

---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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Water Quality Specialist: Carlee Sabus
Office Manager: Brenda Shannon
Communications Coordinator: Joe Hayes

Office Phone: 515-289-8300
Office Address:
315 East 5th Street, Suite #134
Des Moines, IA. 50309

From: CDI President Dennis Carney

I attended the National Association of Conservation Districts 74th annual meeting this past week in Las Vegas, led by Iowa's Tim Palmer. There were four days of board meetings and presentations with an opportunity to network and learn more about agriculture issues from across the country. I am pleased to report that **Iowa's two resolutions with national implications (below) were passed by their respective committees and then by the entire board.** In addition, Iowa was recognized as having contributed the 7th largest amount of NACD paid dues of any state.

Also, I worked with board members from Illinois to submit and pass a resolution of support for the S.T.A.R. program that we are working to implement.

I look forward to seeing everyone at our Legislative Day on February 26.

CDI resolutions approved by NACD

At the annual meeting in early February, the National Association of Conservation Districts approved two resolutions sponsored by the Conservation Districts of Iowa:

1. **Cost-Share to Replace Tile Intakes with Blind Inlets as a Stand-Alone Practice** NACD supports NRCS amending cost-share rules to allow the replacement of existing drainage.
2. **Definition of Urban Agriculture** NACD supports USDA reviewing existing definitions of urban agriculture on a local to national level for the purposes of business models, planning, zoning, cost share and other relevant issues to create a sustainable definition to insure long term stability of these urban farms.

Executive Director Report – John Whitaker

We need your help! (No, not filing around the office or anything like that!) We need you to give us your thoughts and ideas. I am sure that you know how much I enjoy the monthly training videos (sarcasm) but I really don't know what topics you would like us to present. Yes, we had a list of topics from IDALS and NRCS and they have been great partners to provide those topics, but this is really about what you need and want from us. Please email me at john@cdiowa.org with any issues you want us to pursue. IDALS and NRCS will continue to provide the details of programs and, unfortunately, you will also still have to put up with me on the videos.

The Spring Regionals are coming up the second and third weeks of March. We have invited our Congressional representatives to attend and speak briefly but we don't know how many will have time. The last few years, Congress has taken the third week of each month as an 'in-district work week' so they can meet with constituents in their respective districts. We don't know who among them, if any, will be able attend Spring Regionals but some have expressed interest in the idea. This could be a great chance for you as commissioners to speak one-on-one with the folks who represent you in Washington.

When I served as the State Executive Director of the USDA FSA, I was always amazed at the partnership between local SWCDs, IDALS and NRCS. The FSA doesn't have local, state or national partners except for the local County Committee members and their duties are to ensure the programs are delivered in the respective counties. Now as I witness the SWCD/IDALS/NRCS partnership firsthand, I understand why it works so well. **Every partner brings a piece of the conservation puzzle to the table and the puzzle is not complete without the work of each partner.** As Commissioners, you need NRCS and IDALS staff to carry out the important work you promote. NRCS and IDALS need your local input into their planning process. All of this explains why the five-year plan and annual plan of work are so important in order to accomplish everyone's conservation goals, and why this partnership needs you. You are local. You offer yourselves in unpaid service to the future of conservation. **The one thing you don't get often enough is 'thank you'!**

Nominations Open for Conservation Farmer of the Year Award

Nominations are open for the **2020 Iowa Conservation Farmer of the Year** award. The award has been co-sponsored by the Iowa Department of Ag and Land Stewardship and the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation since 1952. It honors an Iowa farmer who has a proven track record of excellence in soil conservation and water quality improvements and is committed to long-term land and water protection. The winner receives free use of a [John Deere 6E Series utility tractor](#) for up to 12 months or 200 hours of use. The prize, valued at more than \$12,000, is sponsored annually by [Van Wall Equipment of Perry](#) and John Deere. Last year's winner was [Jarad Weber of Donnellson in Lee County](#).

Nominations are due Monday, May 18 (earlier than past years). The nomination process is easy! A farmer can be nominated for the award by sending a brief letter, 100 words or less, summarizing the nominee's conservation efforts, to the local Soil and Water Conservation District well before the deadline. The local SWCD will choose one nomination in each county to develop further and advance for consideration for a regional award, and the nine regional award winners will then compete for the overall state award. You can learn more about the award criteria by reviewing the SWCD nomination form at [this link](#). The state winner will be announced at the Iowa State Fair. The winner will receive the keys to their tractor at the county soil commissioners annual conference, during the Conservation Districts of Iowa annual meeting, August 10-11 in Ames at the Gateway Hotel. For more information, contact [Rick Robinson](#).

Poweshiek SWCD commissioner sees water quality entering political mainstream

Water quality is quickly becoming an important issue in today’s political mainstream, says Poweshiek SWCD Commissioner Mark Kennett, with agriculture typically taking the brunt of the criticism. As a farmer active in the local community, Kennett has a first-hand perspective on the issue. Kennett was recently featured in a profile written by Margot Dick, IIHR–Hydroscience & Engineering Communications Assistant, University of Iowa, appearing in the [Iowa Watershed Approach website](#).



An aerial view of flooded potholes as Kennett pilots a helicopter for his agribusiness Kennett Ag Services.

Kennett – a New Zealand native – believes new technology designed and tested in New Zealand to measure nitrates in the soil will soon be available with the hope that it can reduce nutrient loss from the fields. Kennett is hopeful that technology such as this can help farmers while also improving water quality.

Kennett is an active member of the English River Watershed Management Authority board, a group dedicated to connecting communities along the same body of water. Generally, the fate of water is unknown once it passes over county lines simply because counties do not discuss their shared waterway. “We’re very fortunate in the English that it’s relatively small,” says Kennett. “We see the top of it and the lower reaches of the watershed, and the performance of one helps or hinders the other.”

Kennett says he hopes Iowans will treat water sources with more respect. He believes a focus on the benefits of water will create a culture that protects natural resources rather than simply using them as a waste elimination tool. Click [here](#) to read the complete profile.

Local SWCDs at work. This month:

Farmers share questions, offer answers in Hamilton SWCD conservation roundtable



Commissioner Jean Eells (left, standing) welcomes farmers to the Conservation Roundtable, where guests (right) share insights.

The Hamilton SWCD sponsored a “Farmer Conservation Roundtable” in Stanhope this month, inviting area ag producers to share questions and insights regarding their experience with using cover crops, no-till and strip-till. “Banking on the success of this sort of discussion in states across the US, we hope to promote more farmer-to-farmer discussion,” Eells said. “We need to spread the practices faster across the state and they prefer to learn from each other. It’s a win-win.”

Share what’s happening in your district! Events – Awards – Updates – Special Recognition? Let your peers and partners in Iowa know.

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



Hummingbird, photo by Pam Wright

Pam Wright, CA, named winner in NACD photo contest

Pam Wright, Louisa SWCD Conservation Assistant, has an eye for beauty in nature, and the skill to capture it on camera. Her talents were rewarded this month by the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), who chose her photo of a hummingbird as a winner in the NACD 2019 Photo & Poster Contest, held in partnership with the NACD Auxiliary. Winners were announced during the 74th NACD Annual Meeting Inspirational Session this month in Las Vegas. In a competitive field from across the nation, Pam's photo was one of two winning entries in the "Close-Up Conservation" category.

"This year's contest winners captured the beauty and importance of our natural resources and those who work to preserve them," said NACD Auxiliary President Karen Smart.

Pam said her winning photo entry was taken at Historic Nauvoo, IL. "There are beautiful pollinator gardens at the Visitor Center, and I was lucky enough to catch this busy hummingbird at work," Pam said. "These gardens provide excellent habitat and are full of many species of butterflies, bees, hummingbirds and other beneficial insects and birds all summer long. It's one of my favorite areas to photograph."

Congratulations, Pam!

Winners receive cash prizes courtesy of the NACD Auxiliary, made possible by the Auxiliary's quilt project proceeds, the Auxiliary Country Store at the NACD Annual Meeting, and the generosity of individual donors. View the [winning photos](#) and the [winning posters](#) on NACD's Flickr page.