

## Lincoln County Conservation District (No. 15)

History from 1969 publication:

Organizational work was started in 1940 toward the formation of a soil conservation district in Lincoln County. A referendum was held on February 27, 1941, to determine if a conservation district should be organized. Seventy-nine per cent of those voting were in favor of the conservation district. The first Board of Supervisors was elected in March, 1941. In 1961, the Conservation District name was changed to Lincoln Soil and Water Conservation District. This change indicated the growing concern of agricultural leaders of the waste and pollution of water throughout the nation. In 1996, the name changed from Lincoln Soil Conservation District to Lincoln Conservation District.

The Lincoln Soil and Water Conservation District was organized in March, 1941 with the following landowners as supervisors: Axel Johnson, Hudson; Frank Iseminger, Fairview; Chris Anderson, Fairview; Tillmore Lappegard, Alcester; and Herman Johnson, Hudson. Other people instrumental in the organization of the district were: John Lavik, Roy Larsgaard, Sam K. Ulrikson, Carl Hermanson, Art Fowles, Stein Larsgaard, and Eric Skamfer. These farmers were all natural born conservationists and very much concerned about the erosion problem.

The Lincoln Conservation District was organized through the efforts of the local Grange at the Chris Anderson home. Mrs. Chris Anderson was the first treasurer and the vocational agriculture instructor at Hudson was the first secretary.

The district was first organized in Fairview, Eden and Norway townships where the erosion problem was the most serious. Additions were made in 1943, 1944, and 1945, at which time the entire County was included in the district.

The C.C.C. camps at Canton and Alcester got the local people interested in the conservation movement. They demonstrated a number of conservation practices in Lincoln and Union Counties that got people interested. The main problem in these three original townships was soil erosion. This was largely water erosion on rolling and steep cropland. There was also considerable flooding along Pattee Creek and Big Sioux River. This problem has not been completely solved but a great deal has been done and there is probably from 50 to 60 per cent less erosion now than in 1941.

The Pattee Creek Watershed District was organized in 1958 and covers a good portion of Fairview and Eden townships. The Brule Creek Watershed District covers most of Norway township and the east half of Pleasant township. This was organized in 1959 and extends through the central portion of Union county. When these two watersheds are completed, the most serious erosion and flooding problems of the original district will be quite well under control. Probably 75 to 80 per cent of the erosion will be under control.

Two main types of soils are found here, wind laid soils (loess) (Marshall, Moody and Cransburg) and glacial soils with Barnes being the main ones of that group. These names are not used as much now as the new systems of soil classification has changed many of these names.

The water table was much higher and most of the flood plains were in grass when the early settlers came. The main stem (floodplain) of Pattee Creek was called Pattee Slough because of the wide boggy flats on each side of the main channel and some of the lower tributaries.

The steeper slopes were also in grass but this has changed a great deal in the past fifteen years. The boggy flood plains have silted up to where they are being cropped and the demand for more crops to improve the economic situation for the farmer has caused many to plow up the steeper grassland and farm that also. The farming of some of the steeper slopes has created a serious erosion problem that would not have existed if they had been kept in grassland. However, these are all loess soils and if a terracing system is established, they can be farmed safely and with high production.

The change from 160 acre farm units to much larger ones affects the social and economic conditions. The larger units increased income of many farmers, but at the same time it has changed community social activities. Many rural schools have closed and many rural churches are being affected. This naturally affects social life in these areas.

A minority group has been opposed to the formation of the soil conservation district, as well as to the watershed districts. This group was very small but had some influence in most instances. They were people who were not good conservationists and could not seem to realize how serious this problem might be to future generations.

In 1964 the charter was amended to include all townships in the County.

The complete soil survey of the County, with its publication, has been scheduled, dependent on the availability of a soil scientist to do the job. This is a very important activity that should be completed as soon as possible.

The Conservation District has completed twenty-four years of service to Lincoln County farms and has printed 5,000 copies of a Long-Range Program to celebrate this milestone. This publication has been sent all over the United States and to foreign countries upon request from interested people who saw copies at the National and State Association meeting.

The USDA-Soil Conservation Service staffed Lincoln Conservation District with technicians since August of 1941. Lloyd Haisch was the first Work Unit Conservationist, and he held this position until 1965 when he transferred to Lake Andes, South Dakota.

Kenneth Ostroot, county agent, came to Lincoln County about 1947. He was a big help to the Conservation District as their secretary for about ten years, providing the supervisors with valuable suggestions and recommendations. Mr. W. R. Bryant, vocational agriculture instructor at Canton, was also secretary for about ten years and his assistance was very valuable.

The 1966 board of supervisors had been on the board for a period of eighteen to twenty-three years. They were: Sam K. Ulrickson, Canton, chair; Tillman Nelson, Beresford, vice chair; Roy Larsgaard, Fairview, treasurer; Oliver Anderson, Hudson; and Joe Welter, Harrisburg.

The 1969 board was composed of: Tillman Nelson, Beresford, chair; Oliver Anderson, Hudson, vice chair; Roy Larsgaard, Fairview, treasurer; Sam K. Ulrickson, Canton; John Froslie, Canton; Mrs. Lavonne Nelson, Canton, secretary; and Joe Welter, Harrisburg, assistant supervisor.

Updated information provided in 2012:

The Lincoln Conservation District covers the entire area of Lincoln County, which is 368,640 acres. There are approximately 1,000 operators and 2,300 farms within the Conservation District. The majority of these units are cash grain, growing corn and soybeans. Some diversified farms also have dairy cattle, beef cattle, hogs and sheep. The land use of the

Conservation District is approximately 300,000 acres of cropland and 40,000 acres pasture land, hay land, and rangeland.

The current Lincoln Conservation District has five elected supervisors and one advisor; they are Chair Gene Thormodsgard; Vice Chair Lorin Brass; Treasurer Nancy Bitterman; Merlyn Rennich and Craig Dittberner. Dale Long, Advisor. The Conservation District also has a Conservation District Manager, Lynda Johnson and hires seasonal help in the spring and summer.

Past supervisors are: Frank Iseminger, Tillmore Lappegard, Chris Anderson, Herman Johnson, Axel Johnson, Sam Ulrikson, Tillman Nelson, Tebbo Knocks, Oliver Anderson, Roy Larsgaard, John Frislie, Joe Welter, Dick Fossum, Gary Rikansrud, Gene Thormodsgard, Bruce Beck, Merlyn Rennich, Milo Hemmingson, Richard Viereck, and Jed Olbertson.

The Conservation District works with the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service, Farm Agency Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, S.D. Game Fish and Parks, S.D. Dept of Agriculture Forestry Division, S.D. DENR, Division of Conservation, Pattee Creek Watershed, the Lincoln County Commissioners and Canton Chamber of Commerce. We are currently involved with a grant for three years with Turner Conservation District for a Grant Technician. We sponsor the Lower Big Sioux River Watershed Project.

The Conservation District receives 10,000 to 15,000 conservation grade tree seedlings in the spring of each year. Tree seedlings can be purchased in April or May by customers to take home and hand plant or they can hire the Conservation District to plant trees. When the Lincoln Conservation District plants trees and installs fabric weed barrier for customers, planning service and contractual obligations are required. We have tree books, deer repellent and wilt proof products available as well.

The Conservation District also offers fabric weed installation; fabric for the producer to purchase and install themselves. We also provided the service of tillage and no-till grass seeding. Our grass drill has planted around 200 acres a year since we purchased the drill.

A long range work plan was written in the late 60's to guide the Conservation District. During this time the Conservation District was served by many supervisors and advisors who took active roles in achieving its goals for public education, conservation planning, pollution and weed control, water, forestry and range management, enhancement of recreational opportunities and wildlife habitat.

The Lincoln Conservation District is proud of their history. The people that have helped in the past and those working in the present bring about changes that protect our future.