

# ---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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### From: CDI President Ramona Nitz

I've been receiving calls recently from folks wanting to talk about carbon sequestration and what the future may look like in that regard.

Last Spring, I participated in the NACD (virtual) Fly-In and spoke with our Iowa legislators. I had participated in these type of "legislative days" in Washington for years with JDRF so I was very happy to be asked to join in. One issue that our NACD leaders wanted us to discuss was carbon and what the future may bring. We all agreed that the ideas being brought forth at that time were quite new but that we needed to be ready should the practice of carbon sequestration ever be in the form of a government program run through our district offices.

A few months later, Governor Reynolds announced the formation of a carbon task force that was to be headed by Ag Secretary Mike Naig. Shortly after this announcement, I received a call saying that the Secretary was going to be in town that week and asking if I would meet with him. I readily agreed, of course, because I really wanted to talk with him about this new task force. I told him that in case it ever did happen that our SWCD offices would be involved with a program dealing with carbon sequestration, we at CDI felt that we would like to be involved now with what the task force was thinking and the direction they were heading. He agreed.

Secretary Naig and I have been in touch regularly and he has kept me updated on the work of the task force. This is a topic for which I plan to make time at our regional meetings. I'm very interested in hearing your thoughts and ideas. Just one more reason I'm really looking forward to the Spring regional meetings this year!

Ramona

### The '1,000 Farms Initiative' seeks to demonstrate power of regenerative agriculture

According to the [Ecdysis Foundation](#), modern industrial agriculture faces threats to production of nutritious and sufficient food for our nation and the world, made more acute in the face of a changing climate. In a recent release, Ecdysis asserts that "Regenerative agriculture sits at the intersection of a healthy environment, productive agriculture, and social and economic health and resilience." The foundation is sponsoring the '1,000 Farms Initiative' to demonstrate the power of regenerative agriculture on a network of farms, where the status of key agronomic, ecological, and economic factors will be assessed. They are seeking producer participants in the study, which has two overarching scientific goals: 1) Validate key regenerative agricultural systems, and 2) Develop data-driven roadmaps for transitioning key food systems from conventional to regenerative systems. To learn more and participate, check out: [1000 Farms Initiative](#) and [A Regenerative Agricultural Study](#).

## Executive Director Report – John Whitaker

We are preparing for the spring regional meetings in early March so please be watching for your invitation to your region’s meeting. The current plan is to hold these meetings in person but with the recent surge in Covid cases, that may change. We really want to see everyone in person, but we must stay safe.

CDI lobbyist Jim Obradovich is sharing helpful tips to talk with your local legislators (p. 3). He also has bills of interest that he has written brief descriptions of. **It is very important that your legislators hear directly from you.** Legislators do hear from us in our lobbying efforts but as a former legislator, I can tell you that hearing from constituents is far more important than hearing from the lobby. You should talk to them about issues that are important to you and your local district. They want to help their local districts so please let them know what you need. If you have any questions, please contact me and I will help you all I can.

The soil health bill, House File 801 is eligible for debate at any time since it passed out of committee last year, so that is worth talking to legislators about. The budget request for the IDALS Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality has a direct effect on the work you do as commissioners and so we have included a copy of that request with this edition of Connections. You may feel strongly about other CDI resolutions such as buffer strips along streams and many others, but your local legislators don’t know what is important to you unless you tell them. The dome on the capitol may be gold but that doesn’t mean your legislator is isolated from you!

### ‘District Buffer Initiative’ funding available through local SWCDs

IDALS announced available funding available for Iowa producers and landowners – administered through local districts – to help improve water quality and provide wildlife habitat. In a January 26 memo to SWCDs from Will Myers, Field Services Bureau Chief, IDALS/Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality, the “District Buffer Initiative Program” offers practice and technical assistance by districts “to promote the benefits of filter, buffer, and contour practices on the farm under a state maintenance agreement.”

The District Buffer Initiative Program falls into three program “bins” for practices that:

- Incentivize contour, filter, and buffer strips under a 5-year state maintenance agreement
- Facilitate the transition of expiring CRP to pasture systems or tree plantings
- Further incentivize specific CRP practices through a state incentive



**DISTRICT BUFFER INITIATIVE FUNDING AVAILABLE**

*Funds are available to assist with keeping perennial cover on the farm - to assist with CRP, expiring CRP, or buffers - to help improve water quality and provide habitat.*

<p><b>CONTINUOUS CRP</b> FUNDING ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE TO INCENTIVIZE THE PRESERVATION OF ELIGIBLE CRP PRACTICES, INCLUDING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contour buffer strips (CP15A and CP15B)</li> <li>• Filter strips (CP21*)</li> <li>• Prairie STRIPS (CP42)</li> <li>• Shallow water areas (CP9)</li> <li>• Wetlands (CP23, CP27, CP41)</li> </ul>	<p><b>TRANSITIONING CRP</b> FOR LAND TRANSITIONING OUT OF CRP, STATE FUNDING ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE TO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain buffers or filters on farm while being able to hay/graze</li> <li>• Plant new seedlings</li> <li>• Implement a grazing system on the grassland (may include water source, pipeline, fence and seeding)</li> <li>• Plant grassland to trees or shrubs</li> </ul>
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Contact your local SWCD for program details, to determine eligibility and to discuss farm goals.

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & LAND STEWARDSHIP | **cleanwater IOWA**

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[Please review the complete 3-page memo here](#) that offers important background and guidance on the program, and contacts for more information.

## Key for this legislative session: Relationship-building with lawmakers

*Jim Obradovich*  
*President of The Capitol Group*

As a result of the everchanging COVID situation, there will not be a Partnership Day at the Statehouse this year. While the event will not take place, I strongly encourage all commissioners to stay in contact with their local state lawmakers. One key to CDI's success at the Statehouse are the relationships commissioners have with their local state senator and state representative. These are not superficial relationships. They are built upon a foundation of mutual respect, and they are bolstered by the commissioners' expertise and sincerity in protecting our soil and water. We know that Iowa's soil and water are neither conservative nor liberal nor Democrat nor Republican. We do also know that our soil and water are resources deserving of protection.

In the absence of the Partnership Day, please reach out to your local state lawmakers. Send them a short email urging them to continue their investment in soil and water conservation projects and programs. Consider inviting them to a commissioners' meeting to hear about what you do. Also, when it warms up a bit, invite them to join you on a short tour of conservation practices - seeing is believing.

To identify your local state lawmakers and find their contact information, please visit the "Find Your Legislator" page of the Iowa Legislative website at: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find>

Conservation Districts of Iowa | State Soil Conservation and Water Quality Committee

### FY2023 SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION BUDGET REQUEST

[Click here to review a detailed outline of budget requests](#) before the Iowa legislature, promoted by CDI and the State Soil Conservation and Water Quality Committee. From water quality initiatives, watershed protection, CREP, CRP, REAP and more, this convenient, downloadable guide will give SWCD commissioners background for their critical face-to-face meetings with local legislators.

## Iowa Legislature 2022 Bills of Interest

### Bills of Interest:

(HF - House File, HSB - House Study Bill, SF - Senate File, SSB - Senate Study Bill)

**HSB 536 - Stormwater Preemption (M)** - This bill prohibits a county or city from adopting, enforcing, or otherwise administering an ordinance, motion, resolution, or amendment providing for any terms or conditions of storm water regulation that exceed or conflict with the requirements of federal or state law relating to stormwater runoff, discharge, retention, or management. *Subcommittee: Nordman, Mitchell and Nielsen*

**HSB 500 - CRP Property Tax Classification (M)** - The USDA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a land conservation program administered by the federal farm service agency (FSA). In exchange for a yearly rental payment, property owners enrolled in the program enter into contracts with the FSA to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. This bill prohibits land from being classified or valued as residential property for property tax purposes under Iowa law while the property is enrolled in the CRP. *Subcommittee: Latham, Hansen and Ingels*

February 25<sup>th</sup> deadline for team registrations

## Iowa Envirothon returns to in-person competition



The intensity of face-to-face Envirothon competition is back – high school-age teams huddled together, debating in whispers, eyeing competitor tables, answering challenging questions for a chance to move on to the state finals in May. “We are excited to be able to hold an in-person competition this year,” says CDI Program Manager Carlee Sabus. “It would not be possible without our regional coordinators and volunteers who volunteer their time every year to make these events a success and we are very grateful for them!” Last year’s Envirothon competition was a virtual contest between teams held online – a successful event, but missing that unique pressure of competitive teams gathered and dueling in shared locations.

Envirothon is an environmental and natural resource conservation problem-solving, teambuilding and leadership experience and competition for high school students (grades 9-12 or ages 14-19) across the United States, Canada, and China. Envirothon fosters student learning in the areas of aquatic ecology, forestry, soils and land use, wildlife, and current environmental issues.

For the 2022 Iowa Envirothon, Sabus says teams must submit registration forms by February 25<sup>th</sup>. **For more information, registration forms and study guide, go to [CDI Envirothon](#).** The State Envirothon competition will be held on May 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Jester Park Nature Center in Granger, Iowa. The five regional event dates and locations are scheduled at these dates and locations:

- March 9 – Upper Iowa University, Waterloo
- March 15 – FFA Enrichment Center, Ankeny
- March 14 – Cherokee Community Center, Cherokee
- March 15 – Kirkwood Community College, Iowa City
- March 17 – Montgomery CO Fairgrounds, Red Oak

Introducing “Digital” version for 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades

## Poster contest promotes “Healthy Soil Healthy Life” for young Iowa conservation artists

The CDI Poster contest is underway for Iowa youth, who wish to turn their artistic talents toward promoting “Healthy Soil Healthy Life”. The 2022 Poster Contest will include two options: the “**2022 Hand Drawn Poster Contest**” is open for grades K-12; the “**2022 Digital Poster Contest**” is open for grades 7-12.



The first critical deadline is **Friday, April 29, 2022**: Applicants must submit their poster accompanied by the Poster Contest Entry Form to the SWCD office in the county which their school is located. Entry forms must be legible and complete, including a guardian/parental signature and their SWCDs information or the poster cannot be considered. Make sure a copy is securely attached to the back of the submitted poster.

Want to add logo to your email signature? [Click here!](#)

For complete information, entry forms and poster contest rules, log on: [CDI 2022 Poster Contest](#).