

----CONSERVATION DISTRICTS OF IOWA (CDI) ----

CONNECTIONS

The Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) informs, educates and leads Iowans through our local soil and water conservation districts to promote conservation of natural resources.



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Office Manager: Brenda Shannon

Office Phone: 515-289-8300
Website: <https://cdiowa.org>

From: CDI President Dennis Carney

Welcome to the second edition of the Conservation Districts of Iowa's newsletter "Connections". There have been several exciting changes for CDI in the past month.

Just last week the CDI Board approved an agreement with the Champaign County, Illinois, SWCD to bring their Saving Tomorrow's Agricultural Resources (S.T.A.R.) program to Iowa. S.T.A.R. is a free tool to assist farmers and landowners to evaluate their management practices on individual fields and to promote conservation practices that reduce nutrient and soil losses. Industry has taken an interest in the program as a way to reach their sustainability goals. We see the potential for some real meaningful advances in how districts can incentivize conservation practice work through S.T.A.R.. Stay tuned.

CDI has recently added five new employees. These individuals will assist districts in completing resource concern evaluations and in developing one-year and five-year work plans. This will be a great help to districts in focusing their conservation efforts to achieve meaningful outcomes.

Please be careful out there as you complete fall harvest. Thank you for your dedication and great work.

Executive Director Report – John Whitaker

I do quite a bit of driving around the Iowa countryside both through CDI work and a personal obligation I have in the Order of the Eastern Star. Like anyone who drives Iowa roads, I see examples of what not to do for soil conservation. I see gullies washed through fall tilled soybean fields, gullies where there should be waterways, or fields that, in my opinion, should be in grass or some other form of permanent cover. I sometimes fear that the general public sees this as an indication of how all farmers treat their land, which is the wrong impression. Most farmers care about their land and plan to have it be in better condition for the next generation, but there are bad actors out there.

As farmers, we tend to try new things on the back of the farm where the neighbors don't see it when they drive by. We don't want them to see a "learning experience" that we may be having and so cover crops and other good conservation practices are not out by the road on public display. The exceptions to this are the good conservationists who serve as Commissioners. You understand that conservation is an ethic that should not be experimented with, but rather practiced in all aspects of your operation.

I do have a couple of conservation practices that I would rather have far from the road, CRP, or tree plantings. Maybe then we could keep the deer off the road when I am traveling!

Friends of CDI

The CDI mission is to inform, educate, and lead Iowans through our local Soil and Water Conservation Districts to promote the conservation of our natural resources. Friends of CDI is an opportunity for advocates of Conservation Districts of Iowa to contribute to our mission as an additional funding source. Funds received as Friends of CDI will be kept in a separate account and administered by the Executive Board. This money will be used to support a variety of our efforts, especially the scholarship program. Any size donation will be accepted and all are tax deductible. Please send donations in care of Brenda at CDI. Please see attached brochure for more information. Thank you for your support.



Staff Spotlight Brenda Shannon - CDI Office Manager

Brenda moved to Ankeny, IA from Tampa, FL in 2004, where she worked for the Florida Department of Law Enforcement as a Financial Crimes Investigator. After living in the Des Moines area for four years, Brenda decided to go back to college where she earned a degree in Paralegal Sciences. Until accepting the position of Office Manager for CDI on September 24, 2019, she primarily did contract work for the State of Iowa Department of Human Resources as a Legal Transcriptionist.

Resolutions

Two resolutions approved by the CDI Board at annual conference have been submitted to NACD, where they will be discussed and voted on during the legislative committee hearings held as part of NACD's annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada in February 2020. Iowa's two resolutions deal with cost share for tile blind inlets and a national definition of urban agriculture.

New CDI Staff

CDI has new staff on board! We have hired our communications coordinator and our four area planners. Joe Hayes is the new communications coordinator; Joe has many years of experience in the communications field. He worked as an Assistant Vice-President for Communications for a major Iowa Company before starting his own creative media company in 2018.

Four planning coordinators have been hired:

- The Northeast Iowa planning coordinator is Katherine Hannigan. Katherine has a diverse background that ranges from teaching at the college level to being a published author to on-farm field work.
- The Northwest Iowa planner is Matthew Jefferson. Matt is a geologist who has worked as a park ranger, a researcher, and a soil technician. Matt has worked in public water supply testing and research.
- Brooke Bastron is our Southeast Iowa planner. Brooke has a degree in Business Administration and has worked in administrative positions relating to human resources. In addition, she has worked for a major Iowa seed company doing laboratory testing of seed.
- In Southwest Iowa Jonathan Hendricks is a new planner. Jon worked in the telecommunications industry before becoming a nontraditional student at Creighton, where he recently graduated.



Photo taken last week in Northern Iowa of cover crop (cereal rye and rapeseed) aerially planted Sept 6, 2019. This field has had no tillage for over thirty-five years yet very little residue visible. Cover crop growth has been slightly less than normal due to cold weather and delayed corn maturity. Please share with us your cover crop successes and failures – we are all learning.

District Newsletters / Reports

Many districts have just completed on their annual reports. So that we might better understand each district's projects and activities, please send an electronic or paper version of your report to CDI in care of Brenda Shannon (Brenda@cdiowa.org). We would like to use some of this information in our Connections newsletter to inform everyone what projects your district is working on. Also, this collection might be of great value to districts that are wanting to improve the layout and content of their annual report. Thank you for your help.

2020 Scholarship Contest

Information about CDI's 2020 scholarship program has been released and is available on our website. With your support of our annual scholarship auction at annual conference we are able to fund the program at the same level as last year. We will award scholarships worth \$6,000.00 total to the top three award winners and award the remaining six district winners \$500.00 each. Students applying for this scholarship need to turn in their completed applications to their local SWCD by February 14, 2020. The application form is available on our website. Local districts are encouraged to tie their own locally funded scholarship efforts to this program.

New Commissioner Nomination Deadline

Next year is an election year in Iowa if you hadn't noticed every time you turn on the TV! As we prepare for your re-election as Commissioners, you should be aware of changes that have been made to the timing of your nomination. HF 692, which passed last year in the legislature made several changes to election law. One of the changes is that now all petitions are filed before the primary. In the past, non-partisan, nominated by petition offices had a filing deadline prior to the general election, now that filing deadline is moved to the same filing date in March that is used for partisan primary elections.

District Commissioner candidates must file their nomination papers and petition signatures with the county auditor between **Monday, March 2 and Friday, March 13, 2020**. We wanted to make you aware of this change so that you do not miss the deadline. If you miss the deadline in March, you will not be on the ballot in November.

WHAT'S MISSING?

(Your Districts news could be featured here!)



Please send your articles to carlee@cdiowa.org to be featured in Connections