

# ---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.



April 2022  
Volume 3, Number 7

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### From: CDI President Ramona Nitz

This time of year is always busy, isn't it? It seems we farmers are constantly watching the weather and the soil temperatures, waiting for the day when the planters can roll. It's also a time when we soil and water commissioners may spend extra time with projects in our counties.

One of my favorite things to do as the chair of my county SWCD is to go to each of the elementary schools in the county and present awards to the winners of our annual poster contest. The children are always so excited! Later in May, I will attend the high schools' awards ceremonies to announce the winners of our scholarships. In this case, I think the parents are even more excited than their winning students! In any case, it's always great fun to be at the schools.

As I write today, we are just beginning Conservation Week. Tomorrow, I will head to our local radio station where our DC will be sharing information on the Cherokee County cover crop tour that we are sponsoring with the Iowa Soybean Association. Wednesday, I plan to join Governor Reynolds in Polk County as she signs the proclamation for Soil and Water Conservation Week. And Thursday, I'll be in Story County with Secretary Naig at a drainage water recycling project.

Yes, it's a busy time. And a rewarding time as we continue to share our enthusiasm for soil and water conservation all over the state. Did your district do something special for Conservation Week? Send your photos to Joe here at "Connections" and tell us how you shared our message this year (*see page 4*)! Before signing off, I want to extend a special thank you to Kossuth County SWCD for inviting me to their monthly meeting. I had a great time hearing what they've been up to. And the taco lunch was delicious! Have a safe spring! – *Ramona*

### Save the Date!

## CDI Annual Conference dates set for August

The CDI Board of Directors set **August 21-23** for the 2022 CDI Annual Conference, to be held at the Gateway Hotel, Ames, Iowa. CDI Executive John Whitaker said the board decided to focus on one important topic for the entirety of the three-day conference. "The theme of this year's meeting will be '**How Important is Water to You?**,'" Whitaker announced. "Instead of multiple topics for afternoon breakout sessions, we will use the entire time to discuss water. We will look at Iowa's water from both a quality and a quantity perspective." Details regarding speakers and breakout sessions are pending.

## Executive Director Report – John Whitaker

We are currently in a ‘rebuilding’ situation with the five-year Soil and Water Resource Conservation Plan process in SW Iowa. Jonathan Hendricks accepted another position at the beginning of April. We have a plan forward either placing a newly hired planning coordinator or RC&D to finish the process. April was a big month for the planning process with 15 SWRC Plans being approved by the SSCWQC.

We currently have two openings for Private Lands Wildlife Specialist positions, one in Garner, and one in Corning. We will be interviewing candidates for these positions the second week of May.

Farmers have been steadily submitting STAR field forms, but we are looking for more. We would like to see an additional 250 fields this year. We are also working with farm management companies to use STAR as a conservation measurement tool in farm leases. It is simple to use and does not require the manager to ‘spell out’ all of the details of particular conservation practices in the lease. We have discussed this with managers and they like the idea. They point to the ease and flexibility this gives producers to protect the land.

During April, CDI leadership met with most of our Congressional Representatives and Senators, or their staff. They were all eager to communicate with us and listen to our needs – including the need for additional staff in offices, funds to maintain existing structure, and climate issues.

Do you know good conservationists in Iowa? There are many and yes, the list is long. The Leopold Conservation Award for Iowa will be awarded for the first time this year. The award is offered through the Sand County Foundation and CDI is a major sponsor of this award in Iowa. Applications can be found here: [2022 CFN Iowa.indd \(sandcountyfoundation.org\)](https://www.sandcountyfoundation.org/2022-CFN-Iowa.indd)

### *Reminder from IDALS*

## “Conservation Farmer of the Year” deadline nears

Again in 2022, Van Wall Group of Perry will be donating the use of a John Deere 6E Series utility tractor to the Iowa Soil Conservation Awards Program (ISCAP) **Conservation Farmer of the Year**. The winner will have the free use of the tractor for up to 12 months or up to 200 hours! Note that the awards promotion for Conservation Farmer of the Year allows people to nominate farmers by providing to the district a name and brief summary. IDALS-DSCWQ would like each district to help complete the nominations and summaries and submit them to your Area Office to be considered for this award. Please note – This program is open to all farmers in the SWCD, except SWCD commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, members of the SSCWQC, and employees of the sponsoring agencies. Past state winners are not eligible to compete. Past district winners are ineligible to compete during the two years subsequent to receiving the state award.

The following are the due dates and locations to send the nominations for awards. You can find the award forms attached to this email or on CDI’s website: <http://cdiowa.org/recognition/awards/>

- Iowa Soil Conservation Awards Program (ISCAP): Conservation Farmer of the Year Award (open to self-nomination) – **Due May 13 to Local SWCD**, District selections due May 27 to NRCS Area Office, Area Office selections due June 10 to IDALS-DSCWQ

Please submit electronically to Angie Sebastian at [angie.sebastian@iowaagriculture.gov](mailto:angie.sebastian@iowaagriculture.gov). Be sure to scan all photographs in color. You will receive a confirmation email within one week. If you do not, please contact Angie Sebastian. Good luck this year with your district awards programs. If you have any questions, please call Angie Sebastian at 515-499-4941 or Lori Lewis at 515-281-5258.

*Promote what's best about your district to support the CDI Scholarship Program!*

## ***Fund-raising auction returns, helping youth on conservation path***

CDI's Scholarship Program is a vital means to support our mission with districts and reward selected outstanding high school seniors planning to study agriculture at the collegiate level. Former CDI President Dennis Carney says this year, a familiar event returns in support of that funding after a two-year absence. "As you are aware, in the absence of our annual scholarship auction held during conference the past two years we relied on the generous cash support of our districts,"

Carney says. "And we have good news: **this August, the auction is returning to the CDI Annual Conference!**

Consider donating an auction-able item from your district to support this very worthwhile program. Items that represent the best of what is unique or unusual about your district always sell well."

***"I am so, so grateful to all of you at the Conservation Districts of Iowa for your continued support of high school graduates..."***

**-Morgan Dunn, CDI Scholarship winner**

The return of the auction means a chance for district commissioners to make an important contribution to funding that influences the 'real-world' goals and future of Iowa youth – and therefore of Iowa. A recent CDI Scholarship winner says she's thankful to Iowa district commissioners for the award she received that helped



***CDI Scholarship winner Morgan Dunn***

put her on the path to achieving her professional goals. Morgan Dunn, representing Polk SWCD in Region 6, was the CDI Scholarship Program 1<sup>st</sup> place winner in 2021, earning a \$3,000 award. Morgan is a 2021 graduate of Johnston High School, now attending Colorado State University, pursuing a major in Ecosystem Science and Sustainability. "The generosity of the CDI scholarship program has made it possible for me to attend my dream school and continue learning about land, water, and climate issues," Morgan says. "I am so, so grateful to all of you at the Conservation Districts of Iowa for your continued support of high school graduates. Your contributions build crucial steppingstones to higher education for students who are passionate about preserving our natural world."

Other winners in 2021 include: 2<sup>nd</sup> place – Krista Goth, Cherokee SWCD, Region 1, with a \$2,000 scholarship; and Dylan Engelbrecht, Scott SWCD, Region 7, with a \$1,000 scholarship. Additionally, a \$500 scholarship winner is chosen from each of the remaining six Regions. Carney, who is "Auction Chair" for the event to be held during the August CDI Annual Conference, suggests such items as guided hunting or fishing trips, bed-and-breakfast stays, guided tours, and goodie baskets have been well received in the past. "At your next commissioner meeting, please discuss what your district will donate. Then bring it with

you to conference, along with a fat wallet, and let's have some fun while supporting CDI scholarships!" Please consider helping CDI meet its funding goals for 2022 CDI Scholarships by participating in the August auction. To learn more or contribute, click here: [CDI Scholarships](#).

## Getting the word out...



At left, Ramona and John Nitz recently had an opportunity to talk with Senator Chuck Grassley. The discussion included issues such as the next Farm Bill, renewable fuels, carbon sequestration and conservation practices. The Senator was very interested to learn that NACD has formed a Farm Bill task force.

Nick Livermore (at right, center), District Conservationist in Cherokee County and Ryan Johnson (far right) with the Iowa Soybean Association talk with John O’Conner of KCHE radio in Cherokee as they share information about the self-guided cover crop tour now taking place in Cherokee County.



## 2022 Iowa Soil & Water Conservation Week

### Share Your Local Celebration!

CDI and *Connections* would like to share your good work celebrating the 2022 Iowa Soil & Water Conservation Week!

Let others know how you are promoting sound conservation practices in your district

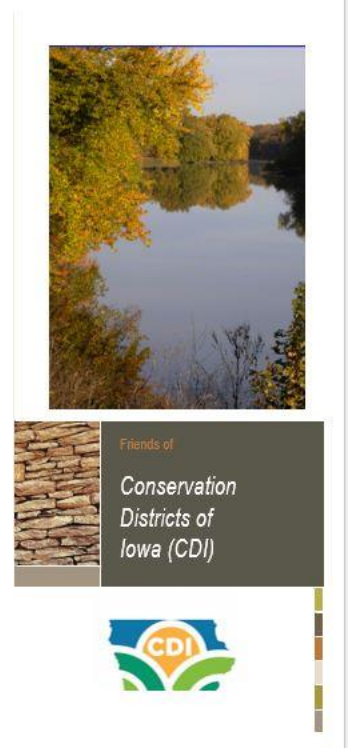
– send your pictures or story ideas to [joe@cdiowa.org](mailto:joe@cdiowa.org)



## ***Increased conservation awareness may inspire more “Friends of CDI” to help fund programming***

The “Friends of CDI” program was started several years ago as a means for individuals, businesses, and other non-profits to financially support the programs of CDI. Although this part of CDI’s fundraising efforts have not been strongly promoted in recent years, an increasing public interest in how our food and fiber are produced and the expanding reach of CDI programming offers an opportunity to promote this recognition program more.

On the CDI website, under “Who We Are/Donations”, is a [downloadable Friends of CDI](#) brochure that can be printed and shared, and which helps explain how to support these important efforts. Funds raised through “Friends of CDI” are used at the Board’s discretion to support existing programs, promote conservation and water quality efforts across the state, and develop new outreach efforts. Please spread the word and mobilize efforts for members and others to make a tax-deductible donation to support CDI’s mission. Thank you!



*Cover of "Friends of CDI" brochure available for easy download and sharing.*

## **2022 Iowa Water Conference Postponed until September**



**IOWA WATER 20  
CONFERENCE 22**  
Our Watershed Moment:  
Building Communities for Conservation

The 2022 Iowa Water Conference has been **postponed to September 28-29th**. The conference will be held in person at the Grand River Center in Dubuque, Iowa. Registration will be available in mid-July. The program will include new features and tours to highlight the region during its peak season.

Updated deadlines:

- The poster submission deadline has been extended to May 28<sup>th</sup>
- The photo contest submission deadline has been extended to August 22nd

For more information: <https://www.regcytes.extension.iastate.edu/iwc2022/>

# Making the connections to conservation

**By Kriss Nelson, Iowa Soybean Association**

The goal of the Iowa Soybean Association's (ISA) Research Center for Farming Innovation (RCFI) is to deliver the best farmer-led research combining agronomic, conservation and analytics tailored for soybean farmers. Whether this is through on-farm research working directly with farmers, hosting events, or online resources, ISA is driven to improve farmer profitability and stewardship. "At RCFI, we work to combine agronomic, conservation and analytics tailored for farmers," says Roger Wolf, RCFI director. "This work is done in partnerships with groups like CDI and ag retailers."



*ISA cover crop management field test*

With the help of university specialists and farmers who have found success with cover crops, RCFI recently published a guide for farmers interested in implementing a cover crop system. [Advances in Cover Crop Management](#) includes steps to establishing cover crops, increasing profitability, terminating a cover crop, managing pests, establishing a profitable cash crop and managing soil fertility in cover crop systems. "There have been several research discoveries about cover crop management over the past five years," says Scott Nelson, ISA senior field services program manager. "This guide summarizes these advances in a farmer-friendly format."

## A cover crop road trip

This spring, ISA is hosting a self-guided tour of cover crops in Cherokee County. The tour includes 20 locations, resulting from a collaborative effort between Ryan Johnson, ISA conservation agronomist, and Nick Livermore, Cherokee County district conservationist. Cover crop fields that are a part of the [self-guided cover crop tour](#) can be viewed now through June 1st.

"I wanted the tour not only to be a way to help promote cover crops but to give producers who may be contemplating using cover crops a simple way to look at how other farmers are making the practice work and find a similar approach that would fit their operation," says Johnson. Participants can follow a [virtual map](#) to the 20 locations featuring a variety of cover crop species all planted using different rates, dates and seeding methods. "The tour gives them the background and information of each location to view on their own time," says Johnson. "They will see a lot of fields where the cover crops are grazed. One field has cover crops drilled in areas prone to erosion instead of the entire field." The timing of the self-guided tour will also give viewers a firsthand look at cover crops being terminated and how a cash crop can be managed into cover crops.

## 'Innovation to Go' Webinar series

ISA has begun hosting a series of webinars featuring reliable, farmer-focused research results involving agronomics conservation, analytics and engagement opportunities. The [Innovation to Go Webinar](#) series began in March and will be held monthly through September. [Water Monitoring and Quality](#) will be the subject of the May 3 webinar. More webinar opportunities will be announced soon.



*Iowa Soybean Association is a valued sponsor of CDI.*