

# Conservation Insights

Promoting Water and Soil Conservation  
in Ida County, Iowa

A quarterly publication of the Ida County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)  
and the Battle Creek Watershed Groundwater Protection Project

Summer 1998  
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Phone (712) 364-2124

## You CAN Improve Well Water Quality

By Nancy Rydberg  
Environmental Technician  
Ida County Sanitarian's Office

Can you actually improve your well water quality by protecting your well? If you have problems with sediment, bacteria or nitrates in your well water, the answer may be yes.

The source of these contaminants often is surface runoff entering the well. Make a careful assessment of the wellhead area to be sure rain and runoff cannot enter the well or pool around the wellhead.

Improvements can be as simple as replacing a cracked and crumbling lid with a new solid cement cover or diverting runoff away from the well area. Make sure well casings are more than 12 inches above ground level and 12 inches above the highest known flood level.

For shallow large diameter wells, you may need to add a cement curbing to the top of the well. Then dirt should be added around the well casing at a slope to divert runoff away from the well.

If you have a small diameter drilled well, you should extend the casing up above the ground. Many wellheads are placed in frost pits. Frost pits are not recommended because flooding potential to a well is greatly increased. Removing the frost pit and putting in a pitless adapter works well.

Buried slab construction is used to reduce the size of the well exposed. This is



**Brian Cronin, pictured at right, and project coordinator Chris Jennings stand by the new Battle Creek Watershed sign near Cronin's cornfield south of Holstein. The sign marks a manure demonstration plot that will be the focus of a field day this summer.**

## Cronin, Conover Plots Planted in Watershed

Manure management and Bt corn technology are the subjects of new field demonstrations in Ida County's Battle Creek Watershed Project this summer. Brian Cronin of Battle Township is hosting the manure demonstration, which compares manured corn to non-manured corn with additional rates of commercial fertilizer. On Kevin and Kim Conover's farm in Logan Township, a demonstration plot compares five Bt hybrids with their non-Bt counterparts.

Later this summer, the two plots will be the site of a field day open to the public, according to Chris Jennings, Battle Creek Watershed Groundwater Protection project coordinator. Look for the blue signs along 210th Street and along Eagle Avenue, announcing the locations.

## New U.S.D.A. Service Center Open

The new U.S.D.A. Service Center east of Ida Grove is now open. Several farm agencies moved in May from downtown Ida Grove to this new location on Highway 175 near the Ida Grove airport and North West REC building.

The Service Center is the new home for the Ida County Soil and Water Conservation District, Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Battle Creek Watershed Groundwater Protection Project.

The various agencies are renting their offices in the building built by private investors. Visitors are welcome any time. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

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# To Improve Water Quality: Take Advantage of Cost-Sharing Programs

## Little Sioux Watershed

By Lorne Miller  
NRCS District Conservationist

Landowners are being encouraged to take advantage of the Little Sioux Cost Share program offered in Ida County.

The Ida County Soil and Water Conservation District commissioners recently raised the rates for terraces, as well as water and sediment control basins. This was in conjunction with the Little Sioux Watershed Flood Prevention Program in Ida County.

These rates increased from 50 percent to 65 percent. They affect terraces and con-

trol basins built during the regular construction season (before June 15 or after Sept. 15). A summer incentive of 75 percent cost share exists if construction takes place during June 15 to Sept. 15.

Cost-share dollars are available during this fiscal year 1998 and I encourage landowners to sign up now. These funds can be obligated and used over the next 18 months. Cost-share dollars in the future are always uncertain. So now is the time to get signed up.

Applications now are being taken at the Natural Resources Conservation Service. We are located at the new U.S.D.A. Service Center at 5973 Hwy. 175, Ida Grove, Iowa. Call (712) 364-2124 for more information.

## Learn About NPM Through BCWS Classes

Improving your crop nutrient and pest management (NPM) planning can save you money and help protect groundwater.

A second NPM class sponsored by the Battle Creek Watershed will start this fall. An incentive payment is given to each farmer who agrees to attend 6 to 8 meetings over a 3-year period.

Class members must farm within the 34,000-acre Battle Creek Watershed. Participants in the first class are Brian Cronin, Kevin Conover, Kim Conover, Todd Heilman, Jack Ausborn, Alan Friedrichsen, Jerry Sindt, and Steve Klotz.

This class has been meeting since last fall, led by Chris Clark, crop consultant and owner of ABC Ag, Ida Grove. Class members have been learning how to refine their nutrient management plans.

If you are interested in signing up for these classes funded by the Battle Creek Watershed Project, contact Chris Jennings at (712) 364-2124. He is located at the U.S.D.A. Service Center, east of Ida Grove.

**In 1997,  
Ida County had 710 farms;  
average size was 377 acres.  
Average size in Iowa was  
339 acres.**

\*According to Iowa Agricultural Statistics,  
June 23, 1998.

## Battle Creek Watershed

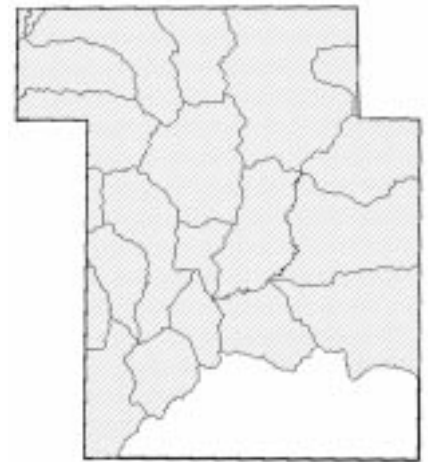


0 4 8 Miles

Watershed boundary  
Towns  
Major roads

**Ida County = 276,000 acres  
Battle Creek Watershed = 34,000 acres**

## Little Sioux Watershed



0 7 14 Miles

Little Sioux Watershed  
Soldier Watershed

**Ida County = 276,000 acres  
Little Sioux Watershed = 230,500 acres**

## Battle Creek Watershed

By Chris Jennings  
Project Coordinator

The Battle Creek Watershed Project is looking for sites to demonstrate best management practices to protect water quality. If you live or farm in the watershed, you may be eligible for cost-share monies.

This is a good opportunity to improve your farmstead well water and stream quality. Limited funds are available, so call soon to discuss your options. The specific practices and cost-share rates are as follows:

- Well plugging (50% up to \$200)
- Well rehabilitation (50%)
- Well diversions (50%)
- Septic system improvements (50%)
- Streambank stabilization (75%)
- Manure storage structures (65%)
- Riparian buffer/filter strips (50%)

For more information call (712) 364-2124 and ask for Chris Jennings.

## Survey Shows Concern About Water Quality

Fifty percent of the Battle Creek Watershed residents who answered an informal survey last year said they were "very concerned" about groundwater quality problems in their watershed. Another 34 percent were "somewhat concerned."

The survey was mailed to 219 residents and landowners in the 34,000-acre area between Holstein and Battle Creek. This area is the focus of a five-year study called the Battle Creek Watershed Groundwater Protection Project.

Approximately 16 percent of the surveys were returned, according to project coordinator Chris Jennings.

Groundwater problems listed in the survey were:

- Infiltration of pesticides
- Fertilizer
- Animal waste, and
- Direct entry of materials into sinkholes/open wells.

The survey respondents gave all four problems equal weight, Jennings said.

## Battle Creek Watershed Advisory Board

Chris Clark, ABC Ag, crop consultant  
Richard Madsen, Ida County sanitarian  
Ed Campbell, Battle Creek landowner  
Scott Lindgren, Battle Creek rural resident  
Win Schramm, Battle Creek mayor  
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Lorne Miller, Ida County NRCS district conservationist  
Nancy Rydberg, Ida County Sanitarian's environmental technician  
Lon Juelfs, Battle Creek city maintenance superintendent  
Rhett Leonard, Ida County conservation director

## Ida County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners

This board manages the Ida County Soil and Water Conservation District's activities:

Rodney Jensen, Ida Grove  
Wally Johnson, Washta  
Dennis Lindgren, Ida Grove  
Lloyd L. Rickers, Kiron  
Alan Van Houten, Battle Creek

However, only 34 percent of these respondents were concerned about their own well water quality. This question focused on problems from livestock, pesticides, and fertilizers. Another 18 percent were "somewhat concerned," and 48 percent were "not at all concerned."

About one-fourth of the respondents were interested in participating in cost-share programs to improve their well water quality. The activities receiving the most interest were closing of abandoned wells, renovation of wells or septic systems, stabilization of streambanks, and nutrient and pest management (NPM).

Manure management systems and riparian or filter strip plantings did not receive much interest, according to Jennings.

Future demos for the public will include most of the activities mentioned above. If you are interested in learning more about the cost-share practices funded by the Battle Creek Watershed Project, contact Jennings at (712) 364-2124.

## Well Water Quality

(continued from page 1)

done by placing a solid well cover 20 feet below ground and extending a 6-inch casing from the cover up to 12 inches above the surface. You also should use a pitless adapter.

Diverting runoff away from the well also is helpful for protecting water quality.

There are many ways to improve wells and the area around them. Each situation is unique with its own options.

Cost-share monies for certain well improvements are available through the Ida County Sanitarian's Office in Ida Grove. Some well improvement expenses can be cost-shared up to 80 percent (up to a maximum of \$600 per well).

Reimbursement is determined on a case-by-case basis. Call the Ida County sanitarian's office at (712) 364-2533 for more information. Watch for demonstration days to be held later in Ida County.

Publications about well water protection and improvement are available through ISU Extension, and on the ISU Ag and Biosystems Engineering web site at <http://www.ae.iastate.edu/Wq.htm>.

## Manure Newsletter Available

A free newsletter that covers manure odor and nutrient management is available to Iowa farmers. "Iowa Manure Matters" is a periodic newsletter with tips and hints from Iowa State University Extension.

The spring 1998 issue covered pit additives, new legislation affecting livestock production, and an in-depth interview with an Iowa hog farmer.

To order, contact the Ida County Extension Office at (712) 364-3003.

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## Ida Conservation Insights

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This newsletter is free of charge. To get on the mailing list, send name and address to: Peggy Peters, Battle Creek Watershed Project, Box 237, Ida Grove, IA 51445; phone (712) 364-2124; or e-mail: [x1peg@exnet.iastate.edu](mailto:x1peg@exnet.iastate.edu).

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Carol Thomson.....Soil Conservation Technician  
Barb Knudsen.....Soil Conservation Technician

### Battle Creek Watershed Groundwater Protection Project:

Chris Jennings.....State Environmental Specialist  
Peggy Peters.....ISU Extension Information Specialist

### Partners, funding sources, and technical assistance provided by:

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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.  
Iowa State University Extension.  
Ida County Public Health Sanitarian.  
Ida County Farm Service Agency.  
Iowa Farm Bureau Federation.  
ABC Ag, crop consulting.  
Cities of Battle Creek and Holstein.  
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service.  
Ida County Soil & Water Conservation District.  
Battle Creek Watershed Groundwater Protection Project.

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The Battle Creek Watershed Groundwater Protection Project offers a limited number of cost-share dollars to help well water quality. Contact Chris Jennings at 364-2124 for more information.

# New Soil Survey Ready For Ida County

The new Ida County soil survey will be released to the public, beginning in late August. These free survey books will be distributed to farmers and agribusinesses at a series of meetings, according to Lorne Miller, Natural Resources Conservation Service district conservationist.

Meetings will be held as follows:

Aug. 24, Arthur, Community Center, 1:30 p.m.

Aug. 24, Holstein, Lohff Schuman Memorial Community Center, 7 p.m.

Aug. 25, Galva, Methodist Church, 1:30 p.m.

Aug. 25, Ida Grove, Community Hall, 7 p.m.

Aug. 27, Ida Grove, Community Hall, 9:30 a.m.

Aug. 27, Battle Creek, Community Building, 1:30 p.m.

The Ida County Soil and Water Conservation District invites the public to attend any meeting to receive their copy of the survey.



## Soil and Water Conservation District Names Scholarship and Poster Winners

By Arlis Bahnsen

Soil and Water Conservation District Secretary

The 1998 Ida County Soil and Water Conservation District scholarship and poster winners were announced this spring.

Dale Friedrichsen of Galva-Holstein High School won \$75 for the scholarship. Poster winners were:

Division 1: Kindergarten-First Grade: Adrienne Burk, Battle Creek-Ida Grove (BC-IG) Elementary School, first place; Raelene Sawyer, Noah Webster Christian Academy (NWCA) at Arthur, second place; and Molly Hofmann, NWCA, third.

Division 2: Second-Third Grade: Bryce Davis, BC-IG, first; Eric Hanson, BC-IG, second; and Kyle Conover, NWCA, third.

Division 3: Fourth-Sixth Grade: Avery Burk, BC-IG, first; Brianne Davis, BC-IG, second; and Morgan Hanson, BC-IG, third.

Division 4: Seventh-Ninth Grade:

Amybeth Hofmann, NWCA, first; and Russell Sawyer, NWCA, second.

Division 5: Tenth-Twelfth Grade:

Malinda Burk, BC-IG High School, first; Sarah Burk, NWCA, second; and Marty Hofmann, NWCA, third.

The poster winners received \$10 for first place, \$7.50 for second place, or \$5 for third place from the Ida County SWCD, which also awarded the scholarship to Friedrichsen.

Adrienne, Avery, and Malinda Burk's posters went on to regional competition.

Poster contest and scholarship sponsors are the Ida Soil and Water Conservation District commissioners and the Conservation Districts of Iowa Auxiliary. Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company also sponsored the poster contest.

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**Don't forget to visit our  
booth at the Ida County Fair  
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