

---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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CDI EXECUTIVE BOARD:

President: Ramona Nitz
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From: CDI President Ramona Nitz

I have recently returned from the NACD annual summer meeting. I was especially excited to attend this summer meeting, my first, because it was being held in one of my very favorite places in the world. San Juan, Puerto Rico. Two board members attended this meeting with me – Jeri Thornsberry, CDI V.P. and Angela Rosol, CDI Treasurer. Also attending from Iowa was Tim Palmer, NACD immediate past president.



CDI VP Thornsberry and President Nitz

As president of CDI, I sit on the NACD Board and have a seat on the Legislative Committee. There was a lot of discussion about the next Farm Bill, as there was when we met as a Board in February. The NACD Farm Bill Task Force has been meeting regularly to come up with ideas to share with our legislators who will be working on this bill.

We spent one day outside of the city to check out conservation projects in rural Puerto Rico. It was very interesting to learn of the challenges faced by producers in a place whose land and climate are so different than ours. And imagine our surprise to find this Iowa flag hanging over the terrace at one of our stops. See you next month at our CDI annual conference and we can talk more about the Farm Bill, carbon sequestration or anything else on your mind. I look forward to seeing you! – *Ramona*

***CDI Annual Conference, August 22-23,
Gateway Hotel and Conference Center, Ames***

Executive Director Report – John Whitaker

As we prepare for our first in-person Annual Conference in three years, I can safely say that I am looking forward to seeing folks again. The Spring Regional meetings were a great chance to talk to folks, but we didn't get to see as many as we will see at Annual Conference. Send your registration today if you have not done it yet. One thing to mention is that we will not be holding the planned Commissioner training at the end of the meeting. It is my fault. Many of us will be attending the State Soil Conservation and Water Quality meeting right after the end of the Annual Conference and that would make it difficult to do the training session at the same time. We are looking at bringing back the training sessions after the elections this fall so that new commissioners can benefit from the training.

We have been receiving applications for the Private Lands Wildlife Specialists and Wetland easement Team Specialists positions we have open but are continuing to look for more. If you know anyone interested in these positions, please direct them to our website.

Thank you to the districts which have sent us their 2022-2023 dues. We are working with one less person in the office and will get your receipt to your district as soon as we can. See you at Annual Conference in four weeks!

Thank You Conservation Districts of Iowa

Thank you for your collaboration in the areas of

Cover Crop Research

Water Quality Initiative Partnerships

Water Monitoring

Conservation Practice Implementation

We wish you success with your 2022 Annual Meeting



Research Center for Farming Innovation

Visit our exhibit for more information

Contact Kristen Dearden at
kdearden@iasoybeans.com for collaboration
opportunities

Planner Profile: Alyssa Comer, CDI Planner for SE Iowa

A casual comment by an Iowa City hair stylist to a client leads to a chance meeting of two who share a common university major – one looking for her first post-grad career position, the other offering a timely career opportunity. ... And that’s how new SE CDI planner Alyssa Comer and NW CDI planner Madison Conley found themselves on the road together, making their way on a weeklong journey through the landscapes and friendly gatherings of northwest Iowa SWCDs.



CDI SE Planner Alyssa Comer

Taking over for former SE planner Nate Kilburg, Alyssa Comer is charged with facilitating SWCDs working to complete their 5-year “Soil and Water Resources Conservation Plan” (SWRCP), a position she says perfectly fit her education and professional goals, and that she was surprised to find so quickly. Thank a hair stylist for that.

Alyssa is a Cedar Rapids native, but born in Lincoln, NE, where her grandfather lived the country life. “I spent a lot of time growing up helping out on his farm, an iris farm. He had a catalog for his flowers and grew his own food. But it was definitely not a typical Iowa farm, more of a small-scale operation. But it gave me a taste of farm life.”

Graduating from Washington High School in Cedar Rapids, Alyssa moved 30 minutes away to begin classes at the University of Iowa. As an open major, Alyssa started her higher education journey taking random classes, but soon found a focus. “What interested me the most were environmental classes,” she says. “I came to respect how interconnected everything was – the social aspect of it, as well as the sustainability aspect. It was an eye-opener.” In

May of this year, Alyssa graduated with a degree in environmental policy and planning with a certificate in sustainability. That’s when the fortuitous meeting of college majors occurred in an Iowa City hair salon. “That’s how I met Madison. She was a client at the hair salon I was working at, and the stylist happened to mention to her that we have the same degree. So she came up and talked to me about what she did as a job, and that sounded really interesting.” Once on board as the new SE Planner, Alyssa joined Madison on a week-long road trip. “Alyssa went with me through northwest Iowa to shadow and observe what I do, and how I work with each district,” says Madison. “She was so open-minded, and ready to learn about the job. She took a lot of notes and asked a lot of questions about the process. Alyssa learned a lot that week ... and we had a really good time together, as well!”

“To see what’s happening in different parts of Iowa, and meet people who are doing important conservation work, was a great experience and very motivating.” – Alyssa Comer

For Alyssa, the journey was an encouraging look at the responsibilities ahead in her new position. “Even though I grew up living in Iowa, I didn’t really know what we do for conservation here. And to see what’s happening in different parts of Iowa, and meet people who are doing important conservation work, was a great experience and very motivating.” Alyssa, as the new SE Planner, faces the challenge of working with 14 remaining SWCDs – each at various points in the process of completing their 5-year SWRCP. “It can be interesting, especially trying to catch up with districts that are in the middle of the process. I’m excited to meet everyone.”

In the experienced view of colleague Madison Conley, what should southeast districts know about their new 5-year planner? “Alyssa is a quick learner, and she’s there to get the job done. She’s on a shorter time frame than the rest of us planners because she is taking over for her predecessor, Nate – who did an awesome job as well. She’s ready to get work and help districts get their five-year plan done.”

76th Annual CDI Conference

Featured speakers bring focus to policy and planning for Iowa’s water quality and conservation future



Secretary Mike Naig

Monday, August 22, 2022

Lunch – Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig

Mike Naig grew up on a family farm in the northwest corner of the state near Cylinder, Iowa and he continues to be involved in the operation today. Mike is a graduate of Buena Vista University in Storm Lake with degrees in biology and political science. Mike was elected as the 15th Iowa Secretary of Agriculture in November 2018. He previously served as the Deputy Secretary at the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. Mike knows that protecting our air, soil and water is essential to our success.

<https://iowaagriculture.gov/mike-naig>

Monday, August 22, 2022

Awards Banquet – Speaker Larry Weber, Iowa Flood Center

“I am a professor of civil and environmental engineering and hold the Edwin B. Green Chair in Hydraulics. With Director Witold Krajewski, I helped create the IFC and continue to be active in its development through work with the Iowa Legislature. I have also been active in IFC programs for statewide floodplain mapping and watershed projects for flood damage reduction, including the \$97M Iowa Watershed Approach. As a service to the state of Iowa, I am a member of the Water Resources Coordinating Council and participate on numerous state and federal agency committees related to water resources planning.” <https://iowafloodcenter.org/people/larry-weber/>



Larry Weber

Tuesday, August 23, 2022

Breakfast Buffet – Neil Hamilton, retired Drake Law Professor

Former Director of the Drake Agricultural Law Center. Professor Emeritus of Law. Areas of Expertise: Agricultural Law, Land Use, Legislation, Food and the Law, Environmental Regulation of Agriculture, Wind Law. Education: JD – University of Iowa, *Order of the Coif*; BS – Iowa State University (with honors and distinction). Professional Experience: Drake Law School professor since 1983. Assistant Attorney General for the Iowa Department of Justice. Assistant professor at the University of Arkansas. Significant Accomplishments: Member of the Board of Directors for the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. Past president of the American Agricultural Law Association. Chair of the Iowa Food Policy Council (2000-2007). Past chair of the Agriculture Law Section of the Association of American Law Schools. Vice chair of the USDA Small Farms Advisory Committee (1997-2000)

<https://www.drake.edu/law/facstaff/directory/neil-hamilton/>



Neil Hamilton

**2022 Iowa Soil & Water Conservation District Commissioners Annual Conference
August 22 & 23, 2022**

Agenda

Sunday, August 21, 2022

- Noon Registration Table Opens
- 3:00 pm CDI Board Meeting

Monday, August 22, 2022

- 8:00 am Registration and Credentials Tables Open
Exhibits Open – Auction Items Accepted
- 9:00 am Guest Tour Departs
Welcome from CDI and SSCWQC
CDI Business Meeting
- 11:30 am Breaks and Exhibits
- 12:00 pm Lunch – Speaker; Secretary Mike Naig
- 1:00 pm Break and Exhibits
- 1:30 pm Afternoon session: Where we are on Water Quality and Quantity in Iowa – Iowa Soybean Association and USGS
- 2:15 pm Ice Cream Social served by CDI Board – Break and Exhibits
- 2:45 pm Afternoon session: How can we improve water quality in Iowa? – Catherine DeLong, ISU Extension and Wayne Fredericks, Farmer from Osage, Iowa
- 3:30 pm Break and Exhibits
- 3:45 pm Afternoon session: Water Quantity Improvement Innovation in Iowa – Johnathon Swanson, Polk SWCD and Mary Beth Stevenson, City of Cedar Rapids
- 4:30 pm Break and Exhibits
- 4:45 pm NACD Presentation
- 5:00 pm Social and Exhibits
- 6:00 pm Awards Banquet – Speaker Larry Weber, Iowa Flood Center
- 8:00 pm Live Auction

Guest Tour
Monday, August 22nd
9:00am-3:30pm
Enjoy a guided tour of a glass art gallery in Ames, Iowa and you will be able to make your own glass piece to take home with you.
Lunch and beverages will also be provided.

Tuesday, August 23, 2022

- 7:00 am Breakfast Buffet – Speaker Neil Hamilton, retired Drake Law Professor
- 8:00 am Break and Exhibits
- 8:30 am *Propelling Conservation through Conversation... An Imagining Session* - Commissioners/IDALS
General Discussion to explore ways to enhance commissioner’s involvement, ideas to get new people involved with local SWCDs, suggestions to enhance Commissioners/IDALS partnership, and share local best practices for District operations
- 10:00 am Break and Exhibits
- 10:30 am Panel Discussion – Partners, NRCS, FSA, IDNR
- 11:30 am Lunch and District Awards
- 1:00 pm Annual Conference Wrap-up