

# ---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.



July 2021  
Volume 2, Number 10

### CDI EXECUTIVE BOARD:

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### From: CDI President Dennis Carney

The Saving Tomorrow's Agriculture Resources (S.T.A.R.) program is an exciting new free program to assist producers and landowners in evaluating their nutrient and soil management practices on individual fields. CDI is promoting a 25-county pilot project this year in East Central Iowa.

S.T.A.R., developed in Champaign County, Illinois by their local Soil and Water Conservation District commissioners, is a way to promote conservation practices. The S.T.A.R. evaluation program assigns points to each cropping, tillage, nutrient application, and soil conservation activity on individual fields. Higher point values are assigned to those practices that align best with Iowa's "Nutrient Reduction Strategy". Based on the points awarded, the field is assigned a rating of one to five stars, with five being the best.

S.T.A.R. is still in its early stages. Iowa was the first state outside of Illinois to formally sign-on with the program. Several additional states, including Missouri, Colorado, and Minnesota, are in the preliminary stages. In addition, a variety of major agricultural industry companies have been closely following the progress of S.T.A.R., acutely aware of increasing consumer pressure focused on resource protection and sustainably produced food, feed, and fuels. On a more local level, the S.T.A.R. program will assist landowners in ensuring that their valuable cropland is being operated and cared for in the way desired. If you are curious about S.T.A.R. and want to learn more, log on to the CDI website at [cdiowa.org/S.T.A.R.](https://cdiowa.org/S.T.A.R.)

## SAVE THE DATE!

CDI Virtual Annual Conference August 23-24

*Please don't miss out on this opportunity to hear from CDI and partners, as well as educational sessions ... at no cost to you!*



## Executive Director Report – John Whitaker

We have received a large number of ballots on the proposed CDI resolutions, and we truly appreciate your participation in the process. At the virtual CDI annual conference, there will be an opportunity to discuss resolutions which fall between 40% and 60% approval in preconference voting, just as has been done in the past. Your resolutions are not always passed by the legislature, but your input is critically important to the process.

The webinars that will be presented at the annual conference are important topics to conservation and water quality work and I hope that you can join those webinars. Soil health, cover crops, women in conservation, pollinators and more, the range of topics is deep enough that you can find topics that will appeal to you.

Election of offices is another important task of the annual conference and we have good candidates for both President and Vice President.

One final thought, I do wish that it was safe to meet in person as I miss the personal connection of an in person annual conference but I also want to keep everyone safe and with the current Delt variant of COVID, an in-person meeting is too great of a risk.

## CDI Virtual Annual Conference Schedule

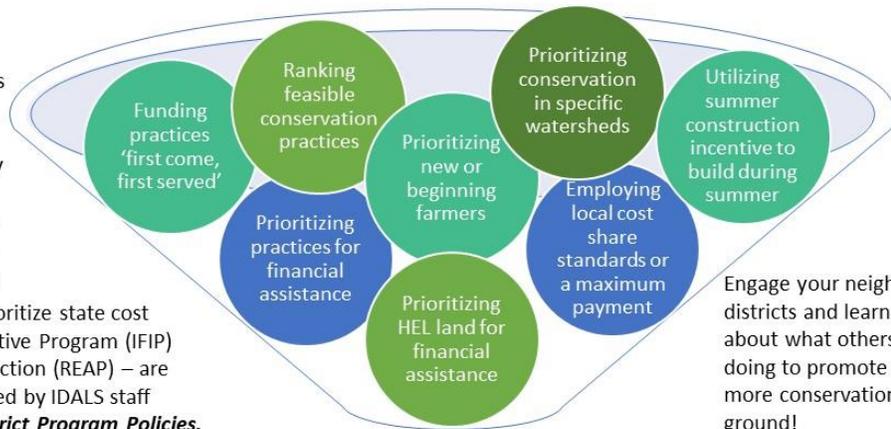
(Subject to change)

| Monday August 23   | Tuesday August 24  |
|--|--|
| <p>9:00 AM to 11:30 – <b>Business meeting:</b> includes greetings from Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig</p>                                | <p>8:30 to 10:00 - Partner discussion: IDALS, NRCS, FSA, DNR. More in depth reports as well as Q&amp;A; 15-minute break for tradeshow</p>              |
| <p>11:30 to 12:30 – Lunch break and trade show</p>   | <p>10:15 to 10:45 – Breakout session 5: <b>Establishing Pollinator Habitat for Spring, Summer, and Fall;</b> 15-minute break for tradeshow</p>         |
| <p>12:30 to 1:00 – Breakout session 1: <b>Healthy Soils Can Store Carbon;</b> 15-minute break for tradeshow</p>                              | <p>11:00 to 11:30 – Breakout session 6: <b>Urban Farming—A fresh Concept</b></p>   |
| <p>1:15 to 1:45 – Breakout session 2: <b>Graze Your Cover Crops to Increase Soil Health;</b> 15-minute break for tradeshow</p>               | <p>11:30 to 12:00 – <b>Awards Presentation</b></p>   |
| <p>2:00 to 2:30 – Breakout session 3: <b>Women in Conservation—A Critical Link;</b> 15-minute break for tradeshow</p>                        | <p>12:00 to 1:00 – Lunch and tradeshow</p>   |
| <p>2:45 to 3:15 – Breakout session 4: <b>You Can Increase Conservation Through Your Farm Lease Agreement</b></p>                             | <p>1:00 to 1:30 – Breakout session 7: <b>Want to Tell Your Conservation Story? Here is How to Do it Effectively;</b> 15-minute break for tradeshow</p> |
| <p>3:30 to 4:00 – NACD, NRCS, and IDALS brief partner reports. Email questions to <a href="mailto:admin@cdiowa.org">admin@cdiowa.org</a></p> | <p>1:45 to 2:15 – Breakout session 8: <b>The S.T.A.R. Program—Bringing about Good Conservation</b></p>   |
| <p>4:00 to 4:30 <b>Awards presentations</b></p>  | <p>2:15 to 2:30 – <b>Closing remarks.</b></p>  |

## Conservation Partnerships – Supporting Local Conservation Goals

The 100 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (districts) in Iowa work together with partner agencies such as IDALS and NRCS to plan and fund conservation practices to best meet local conservation goals using a variety of financial assistance programs. Each district has the opportunity to engage others, together learning and sharing, to best meet their constituents needs.

More information on how districts prioritize state cost share funds – the Iowa Financial Incentive Program (IFIP) and Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) – are summarized in a recent report compiled by IDALS staff titled, *Summary of IFIP and REAP District Program Policies*, which is based on 2021 policy information collected from all 100 districts in Iowa. Examples of methods districts utilize to prioritize financial assistance may include:



## IDALS to release results of recent district survey

In the fall of 2020, IDALS requested district policies for the Iowa Financial Incentive Program (IFIP), Resource Enhancement and Protection Program – Forestry/Native Grasses (REAP-F/NG), and Resource Enhancement and Protection Program – Practice Funds (REAP-P). All 100 districts participated in the district policy survey and this information was compiled and assessed to better understand how districts prioritize conservation practices when allocating IFIP and REAP funds. This information helps IDALS and partners better understand local conservation goals and to continue striving towards more effective conservation program delivery. Now, IDALS is preparing to share its observations so that each district might better understand what other districts are doing to best meet the needs of their constituents and local conservation goals. **The summary report will be sent to district offices soon via email, so please pay close attention to findings of the report as this valuable information may benefit future funding strategies and planning in your districts!**

### Summary of IFIP and REAP District Program Policies



Prepared by the Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality, Field Services Bureau

July 2021



## Humboldt SWCD sponsors local event to support “pollinator friends”



*Pollinator Conservation Planner Sarah Nizzi*

The Humboldt County Soil and Water Conservation District and Humboldt County Historical Association invite the public to attend a free event, “Butterflies and Bees: How to Support Your Pollinator Friends,” at the Humboldt County Historical Museum, Dakota City, July 29. The event runs from 5:00-8:30 p.m., and includes free supper.

According to Jim Sayers, President Humboldt County Soil and Water Conservation District, event introduces the importance of pollinators and demonstrates how residents can support pollinator success in Humboldt County. “Pollinators - including butterflies and bees - are essential to our environment,” notes Sayers. “The United States grows more than 100 crops that either need or benefit from pollinators, and the economic value of these native pollinators is estimated at \$3 billion per year. Here in Humboldt County, we have a great opportunity to learn about and do a lot support these creatures so important to our lives.”

Featured speaker will be Sarah Nizzi, Farm Bill pollinator conservation planner and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) partner biologist, Xerces Society. The evening will also include a tour of historical museum pollinator plots, led by Donna Day, museum volunteer, and a presentation by Kelsey Wigans, seed-to-table manager, Gilmore City-Bradgate Elementary School, about school pollinator activities. Plans are to give each participant a milkweed plant to take home after the event.

## Commissioners agree: the five-year planning process means cooperation and coordination

### *Five-year SWRCP tutorial video offers clear guidance for districts*

As we enter late summer, progress is ramping up in the development of state-mandated 5-year *Soil and Water Resource Conservation Plans (SWRCPs)*. Nearly 40 Iowa districts have sponsored at least their first public input and working group meetings, moving forward with next steps. Many of those districts are deep into the draft stage; others have successfully secured state-approved SWRCPs, turning plans into action.

“Completing a five-year plan seemed like a daunting task for the board,” says John Lubke, chairman of the Winneshiek SWCD. “But thanks to CDI Planner Claire Carlson’s leadership and help, along with several members of the board stepping up, we have a very good and comprehensive five-year plan.”



The first step towards any major endeavor may seem a challenge. Explains Mark Jensen, a Winneshiek commissioner: “The five-year plan was a task that all of us as commissioners knew was important, but always struggled with knowing where to start. When Claire became involved in the process it helped give us direction, and in the end, a better plan.” Now Claire Carlson, CDI Planner for Northeast Iowa, has created a helpful 15-minute video explaining how the SWRCP planning process works and what those districts which have yet to meet their planner and begin the planning process can anticipate. The video is a helpful tutorial in preparing for a smooth and successful planning effort. Says Winneshiek SWCD chair Jensen: “While the process can be an undertaking, we created the vision that will enable us to continue making and supporting decisions that positively impact our communities and land that supports us all.” **Please take the time to review Claire’s helpful video – share with staff, interested community members and local commissioners!**

[Click here to watch Claire’s “Five Year SWRCP Overview”](#)