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ON THE COVER

Direct sales, u-pick and other ventures that open farms to the public can be a great source of revenue for landowners and a delight for visitors, like these young guests at a u-pick lavender farm near Sequim, Wash. But first, concerns about liabilities need to be assessed and addressed.

Photo courtesy of Steve Werblow



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Naked, Hungry and Thirsty

Dear Readers,

I recently had the opportunity to attend the Iredell County No-Till Field Day and Conference in Statesville, N.C. The field day was held at the farm of Beecher Grose, a local dairy farmer who has been practicing conservation tillage for the past 20 years and, for the last seven years, has been using continuous no-till. The field day was well organized and allowed participants to visit different venues throughout the day. The information provided by the presenters at each of the venues was superior. Bobby Brock, of NRCS, and the other organizers are commended for this worthwhile field day and conference.

While attending the field day, I noticed one of the participants wearing a T-shirt that read, "Naked and Hungry." It reminded me of a discussion that I had with Carlos Crovetto in 2003. While in Chile and on a tour with Carlos, we passed by a cultivated field and Carlos said, "Look at that naked field. The life that lives below that soil is starving to death. The field needs food. That's why I have stubble over the soil — to feed the organisms that live below so that I will improve the quality of the soil."

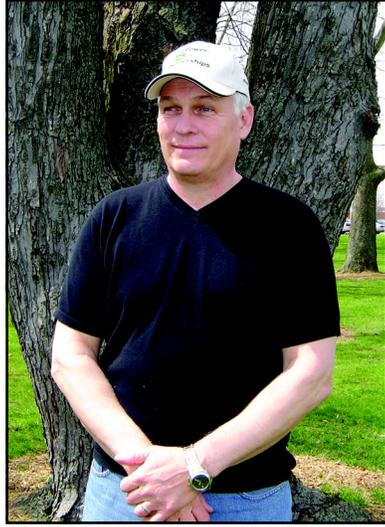
His words have stuck with me. Every time I see a naked field, I say to myself, "That field is naked, hungry and thirsty." As a professional in the field of conservation, it is my responsibility to work toward changing this. Every meeting I attend, I talk about the need to renew the conservation passion of years past and inspire people to make changes in the way we farm. My message is about moving away from managing for soil erosion to managing for soil quality.

We are challenged every day to continue producing food, fiber and energy to support an ever-increasing world population. Such production pressures put additional stresses on our soil resources. This is one reason why we need to pay more attention to soil quality. It is incumbent on each of us to personally declare a conservation ethic that is beyond reproach.

I'm encouraged to know more and more people who feel that same responsibility — like Beecher Grose in North Carolina or Dean Graumann in Oklahoma, a Champion in the making featured in this issue. They are just two of the many producers who are working to improve our soil resources, while at the same time protecting our water and air resources, providing wildlife habitat and improving their bottom line.

The conservation work we do today will define our future. It's in our hands to ensure that future generations will have abundant and affordable food, fiber and energy. Our soil resources must be transformed from naked, hungry and thirsty to covered, fertile and productive. If you want to know more about how we can work together to accomplish this, call me, send me a letter or drop me an email.

*Conservation is more than just a word —
it's a way of life. It's for Ever.*



John A. Hassell, CTIC executive director

CTIC Initiative

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grant

The Conservation Technology Information Center recently completed work on a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant that focused on the Great Lakes watershed and the North Central region of the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) (Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin). The project had four different components:

No-till and Buffer Training

Seven training sessions were held on conservation buffers and no-till with an emphasis on continuous no-till. Participants included personnel from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation Districts and state agencies, as well as crop consultants, producers and agribusiness. A total of 233 individuals attended the training sessions. Five Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) were offered for Certified Crop Advisors (CCAs) who attended. PowerPoint presentations will be available on CTIC's web site.

Conservation Buffer and Wetlands Maps

Maps depicting county and state adoption of conservation buffers and wetlands in the Great Lakes watershed and states in the NACD North Central region were created. Buffers and wetlands include those enrolled in the Wetlands Reserve Program, Conservation Reserve Program and various state initiatives. CDs of the maps were sent to conservation leadership in each state and will be available on the CTIC web site.

Measuring Continuous No-till

States in the Midwest use a roadside transect to document no-till and conservation tillage adoption. A paper explaining ways to use GPS receivers and an annual roadside transect to document the amount of continuous no-till will be available on the CTIC web site. This can be a valuable tool for watershed analysis.

Continuous No-till Marketing Plan

The services of Fleishman-Hillard, a public relations company, were secured to assist with developing an ad campaign that features continuous no-till for improved soil quality and higher profits. Ads will be placed in major farm publications and will be available for CTIC members to use.

Contact CTIC for more information. Tel: (765) 494-9555; E-mail: ctic@ctic.purdue.edu; Web: www.ctic.purdue.edu.

INTERIVAL

Building Partnerships Among Rivals in Austria

Using resources from CTIC's Know Your Watershed program, an Austrian project has engaged farmers in watershed management. The INTEgrated RIVER Basin and Agricultural Land Use Management (INTERIVAL) project, funded by the Austrian Ministry for Economics, involved farmers in development of a watershed plan and helped forge a partnership between the farmers and water managers, traditional rivals. *Partners* spoke with Frederick Cate, water resource consultant, about INTERIVAL.

What are the agricultural issues in the watershed?

The Triesting Valley watershed lies in the foothills of the Alps near Vienna, Austria. The most pressing issue is the use of agricultural land for flood protection, either by building retention basins or increasing the natural flooding through lowering of river banks. Since level fields are scarce in the valley, this has a great impact on the already small farms.

Another issue, caused by the many dairy farms, is nonpoint source pollution, which is caused by run-off from pastures after using natural fertilizer. Organic farming is a growing trend which can help in some ways but also can lead to additional problems. Restrictions to protect important drinking water sources and prevent erosion influence the use of forests and agricultural land.

What are the pressures put on agriculture to address pollution sources?

There are legal constraints in place, such as the Austrian Water Law, the European Union (EU) Nitrate Directive and the new EU Water Framework Directive. Pressure is also brought to bear through requirements for subsidies. Plus, there are voluntary initiatives, such as the ecological point programs.

How have you involved agriculture in creating solutions to watershed issues?

The farmers in the valley are generally very active in municipal politics, so it is easy to reach them. For example, one of the project's kick-off events was held during a farmer's market. Another event was held at the Future Search Conference in November 2003, where representatives from seven areas participated in topics such as: water supply and wastewater disposal, development and zoning, watercourses, tourism and recreation, commerce and transportation, forestry and agriculture, culture and education.

How did you use the Know Your Watershed materials?

The *Know Your Watershed* materials were a great help in developing the specific tools for INTERIVAL. In preparing our general approach we consulted the guide "Building Local Partnerships," especially the sections:

- Identify, involve the "right" people,



Intensive agriculture is typical in the river basins throughout Europe. The Triesting river basin, chosen as the pilot project area for INTERIVAL, lies in the foothills of the Alps in the state of Lower Austria, relatively near to Vienna.

- Purpose statement,
- Establish attainable goals, and
- Identify obstacles.

The "Leading & Communicating" guide was used during the development of our communication concept. The part about "Communication: The Key to Leadership" was very instructive. In addition to the above mentioned guides, "Managing Conflict" was used for the preparation of the Future Search Conference. For the ongoing working groups "Putting Together a Watershed Management Plan" is providing invaluable guidance.

What were the outcomes of working with the farmers?

The farmers are participating in work groups developing models for the care of river bank vegetation by local farmers instead of landscaping firms or government agencies. In addition, new procedures for making land available for the improvement of river retention, including the financial aspects, are being developed by the farmers. Both developments are backed by concrete examples (pilot areas) in the watershed. The goal is to let "land" farmers also be "water" farmers.

For more information about INTERIVAL, contact Frederick M. Cate, E-mail: cate@axis.at.

Getting the Dirt on Soil Trouble

For the past year, *Partners* magazine has presented information concerning the need to manage our soil resources for soil quality rather than erosion control. We have provided information by many experts on the importance of soil quality and the direct benefits that managing for soil quality will have on other resources, such as water quality and quantity, air quality, wildlife, as well as the overall improvement in the quality of life. CTIC has also provided information on the economic benefits of managing for soil quality, explaining how agricultural producers who manage in this way will see tremendous benefits within a relatively short period of time. CTIC is not alone in this effort to promote the need to manage for soil quality.

There are several excellent sources for information on soil quality issues. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has a soil quality team dedicated to providing soil quality technical assistance and training. The Agricultural Research Service has dedicated scientists looking at soil quality and how improved soil health will have a positive impact on global warming.

And most recently, *Science Magazine*, published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, had a special section in its June 11, 2004, issue entitled, "Soils – The Final Frontier." This section draws attention to the plight of soil resources around the world. This global perspective provides information to the reader in non-technical terms on the need to change the way we view our soil resources and how working to improve soil quality benefits us all.



All life forms depend on healthy soil. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure this resource is conserved.

There is a universe that lies beneath our feet, yet most of us are not aware of it. The special section of *Science Magazine* provides a tour of this unseen universe, exploring the function of microbial creatures, such as fungi, and the benefits of earthworms. The article discusses the relationship between above- and below-ground ecosystems, and the importance of both working together. *Science Magazine* should be commended for this timely work on the importance of soil.

To purchase a copy of the June issue of *Science Magazine*, visit www.sciencemag.org/subscriptions/purchase.dtl#non.

Naked and Hungry

I found you naked,
hungry and thirsty. Abused
for years by the bite of deep steel.
Starved, deprived and abandoned, your
very essence had been robbed.
Tormented by the elements of rain and wind, your dignity
had been stripped away, slowly and methodically.
I wept at the sight of your pain and knew
that you were not alone. I vow to
cover you, nurture you and protect you
so that you can again be what you once were and
provide the inhabitants of the world sustenance.
Special, unique and spiritual. You are the earth.

John A. Hassell

8th National Mitigation and Conservation Banking Conference

March 29 - April 1, 2005, Charlotte, N.C.

Environmental Banking and Beyond is the conference theme for 2005. This conference will offer opportunities to explore emerging and multiple markets in the environmental banking and restoration industry, as well as hands-on, how-to sessions on mitigation and conservation banking. It will also allow attendees to experience North Carolina's unique approach to mitigation banking, with the new banking primer, plus continuation of Regulators' and Bankers' Forums. Presenters do not pay a registration fee. Call for Papers deadline is Sept. 10, 2004. For more information, visit www.mitigationbankingconference.com or Tel: (703) 548-5473.



Looking At Liability

What are the risks surrounding agritourism and alternative farm enterprises?

By Steve Werblow

Editor's Note

Alternative enterprises – from farm stands to corn mazes to hunting rights – can be a viable part of a conservation-oriented farming or ranching operation. But typically, the first questions that arise when landowners hear about opportunities that involve visitors on their property revolve around liability. In today's litigious climate, those are extremely important questions indeed.

Questions of liability are complex, and good answers aren't always easy to come by. Worse, many insurance companies will not write policies for agritourism enterprises. Fortunately, the news isn't all bad – and that leaves more income alternatives open for farmers and ranchers.

In a world where plaintiffs sue fast food restaurants over hot coffee and the fat in deep-fried food, where accidents result in massive settlements, and where it seems that there's a personal injury lawyer behind every tree and lamppost, it's no surprise that many farmers and ranchers harbor strong reservations about opening their land to visitors for alternative enterprises such as farm stands, u-pick produce, family recreation, or hunting and fishing.

Unfortunately, a growing number of insurance companies also harbor those reservations, shrinking the pool of options for liability protection for alternative farm enterprises and agritourism. That leaves landowners, and even nationwide groups that represent them, struggling to find policies to offer to members.

Recreational Use Statutes

Despite the scary lawsuits and settlements being covered by the media, farm and ranch owners may be at less risk than they might think, offers Brett Wright, chair of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management at Clemson University in Clemson, S.C.

Wright was one of a team of three academicians who studied lawsuits surrounding recreational use of private land, publishing the results in the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* in 2002. The review included decades' worth of cases from all 50 states. At the heart of the study was the states' support of recreational use statutes, laws that allow states to indemnify landowners who open their land to hikers, hunters, fishermen and other recreational users.

The model statute was developed in 1965, says Wright. The motivation: states realized that state and federal land couldn't support the nation's demand for fields, forests and streams to play in. Expanding the acreage open for recreational use saves governments uncounted tax dollars and reduces the workload on park personnel. However, it was clear even 40 years ago that landowners needed protection from the threat of lawsuits from the people who would be enjoying their hospitality.

Every state has since adopted some sort of recreational use statute, says Wright, and each one is a little different. For a good start on learning about applicable laws, check with your local or state Farm Bureau office, Wright suggests.

Show Me The Money

If recreational use statutes sound like a slam-dunk, think again. "Recreational use statutes are primarily for landowners that don't charge a fee," Wright cautions. "That's the critical piece."

That could burst the bubble for a farm that wanted to cash in on a pumpkin patch, a haunted house, a corn maze or even a hunting lease. But Wright notes that there are ways around the

restriction. For instance, some agritourism operations allow free access to on-farm attractions – but they charge a fee for parking. “The courts have upheld that in many cases,” he says.

More important, modifying the statutes to allow for some sort of fee-based recreation should be an important goal for landowners. “We’re starting to see a crack in that dam,” Wright says, though he is quick to add that the amount of income allowed is not consistent from state to state and is often unrealistically low. However, he points to Texas (where generations of farmers and ranchers have leased hunting rights) as a decent model of a working recreational statute that allows landowners to capture some income without forfeiting protection.

“We need to have a threshold,” Wright says. “We want to differentiate between the Six Flags of the world and the landowner who’s just trying to make it.”

Don’t Assume

Wright’s research into recreational use statutes uncovered a heartening trend: for all the millions of recreational users of private land over the past four decades, there weren’t many lawsuits. And among the suits that made it to the courts, the justice system seemed to treat landowners fairly.

“Don’t assume you’ll immediately be found liable,” he says. “Even activities that are seemingly or evidently dangerous – like hunting – are not necessarily putting the landowner at a liability risk.”

The key is making reasonable efforts to protect users from reasonable risks. What’s “reasonable” is ultimately up to the courts, but there is a clear difference between someone tripping in the tall grass on a stroll through native prairie and someone injuring himself on a hidden wire that was intentionally strung to discourage trespassers.

The basic exercise is to inspect your property for hidden dangers, remove the dangers or warn users about them, keep the property in relatively safe repair, and take reasonable precautions to protect users from foreseeable dangers, says Wright. Those are the standards for protecting fee-paying visitors – the user who merits the highest level of protection under liability law – so they represent

Partners

Hunting For Land... And Hunters

Conservation-farmed land that is open to hunters or anglers could play a major role in enhancing wildlife habitat – in ways that extend beyond the value of buffers and crop residue on the landscape. State and federal wildlife agencies depend on revenues from hunting and fishing tags for their operating budgets, notes Brett Wright of Clemson University’s Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management, and many people, lacking access to good ground or prime fishing holes, have been staying home during hunting and fishing season.

“States are losing hunters and anglers in droves,” says Wright. He conducted a series of surveys in Virginia and watched the number of hunting licenses drop from 282,492 in 1995-1996 to 259,180 in 1998-1999, and to 242,509 in 2000-2001.

“When we start losing licensed hunters and licensed anglers, we’re losing money to manage wildlife,” he adds. One solution: encouraging farmers and ranchers to open their gates to sports enthusiasts, using landowner enticements, such as statutes that protect them from liability arising from recreational use.

a good goal to shoot for even on an operation that doesn’t charge a fee.

Cancelled and Careful

That’s how Doug and Joan Allen of Long Acre Farms in Macedon, N.Y., approach their agritourism operation. The Allens host 200,000 to 400,000 people per year on their farm, drawing visitors with an ice cream shop, picnic grounds, corn maze, haunted hayride and an airstrip for hang gliders and ultralight aircraft. Doug figures 30,000 to 40,000 of the guests go through the corn maze alone; others are shoppers, strollers, participants in corporate retreats or school trips, or festivalgoers out for an evening of music in the countryside.

The Allens hold an umbrella liability policy on the whole farm and buy supplemental insurance for their three-month busy period around harvest time. The problem, says Doug, is that anytime the insurance agency is notified of an accident, it’s a red flag in the farm’s file. Even if they never file a claim, it’s still in your record, he marvels.

Ultimately, a pair of threatened lawsuits by visitors – one an overweight lady who hurt her bottom after sneaking onto a slide; another a woman who let go of her grandchild’s hand on a bridge over a corn maze, allowing the toddler to fall down the steps – got the Allens dropped by their original carrier last year. After a scramble, they were able to buy

coverage. In addition, their experience reinforced their resolve to run a safe operation.

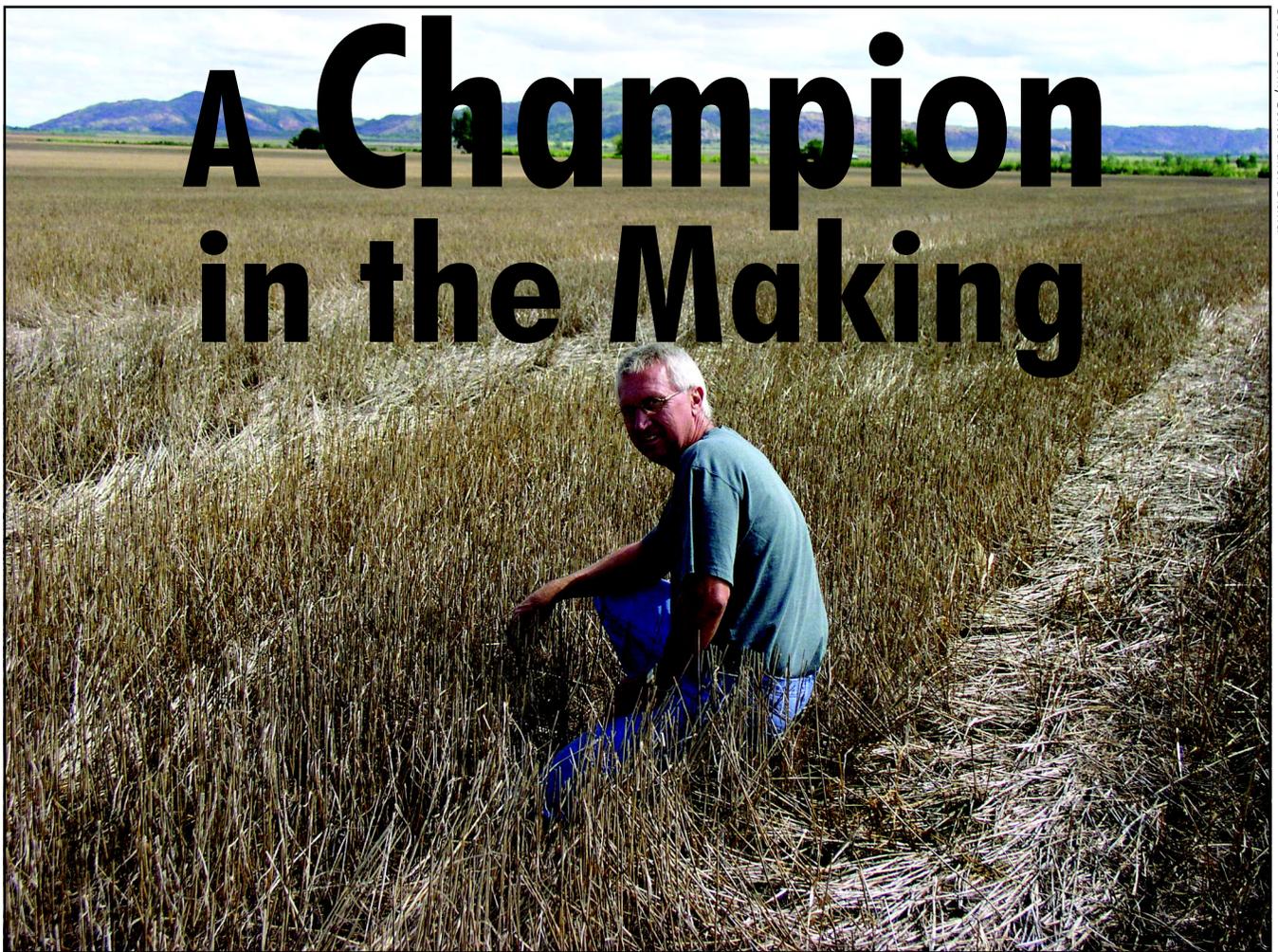
“We’re building things that are solid and aren’t going to fall apart and cause injury to someone,” says Doug Allen. “And all the help is trained to look for things that could be a problem, to check everything when we take it out in the morning. I am confident in the way we do business – we try to be as safe as we possibly can.”

No Net?

Allen says he and his wife considered operating this year without insurance if a policy was impossible to find. But even with different parts of the farm incorporated as independent Limited Liability Companies – reducing exposure of the family’s assets if one part of the operation is hit with a lawsuit – it was still a relief to find an insurer.

“Some folks are opening their doors as uninsured businesses,” says Charlie Touchette, executive director of the North American Farmers’ Direct Marketing Association (NAFDMA) in Southamptton, Mass.. “In that case, talk to a good lawyer first. If you’re looking for insurance, be patient. And just go into it knowing that if you can find insurance, you’re probably going to have sticker shock.”

Steve Werblow is a free-lance writer based in Ashland, Ore.



Dean Graumann of Greer County, Okla., knows that what he is doing to conserve the land for the next generation is the right thing to do.

By Angie Fletcher

They said it was impossible. They said no-till couldn't be done in southwest Oklahoma. But for one farmer, no-till was the only way to continue farming.

Dean Graumann, of Granite, Okla. (Greer County), graduated from high school in 1974, attended the University of Tulsa on a baseball scholarship and had no intention of returning to Oklahoma to farm. In fact, after college he went on to play professional baseball in the minor leagues for Cincinnati. "I couldn't make the

majors because every time I moved up a notch, the baseballs got smaller," says Graumann.

After five years of professional baseball and moving all over the United States, Graumann and his wife decided they wanted to raise their family in a small town around

both sets of parents. So when Graumann's father offered him a chance to farm 2,500 acres of wheat and 200 acres of alfalfa and raise 300 cows, he didn't hesitate – he accepted.

Getting Back To His Roots

"My dad had a nice operation, and he made me a good deal to buy into the farm," says Graumann.

Graumann's father used conventional tillage and spent a lot of time and fuel plowing and discing the fields. When his father's health began to deteriorate and his time on the farm lessened, Graumann knew it was time to change the way things were done on the farm. "I couldn't do everything the way we were doing them," says Graumann. "With rising fuel prices and equipment costs, and the fact that it was just me and one hired hand, I didn't have a choice but to try no-till." Graumann's decision to switch to no-till was purely economic.

The decision was tested and proved about five years ago when Graumann experienced a bindweed problem on two leased farms. He and his landlord, Charles Covington of Oklahoma City, agreed that he would skip any tillage and spray for weed control. "One thing led to another, and now I'm planting nearly 1,400 acres of wheat with no-till," says Graumann.

Since then, Graumann has added more conservation practices – grassed waterways, contour terraces, nutrient

Editor's Note

Champions of Conservation just don't happen. They research, plan, test, adjust and keep adjusting their system of practices and management to achieve the right balance, protect the resource and make a profit. In this issue we introduce a champion in the making - an Oklahoma producer dedicating himself and his farm to the pursuit of conservation excellence.

management – to his operation and strengthened his belief in the advantages of a no-till system. He monitors and maintains the system with soil testing, variable applications and a continuous search for new and better ways to operate. He's doing all the right things to make a champion of conservation, according to Larry Wright, Resource Conservation and Development Coordinator with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. "Dean is truly interested in improving soil health and water quality for the benefits it brings him and the land," Wright says.

Influential People

Graumann credits two people – Covington, his landlord, and John Hassell, director of Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC) – with helping him make the switch to no-till. Mr. Covington could have declined Graumann's offer and insist he plow the field. "He allowed me to experiment with his farm," says Graumann. "When you are plowing (conventional tillage), the ground is always clean and looks wonderful. Now when you drive by, there are some weeds growing and it doesn't have the aesthetic value."

According to Graumann, Covington wasn't exactly thrilled with the look of the no-till fields, but now he sees the greater, long-term benefits of the no-till system.

Graumann met Hassell at a regional meeting of the National Association of Conservation Districts in Arkansas. Hassell's encouraging words and insight into the rewards of no-till led Graumann to continue his course of action. "John Hassell's enthusiasm and encouragement made me confident in the changes I was making," says Graumann. "I was one of the first guys around here to make the switch, and I took all the verbal abuse." It was encouragement from Hassell and many others that helped Graumann stay committed to the no-till systems approach.

Return on Investment

The only major change Graumann made was purchasing equipment: a no-till drill and a sprayer equipped with a Global Positioning System. With this, Graumann says, the rewards were immediate: farming with less money, less time, less fuel and a smaller tractor.

"Fuel costs are unbelievably high and typically a new tractor will cost upwards of \$150,000," says Graumann. "But with no-till you can do it with almost half the horse power because you're not having to haul the plow."

And, Graumann says, no-till has been an asset during the five-year drought in Greer County. "People didn't think no-till would work around here because of the minimal rainfall, but it's worked on my farm," says Graumann. He remembers thinking, "If I get rain, I can make a crop. So why go out there and plow up the ground and let all that moisture escape?"

Increased moisture holding capacity is not the only benefit Graumann has witnessed since leaving residue on his fields. The no-till transition also has greatly reduced soil run-off, increased organic matter and increased yields over the conventionally tilled fields. "Financially you try to get everything you can out of

Reaching Out to Improve Incomes and the Environment

This year, Dean Graumann has begun to stretch his outreach efforts to a broader region. He brings his experience and perspective to the steering committee for the Southern Plains Agricultural Resources Coalition (SPARC), a voluntary group dedicated to addressing resource and economic concerns in the western half of his state. "Dean has taken an active role in SPARC," says Larry Wright, Resource Conservation and Development Coordinator with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. .

However, Graumann is quick to point out that the group is Wright's "brainchild." "I'm just a volunteer," says Graumann. "With the help of Karen Scanlon, communications director at CTIC, and John Hassell, we are forming our own food alliance."

Even in its early stages, the alliance is exceeding Graumann's expectations. "I thought it was going to be a group of farmers helping others convert to this way of thinking about no-till," says Graumann. As the group developed its vision, however, it expanded to include not only conservation but also marketing, to add value to farmer's efforts. "Now I see it as an economic benefit to producers in our neck of the woods. We are going to be able to increase incomes and improve the environment tremendously," says Graumann.

what you have to make ends meet. But with no-till, it's the best of both worlds. It's a good deal financially, but it's also leaving the earth a better place than when I got here," says Graumann.

Walking the Talk

"Dean has the attitude and the conservation ethic that truly sets him apart from most of his peers. He walks the talk and sets the example by adopting best management practices on his farm," says Wright.

Graumann says that's why he likes to share his story with others. He averages five phone calls per week from area producers asking him about what he is doing, why he's doing it and how it's working. Graumann talks about his successes, as well as the failures, and admits that he'll always be learning how to improve his system. "I'm the first to admit that my fields look terrible right now. I didn't spray early enough, not knowing it was going to rain three weeks in a row," says Graumann.

His honesty and humor make Graumann a popular public speaker as well. The local school board, of which he's a member, youth groups and other civic organizations have all invited Graumann to tell his story.

Graumann says, "I look at it as God is allowing me to be a caretaker of the land. And for the very first time, I'm doing things to leave it in better condition than when I originally got it."

For more information about conservation in Greer County, Okla., contact Linden Haygood, district conservationist. Tel: (580) 782-2787 ext. 103; or E-mail: linden.haygood@ok.usda.gov.

Watershed Restoration Funding

Michigan Area Discovers Little Known Source

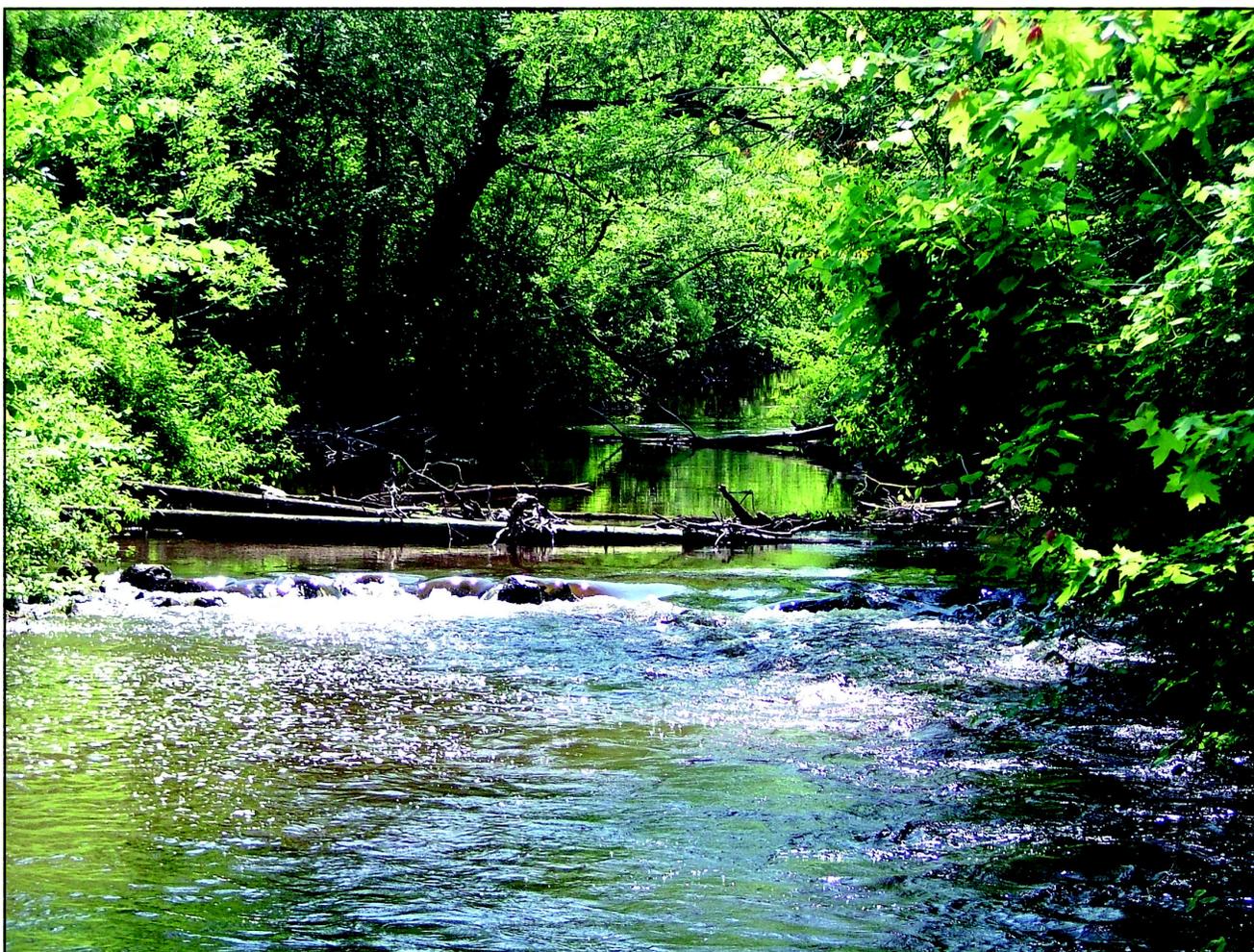
By Jill M. Reinhart

Two watersheds in Michigan are using a little known Farm Bill program as a model to effectively complement funding sources and target areas in need of water quality improvements. Over 20 agencies and organizations have signed on to the Rice Creek and Battle Creek River Watersheds Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, a pilot for how Section 2003 of the Farm Bill could be used to leverage funding sources and focus on local resource problems.

Section 2003 of the Farm Bill outlines the Partnerships and Cooperation program as a mechanism to create stewardship agreements among various government entities. Although the rule is not yet published, the program promises a way to infuse flexibility into administration of Farm Bill programs and prioritize funds to address natural resource issues, such as water quality. It allows the use of up to 5 percent of Farm Bill conservation title program funds, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), to carry out Partnership and Cooperation initiatives.

Michigan's pilot project was conceived in response to the national

debate about whether the increase in Farm Bill funds warrants a decrease in Section 319 nonpoint source funding. Thad Cleary with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's Water Division explains that there are nonpoint source pollution activities that the Farm Bill can't fund, such as watershed planning activities, implementing non-agricultural best management practices and education. Michigan is trying to focus its 319 dollars on those types of activities and practices, at the same time directing Farm Bill dollars to areas with a water quality need. By targeting watersheds where there are known water quality impacts, the project is essentially,



Calhoun Conservation District

Those involved in the partnership recognize the need for improving, maintaining and protecting the water quality of the Rice Creek and Battle Creek River watersheds.

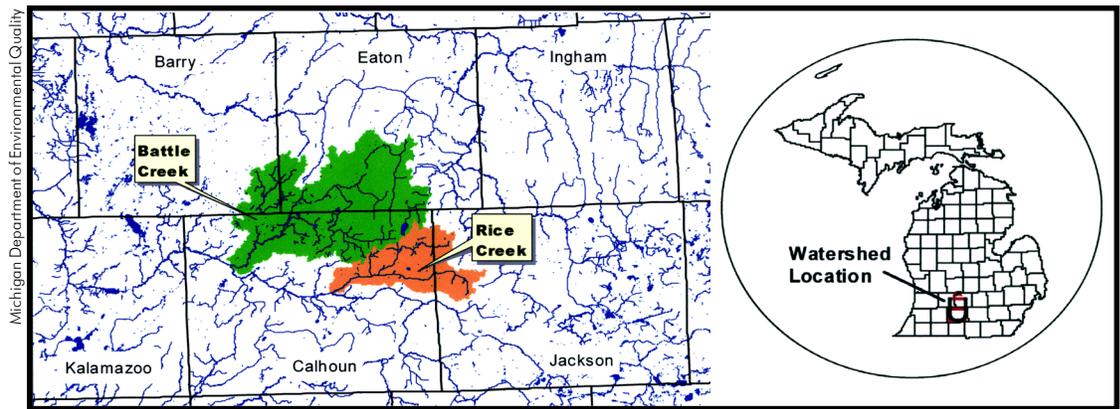
"directing Farm Bill money to the highest priority watershed issues," says Cleary, rather than servicing the first producers that apply for the money.

Selecting the Watershed

Cleary explains that the Rice Creek and Battle Creek River watersheds were selected for the pilot project for several reasons, including an established need for water quality improvements and active watershed groups. In both watersheds, locally led groups were working to develop watershed management plans with Section 319 funding. Both groups are made of diverse partners, including government representatives, landowners and conservation organizations.

The Rice Creek watershed group formed in response to a potential wastewater lagoon discharge from the Village of Springport into Rice Creek. In the Battle Creek River watershed, a local watershed group formed in response to a Total Maximum Daily Load being implemented for the Kalamazoo River. Battle Creek was named as a leading contributor of sediment and phosphorus to the Kalamazoo River and targeted as a priority sub-watershed. Agriculture dominates land use (67 percent) in the two watersheds, which total 245,000 acres in lower central Michigan. The priority concern in both heavily dredged and ditched watersheds is sediment and phosphorus, says Kristine Boley-Morse, watershed coordinator for the Battle Creek River watershed.

Local involvement was instrumental in developing the agreement. About half of the watersheds lie in Calhoun County, and the Calhoun County Conservation District has administered funding for the watershed planning projects. The Calhoun County Conservation District, "really built all the additional partners at the local level," says Alan Herceg, NRCS assistant state conservationist for programs in Michigan, "The partnership had a huge signing ceremony and everybody was there. The ceremony for the agreement was carried out locally



The Rice Creek and Battle Creek River Watersheds Partnership and Cooperation Agreement pairs funding from the Farm Bill and Section 319 of the Clean Water Act to target areas and address local resource problems.

and brought everyone together face to face, to verbally tell everyone what their commitment level would be."

The district's executive director Tracy Bronson explains that, "Everyone participated and was a part of these two projects, which flowed into creating this Partnership and Cooperation Agreement."

"What we are doing is piloting the theory and the relationships, building experience and working collectively at the local level," explains Herceg. "Nobody is putting any new money in, we're just agreeing on priorities in those two watersheds. USDA is making a commitment to prioritize Farm Bill applications across the board." At the same time, other state, federal, nongovernmental and private organizations are making the same commitment to prioritize funding and technical assistance to these watersheds. "The key is that everyone is on the same priority," says Herceg.

Overcoming Challenges

One of the challenges of putting the agreement in place was overcoming the perception that this was a new initiative. "The hardest part was getting groups to understand this is for things they do already," explains Gregg Strand, the local partnership project coordinator. He stresses that the purpose of the agreement is, "to work together, compliment efforts and avoid duplication." Another hurdle Strand faced was explaining that the agreement is not a contract, but a voluntary agreement.

Strand's advice to others who may be starting this process is to first identify all the stakeholders, agencies and organizations active in conservation, from drainage committees to nonprofits. "Keep your scope open to

anyone who deals with the resources, especially landowners, and show them that they are a part of a larger effort," says Strand.

Right now both watersheds are ready to transition to implementation. Boley-Morse works directly with landowners, and explains that, "this is a great way to identify which agencies and organizations fit with landowner objectives and help the landowner find resources and technical assistance to complete conservation on their property. Private landowners have tons of opportunities to work with agencies and organizations to get conservation on the land and get technical assistance." NRCS is planning to treat the watersheds as a priority for fiscal year 2005 Farm Bill funds, and a Section 319 nonpoint source grant is pending approval at the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

Promulgation of the Partnership and Cooperation rule is anticipated to follow development of other Farm Bill Programs, including the Conservation Reserve Program and Grassland Reserve Program. Once the rule is promulgated, state and local government agencies, Indian tribes and nongovernmental organizations can enter into formal stewardship agreements with the USDA Secretary. In the meantime, Michigan's proactive pilot project proves that Partnership and Cooperation agreements can be successfully developed ahead of the official Farm Bill program.

For more information, contact Thad Cleary, Water Division at the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Tel: (517) 335-4172; E-mail: Clearytj@Michigan.gov.

For information about the Farm Bill, visit www.usda.gov/farmbill/.

Centers of Excellence Offer Realistic Conservation Research

Monsanto, in cooperation with agencies such as the state Extension Service, state department of natural resources, NRCS and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts or watershed districts, sponsors three- to five-year research/demonstration projects called Centers of Excellence (COE). COEs are actual farms that use typical farm equipment.

Research at the COEs is focused on improving conservation systems in realistic conditions. These practices include no-till, biotechnology crops, fertilizer placement, varieties, precision agriculture, row spacing, tillage and weed control.

During the growing season a field day is scheduled at each COE, offering farmers a chance to view research results, listen to experts describe current management practices and how to use them, and ask detailed questions.

Visitors are welcome at the Centers any time. At each entrance, leaflets are available that describe the various plots and directions to the plots. Brochures also itemize the results from the previous year's research.

For more information, contact Sheila Bush, Monsanto, at Tel: (314) 694-3321 or E-mail: sheila.i.bush@monsanto.com.

2004 Centers of Excellence Field Days

September 8 – Redfield, S.D.

9 – Beresford, S.D.

14 – Queenstown/Pintail Point, Md.

14 – Delta, Ohio

Nutrient Credit Trading in the News

A recently published article in the Virginia Daily News, written by Patrick Lynch, highlights the win-win-win prospect of nutrient credit trading for farmer, industry and the environment. Brian Noyes, conservation specialist and district coordinator of Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District and a proponent of trading quoted in the article, was asked to testify on trading at a state senate hearing in September.

To the right is an excerpt from the article. To view the entire article, visit www.ctic.purdue.edu/frompollutiontoprofit.

Nutrient credit trading is a way for farmers to be paid for their conservation practices that reduce nitrogen and phosphorus losses beyond the "norm." It involves the transfer of nutrient reduction credits, specifically those for nitrogen and phosphorus, between buyers (utilities and other companies that purchase nutrient reduction credits) and sellers (farmers that offer nutrient credits for sale). Conservation practices include, but are not limited to, no-till (especially continuous no-till), nutrient management planning (with and without manure) and retiring cropland.

Compensation could come from the government or from companies that are interested in "trading" nutrient credits. A company or utility releasing nutrients above a predetermined amount would pay a farmer to reduce his nutrient loss, thereby reducing total nutrient loadings.

From Pollution To Profit

By Patrick Lynch

Courtesy of Virginia Daily News

There is something on a farm near Jamestown that you won't find on many other agricultural tracts near the Chesapeake Bay.

Below waist-high corn on the Mainland Farm, there is soil that hasn't been plowed in almost a decade. Soil that, according to proponents of "no-till" agriculture, absorbs water and nutrients - drastically reducing erosion and the runoff of nitrogen and phosphorus that chokes the bay's aquatic life.

Standing in one of Mainland's fields on a recent afternoon, Brian Noyes pointed out the benefits of planting crops in soil that is never tilled. Rain doesn't carry the churned soil into the James River, and wind doesn't blow it away after the conventional three or four tillings a year. Decaying crop matter, which is never removed from the field, builds up in the soil and helps trap fertilizers applied to corn, grain and soybeans.

The way Noyes envisions trading - and the way the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has outlined hypothetical trading programs in a 2003 plan that supports the concept - a source such as a treatment plant or a developer would pay farmers who can scientifically document that their no-till fields prevent a certain level of nitrogen and phosphorus from reaching waterways.

The farmer earns income from the payments and gets a financial boost that would help cover the cost of buying new equipment needed for no-till. The plant or developer saves money by avoiding a more costly clean-up method, and the watershed as a whole moves closer to its overall goal.

To view the entire article, visit www.ctic.purdue.edu/frompollutiontoprofit.

Thank You, PNDSA

CTIC Board of Directors and staff extend a sincere "Thank You" to the Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Association (PNDSA) for hosting the CTIC Board of Directors summer 2004 meeting and providing an excellent tour of direct seed farms in the Palouse region.

Directors and members of both CTIC and PNDSA spent two days together traveling through the region, visiting farms and discussing direct seeding (no-till). Through tour stop presentations and casual conversations, visitors to the region learned about the variances in rainfall, soils and equipment needs in this farming region of the Pacific Northwest. At the same time, discussions also revealed that our two organizations share a vision for increasing the adoption of direct seeding and a desire to work together to make that happen.

As a result, CTIC and PNDSA realized the power of partnerships and agreed to work together to promote comprehensive systems of conservation practices and provide the necessary social support to help producers eliminate tillage and focus instead on improving soil quality.



CTIC Board and staff are introduced to direct seed farming during the summer 2004 tour of the Palouse region organized by the Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Association.

House Passes 2005 Agriculture Appropriations

The House of Representatives passed its fiscal year 2005 appropriations bill for agriculture. In the area of conservation, the bill provides \$1.01 billion in funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP); \$194 million for the Conservation Security Program (CSP); \$60 million in the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP); \$112 million for the Farmland Protection Program; and funding for up to 39.2 million acres in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The bill awaits Senate action.

For more information visit http://appropriations.house.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressReleases.Detail&PressRelease_id=389&Month=6&Year=2004.

Partners Survey

Partners Magazine just keeps getting better. *Partners* is now available in two forms: printed or electronic, attached to an email message.

Which do you prefer? Printed _____ Electronic (print current email address) _____

In order to continue to provide useful information **to** you, we request information **about** you.

1. What is the name of your organization? _____
2. What is your primary job function? _____
3. Have you visited the CTIC website (www.ctic.purdue.edu)? _____
4. Which topics covered in *Partners* interest you most? _____
5. What topics would you like to see addressed in the future? _____
6. Is the information you read useful? _____
7. Do you share *Partners* with other people? If so, how many? who? _____
8. Do you know someone who should be a member of CTIC? Please tell us how to contact them. _____

Submit the completed questionnaire to Karen Scanlon, communications director, Fax: (765) 494-5969; or E-mail: scanlon@ctic.purdue.edu or visit www.ctic.purdue.edu/survey to complete the survey.

ALLIANCE HIGHLIGHTS

Little Red River Action Team (RATs)

In 2001 under a 319 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Cleburne County Conservation District began a watershed project on the Lower Little Red River Watershed in Cleburne, Independence, and White counties in central Arkansas. One goal was to start a watershed alliance, so the conservation district, with the help of CTIC, started laying the ground work for what they hoped would become a group of concerned citizens who were willing to take on watershed issues.

As happens with many voluntary groups, frustrations were encountered, and the Little Red River Watershed Alliance had trouble getting off the ground. In the fall of 2003, however, the alliance finally took off. Today with a new name, the Little Red River Action Team (RATs), the group is incorporated and is applying for non-profit status. The RATs have produced a brochure, with the help of a CTIC alliance grant, and have designed promotional T-shirts. The group is offering a county road improvement training for all of the county road departments in the watershed in an effort to reduce sedimentation. And, the RATs are also participating in the World Water Monitoring Day and are involved in a city beautification project involving one of the local creeks.

Although the RATs have a strong board of directors that is enthusiastic and dedicated to the cause, the group

does not have a large active membership and is currently accepting members. The board of directors consists of Joe Rath, chair; Jamie Rouse, vice chair; Cindy Greaves, secretary; Sandy Watters, treasurer; and Greg Holland, Jed Hollan, Kati Rouse and Tom Bly as ex-officio members. Shawn Burgess, formerly of the Cleburne County Conservation District, and LeVonna Uekman of NRCS were instrumental in forming the watershed alliance from the start. This dedicated group has the enthusiasm and energy to make a difference for the River and the watershed.

For more information about the alliance and its activities, contact Joe G. Rath, chair, E-mail: joerath@cox-internet.com.



Cleburne County Conservation District

The Little Red River Action Team, formerly known as the Little Red River Watershed Alliance, had trouble getting started but with the help of CTIC, the alliance finally took off in the fall of 2003.

Blacklands Conservation Technology Alliance

Approximately 400 people attended the annual Stiles Farm Foundation Field Day June 15 in Thrall, Texas, which is the hub of the Blacklands Conservation Technology Alliance. Participants discussed the condition of the conventional-till, strip-till and no-till plots. Strip-till looked the best, followed by no-till. Compaction was a major problem in the conventional tillage plots. There were demonstrations of strip-till rigs and crops that were planted with them. There was also discussions on biotechnology, fertilizer placement, and insect and weed control.

Several watersheds in the Blacklands have been removed from the state's atrazine impaired list due to good conservation measures, says Charles Wade. No-till and strip-till crops are doing very well and are decreasing erosion on those fields.

Farmers using no-till and strip-till have a lot less money in their crops and their yields are as good, if not better, than conventionally tilled farmed fields.

For more information about the BCTA, contact Charles Wade, NRCS, at Tel: (254) 697-3692 or E-mail: charles.wade@tx.usda.gov.

Agriculture for a Clean Environment

Agriculture for a Clean Environment (A.C.E.) selected Bill Richards, agriculture liaison for Senator Mike DeWine and past chair of CTIC, as the guest speaker at the Fetters Field Day, scheduled for Sept. 1, at Greg and Roger Fetters Farm in Laura, Ohio.

Fetters Test Plots and Field Day provides landowners and operators an opportunity to see the environmental benefits of no-till and learn how to implement no-till farming on their land. Visitors are able to see comparisons of no-till and conventional tillage and to learn various techniques and benefits of each tillage practice.

A.C.E. sponsored the 5th Annual Stillwater River Trash Clean Up in June. More than 50 participants helped spruce up the area.

For more information about the Agriculture for a Clean Environment, contact Nicole Reese, E-mail: nreese@myvine.com.

Sandusky River Watershed Coalition Agriculture Committee

The Core 4 Conservation program is progressing in Ohio's Sandusky Watershed. Partner organizations, including local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, have lined-up volunteers to serve on an ad-hoc committee for the program. Representatives on the committee include local farmers, agriculture industry representatives and retired agriculture service agency staff.

Letters were sent to 40 local agricultural companies requesting

donations to help increase the size and longevity of this program. The ability to produce a strong base of financial support for this program will be crucial to its continued success.

"We are in the process of extensively researching similar programs in Indiana and Minnesota, hoping to learn from the successes of others as we work to grow the program in Ohio," says Chris Riddle, watershed coordinator. "Strong groundwork is being laid

to help ensure a successful program that has an opportunity to grow and flourish in the future."

For more information, contact Chris Riddle, watershed coordinator, Tel: (419) 334-5016; Fax: (419) 334-5125; or E-mail: CMRiddle@wsos.org.

No-till on the Plains, Inc.



Dr. Ray Ward of Ward Laboratories in Kearney, Neb., plays a vital role in No-till on the Plains' summer events.

This tour brought together participants in various stages of no-till adoption. The three-day tour departed from Salina and featured the Dakota Lakes Research Farm with Dwayne Beck in South Dakota, as well as Ward Labs with Ray Ward in Kearney, Neb., and Paul Jasa and Rogers Memorial Farm in Lincoln, Neb.

For more information on the Whirlwind No-Till Expo or the South Dakota No-Till Tour, contact No-Till on the Plains, Inc., Tel: (888) 330-5142 or register online at www.notill.org.

No-till on the Plains, Inc., planned summer events to show farmers ways to increase profitability, gain better agronomic understanding of soils and their reactions to fertility, and increase efficiency with new rotations and sequencing of crops. The Whirlwind No-Till Expo, a four day event in July and August, offered hands-on learning with no-till experts. The Expo featured a rainfall simulator to demonstrate the impact that no-till has on soil.

The 10th Annual South Dakota No-Till Bus Tour took place Aug. 2-4. This

For assistance in starting an alliance in your area, contact Karen Scanlon, CTCI, E-mail: Scanlon@ctci.purdue.edu; or Tel: (765) 494-9555.

Athens County Grazing Council

More than 40 landowners gathered in early May to attend an Advanced Grazing School hosted by the Athens County Grazing Council and funded by a Core 4 Conservation Alliance grant. The Athens County Grazing Council, in cooperation with the Athens Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), the Ohio State University Extension, Athens County and Natural Resources Conservation Service, developed a three-session workshop designed to help grazers develop a more in-depth understanding of rotational grazing system management to improve the sod base, reduce soil erosion and improve water infiltration into the soil. The school focused on providing ideas and practices that will allow producers to extend the grazing season and reduce production costs.

The Athens County Grazing Council plans to survey participants of the Advanced Grazing School to see if any changes were made or will be made in the near future in their farming operations.

For more information, contact Cathy Bobo, district manager, Athens County SWCD, E-mail: cathy-bobo@oh.nacdnet.org.



The Advanced Grazing School, made possible with Core 4 Conservation Alliance grant funds, consisted of two evening meetings and a Saturday farm tour.

SUPPORT CTIC

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YES! I want to help support CTIC. Enclosed is
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DID YOU KNOW?

2002 American Farmland:

938 million acres were in farmland

441 acres was the average farm size

177,000 farms were greater than 1,000 acres
in size

434 million acres were cropland (decrease
of 11 million acres from 1997)

55 million acres were irrigated (decrease of
1 million acres from 1997)

303 million acres of cropland harvested

562,466 acres raised certified organic crops
(0.1 percent of total)

32,723,967 acres enrolled in Conservation
Reserve Program (CRP) or Wetlands Reserve
Program (WRP)

\$1.4 billion total government payment for
CRP and WRP in 2002

Source: 2002 Ag Census - www.nass.usda.gov/census

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WHAT

12th National Nonpoint Source
Monitoring Workshop
Managing Nutrient Inputs and Exports
in the Rural Landscape

WHEN

September 26-30, 2004

WHERE

Princess Royale Oceanfront Hotel
Ocean City, Maryland

WEB SITE

[www.ctic.purdue.edu/
NPSWorkshop/
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