,
Description of erosion & damage.
Land quarter, section, township,
range.
I invite the commissioners to
inspect.
-Landowner/Tenant

Commissioners may inspect any land in the district where they suspect excessive soil loss is occurring. Residents can report a location to commissioners.

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MAKING A DETERMINATION

Commissioners then visit the land to determine if sediment damage is occurring.



Commissioners document the land during visits.



At the next board meeting, the commissioners decide if there is cause for a complaint.

If commissioners are denied access, a search warrant is obtained from the County Sheriff's Office.



If there is no damage, a letter is sent to the individual filing the complaint and no further action is taken unless another complaint is filed.

If there is damage, a letter is sent by certified mail informing the landowner/operator of the damage and that an inspection will occur in no less than 10 days on their land. The commissioners will request experts to accompany them and collect field data.

Commissioners and experts will determine if erosion is exceeding soil loss limits and will provide the landowner with two alternative land measures needed to bring soil loss to a tolerable limit.

ENFORCING THE COMPLAINT

Commissioners will accept equal or better alternative land treatment options from the landowner/tenant to meet district soil loss limits. Landowners are eligible for technical assistance and up to 50% cost share.

An administrative order will be filed to ensure work begins in a timely manner, in 6 months or less. If the administrative order is violated and work does not begin in 6 months, commissioners will petition for a court order to require compliance with the administrative order. This may require commissioners and experts to testify.

Factors that determine the amount of soil loss occurring and the practices to bring the soil loss to the tolerable rate (T):



Soil



Rainfall



Current Conservation Practices



Slope



Crop Rotation



There are many options for controlling erosion:

Conservation tillage



Crop rotation



Sediment control basins



Terraces



Waterways