

Clean Water Starts With Us

WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT IN IOWA

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Education leads to action with ILF, Juchems

"I'm one of many trying to do the right thing, and we just try to do what we can," says farmer Rick Juchems. "I don't know that it's my job, but I do it anyway."

With any cooperative program, partners like Juchems are important. Feeling a personal obligation to protect and improve his land for future generations, Juchems hopes to pass his land near Plainfield to his two children someday.

That's made him a vocal leader and advocate in multiple local, regional, and national conservation organizations. "There's a finite number of acres that are farmable and that number keeps dwindling every year," he says, "so each acre gets more important as you go."

Juchems became involved with Iowa Learning Farms as a cooperator for a cover crop study in 2004, and has been an advocate for the organization ever since, working with ILF coordinators and partners to encourage use of conservation practices.

ILF has been working across the state through funding, field days, and educational outreach programs for just over a decade.

"We're discovering that there aren't



Rick Juchems works with Iowa Learning Farms and advocates for conservation work among other farmers.

as many scientific barriers to conservation practices as there are social ones," says ILF program manager Matt Helmers. "Most farmers don't want to be the only one in their county using these practices."

Currently, even practices like cover crops are only used on about 1.5 percent of Iowa row crop land. Still, Juchems isn't the only farmer embracing conservation with gusto — and he's constantly working to encourage more neighbors and landowners to implement more conservation practices.

"I got [my neighbor] talked into putting in a CRP waterway filter strip," Juchems says.

ILF program director Jacqueline Comito describes Juchems an ideal partner

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Working for Clean Water - 2015 edition released

Featuring eight stories highlighting how Iowans are coming together to improve and protect our state's water quality, the 2015 edition of *Working for Clean Water* explores efforts in Coralville, Storm Lake and more.

Find the publication online at iowadnr.gov/Environmental-Protection/Water-Quality/Watershed-Improvement/Watershed-Successes

Juchems, ILF take a grass-roots approach to conservation

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because of his willingness to speak out and show off the practices he advocates on his own land.

“Hearing that [conservation practices] really work sounds a lot more credible coming from another farmer,” Comito says. “Our field days give the opportunity for farmers, landowners, and community members to see conservation on similar soils to their own and the benefits it has on the surrounding area.”

Comito and Helmers say that ILF programs and partners have had a significant effect on conservation in Iowa so far, but note that there is always room to grow.

“We’re being forced to turn down almost a third of the requests we have for field days due to time and staff constraints,” Comito says. “While we definitely want to reach everyone, the fact that the demand is there makes it pretty clear to me that we’re doing something right.”

That’s a feeling Juchems

shares. His daughter, Elizabeth, started working with the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and ILF while she attended Iowa State University, and now she serves as an event coordinator.

Rick says he’s proud that she chose to enter conservation of her

own accord, and that she and others are continuing to do work that will be important for Iowa communities in the future.

For more success stories from the 2015 edition of Working for Clean Water, visit iowadnr.gov/watershed.



Prairie plantings are just one of many practices on Rick Juchems’ farm near Plainfield.

Apply soon for Gov’s Environmental Award

Iowa businesses, organizations and citizens are reminded that the deadline to apply for the Governor’s Iowa Environmental Excellence Awards is nearing quickly.

Applications are available at www.iowadnr.gov/eeawards and are due March 31.

These awards are the premier environmental honors in Iowa, recognizing leadership and innovation in the protection of Iowa’s water, land and air.

For 2016, organizations are encouraged to submit electronically to reduce paper waste and eliminate mail delays. Complete instructions are included in the application packet.

Awards will be given for Overall Environmental Excellence, along with Special Project Awards in:

- Air Quality
- Energy Efficiency/Renewable Energy
- Habitat Restoration
- Waste Management
- Water Quality
- Environmental Education

For more information and to download an application, go to www.iowadnr.gov/eeawards or contact Scott Flag at 515-725-8318 or Scott.Flagg@dnr.iowa.gov.

BE RECOGNIZED WITH AN IOWA ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARD!

WE ARE LOOKING FOR INDIVIDUALS OR ORGANIZATIONS WHO ARE:

- 1 RESULTS ORIENTED**
Creating new technologies or processes that improve the environment or reduce reliance on natural resources
- 2 FOCUS ON SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIES**
Developing energy efficiency or renewable energy.
- 3 LEADERS & INNOVATORS**
Creating programs or processes that balance economics with the environment
- 4 PROTECTORS AND ENHANCERS OF NATURAL RESOURCES**
Creating natural resource protection and enhancement projects, such as watershed protection.

DNR
APPLY AT:
iowadnr.gov/eeawards

Statewide survey gauges Iowans' attitudes on water quality

Iowans view improvement of water quality as a shared responsibility, according to a new survey conducted by the University of Northern Iowa.

On behalf of the DNR, UNI's Center for Social and Behavioral Research conducted the survey, titled "Public Perceptions of Water Quality in Iowa: A Statewide Survey."

The study aimed to establish a baseline of perceptions, knowledge, behavior, and attitudes toward water quality in the state of Iowa.

The majority of Iowans surveyed were satisfied with water quality in their area, and almost 60 percent rate their unfiltered home drinking water as either good or excellent.

The study also gauged Iowans' perception of water quality and issues surrounding it. About half of participants said that waterways are about the same as they were 10 years ago, and 30 percent say Iowa's waters are worsening.

Survey participants viewed agricultural runoff as the top threat to Iowa's water quality, and 80 percent

recognized nitrates and phosphorus as pollutants.

While the majority of Iowans view water quality as a shared responsibility, very few reported being involved with volunteer efforts to improve Iowa's waters.

Most Iowans in the survey used our state's waterways for recreation in the last two years, and just more than half of Iowans said they had seen or heard information about water quality in their community.

More than 2,000 Iowa adults, chosen at random and called on both landlines and cell phones, participated in the survey.

The study is part of Iowa's Non-point Source Management Plan, developed with extensive input by DNR partners and individuals, representing more than 50 stakeholder groups from across the state.

Information from the research will be used to create a statewide campaign to educate on water quality issues, and to motivate Iowans to get involved and to change behaviors that

poorly affect water quality in the state.

A full report of the survey's results and findings is available at iowadnr.gov/watershed.



Nominate a steward for Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Award

Take the time to show your appreciation for an environmental steward in your community that leads by example in their farm operation by nominating them for the Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Award.

As environmental leaders, these farmers have adopted best management practices and incorporated environmental stewardship throughout their operation.

The nomination form can be completed with basic knowledge of the farming operation and the nominee.

Additional information regarding this award, an example completed nomination form, a fillable nomination form and a listing of previous award winners are available at: www.iowaagriculture.gov/

EnvironmentalLeader.asp.

Submit nominations by June 15 for consideration to be included in the 2016 awards program at the Iowa State Fair.

Questions on the award or nomination process can be directed to Jerry Neppel at jerry.neppel@iowaagriculture.gov or by calling 515-281-3599.



Resources for vegetable growers considering cover crops

Cover crops are sprouting in more and more Iowa farm fields, and that includes vegetable farms.

A new publication from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach outlines the benefits for veggie growers: better soil and water conservation, more organic matter and fewer weeds, better

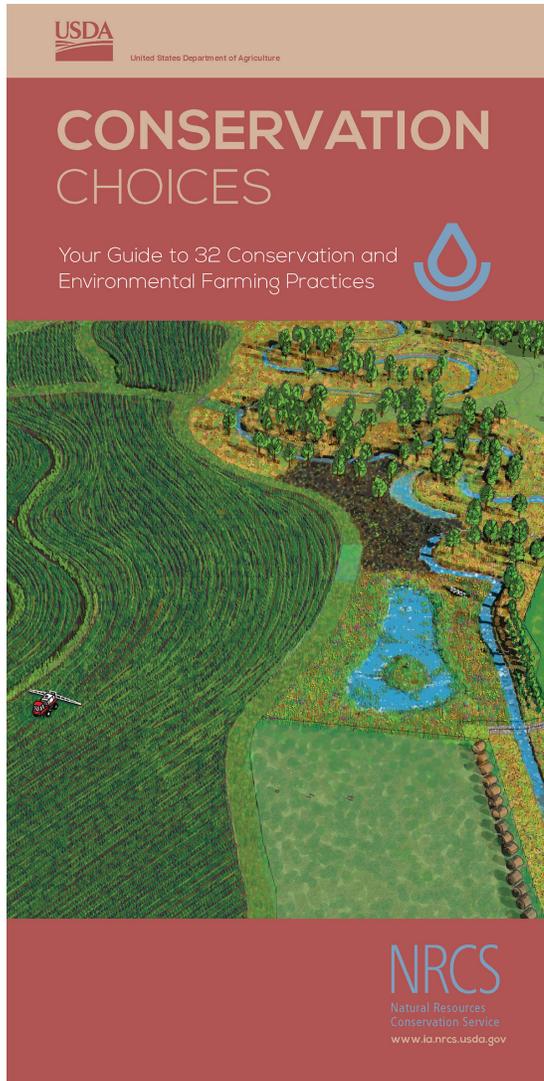
nitrogen fixation and even improved yields.

The publication discusses the pros and cons of short-duration cover crops, like buckwheat, oats, cowpea and sorghum sundangrass, which are usually grown for about 45 to 60 days. It also addresses planting and termination tech-

niques, and more.

Download the free publication from the Extension Store at <http://store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/Short-Duration-Cover-Crops-for-Vegetable-Production-Systems>

New NRCS publication highlights Iowa conservation practices



A new publication developed by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) called "Conservation Choices: Your Guide to 32 Conservation and Environmental Farming Practices" provides helpful information for the most common conservation practices used by Iowa farmers.

NRCS developed a similar brochure more than 20 years ago. The updated version features a new look, an updated list of practices, and web features for each practice that include photos, videos, and standards for designing and installing practices.

Laura Crowell, state public affairs specialist for NRCS in Iowa, says Conservation Choices is an excellent resource for farmers and rural landowners.

"This is a great tool for our customers because the information is straightforward," she said. "Implementing conservation can be an overwhelming process. We feel this brochure will make the conservation decision process easier and more understandable."

Another highlight of Conservation Choices is a new farm illustration that includes all 32 conservation practices featured in the brochure.

"Including a suite of practices, instead of using just one practice, is almost always the best way to treat resource concerns," says Crowell. "The illustration shows how oftentimes it requires multiple practices to help reduce soil erosion, improving water quality, and provide wildlife habitat."

Crowell says hard copies of the brochure are available for free at all of Iowa's NRCS offices, or by calling 515-284-4262.

To view the brochure and practice features online, visit the Iowa NRCS website at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov and click on "Publications and Fact Sheets" under the "Newsroom" tab.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Ongoing: USDA-NRCS soil health webinars
Schedule at: www.conservationwebinars.net/documents/planned-conservation-webinars

Ongoing: Iowa Learning Farms field days and webinars
Schedule at: www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf/home

EPA recognizes success at southwest Iowa's Viking Lake

The water quality improvement at Viking Lake in southwest Iowa has earned recognition from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Viking Lake is Iowa's eighth success story approved by the EPA in the WQ-10 category, which indicates a documented water quality improvement which led to the removal of an impairment.

Runoff from private farmland, gully erosion from state park land and failing septic systems in the watershed contributed excessive sediment, nutrients and bacteria to Viking Lake.

As a result of these pollutants, Viking Lake was placed on Iowa's list of impaired waters in 2004 for excessive algae and in 2006 for bacteria.

Between 2005 and 2008, the Montgomery Soil and Water Conservation District worked with federal and state partners to install erosion control structures on private and state land, upgrade failing septic systems and complete in-lake improvements, including shoreline stabilization and fish habitat structures.

As a result of these projects, lake algae levels decreased and fish



populations increased, leading to the removal of Viking Lake's algae impairment in 2014.

The restoration projects reduced sediment delivery to the lake by an estimated 2,373 tons per year (51 percent) and phosphorus by an estimated 3,086 pounds per year (51 percent). Post-project water quality monitoring showed various improvements, including improved

Secchi depth (water clarity), reduced turbidity, reduced phosphorus and reduced chlorophyll a levels.

In addition, algae blooms have declined, allowing beneficial rooted aquatic vegetation to flourish in the clearer water. Stocked fish species, including largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie and channel catfish, are now growing well and populations are healthy and balanced. The improvements to water quality have helped make Viking Lake once again a popular destination for anglers seeking to catch quality fish.

Project partners included the Montgomery SWCD, Iowa DNR (Parks, Fisheries, Engineering and Watershed Improvement sections), IDALS Division of Soil Conservation, NRCS, Montgomery CCB, Page 1 Rural Water District, Iowa Department of

Transportation and private landowners.

Read the full story on the EPA's website at http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/success319/ia_viking.cfm.

In addition, the EPA recognized watershed-wide improvement at Carter Lake in its SP-12 category.

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Editor: Jessie Brown, DNR: 515-725-8278 or Jessie.Brown@dnr.iowa.gov

Contributors: Kyle Ament, Allen Bonini, Bill Ehm, Steve Hopkins, Mary Beth Stevenson (DNR); Mike Franklin, Jim Gillespie, Jake Hansen, James Martin, Jerry Neppel, Vince Sitzmann, Jeff Tisl, Bob Waters (DSC); Marty Adkins and Laura Crowell (NRCS)

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