

2025 Annual Report

Our mission is to conserve, protect, and enhance our natural resources for current and future generations by providing information and assistance to landowners, operators, and residents of Madison County, Iowa.

Meet the SWCD Commissioners



Left to right: Frederick Martens, Tim Palmer, Don Eyerly, Tom Moss, Valerie DeJooode

2026 Board of Commissioners:

Chair: **Tom Moss**, Douglas Township (2023-2026)
Vice Chair: **Don Eyerly, Jr.**, Lincoln Township (2025-2028)
Treasurer: **Tim Palmer**, Ohio Township (2025-2028)
Co-Treasurer: **Frederick Martens**, Madison Township (2023-2026)
Secretary: **Valerie DeJooode**, Lee Township (2025-2028)

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Assistant Commissioners:

- Jason Hirsch
- Doyle Jamison
- Ryan Marquardt

Assistant Commissioners

Are you interested in getting involved with the SWCD board? Consider serving as an Assistant Commissioner!

Assistant commissioners are officially appointed by the district board as **advisors and representatives**; in addition, they **assist with board activities**. Assistant commissioners **do not vote**; they **augment the board's knowledge and experience**. Activities may include, but are not limited to: field days, annual meetings, contests, education events, and special observances, such as Soil and Water Conservation Week. Assistant commissioners may serve on committees and can serve as committee chairperson. Assistant commissioners may also participate and sign off on the district's annual financial review.

Serving as an assistant commissioner is also a way to gain valuable awareness and experience before making a decision to run for election as a Soil and Water Conservation Commissioner.

If you're interested in learning more, contact the office or reach out to any commissioner, attend a monthly commissioners meeting (they are open to the public!), or visit our website: www.madison-swcd.org/how-conservation-districts-work/

Madison County SWCD

815 E. Hwy 92, Winterset, Iowa 50273

☎ 515-462-4884 ext. 3 💻 www.Madison-SWCD.org

@MadisonSWCDIowa on Facebook and X

Meet the Staff

Iowa is fortunate to have a strong conservation partnership between the United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship – Division of Soil Conservation & Water Quality, and local Soil & Water Conservation Districts.

The USDA Service Center houses employees from all three agencies (and sometimes employees from additional partners). There, staff members work together to “Help People Help The Land.” Like a three-legged stool, the three core partners support conservation on private land in Madison County!

The NRCS conservationists assist with conservation planning and programs; the technicians assist with layout, survey, and design of engineered conservation practices (e.g., terraces, ponds, etc.); and the conservation assistant helps with the administration of the SWCD, state cost share programs, and a little bit of everything else.

Current Staff:

NRCS District Conservationist: Clay Rogers

NRCS Soil Conservationist: Sheila Maurer

IDALS Conservation Assistant: Anna Golightly

IDALS Soil Conservation Technician: Joe Moore

District Soil & Water Resource Technician: Triston Davidson

Other Staff:

In 2025, our office also housed our summer intern employed by IDALS, and administrative support staff employed by Conservation Districts of Iowa. In the past, we have had also had employees of the Iowa DNR, Pheasants Forever, and government contractors working in the USDA Service Center.



Left to right: Anna Golightly, Kendra Daniels, Triston Davidson, Clay Rogers, Joe Moore



Agency Acronyms & Initials:

DSCWQ = Division of Soil Conservation & Water Quality (IDALS)

IDALS = Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship

NRCS = Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA)

SWCD = Soil & Water Conservation District

USDA = United States Department of Agriculture

North Thompson River Water Quality Project Coordinator

In February, Madison SWCD welcomed Kendra Daniels as the new Project Coordinator for the North Thompson River Water Quality Project in Adair, Madison, and Union SWCDs.

Kendra is employed by Union County SWCD in Creston, but she works throughout the watershed in all three counties and visits the Greenfield and Winterset offices on a regular basis.



Learn more about the **North Thompson River Water Quality Project**
www.madison-swcd.org/north-thompson-river-water-quality-project/



2025 Events & Outreach Activities

Coffee & Cookie Drive Thru

For Iowa Soil & Water Conservation Week and National Stewardship Week (April 27-May 4, 2025), and in celebration of the Natural Resources Conservation Service's 90th Anniversary, Madison SWCD commissioners and staff hosted a "Coffee & Cookie Drive Thru" on April 29 in the parking lot of the Winterset USDA Service Center from 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. Thanks to everyone who stopped by!



Ag4Kids Day for Madison County 5th Graders

Every spring, the Madison County Farm Bureau and Agriculture in the Classroom organize Ag4Kids Day. 5th Graders from Earlham, Interstate 35, Orient-Macksburg and Winterset schools spend the day rotating between various stations at Winterset Middle School, the Madison County Fairgrounds and Winterset Sale Barn. Students learned about many aspects of agriculture – crops, livestock, farm safety, etc. – including soil and water conservation! On May 1, 2025, Conservation Assistant Anna Golightly brought the Badger Creek Lake Watershed flow model and spoke to 11 classes about conservation, the value of our fertile soil, and what we can do to prevent soil loss and protect our rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds.



Tour of Winterset Water Plant

For Drinking Water Week (May 4-10) Madison SWCD commissioners and staff toured the Winterset Water Plant to learn how water from Cedar Lake is treated and distributed to the City of Winterset. Thank you to the Water Utility staff for showing us around and answering our many questions!

Cedar Lake Watershed is one of Madison SWCD's priority watersheds. Learn more about **Cedar Lake Watershed**: <https://www.madison-swcd.org/cedar-lake-watershed/>

Learn more about the history of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

- **Interactive Timeline:**
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/a3a0db06ef774ea6958c870f86c73365>
- ***After Setting Roots 90 Years Ago, NRCS Continues to Grow Its Conservation Legacy:*** <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/our-agency/news/after-setting-roots-90-years-ago-nrcs-continues-to-grow-its-conservation-legacy>



2025 Events & Outreach Activities continued...

Ensuring Your Land's Legacy Workshop

On June 3, For Lands Sake!, the Madison County Conservation Board, Madison County ISU Extension & Outreach, and Madison SWCD partnered to host a workshop on "Ensuring Your Land's Legacy" at the brand-new Madison County Conservation Center in Pammel Park. The workshop included time for small group discussions, informational presentations, and a panel discussion.



In case you missed it...

On May 30th, our partners at the Madison County Conservation Board celebrated the grand opening of the **Madison County Conservation Center!**

Winter Hours:

Mon-Fri 9am-3pm
Closed Holidays

Address:

2508 Pammel Park Trail

Learn more:

www.madisoncountyparks.org



Prairie Walk at the Quarry at Peru

For National Prairie Day on June 7, Roslea Johnson invited the public to visit the quarry at Peru to tour remnant prairie and savanna as well as high-quality restored prairie. The event was sponsored by Madison SWCD, For Lands Sake!, and Cultivating Connections. Visitors had the opportunity to learn about the unique site, see several rare native plants, and enjoy an afternoon outdoors on a beautiful property.

Soil Health Field Day on July 23

For National Soil Health Day on June 23, 2025, Madison SWCD organized a Soil Health Field Day at McLaughlin Farms in rural Cumming, Iowa. Dennis McLaughlin, a 5th generation farmer on his family's farm that was established in 1854, hosted the field day.

Presentations included the Iowa Learning Farms Conservation Station's rainfall simulator, demonstrated by Alena Whitaker; an overview of soil health by Ruth Blomquist, Area Soil Health Specialist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in southwest Iowa; an overview of the farm operation and how the McLaughlin family is protecting their farming legacy through an Agricultural Land Easement, explained by Dennis McLaughlin and Erin Van Waus, Conservation Easement Director with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF).



After the presentations at the farmstead, attendees loaded onto hayracks to tour one of the pastures protected by the Agricultural Land Easement. Afterward, the Madison County Cattlemen provided burgers and all-beef hot dogs for lunch, and conversations continued over the meal.

While many soil health field days and workshops focus on cropland, this field day provided an opportunity to explore the topic of soil health in the context of pastures and grazing management. Madison SWCD would like to thank the Iowa Forage and Grassland Council, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and Madison County Cattlemen for their support in making this field day possible.

Madison County Fair

Madison SWCD set up a booth in the Farm Bureau Building at the Madison County Fair from July 16-19, 2025. The activities and giveaways focused on native plants and habitats, and the wildlife that rely on those resources. The root depth box was on display; visitors could guess how deep different native plants' roots grow and then pull out the ropes for each species to see how long the roots were. Visitors could also pick up a free "Trees for Bees" poster and get a conservation-themed temporary tattoo.

Madison SWCD partnered with the Madison County Conservation Board and their Cultivating Connections project to give away free native prairie plants on Friday and Saturday. Over the course of both days, about 80 individuals and families took home plants to improve wildlife habitat on their property!



Madison SWCD Awards

Scholarship

The Madison County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) commissioners were pleased to present the 2025 Conservation Scholarship to Karly Christensen at their monthly meeting on April 16. Ms. Christensen, a senior at Winterset High School, is planning to attend Iowa State University in the fall.

Madison SWCD has been accepting scholarship applications on behalf of Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) for many years, but has only been offering its own local scholarship award since 2023. The scholarships are open to graduating high school seniors pursuing programs of study in conservation or agriculture.



Conservation Award

Over the years, the Madison County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) has recognized hundreds of individuals and families that have done outstanding work to conserve our natural resources and embody what it means to be a steward of the land.

Madison County SWCD commissioners presented the 2025 Conservation Award to Weeks Family Farm in recognition of the stewardship efforts of Steve and Patty Weeks. Steve and Patty Weeks' families have deep roots in farming. As Steve says, "I was born a farmer." Steve and Patty purchased their original 275-acre farm in Monroe Township in 1974. They made their home on the property and actively farmed until the farm crisis of the 1980s.

Today, their 45-acre property includes prairie that was established in 1990 with assistance from the USDA, as well as 8 acres in the Conservation

Reserve Program. The prairie is a mixture of grasses and forbs, and they keep a constant vigil for noxious weeds and cedar tree starts. Prairie burns every few years help keep tree starts in check and the prairie healthy.

Other conservation features on their property include 10 acres of timber, a waterway, and a 3-acre pond. Their farm has become a wildlife sanctuary; in addition to the habitat provided by the prairie, woodland, and pond, they have also constructed owl boxes, wood duck boxes, and goose nests. Steve and Patty's parents instilled in them a love of the land and a desire to save it for future generations. Steven and Patty recently sold a 5-acre parcel with the farmstead to their daughter and son-in-law, Jessie and Justin Lowry, so Jessie has returned to her roots and is enjoying the prairie with her husband and daughter.

Steve said that they have always tried to take care of the farmland, but beyond their stewardship efforts on their farm, other notable conservation activities include: Patty Weeks has been a member of the Winterset Tree Commission for several years. She also served on the Winterset Municipal Utilities Board of Trustees, where she helped re-energize conservation efforts in Cedar Lake Watershed. Patty was also a longtime member of MCFEE, the Madison County Foundation for Environmental Education, where she has served as Board Chair. Patty and Steve both help out with activities for the Madison County Conservation Board.

The 2025 Conservation Award presentation was held on Wednesday, July 16 at the Madison County Fair. The SWCD commissioners and staff presented a metal award sign to Patty Weeks, who was joined by her daughter, Jessie Lowry, and granddaughter, Elena (Steve was out of town).

Madison County SWCD would like to thank the Madison County Fair Board for providing an opportunity to recognize stewards of our natural resources at the fair, and Madison County Farm Bureau for sponsoring the metal award sign.



Building Iowa's Conservation Momentum

By Secretary Mike Naig,
Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF
**AGRICULTURE &
LAND STEWARDSHIP**

Iowans have a long and proud history of caring for the land, and that work continues today through the efforts of our farmers, landowners, and public and private partners, including the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Conservation is not new to us. It is part of our agricultural legacy. And this past year showed, once again, that Iowa is accelerating progress in meaningful, measurable ways.



We continued to advance the goals of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy with the kind of boots-on-the-ground, dirt-moving, project-installing work that makes a real difference. We saw strong adoption of conservation practices across the board. Landowners stepped up. Local partners leaned into the work. We saw momentum in both rural and urban areas, and we saw people working together, especially in priority watersheds like the Des Moines, the Raccoon and the Middle Cedar.

That spirit of collaboration has been building for more than a decade. Since 2013, farmers and landowners, working alongside nearly 450 public and private partners, have been pulling in the same direction. When that happens in Iowa, good things follow. And that teamwork showed up in a big way this year. With the help of every Soil and Water Conservation District, we set an all-time cost-share record for the fourth year in a row.

At the state level, we supported more than \$32.7 million in soil and water practice implementation, nearly \$6.5 million more than last year's cost share record. We processed more than 7,300 claims – that's 630 more than last year and more than 1,800 more than just five years ago. These numbers reflect real demand, real commitment and real results.

The progress we are making today builds on a strong foundation. For decades, Iowa farmers installed terraces, grassed waterways, and sediment basins to reduce erosion and phosphorus loss. Those efforts paid off, and because of that sustained commitment, we are now nearly at our statewide phosphorus reduction goal. That success story is important, not only because of what it achieved, but because it proves that long-term, science-based, voluntary conservation efforts work in Iowa.

Today, we are writing the next chapter. Our focus now also includes reducing nitrogen losses through wetlands, bioreactors, and saturated buffers. And we are scaling up those practices at a faster pace than ever before. Through our batch and build model, we are streamlining funding, engineering, and construction, making it easier for farmers to say yes to conservation. We now have batch and build agreements working in 28 counties, and that number continues to grow.

The pace of progress has only increased in recent months. Together, we had record demand for cover crop cost-share, and Iowa farmers are now planting nearly four million acres of cover crops. We initiated twenty-six wetland projects in 2025, the most ever completed in a single year. We expanded the cattle and conservation working lands project to eight counties. And we launched a new streamside buffer program that is helping address near-stream challenges across the state. Our partners at Iowa State University are also advancing this work by rolling out tools like N-FACT that help farmers optimize nitrogen rates, improve yields and protect water quality.

As we look ahead to the next year, we should carry forward the same spirit of teamwork, innovation and determination that has gotten us this far. Iowa's farmers, landowners, districts, and partners have shown what is possible when we work together with purpose. Thank you for everything you do for Iowa's land, water, and people. Let us build on our momentum, push even harder and accomplish even more in the year ahead.

www.IowaAgriculture.gov



Choose Iowa's vision is to connect consumers to Iowa produce and food products and expand markets for Iowa farmers. Visit the website to discover Iowa food and farms, sign up for a Passport, see what's in season, find recipes, and learn about events, grants, and the Coloring Calendar contest for students!

www.ChooseIowa.com

State Awards

Kincade Farmland Trust receives Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Award



Kincade Farmland Trust was awarded the Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Award at the Iowa State Fair on August 13. Jerry and Becky Kincade's farm is a mosaic of conservation, composed of a combination of CRP land, pasture/hay ground, timber, prairie, and food plots. They have prioritized further prairie restoration and timber stand improvement.

The family also runs a cow/calf and ewe/lamb livestock operation. The Kincades are dedicated to rotational grazing with their cattle and sheep. They have added 1.5 miles of waterline through EQIP and two livestock ponds with gravity waterers, fencing them off to protect water quality.

The Kincades' commitment to conservation has also been recognized locally; they received Madison SWCD's Conservation Award in 2024.

Assistant Commissioner Jim Gillespie Honored with Ruth Wagner Award

The Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is proud to announce that Jim Gillespie was presented the Ruth Wagner Award Honoring SWCD Assistant Commissioner on Tuesday, August 26, 2025, at the 79th Annual Conference of Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Iowa.

After Jim Gillespie retired from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship's Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality in 2018, he continued to be involved in soil and water stewardship. First, by working as a Conservation Consultant in Cedar Lake Watershed in Madison County, and then as an Assistant Commissioner with Madison SWCD since 2021.

Jim's background, including his career with IDALS and being a vocational ag teacher before that, has made him an incredible asset to the Madison SWCD board. He has been able to provide guidance to the commissioners and staff on a wide variety of topics, which has been valuable in itself, but Jim's participation with the SWCD board and its activities goes beyond just attending board meetings.

Jim has assisted the district by participating in the Annual Financial Review every year since he was appointed as an Assistant Commissioner. He encouraged the district to review its 5-year Soil & Water Resource Conservation Plan on a regular basis, and has served on the committee responsible for that since it was established in 2023. He has also participated in Watershed Management Authority meetings.

Jim has also made a difference with the district's education and outreach activities. In 2022, he volunteered an entire day to speak to Madison County 5th graders as part of Ag4Kids Day. When Madison County offered the Master Conservationist program in 2022 and 2023, Jim co-presented the Watersheds module both years. He has helped staff the district's booth at the Madison County Fair for several years. Jim has also assisted with providing nominations for the Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Award and helped with the district's annual Conservation Award.

Jim has been involved in a variety of activities and functions for Madison SWCD, and the district has benefited greatly from his knowledge and willingness to participate. In addition to all of the things he has done and helped with, he is also a genuinely nice person and someone the district can count on. Jim shows up, is present, and offers not only his time, attention, and knowledge, but brings with him a passion for agriculture and conservation that isn't just admirable; it's inspiring!

Jim Gillespie retired from serving as Assistant Commissioner at the end of 2025. Thanks for everything, Jim!





IDALS Staff Adjust Operations During Recent Federal Government Shutdown

By Will Myers, Bureau Chief and
Susan Kozak, Division Director

Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship –
Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality

Did you know that IDALS has approximately 155 permanent and 45 contract employees that work out of the 100 USDA Service Center offices in each of Iowa's 99 counties? These staff directly serve our farmers, landowners, and local communities to implement conservation projects ensuring that our state's valuable natural resources are preserved for future generations. To fulfill this mission, they work in partnership with

federal Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), county Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and other local organizations as part of our state's collective conservation partnership. Through this partnership, NRCS provides all IDALS field office staff with office space and other work resources such as computers, phones, vehicles, and field equipment.

When we are faced with the unfortunate circumstances of a federal government shutdown, access to these work resources are generally not available until the shutdown ends. As a result, IDALS staff must make abrupt and significant adjustments to their normal work routines in order to continue providing core services to our customers. During the most recent shutdown, this required our staff to relocate and began working out of other partner offices such as Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, County Conservation, or other local offices as available in each county. In addition to providing a temporary workspace, many of these partners also provided computer access and shared other resources to assist our staff during the shutdown. IDALS staff in the central office also worked to deploy available vehicles, computers, and field equipment and coordinated sharing of resources to keep state funded conservation programs operational to the extent possible.

Unfortunately, this shutdown occurred during one of the busiest times of year while harvest was winding down and fall field work activities were ramping up. This resulted in significant delays in project planning, design, and construction which will undoubtedly take many months to recover. While disruptions to services occurred as a result of the shutdown and we are still assessing the short- and long-term effects, our staff worked to keep impacts to a minimum whenever possible. They found innovative and alternative means to continue business operations with limited resources, and most importantly to communicate and continue to serve our valuable customers. We are truly thankful for our staff and their patience and dedication throughout this difficult time. We are also thankful for our many local partners and organizations which generously stepped up without hesitation during the shutdown to assist our staff and our Agency. Although this experience was challenging and impactful on many levels it also served as a valuable example of the strength in our partnerships and the dedication to advancing our collective conservation mission in Iowa.

Thank you to Madison County Extension!

Madison SWCD would like to thank the staff at the Madison County ISU Extension & Outreach office for welcoming our state and district employees during the federal government shutdown that lasted from October 1 to November 12, 2025. The Extension office provided desk space for state and district staff, printed materials when needed, and provided access to the copier/scanner. SWCD commissioners were able to hold their October monthly meeting in person at the Extension office, and landowners and producers had a place where they could contact staff during the shutdown. We are so grateful for our partnership with Madison County Extension!

Madison SWCD would also like to thank landowners and producers for their patience and understanding during the shutdown and afterward.



State Cost Share

Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025)

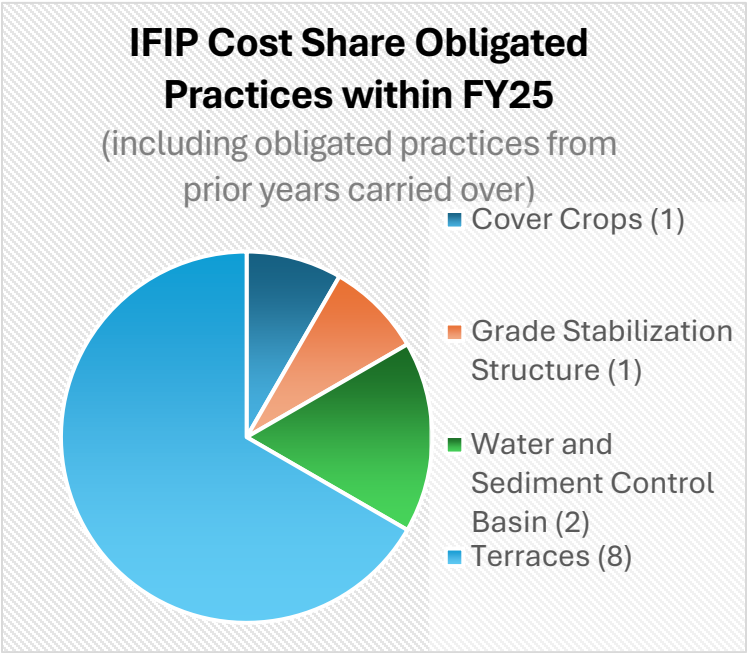
The Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship (IDALS) allocates state cost share funds to SWCDs, commissioners set priorities for their use, and field office staff assure the technical quality of practices built.

Madison SWCD receives state cost share allocations at the beginning of the state fiscal year (July 1 – June 30).

- **Iowa Financial Incentive Program (IFIP)**
 - Initial Allocation: \$47,532.00
 - Fall Supplemental: \$6,520.30
- **Resource Enhancement And Protection (REAP)**
 - **REAP Forestry/Native Grasses**
 - Initial Allocation: \$2,831.33
 - **REAP Practices**
 - Initial Allocation: \$8,565.58



Iowa’s statewide **Water Quality Initiative (WQI)** funds are also used to provide state cost share for practices such as cover crops (first time and previous users) and No-Till/Strip-Till/Ridge-Till and Nitrification Inhibitor (first time users only).



Learn more about **state cost share programs**
www.madison-swcd.org/state-cost-share-programs/

Conservation Practices Implemented with State Cost Share in FY25

Completed and paid between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025

Projects	Fund	# of Apps	Amount Installed	Cost Share Paid
Terraces	IFIP	1	1,104 ft	\$7,030.93
Conservation Cover	REAP-F/NG	1	4 ac	\$1,380.00
Tree/Shrub Establishment	REAP-F/NG REAP-P	1	5.9 ac	\$1,360.53 \$2,179.47
Native Landscaping	REAP-P	1	0.77 ac	\$317.45

WQI Cover Crop Summary for Fall 2024

- 23 applications received (4 first-time users; 19 previous users)
- 22 completed (1 canceled)
- 2,345.14 acres
- \$48,871.80 state cost share paid



Financial Reports

Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025)

Coop Account		Badger Account		Badger CDs	
Beginning Balance	\$42,900.07	Beginning Balance	\$283,632.20	Beginning Balance	\$256,531.92
Receipts	\$19,942.79	Receipts	\$73,129.85	Receipts	\$418,459.06
Total Receipts	\$62,842.86	Total Receipts	\$356,762.05	Total Receipts	\$674,990.98
Less Total Expenditures	\$49,827.67	Less Total Expenditures	\$2,403.35	Less Total Expenditures	\$414,446.33
Ending Balance	\$13,015.19	Ending Balance	\$354,358.70	Ending Balance	\$260,544.65

Beyond the Surface: How NRCS Engineers Help Plan and Maintain Iowa Watersheds

by Jolene Bopp, Public Affairs Specialist, USDA-NRCS, Des Moines, Iowa

This is the first in a series of stories highlighting ways USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service is helping Iowa farmers protect the natural resources on their land, often behind the scenes. NRCS celebrated its 90th anniversary in April, having formed from the 1930s Dust Bowl.

In early May, engineers with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) launched a boat into a body of water held by one of the Badger Creek Watershed structures in Madison County, Iowa. Instead of bait and tackle, the boat carried a survey rod and a GPS unit to help determine how well the structure is functioning, and what may need to be done to keep it working in the future.

Although this structure is over 50 years old, it continues to help manage 300 acres of upstream drainage by reducing flood risk, controlling gully erosion and trapping sediment before it reaches Badger Creek Lake.

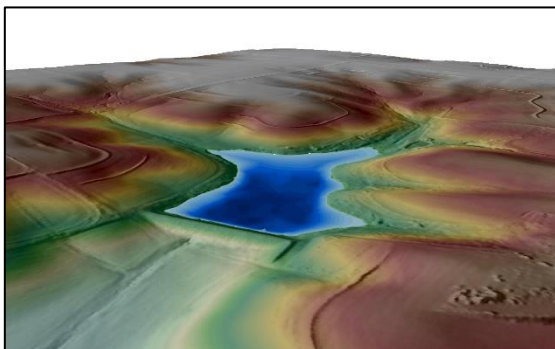
NRCS worked closely with local sponsors to design and implement solutions to protect the land and improve water quality. Thanks to good stewardship and strong partnerships it continues to do just that.

The project was a collaborative effort between NRCS and local sponsors including Madison County and the Dallas, Madison, and Warren County Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The watershed plan was signed in 1960. The structure was completed in 1973 under Public Law 566, now known as the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) Program.

"This might have been an equipment test run, but the information we gathered is valuable and usable right now," said Hayes Durbin, civil engineering technician with the NRCS in Iowa. "We can start assessing whether this site needs repairs, rehabilitation or if it's still operating as designed."

Durbin and NRCS State Technology Engineer Tim Mensing are preparing for a large bathymetric survey later this month. Typically, they use a remote-controlled bathymetric boat with survey equipment already built in. Due to the large scale of the next site, they are utilizing a manned boat they will equip with the survey rod and computer.

At the bottom of the rod is the transducer, which sends out and receives the sonar signals that detect the bottom of the pond, stream or wetland. On the top of the rod is a Trimble R12i receiver, a GPS unit which collects the latitude, longitude, and elevation data. This data is key to understanding sediment buildup and changes in water storage over time.



Combined, this data allows engineers to create a 3D map that gives them the ability to track sediment buildup and long-term capacity changes. Over time, sediment builds up in watershed structures, decreasing water and sediment storage capacity. Sediment runoff reduces water quality and contributes to erosion or infrastructure damage during high-flow events. If the dam is silted full it will continue to provide the same flood control benefits.

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Why Iowa's Watersheds Matter

Watersheds are interconnected, impacting every community. They provide resources for all living things to survive. Watershed dams are built through federal, state and local partnerships. They were designed to protect property, farmland and infrastructure from erosion and flooding. The technical expertise of NRCS engineers becomes especially critical when these structures start approaching or exceeding their expected design life which is typically 50 to 100 years.

Since 2005, watershed structures have provided approximately \$435 million in flood and non-flood benefits statewide. NRCS engineers work closely with local watershed boards, soil and water conservation districts, and landowners to address resource concerns and issues like failing embankments, unstable streambanks, and grade stabilization.

“Collaboration is key,” NRCS State Conservation Engineer Christian Osborne added. “We’re not here to just design and walk away. We stay involved, help monitor, and make sure these investments continue to pay off for farmers and rural communities.”

In this case, the surveyed structure is nearing the end of its lifespan, prompting conversations between NRCS and local partners about what’s next. The data collected will play a key role in those discussions.



Engineers Behind the Scenes

While people may know NRCS for its financial assistance programs like the Environmental Quality Initiatives Program (EQIP) or Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), NRCS roots are grounded in the technical services they provide. NRCS engineers and technicians design terraces, grassed waterways, grade stabilization structures, and water and sediment control basins. They inspect and evaluate infrastructure that might be decades old.

Iowa NRCS has built 2,695 structures through all four of the NRCS Small Watershed Programs offered over time. The first structure was built in 1948, and most structures are still in place today providing the benefits they were intended for.

In 2024, NRCS engineers assisted Iowa communities with about 20 watershed structures. The importance of functioning watershed infrastructure may go unnoticed unless something goes wrong. Thanks to the work of NRCS engineers and partners, many of those risks are managed long before they become emergencies.

Learn More

Through NRCS watershed programs, staff provide free technical and financial assistance to help project sponsors address watershed resource concerns in local communities. Assistance in Iowa is available through:

- **Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program** assists communities in recovering from natural disasters and sudden watershed impairments.
- **Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) Program** focuses on reducing flood risks, conserving natural resources, and improving water quality.

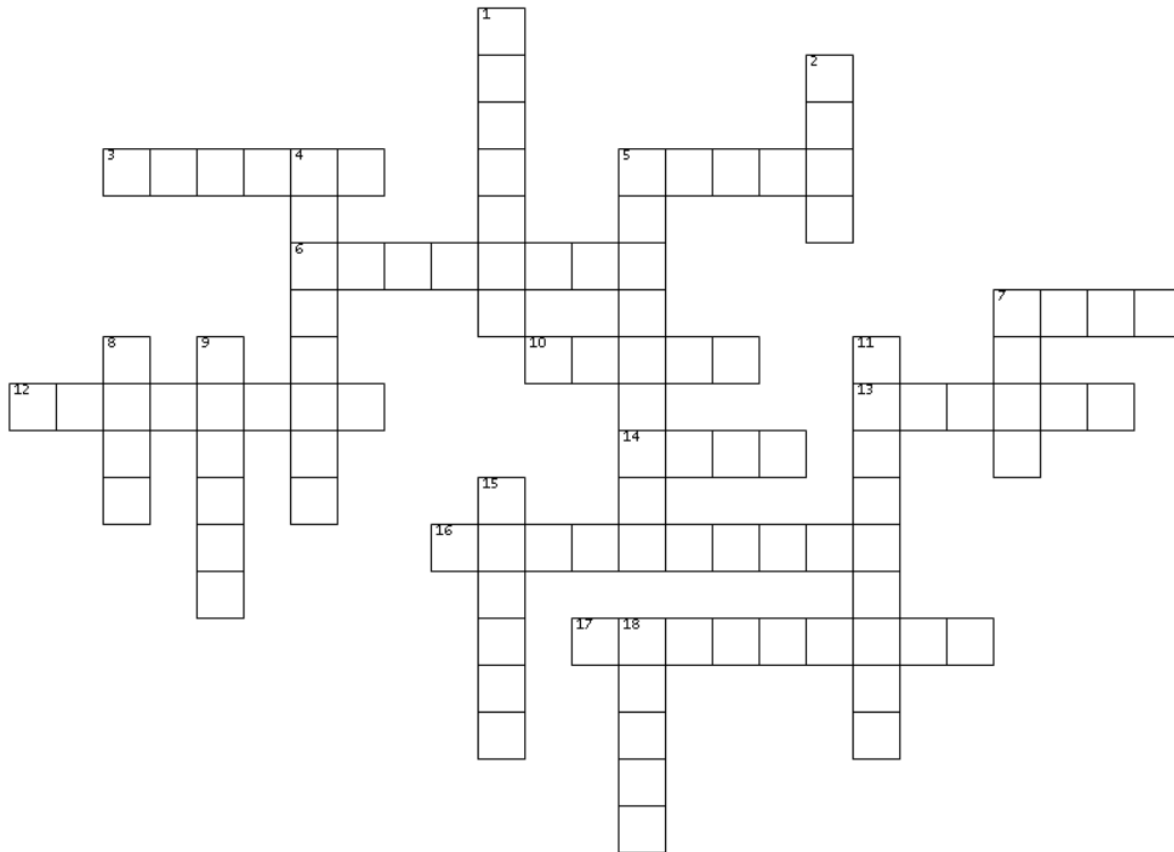
To learn more about NRCS technical and financial assistance, contact your local service center: farmers.gov/service-center-locator or visit: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted>



Learn more about **Badger Creek Watershed**
www.madison-swcd.org/badger-creek-watershed/



Madison SWCD Annual Report Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

3. Park where Madison CCB's new Conservation Center is located
5. What the W in SWCD stands for
6. Why Madison SWCD state and district staff worked at extension office between October 1 and November 12, 2025
7. Book by Mary Roach featured in Madison County's Most Wanted community-wide book club
10. Family that received Madison SWCD's 2025 Conservation Award
12. Conservation practice with the greatest number of obligated state cost share applications in FY 2025
13. Number of 5th grade classes at Ag4Kids Day in 2025
14. _____. Where it all Begins (2026 Theme for Stewardship Week)
16. Annual event in July where the SWCD has a booth
17. Jim Gillespie was recognized with an award for his service as _____ Commissioner

DOWN

1. Madison County family that received the Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Award in 2025
2. Location of the quarry where the Prairie Walk was held in June
4. Farmland can be protected by an Agricultural Land _____
5. Location of the USDA Service Center in Madison County
7. Number of elected SWCD Commissioners
8. Agency that celebrated its 90th Anniversary in 2025
9. Fundraising activity with a chance to win tickets to Hinterland Music Festival
11. Source of Winterset's Drinking Water
15. Drink provided at the Drive Thru event in April
18. The conservation partnership works like a three-legged _____

Answers can be found on the next page.



Support for Madison SWCD

THANK YOU to these contributors for their generous support in 2025!

Madison County Covered Bridge Chapter
of Pheasants Forever

Hinterland Music Festival

JP&D Farms Inc.

Union State Bank

Adaptive Wildlife Management

Homefront Real Estate

John Wayne Birthplace & Museum

Farmers & Merchants State Bank

IFG Insurance

Winterset Kiwanis Club

Agri Drain Corporation

The Bakery Unlimited

Scot & Kim Clark

Dennis McLaughlin

Lamb Tiling

Madison County Sportsmen's Club

AgriVision Equipment

Kloubec Earthworks LLC

Bridges Financial



A BIG THANK YOU to
**everyone who purchased
raffle tickets**
for a chance to win tickets to
the Hinterland Music Festival!

***Madison SWCD would also like to thank the following for their support of
specific activities and events in 2025:***

- **Pammel Park Coffee Company & Petite Café** for providing the coffee for the Coffee & Cookie Drive Thru event on Tuesday, April 29, 2025 for Soil & Water Conservation Week
- **Madison County Cattlemen, Iowa Forage & Grassland Council, and Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation** for their support and sponsorship of the Soil Health Field Day on June 23, 2025
- **Madison County Farm Bureau** for sponsoring the 2025 Conservation Award sign and providing space for the SWCD booth in their building at the Madison County Fair

Learn more about **supporting Madison SWCD**

www.madison-swcd.org/supporters/



Crossword Answers

ACROSS: 3. PAMMEL, 5. WATER, 6. SHUTDOWN, 7. FUZZ, 10. WEEKS, 12. TERRACES, 13. ELEVEN, 14. SOIL, 16. COUNTYFAIR, 17. ASSISTANT

DOWN: 1. KINCADE, 2. PERU, 4. EASEMENT, 5. WINTERSET, 7. FIVE, 8. NRCS, 9. RAFFLE, 11. CEDARLAKE, 15. COFFEE, 18. STOOL

2026 Student Opportunities

- Scholarship

- For high school Class of 2026 students enrolled in college and pursuing studies in conservation, agriculture, or related fields.
- CDI is offering scholarships in the amount of \$3,000, \$2,000, and \$1,000 to the top three applicants in the state, and \$500 to winners from the remaining 6 regions. Madison SWCD is offering an additional local scholarship in the amount of \$250.
- Scholarship applications due to local SWCD office (where the student *resides*) by **Friday, February 6**

- Summer Internship

- For students enrolled in college pursuing studies related to agriculture, conservation, engineering, environmental science, GIS, natural resources, or similar fields.
- Applications due to Madison SWCD by **Monday, February 23**

- Poster Contest

- For K-12 Students
- 2026 Theme: **“Soil. Where It All Begins”**
- Due to local office (in the county *where the student’s school is located*) by **Friday, May 1**



Learn more about these and other **opportunities for students**

www.madison-swcd.org/for-students/



2026 Calendar

- **April 26–May 3:** Iowa Soil & Water Conservation Week / National Stewardship Week
- **July 15–19 :** Madison County Fair



Community-Wide Book Club



A collaboration of Madison County organizations is proud to announce the awarding of a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Big Read program. This year’s theme is **nature**, and we have chosen the acclaimed books *Fuzz: When Nature Breaks the Law* by Mary Roach (for adults) and *Becoming a Good Creature* by Sy Montgomery (for children).

The program will feature **writers’ workshops, book discussions, community art projects, and more**—all exploring the fascinating and sometimes humorous world of human-wildlife conflict, as portrayed in *Fuzz*. **All books and events are completely free**, thanks to the generous support of the NEA and Arts Midwest.

Upcoming Events:

- Saturday, February 7: “Extra! Extra! Read All About It!” Book Discussion + Media Writing Workshop
- Tuesday, February 17: “Snakes, Coyotes & Bats, Oh My!” Expert Panel on Wildlife Encounters
- Saturday March 7: “Ready? Action!” Book Discussion + Screenplay Writing Workshop
- Tuesday, March 31: “Breakout from the Big-House” Game Night
- Tuesday, April 7: Virtual Meet the Author and Q&A with Mary Roach
- Saturday, April 25: Madison County’s Most Wanted Community Showcase
- Thursday, May 7: “America at 250” Celebration



Learn more about **“Madison County’s Most Wanted”** on Facebook and at www.madisoncountyparks.org/the-big-read/