Ada SCD

Following World War II, Ted Downing, Eagle, became concerned about flooding of the fertile farmlands along Dry Creek in northern Ada and southern Boise counties. Sediment washing off the watershed above Dry Creek was causing the trouble. To solve this problem, Downing and others carried petitions in the Eagle and Star areas to form a soil conservation district. Following a public hearing and a popular referendum, the Dry Creek Soil Conservation District was formally organized April 30, 1948.

The original SCD included only the Dry Creek drainage, 118,000 acres. Downing and Colin McLeod, Jr., along with H.B. Chase, Sr., Walter Stillwell, Sr., and Raymond Haworth were the first supervisors of the Dry Creek SCD. Ada County Extension agent H.G. Hilfiker served as the district's first secretary.

To provide farmers with equipment for conservation work, these new supervisors personally signed a bank note in 1948 to pay freight charges for bringing a Cat and carryall from Mexico City. In 90 days the equipment earned enough money to retire the loan plus a small cash balance. Renting equipment including a rod weeder, rotary hoe, disc range drill, leveling machinery, ripper, and a Brillion seeder brought conservation to the land — and provided money for the young SCD to carry out its program. The district rented an office, purchased office equipment, hired a secretary, and loaned money to the South Bingham SCD for the purchase of a plant materials research center.

The Dry Creek District sponsored a pilot conservation program in the Dry Creek watershed. The program required landowners to pay half of the construction costs and furnish easements and rights-of-way. McLeod started the program on his ranch. Later, a Flood Control District was formed to raise additional money to finish the project. But in 1957, due to a lack of funds, the project ended. However, through the cooperation of Drainage District No. 2 and Ada County, the channel has been cleaned to alleviate an immediate flood threat.

As more people learned about the services and program offered by the district, they wanted to be included in the Dry Creek SCD. In 1957 popular request led to annexation of the area between the Boise River and Highway 20. A small area south of the highway was annexed in 1960. In 1962 the Boise Front area petitioned for annexation and was voted into the SCD that summer. In 1965 the SCD moved its office from Eagle to a more central location in Meridian. In 1972 the rest of Ada County entered the SCD and along with the original portion of Boise County became the Ada SCD.

The Ada SCD includes 699,524 acres. Ada County's increasing population has led to extensive subdivision activity in rural areas. Some expansion has been at the expense of productive agricultural land.

Soil erosion and water management are still the major agricultural conservation problems in the Ada District. Abundant water resources have led some farmers to irrigate for convenience rather than to supply crop needs and prevent erosion. The Ada SCD and assisting Soil Conservation Service personnel continue helping farmers improve their irrigation systems.

To introduce new soil-saving technology to the area, the district rented the Buffalo All-Flex Planter and Cultivator, a no-till/minimum-till implement, in 1984 and made it available to local farmers. With reduced tillage equipment, the farmer plants the new crop directly into the residue of the old crop, saving time, labor, and fuel. With these savings, the reduced tillage operation produces equal or better yields than conventional tillage. And residue left on top of the soil reduces wind erosion, runoff, and evaporation. The Ada SCD is committed to helping farmers adopt farming methods that are cost-effective and will conserve our irreplaceable soil resource.

The Ada SCD won first place in the 1984 national newsletter contest conducted by the National Association of Conservation Districts.

Adams SWCD

The Adams Soil and Water Conservation District, legally organized April 21, 1966, is the third youngest district in Idaho. The district includes all of Adams County in western Idaho except the incorporated towns of Council and New Meadows.

Kenneth Johnson, New Meadows, and Clifford Keppinger, Indian Valley, were appointed to the original Adams SWCD board of supervisors. On May 31, 1966, 181 people voted to elect Clark Childers, Council, along with Jim Cole and Melvin Manning, both of Indian Valley, to the new district board.

The Adams SWCD contains about 881,281 acres; it supports diverse land uses including irrigated and dryland farming, grazing, woodlands, recreation, and urban areas. Each of these land uses presents different conservation challenges and often the problems vary within the same land use, depending on local conditions. The Adams SWCD's conservation program has historically focused on agricultural and woodland management.

Water for the three major irrigated areas comes from the Little Salmon River in northern Adams County, the Weiser River in the central part of the county, and the Little Weiser River in the south. Several reservoirs, including Lost Valley and Brundage, also provide irrigation water. Some areas receive adequate irrigation water throughout the farming season; however, other areas dependent on natural stream flow often lack adequate water late in the season.

The SWCD supports construction of additional water storage facilities needed to provide stable water supplies to all irrigated lands. In 1985 a project that will greatly alleviate seasonal water shortages in northeastern Adams County will begin. This project will enlarge the storage capacity of Brundage Reservoir from 2,900 to 7,330 acre feet. With this expansion, Brundage Reservoir will provide full-season water supply to 10,096 acres of pastureland on 55 ranches in the watershed. The Brundage Reservoir expansion also includes a 97-acre surface area conservation pool for year-round fish habitat. Twenty acres of wetland vegetation will be seeded around the pool.

While some irrigated areas suffer from seasonal water shortages, on other lands excessive irrigation has caused water-logging of the soil. Adams SWCD provides site-specific technical assistance to help farmers correct this problem.

Dryland hay and pasture areas bordering the irrigated valleys suffer from flash runoff and erosion. The SWCD promotes various conservation practices for dryland cultivated areas including strip cropping, contour tillage, diversions, and converting erosion-prone cropland to grass.

Private rangeland, found throughout the SWCD, was originally bunch grass, but overgrazing has converted much of this cover to annual grasses and weeds. Serious erosion has taken place in the past and some deep gullies can be found. Range seedings of grasses and legumes, livestock water developments, deferred and rotation grazing systems, and fence building to control livestock movements are making headway against erosion and productivity problems on rangeland.

About one-fourth of all privately owned land in the district, more than 75,000 acres, is wooded. Most of the resource problems on private woodland result from inadequate management due to the fact that many woodlot owners do not recognize the potential value of their timbered acres. Many conservation and production practices are available to improve management of these lands. Adams SWCD is particularly concerned about the need for additional technical personnel to assist private woodlot owners.

Noxious weeds are one of the most pressing resource problems in the Adams SWCD today, and they present many barriers to proper land management throughout the district. The SWCD is continuing to work with private landowners and public land managers to eradicate noxious weeds.

Balanced Rock SCD

Not everyone thought it was a good idea when in 1953 some of the local farmers suggested forming a conservation district in northwestern Twin Falls County. While some people believed the organization could help them conserve soil and redesign their farms for better efficiency, others feared government interference in their farming practices. The proposal surfaced again eight years later and this time the idea took hold. Of 85 people voting at polls in Buhl and Castleford in March 1961, 76 favored forming the Balanced Rock Soil Conservation District.

Officially organized May 22, 1961, the Balanced Rock SCD has remained faithful to its founders' intentions. Working with federal, state, and local agencies, sometimes through formal agreements, the district has brought a wide range of technical and financial assistance to farmers, ranchers, homeowners, towns and organizations it represents. Conservation through voluntary participation, initiated by a strong education program, has always been a basic tenet of the Balanced Rock SCD.

The new SCD, led by Leo Senften, Castleford; Eugene Thomas, Filer; and J.F. Nipper, Devon Ruhter, and Vernon Johnson, Buhl, made public education its primary goal. Using tours, meetings, personal contacts, and local media, these supervisors set out to create the public will to plan, carry out and maintain a complete conservation program on each acre of land. In the 1960s, most farmers came to the SCD for help in designing more efficient irrigation systems and improving crop rotations.

Through public referendum the Balanced Rock SCD expanded its boundaries twice, in 1964 and 1966. Today the district encompasses 880,560 acres in northwestern Twin Falls County and southeastern Owyhee County. Agriculture is the major industry in the district. Most of the land in the district, more than 615,000 acres, is publicly owned; this is primarily rangeland in the Owyhee County portion of the SCD. On the 98,975 acres of private irrigated land in the SCD farmers produce alfalfa, sugar beets, barley, beans, potatoes, corn, and orchard crops. Pasture and hayland, dry cropland, rangeland, and wildlife habitat make up most of the remaining private land in the district.

Inefficient water management and soil erosion are still the major resource problems in the Balanced Rock SCD. Farmers now readily recognize these problems and are using a wide range of traditional and newer conservation techniques to solve them. Vegetative filter strips, sediment basins, conservation cropping systems, rangeland seeding, brush management, and animal waste control systems are some of the many conservation practices now commonly used in the district.

The district's program took a giant leap forward in August 1979, when the SCD began the Cedar Draw water quality project. Funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the two-year project developed a plan to reduce agricultural sources of water pollution in Cedar Draw, a tributary to the Snake River. The project identified 11,535 acres of critical erosion sites along Cedar Draw. In late 1981, the Balanced Rock SCD received a $1.3 million state grant to carry out the Cedar Draw pollution abatement plan. By the summer of 1984, the SCD had signed 45 contracts with participating landowners and operators to install conservation practices on 3,910 acres of land. The state grant is used to pay part of the costs of installing these practices.

Farmers have responded enthusiastically to the Cedar Draw project. In 1983 the EPA made a special award to the Balanced Rock SCD for excellence in developing and implementing a nationally recognized agricultural water pollution control program.

Because agriculture is the economic mainstay in the Balanced Rock SCD, local citizens, educators, business people, and public officials actively support the SCD's efforts to protect soil and water resources. Local people no longer view the Balanced Rock SCD as an extension of government control, but as a local organization ready to help individuals and groups make the best use of their soil and water resources, while protecting these resources for future generations.

Bear Lake SWCD

More than 100 people turned out to support a conservation district in Bear Lake County at a public hearing in Montpelier February 19, 1940. The hearing record reveals widespread concern about families losing their land because they were unable to produce enough to pay their taxes. Of 416 people who voted in a referendum on April 13, 397 favored forming the Bear Lake SWCD. The SWCD was officially organized May 1, 1940.

Charter SWCD supervisors were William J. Hunter, Montpelier; Silas L. Wright, Bennington; Ernest W. Allred, St. Charles; Walter E. Clark, Georgetown; and Ivan K. Rigby, Pegram. The SWCD soon received 27 applications for conservation plans on 27,304 acres.

Many agencies helped the district get off to a good start. County officials gave freely of their time in providing maps and statistical information. The Extension Service provided use of their facilities. The Soil Conservation Service established an office and provided trained technicians to assist the SWCD. The Forest Service furnished maps and other information, particularly about the livestock industry. County Commissioners appropriated funds for legal notices and the expense of the February 19 public hearing. The Farm Security Administration, Works Progress Administration, National Youth Administration, and Idaho Department of Reclamation also helped the SWCD.

The district introduced cooperators to basic soil and water conservation practices such as terraces, sediment basins, diversions, strip cropping, stubble mulching, and cross-slope farming. Farmers also received help improving their irrigation delivery systems to better utilize slim water resources. For ranchers, the SWCD promoted seeding grasses with legumes in hay mixtures to increase production and improve soil and water management. Ranchers who used the seed mixtures and followed the SWCD's irrigation guidelines in the early 1940s more than doubled their yields.

In 1943 the Preston-Montpelier Irrigation Company turned to the SWCD for help to rehabilitate their canal, which served 34 farmers and 3,500 acres. Soil deposited in the canal had raised the channel floor. Willows growing along the banks were impeding the water flow. Scarce irrigation water was being lost through seepage. Too much water damaged some farms while others did not get enough water. The SWCD provided technical help and equipment for the project.

War surpluses answered the district's need for a dragline and a dump truck. Renting these out for nominal fees, the SWCD raised enough money to purchase other needed equipment. The federal government came to the district's aid again in 1949, giving the SWCD two buildings in Downey used by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The SWCD bought land in Montpelier and moved the buildings there, remodeling one for an office and using the other as an equipment shed.

The SWCD's most outstanding accomplishment is the Montpelier Creek Dam. Funded by the Small Watershed program (Public Law 566), the dam provides flood protection and irrigation water storage, and is a popular recreation site. Completed in 1971 and capable of storing 3,840 acre-feet of usable water, the dam stabilized water supply for 56 farmers and 4,000 acres. The Small Watershed program was also used to help the Georgetown Irrigation Company install a gravity sprinkler system. Completed in 1975, the system saves energy while conserving soil and water on approximately 3,175 acres.

Conservation farming and ranching has become a way of life for many people in the Bear Lake SWCD. However, most irrigated lands are still water-short during the last half of the growing season, and poor irrigation practices still cause erosion. Gully erosion continues on dry cropland, caused by lack of cover, steep slopes, tillage pans, and cultivating up and down steep slopes. Higher quality forage is needed on irrigated and non-irrigated pastureland. On rangeland, localized rill and gully erosion can be found, and low yields caused by poor grazing practices and lack of water sources are still problems. The SWCD's program today addresses these needs by offering individuals and organizations help to bring conservation to all of the land in Bear Lake County.

Benewah SWCD

On January 3, 1946, landowners in Benewah County filed a petition with the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission asking for public hearings on forming a soil conservation district. Hearings were held at the Tensed Grange hall and at the county courthouse in St. Maries on January 25. Following a popular referendum, the Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District was officially organized March 25, 1946.

The original SWCD covered Benewah County. The district's first supervisors were Raleigh Hughes and C.C. Vanderpoel, St. Maries; Archie Atkinson, DeSmet; Al Weaver, Plummer; and William Armstrong, Farmington. They quickly set out to familiarize farmers with the purpose and goals of the new conservation district using public meetings, tours, moving pictures, and news articles. The new board grappled with many resource problems including flooding and the spread of noxious weeds.

In 1948 technical staff assisting the district developed conservation plans for 34 farms and a total of 12,690 acres. Carrying out their conservation plans, Benewah County farmers learned to use conservation techniques such as contour and cross-slope farming, stubble mulching, and range and pasture management. In 1949 the SWCD introduced farmers to strip cropping, the practice of planting two crops in alternating bands across the slope of a field. The bands act as barriers to wind and water erosion. The new conservation practice was very effective in reducing erosion and conserving moisture on dryland farms.

In 1953 almost 50,000 acres in Shoshone County, south of the St. Joe River-Coeur d'Alene divide, entered the SWCD. The Benewah SWCD now encompasses 1,667,043 acres in Benewah and southern Shoshone counties.

Soil erosion and water quality problems can be found on farm, ranch, range, and forest land in the Benewah SWCD. These problems are caused by years of improper soil and water management. While the population in the Benewah SWCD has remained fairly stable during the past ten years, there has been a gradual increase in the number of people moving to rural areas. Benewah County is also becoming increasingly popular for many types of recreation. Urban and recreational developments are contributing to the soil and water conservation problems in the Benewah SWCD today.

Rangeland in the SWCD is under pressure from several sources. Development and road construction are encroaching on rangelands. As conifers naturally replace brush fields, big-game winter range is declining. Modern farming techniques are destroying game bird nesting and feeding areas. Siltation from logging, road construction, and mining activities are damaging fisheries. The economic problems of the logging industry leave little incentive for private woodland owners to invest in long-term timber management. Intermingled ownership of pasture and haylands contribute to improper use of these resources. The SWCD works with individual landowners, private companies, and local, state, and federal governments to solve these problems.

The SWCD includes 52,690 acres owned by the Coeur d'Alene Indian tribe or individual tribal members. In 1977 several federal agencies, including the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Soil Conservation Service, signed an agreement to allow coordinated resource planning on intermingled private and BIA lands within soil conservation districts. Today the Benewah SWCD works closely with BIA officials and individual Indian landowners to reduce erosion and conserve water.

In 1966 the Benewah SWCD began a land treatment project in the Upper Hangman Creek watershed near Tensed. This project installed various conservation measures to protect waterways from erosion. In 1980 the SWCD received federal funds to conduct a water quality planning project along Upper Hangman Creek. During the next two years, the SWCD developed a plan to reduce pollution in this 80,000-acre watershed. One part of the Hangman Creek watershed, the Sheep-Mission Creek area, received state funds in 1981 to cost-share conservation practices with participating farmers. This project is continuing and meeting its goal of reducing agricultural sources of water pollution in the Hangman Creek watershed.

Blaine SCD

Following unsuccessful referendums in 1950 and 1952, the Blaine Soil Conservation District was organized January 29, 1954. The two unsuccessful referendums passed overwhelmingly in the agricultural areas of southern Blaine County, but the district encountered strong opposition in the urban areas near Sun Valley. For a few years in the late 1940s and early 1950s, soil conservation districts, with approval from local county commissions, could levy a small property tax. Money raised through the tax could only be used to reimburse district supervisors for mileage costs associated with their volunteer responsibilities. Opposition to the district stemmed from a fear that the district would levy such a tax.

The third and successful attempt to organize the Blaine SCD proposed that only the portion of Blaine County south of Bellevue be included in the district. The referendum passed by a 71 percent majority.

The first supervisors of the Blaine SCD were Martin Albrethsen, Gannett; Jack Allred, Bellevue; and George Brunnell, Keith Justesen, and Roy Hennifer, Carey.

Within three months, landowners representing about half of the land in Blaine County that was excluded from the SCD asked to be annexed into the district. But it wasn't until February 1958 that petitions were signed and a formal request was filed to annex all of Blaine County except incorporated cities. These remaining rural areas were annexed into the district that year. In 1976 all cities in Blaine County became part of the Blaine SCD.

In its early years, the Blaine SCD secured equipment to help farmers level land and build irrigation ditches. Gradually the SCD went into debt to maintain and purchase equipment, and by 1960 retiring its equipment debt was the district's top priority. In addition to working with individual farmers, the district participated in the design of large irrigation structures on the Big Wood and Little Wood rivers, and Silver and Fish creeks.

The 1970s brought many changes for the district. Rangeland planning became an important part of the SCD's conservation program. Many coordinated range management plans were written between private landowners and public land management agencies. The district took an active role in county land use planning in the 1970s. Development of the Elkhorn Complex near Sun Valley brought the need for modern soil surveys to everyone's attention.

From its beginning, the Blaine SCD has strongly supported snow survey and plant materials programs. The district helped install, maintain, and measure the 16 snow courses that affect local rivers and streams. Thousands of acres of new and improved varieties of plant materials have been tested in the Blaine SCD.

In 1971 the district supported organizing the Wood River Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council. This program has brought several improvements to Blaine County. The Fish Creek Mutual Gravity Sprinkler project, completed in 1983, installed sprinklers on 1,880 acres in Carey. Another RC&D measure, the Nature Conservancy Wildlife Habitat project, seeded 120 acres of cropland back to wildlife habitat and made basic improvements on Silver Creek near Picabo. This project was completed in 1981. In Hailey, two city parks are now being developed — one on a former dump site — and will be finished in 1985.

West of Hailey, the Croy Creek Critical Area Treatment project, also an RC&D measure, is now in the planning stages. The project will reduce erosion on grazing land and prevent damage caused by erosion to a county road and a native meadow.

During the past few years, the Blaine SCD has placed top priority on installing gravity sprinkler systems and developing coordinated range management plans. Four coordinated plans covering 38,000 acres have been completed since 1980. Since 1977 the district has installed nine gravity sprinklers on 4,084 acres.

Bonner SCD

Many farmers attended the educational meetings held around Bonner County in 1946 to discuss organizing a soil conservation district. But a late spring that year kept people in the fields and away from the public hearing held May 4, 1946. While only 12 farmers attended the formal hearing, two resolutions supporting the SCD, passed by the Colburn and Pack River Granges, were read into the public record.

June 11, 1946, polls on the district's organization opened in six towns. One hundred and nineteen ballots were cast — 116 favoring the district and three opposing it. The Bonner Soil Conservation District was officially organized July 15, 1946, to include all of Bonner County in northern Idaho.

Original supervisors of the Bonner SCD were M.A. Roberts, Blanchard; Glen Reed, Sagle; H.L. King, Priest River; Sloan Crawford, Sandpoint; and A.M. Derr, Clark Fork.

Soil conservation in Bonner County steadily progressed during the SCD's first five years. During the first year, 65 landowners signed up with the district to develop conservation plans. During its third year, the SCD accepted 107 more landowners as cooperators. Early cooperators received technical assistance in reseeding grasses and legumes for improved hay and pasture and learning how to manage crop residue. Farmers were introduced to using green manure crops to improve the soil. They also received help in updating their drainage systems and in woodland management.

Because of a change in land use throughout Bonner County during recent years, the direction and priorities of the SCD have shifted. With 110 or fewer frost-free days, row crops and even small grains are unsuccessful in the district. However, hay and pasture are well suited to the area's short growing season and wet springs. Originally, dairies utilized this forage. But as Bonner County grew and many rural areas were subdivided, the number of dairies declined. There are now fewer than one dozen dairies in the SCD.

Bonner County is now a noted resort area offering summer and winter recreation. Riding and hobby horses, rather than cows, are now the main market for the locally grown hay and pasture.

Development did not come to Bonner County without creating resource problems. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, a considerable amount of forest land was logged and then subdivided. Property that would soon be subdivided was often logged carelessly. Lack of proper harvesting techniques led to many erosion problems, particularly along Rapid Lightening Creek north of Sandpoint. Landowners in the new subdivisions did not realize the trees that had been left on their property had little value. They also did not know how to protect and manage the soil, water, and other natural resources on this land.

The Bonner SCD became concerned about the problems caused by unplanned urban development. So, the district worked with the County Commission to develop a planning and zoning committee to provide guidance in subdivision development.

High precipitation levels support excellent timber production in the Bonner SCD. There are more than 350,000 acres of private forest in the district. The Bonner SCD has made woodland conservation its top priority. The SCD works with many woodlot owners to improve woodland management and conserve natural resources.

The Bonner SCD also emphasizes conservation education for Bonner County's youth. Through outdoor classrooms, workshops and annual poster contests, the SCD teaches hundreds of youngsters about northern Idaho's natural resources each year.

Boundary SCD

Agricultural leaders held meetings throughout Boundary County in the summer of 1946 to introduce the idea of forming a conservation district. Interest in starting a district increased, and in February 1947 landowners submitted a petition to the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission requesting a public hearing. A hearing was held March 15, 1947. In a subsequent referendum, 131 landowners voted unanimously in favor of creating a district to include all of Idaho's northernmost county.

The Boundary Soil Conservation District was officially organized May 7, 1947. Wallace Davidson, Bonners Ferry, chaired the original SCD board. Serving with Davidson were Marvin Houck and A.M. Kramer, Porthill; Ralph Anglen, Bonners Ferry; and L.R. Wyman, Naples. The SCD first met in September 1947, the same month the Soil Conservation Service established an office in Bonners Ferry.

The SCD provides technical assistance to farmers and ranchers in planning conservation measures for their land. Conservation plans help landowners accomplish their production goals and protect the land from misuse and deterioration. Maps and information about soils are used to identify the land's suitability for various uses, the adaptability of plants to soil conditions, and the need for conservation practices. The landowner receives a map showing his proposed land uses and needed conservation measures, along with a written record of the conservation practices he intends to use. By January 1, 1984, 218 farmers and ranchers in the Boundary SCD had developed conservation plans for 95,725 acres.

Soil scientist Jack Harwood began soil surveys for conservation planning in the district in 1947. A general soils map with interpretations for county-wide resource planning was completed in 1968. The Soil Conservation Service and the University of Idaho completed a modern, extensive soil survey in the county in 1974. This most current source of soils information is used to plan orderly development for all land uses; it is a valuable tool, increasing Boundary County's ability to support a growing population.

The Boundary SCD has introduced several improved varieties of grasses and legumes into the district. New and improved plants have been used to stabilize severe erosion sites.

All landowners requesting SCD assistance are encouraged to consider wildlife needs in their conservation plans. Approximately 40 farm ponds have been constructed with fish, wildlife, and recreation as the primary use.

Youth conservation education is the key to future stewardship of the district's natural resources. Recognizing this, the Boundary SCD conducts an extensive education program for young people including land judging, essay and poster contests, an annual outdoor classroom, special projects for youth groups, and National Wildlife Week observances. The SCD has participated in a natural resource tour for grade school students for the past 20 years.

The SCD also conducts an active educational program for adults. Annual tours, newsletters, and local media are used to inform people about resource conditions and conservation needs in the district.

The Boundary SCD helped bring the county into the Idaho-Washington Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) in 1972. The Boundary County Agricultural Waste Control Association was organized through the RC&D program in 1981. The association set a goal of developing 12 waste control systems to reduce pollution in county streams and rivers. Three systems were installed by June 1984.

The Sundance Park project, near Bonners Ferry, is also an RC&D program. The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation has given high priority to funding development of Sundance Park.

There are more than 200,000 acres of private woodland in the district; conservation on these lands is one of the most pressing problems facing the SCD today. The SCD is working closely with the Idaho Department of Lands on developing woodland management plans for private woodland owners.

Bruneau River SCD

The Bruneau River Soil Conservation District has the distinction of serving the state's oldest county, Owyhee County, in southwestern Idaho. The first Idaho Territorial Legislature in 1863 recognized Owyhee County as a legal entity. The Bruneau River SCD was organized 90 years later, on August 25, 1953.

The original district encompassed approximately 2,800,000 acres. By popular referendum, the Oreana area was added to the SCD in 1956, bringing the district to 3,009,555 acres. The far western and eastern edges of Owyhee County are included in other conservation districts, while the Duck Valley Indian Reservation in southern Owyhee County receives conservation assistance from Nevada.

Gene Davis, Bruneau, chaired the original Bruneau River SCD board. Serving with Davis were Morgan Shaw and James Munro, Grand View; Carl Agenbroad, Bruneau; and Harold Smith, Indian Cove. Early meetings were held in supervisors' homes since the SCD had no office. A district office was opened in Grand View in June 1954.

The district was and still is a rural area with no major towns. The first supervisors faced an enormous problem in trying to communicate the conservation message in such a large, sparsely populated area. Roads were in poor condition and there were no telephones in 1953.

Supervisors began by identifying priority problems and developing an annual work plan. The board gave first priority to drainage investigations and second priority to developing and irrigating new land for agriculture. Soil surveys and water table studies were given third priority. Conservation plans for individual farms were developed as soil surveys were completed.

The SCD's first five years were busy ones. Supervisors met with various agencies and organizations to request their help in carrying out the district's conservation program. The local Extension agricultural agent helped the SCD develop a program for an annual event known as "Conservation Day." The Farmers Home Administration provided loans to help the SCD purchase equipment. Local canal companies offered equipment and manpower to help with drainage studies and canal seepage problems. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game worked with the SCD on wildlife habitat improvement and tree plantings. The American Legion provided their hall for large meetings. Information and helpful assistance in planning were provided by the Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service, First Security Bank, the Agriculture Research Service, and the Bureau of Land Management.

With help from these groups, the new SCD made considerable progress in reaching its overriding goal: to organize and operate the district program on a carefully planned long-range basis, and to assist each cooperator in developing a basic soil and water conservation plan for his farm or ranch.

Tours were used to observe the progress and problems in different areas. Local newspapers regularly published conservation articles. Landowners and users throughout the district applied conservation practices. These practices included crop rotations, residue utilization, pasture and hayland management, irrigation water management, land leveling, and drainage.

Population in the Bruneau River SCD has increased since the SCD was organized, primarily due to the development of additional land for farming and the introduction of modern irrigation methods. Today the district supports hay and pasture, small grains, sugar beets, and various seed crops. Private and commercial cattle feedlots, dairies, and private ranches are scattered throughout the district.

A geothermal belt runs through the Oreana, Grand View, and Bruneau areas. Wells are being developed from this belt for fish and shrimp farming, hydrophonic farming, home and greenhouse heating, and alcohol production. The district also offers abundant recreation opportunities.

The Bruneau River SCD began major revisions on its long-range resource conservation program in 1984. The program places high priority on irrigation water management, rangeland management, animal waste management, and protection of wildlife habitat. The program will guide SCD activities over the next five years.

Butte SWCD

Water management was a trial and error effort for many farmers in central Idaho's Butte County in the early 1950s. As Herman Aikele, who farmed in the Lost River area, told other farmers at a public hearing in 1953, "Anyone here who has a rough farm knows very well that the high spots go dry and the low spots flood out." In addition to surveys for land leveling, the new district offered soil fertility studies, advice on crop rotations and range improvements, tree planting programs, and new, improved crop varieties.

May 23, 1953, 171 landowners cast ballots in favor of forming the Butte Soil and Water Conservation District, with 17 people voting against it. The new district, formally organized July 23, 1953, included all of Butte County except incorporated towns and the Atomic Energy Commission site near Arco. The SWCD annexed the Big and Little Lost river drainages in Custer County in 1967. The SWCD's first supervisors were Herman Fielding and Carl Rindfleisch, Arco; Wendall Hansen and Clyde Lee, Howe; and Clarence Hope, Darlington.

The Butte SWCD is a land of contrasts where mountain ranges and rapid elevation changes create dramatic variations in climate and precipitation. In the irrigated valleys of the Big and Little Lost river drainages farmers grow seed potatoes, grain, hay, and pasture. Almost 90 percent of the SWCD is public land, important to the livestock industry. About half of the private land in the district, 150,000 acres, is rangeland.

In the 1950s the Butte SWCD provided engineering and design assistance that farmers needed to level their land and improve their irrigation systems. As surveys revealed the capacity of different soils to produce various crops, farmers began to use crop rotations and soil-building techniques to increase yields. Soil surveys showed different soils absorbed water at different rates. Farmers learned how to apply water to match a soil's intake rates, conserving water and reducing runoff and erosion. The SWCD bought a Cat and was donated a scraper. They rented this equipment to farmers for land leveling and building irrigation ditches.

Snow survey courses were established, and in March 1955 the SWCD sponsored its first meeting to discuss the water outlook for that year. Groups of farmers got help developing and improving the structures that delivered water to their farms. Spring floods damaged many farms in 1956; the SWCD devoted many of its resources to repairing the damage. By 1958, 28 farm conservation plans had been developed and 25 of them were being implemented. Ranchers also got help — reseeding, installing pipelines and water ponds, and developing grazing systems to allow natural regeneration of overgrazed areas.

In 1958 district supervisors began taking their message to the larger farm community, talking to Farm Bureau leaders, the Chamber of Commerce, local granges, and vocational agriculture classes.

The soil and water conservation problems in the Butte SWCD today are much the same as they were when the district was organized. Two important changes have occured, though. Landowners are now more aware of soil and water conservation problems and more receptive to new ideas. And as young people have taken over family farms, interest in conservation and developing additional cropland is increasing.

The district's present rangeland program directs technical assistance to help ranchers properly distribute livestock water, develop rest-rotation grazing systems, use cross-fencing, and reseed better soils to improved grass species. The SWCD works with ranchers and public land managers to promote coordinated management and conservation.

Many of the surface-irrigated farms have been converted to sprinklers since the SWCD was formed. Much of the dry cropland produces only marginal grain yields due to lack of water. The SWCD works with farmers to develop sprinkler irrigation or convert these lands to grass and pastures. The SWCD is helping with the development of irrigation programs for water conservation including converting to low-pressure sprinkler systems, land leveling and smoothing, and improving diversions and structures for irrigation.

Camas SCD

The history of the Camas Soil Conservation District illustrates how people have developed a new way of thinking about natural resources during the past 28 years. It is an ironic history because today the Camas SCD's top priority is correcting a problem it helped create years ago.

Farmers and ranchers settled the fertile, lush Camas Prairie surrounding Fairfield in southcentral Idaho around 1880. They raised wheat and forage in the valley and ran sheep and cattle on public land in the surrounding high deserts and forests. Numerous streams ran lazily through the prairie, providing water for crops and livestock. But the meandering paths of streams such as Soldier, Three Mile and Corral creeks cut across cropland. Landowners, with government approval and support, straightened many stretches of streams and removed willows from streambanks to gain cropland and make farming easier.

Unaware and unconcerned about stream channel erosion, farmers in Camas County were interested in forming a conservation district in 1957 to obtain information on the depth, type and fertility of their soils. They also wanted help laying out irrigation systems. Ranchers sought information about the quality of their soils and forage. The Camas SCD was officially organized August 23, 1957.

The first supervisors of the Camas SCD were L.M. Davis and Wesley Fields, Corral; William D. Simon and Allen Bauscher, Fairfield; and Calvin Neeley, Hill City.

Few people understood the dynamics of stream movement or the problems that altering natural channels would cause. Until the Camas SCD learned that channelization was causing erosion both above and below the channeled areas, it assisted landowners in continuing the practice. Stream channel erosion is now the most damaging erosion that occurs in the Camas Prairie.

The SCD now works to rehabilitate eroded stream channels and develop public support for a local stream channel ordinance. District supervisors work with individual landowners to help them solve existing stream erosion problems and prevent new problems from occuring. In 1982 the SCD completed phase one of a project to stop streambank erosion along the West Fork of Corral Creek and conducted a preliminary study of erosion along the West Fork of Three Mile Creek.

The Camas SCD began a comprehensive three-year study of stream channel erosion in 1984. The study will document the problem in all major streams in the Camas Creek watershed and propose ways to rehabilitate eroded streams. The study will also determine how much sediment has been deposited in Magic Reservoir since it was built in the early 1900s and what amount of this sediment originated in the Camas Creek watershed.

Alfalfa and spring grains have now replaced winter wheat as the major crops grown in the Camas SCD. The number of sheep and cattle have declined, but cattle remain an important part of the local economy. Erosion is not a major problem on most farms and ranches in the district. The Camas SCD's conservation program addresses the need for brush management, grazing systems, range and pasture seedings, and spring developments for better livestock distribution on private and public grazing land. Working through the Wood River Resource Conservation and Development program, the SCD helped initiate a four-county noxious weed control effort in 1982.

While focusing on the stream erosion problem, the Camas SCD also helps farmers install grassed waterways, improve their irrigation systems and water management, use conservation tillage and stubble mulching on dryland farms, and plant grass for both erosion control and forage production.

Canyon SCD

The boundaries of the Canyon Soil Conservation District were originally drawn to include farmers and ranchers who wanted the services of a district and to exclude those who, fearing tax increases and government control over their land, opposed the new district. The debate over forming an SCD may have contributed to the large voter turnout at the public referendum on March 15, 1951. Of 250 eligible voters, 227 voted — 197 favoring and 30 opposing the district. April 27, 1951, the Canyon SCD was officially organized to include northeastern Canyon County and the southern portions of Gem and Payette counties.

The first Canyon SCD supervisors were Irvin Callahan and Perry Christensen, Caldwell; and Leon Hendricks, Mark Terrel, and Jack Obermeyer, Middleton. As the new district developed a reputation for helping farmers improve their soil and water management, more landowners wanted these services. Through petitions, public hearings, and referendums the Canyon SCD annexed the Dixie and Middleton areas of Canyon County in 1956 and 1957, respectively. In 1957 landowners organized the South Canyon SCD. One year later farmers in the Wilder, Parma and Notus areas formed the West Canyon SCD. The Canyon and West Canyon districts merged and sections of the original Canyon SCD in Payette and Gem counties were transferred to districts in these counties in 1963. It wasn't until 1974 that the Canyon and South Canyon SCDs merged, bringing all of Canyon County into one conservation district covering 371,200 acres.

Throughout the 1950s, the SCD focused on farm-related soil and water problems. Many farmers got help leveling their land, lining ditches, installing irrigation pipelines, developing conservation cropping systems, and learning to utilize crop residues for better soil and water conservation. Irrigation companies got help upgrading their canals and diversions and improving water-measuring devices along the Boise River.

The 1960s brought rapid growth to Canyon County. Prime farmland was lost, water pollution increased, and irrigation systems were fragmented by uncontrolled development. The SCD began an educational program to help local citizens understand the need for orderly growth and development. Using the county-wide soil survey published in 1972, the district compiled a map showing where septic tanks could be safely installed. From 1970 to 1974 the district provided inventories and evaluations of soil and water conditions to the county Planning and Zoning Commission for more than 125 proposed developments. In 1974 Canyon County completed the first comprehensive land use plan adopted in Idaho.

As research in the 1970s pointed out that soil erosion and animal wastes cause serious water pollution, the SCD began to educate farmers about these problems and introduced new conservation techniques to solve them. In April 1981 the district received a federal grant to develop a plan to reduce agricultural pollution in the Boise River from Caldwell to the confluence of the Boise and Snake rivers. The plan covered more than 82,000 acres. The SCD received a state grant in late 1982 to implement the plan in one watershed, the Conway Gulch drainage. The grant provides cost-share funds to people who apply conservation practices that will improve water quality in the Lower Boise River.

More than 2,200 individuals had signed up as cooperators with the SCD by 1984. Many traditional and new methods of conserving soil and water, managing animal wastes, and improving water quality can be seen throughout the Canyon SCD today. Landowners and operators have voluntarily adopted all of these conservation practices.

The Canyon SCD remains committed to the idea that education is the key to resource protection. The district uses quarterly newsletters, public meetings, tours, local media, and personal contacts to spread the conservation message to adults. Using many different projects, the district and its Ladies Auxiliary have helped hundreds of youth understand and appreciate the importance of conserving Idaho's natural resources.

Caribou SCD

Landowners gathered in Soda Springs and Wayan on April 25, 1951, to present testimony on forming the Caribou Soil Conservation District in southeastern Idaho. According to the hearing record, farmers and ranchers wanted to form a district for several reasons: for help to prevent melting snow from washing away their soil; and help to obtain trees for windbreaks, develop drainage projects, and reseed and improve grazing lands.

Landowners voted overwhelmingly on June 9, 1951, to organize the Caribou SCD, which included all land in Caribou County not already in a district plus the Grays Lake area of Bonneville County. The new district was officially organized September 5, 1951. The first Caribou SCD supervisors were J. Cyril Lau, William H. Lloyd, and Sam Reed, Soda Springs; A. Nelson Hogan, Bancroft; and Frank Somsen and John Muir, Wayan.

The district kept its original boundaries until 1974 when it was reorganized to conform to Caribou County's boundaries. The SCD now contains 1,140,480 acres of private, state, and federal land. The district supports a strong agricultural base, producing livestock, grain, forage crops, and seed potatoes. The area's high altitude provides excellent conditions for growing high-quality seed potatoes. However, harsh winter conditions have forced ranchers to move cattle and sheep to milder climates for wintering. Miners discovered rich phosphate deposits in Caribou County in 1920 and phosphate mining is a major industry in the county today. Recreation is a growing industry.

The new district immediately started looking for equipment it could loan to farmers and ranchers for conservation work. Through federal government surpluses, the SCD obtained two cultivator-subsoilers, a double-disc grain drill, and a tractor in the 1950s. With this equipment the SCD demonstrated how to increase and manage more residue on the soil surface and break up tillage pans. These practices helped farmers protect their dryland farms from erosion caused by melting snow and summer storms and capture more moisture in the soil profile.

The Plant Materials Center in Aberdeen developed many varieties of grass seed in the 1950s. Grass could be used to convert critical erosion areas to permanent cover. In 1954 the SCD sponsored a public meeting to introduce grass seed production. In 1960 the district sponsored a tour of a 200-acre grass seed farm, the first operation of its kind in the Caribou SCD. In 1963 the district co-sponsored a tour of 24 farms where 3,832 acres of highly erosive land had been converted from grain to grass. The SCD also worked with the Idaho Fish and Game Department in 1954, helping local Boy Scouts plant 1,000 seedlings for windbreaks and wildlife shelters.

Stubble mulching, keeping protective amounts of vegetation on the soil surface year round to reduce wind and water erosion, was a relatively new idea in the 1950s. To introduce farmers to stubble mulching, the SCD sponsored a demonstration of tillage methods and implements in 1957. The district bought a basin hole tiller, an implement designed to reduce soil and moisture losses on summer fallow land, and made it available to local cooperators. In 1962 the SCD purchased and resold seven basin hole tillers to its cooperators.

A considerable portion of the Caribou SCD is devoted to grazing. On private, state, and federal lands used for livestock grazing erosion is combined with other problems such as poisonous plants, undesirable brush, and a lack of water developments and quality forage. In 1955 the SCD sponsored its first grassland tour in cooperation with the Caribou County Agricultural Extension agent.

The Caribou SCD's conservation program now incorporates many conservation practices for cropland, grazing land, and wildlife habitat. In 1984 more than 200 people attended a conservation no-till field day sponsored by the district and later that year the SCD bought a no-till drill to loan to cooperators. Landowners are also adopting other conservation techniques such as contour farming, conservation cropping, crop residue use, and irrigation water management. Through reseeding, spring and water developments, and proper grazing use, ranchers are improving the condition of rangeland in the Caribou SCD.

Central Bingham SCD

Six educational meetings were held before the April 29, 1954 public hearing to organize the Central Bingham Soil Conservation District. According to the hearing record, drainage, irrigation system installation, land leveling, and water application were problems with which people hoped the new SCD could help. County Commissioner C.J. Wright noted that weed control was also of concern to the county.

A public referendum was held June 28, 1954, in Pingree and Blackfoot. Fifty-four people voted for the new SCD; 19 voted against it. The SCD was formally organized February 18, 1955, to include western and central Bingham County. C.V. Murdock, Blackfoot, chaired the original SCD board. Serving with Murdock were Rulon J. Callister, Claude Johnson, and Marvin Wray, Blackfoot; and L.B. Sasser, Pingree. The board approved its first plan of operations August 25, 1955. Several natural resource agencies helped the SCD develop its annual programs. An office in Blackfoot, rented by the Soil Conservation Service, opened February 20, 1956. County Commissioners were strong SCD supporters, providing financial assistance to help the SCD employ a secretary.

One reason the SCD was organized was to determine if anything could be done to solve a drainage problem northeast of Blackfoot. The SCD studied the problem, but concluded that the cost of installing and maintaining drains would be prohibitive. Landowners there subsequently shifted to livestock and were able to raise adequate forage.

Farmers also looked to the early SCD for assistance in land leveling. When the SCD obtained surplus government equipment for land leveling, many landowners requested this service. Much of the SCD's initial work involved reorganizing irrigation systems to save water and labor. Several large headgates were installed along the Snake River to divert water into canals. The original SCD was also very active in trial plantings in cooperation with the Aberdeen Plant Materials Center.

One of the SCD's early goals was to end the practice of burning stubble when wheat or barley was grown on newly developed land. This problem was particularly acute on new sprinkler-irrigated land west of Moreland and Rockford. The SCD held a tillage demonstration to show equipment that could handle the stubble.

Irrigated pastures received considerable attention on the older irrigated land in the district. The SCD encouraged farmers to use rotation grazing and proper fertilization; these measures greatly increased production.

Potatoes, wheat, alfalfa, barley, and pasture are the main agricultural products in the Central Bingham SCD. Seventy-five percent of the people working in the district are employed in agriculture.

Nearly all potatoes grown in the district today are under sprinkler irrigation. Uniform water application made possible by conversion from surface to sprinkler irrigation has greatly improved the quality of potatoes grown in the area. The SCD is now promoting use of low-pressure sprinklers to save soil, energy, and water.

Conservation practices such as crop rotations, proper tillage, and returning crop residue to the soil, along with proper management of irrigated pastures, are commonly found today throughout the Central Bingham SCD. Conservation tillage is a top priority in the SCD's current program. Supervisors believe minimum tillage offers great benefits for soil conservation and in eliminating soil compaction.

Using land to its proper potential has been a long-standing goal of the Central Bingham SCD. With SCD encouragement and assistance, sub-irrigated areas have been converted to pasture and rocky, shallow soils along the Snake River have been planted to perennial crops such as pasture and hay. The SCD continues promoting the use of improved plant varieties.

The SCD has traditionally carried out a vigorous information program, using local newspapers, radio, newsletters, demonstrations, tours, and presentations to local civic groups. The SCD's annual youth conservation poster contest entered its 30th year in 1984.

Clark SCD

Livestock was the first and is still the principal agricultural industry in eastern Idaho's Clark County. The northern half of the county forms part of the Continental Divide. Canyons and creeks draining to the south dissect this mountainous timber country. The mountains produce about 200,000 acre-feet of water annually, but due to seepage losses many streams run dry before they can be used. Water from the mountain streams irrigates only about 15,000 acres in the SCD. Rolling lava plains make up the southern half of the district. Hay, wheat, and potatoes are the main crops raised in the district.

Water conservation was the major problem mentioned by ranchers and farmers at a 1956 public hearing on forming the Clark Soil Conservation District. Because water conservation was so important to sustaining and building agriculture in the area, the Clark County Chamber of Commerce strongly supported forming the new district. Following the hearing, landowners voted by a 92 percent margin to organize the SCD to include all of Clark County except Dubois, which was annexed to the district in 1976. The Clark SCD was officially organized September 5, 1956.

Sherman Halverson, Kilgore; Stacy Bond, Small; and George Thomas, Daniel Thomas, and Howard Frederiksen, Dubois, were the first supervisors of the Clark SCD.

Since the SCD was organized, the amount of irrigated land in Clark County has jumped from 13,207 to 62,600 acres. Most of the new irrigated land was formerly rangeland. Only about 20,000 acres are classified as dry farmland. Today more than 680,000 acres of federal, state, and private land are used for grazing.

Both wind and water cause erosion on dry farmland and rangeland in the Clark SCD. Water shortages still occur in late summers; water conservation is an important part of the district's program. Erosion is a problem on rangeland in the district. Additional sources of water are needed for both livestock and wildlife. To improve management of intermingled grazing lands, the SCD supports coordinated rangeland planning.

Each year the Clark SCD provides technical assistance to landowners and operators on a variety of soil and water conservation practices. Some of the more popular conservation measures being adopted in the district today are conservation tillage, brush control, irrigation water management, windbreaks, grazing management, use of crop residue, and irrigation system improvements.

The Clark SCD provides habitat for big game including moose, deer, elk, and bear in the higher elevations and antelope in the lowlands. This area also supports numerous high-quality fisheries and gamebirds including one of the largest sage grouse populations in Idaho. Located near intensively used recreation areas such as Yellowstone National Park, Clark County's rural character offers tremendous opportunity for recreational growth.

Clearwater SWCD

Meetings held throughout Clearwater County in 1945 revealed both the need and public support for a conservation district. Following a public hearing and referendum, the Clearwater Soil and Water Conservation District received its Certificate of Organization March 25, 1946.

Frank Larson, Weippe, chaired the first Clearwater SWCD board. Serving with Larson were Ike Dunlap, Ross Trout, and Harold Powell, Orofino; and Roy LeBaron, Southwick. In July 1946 the Soil Conservation Service assigned Bill Currier and Jack Harwood to work with the new SWCD. Clearwater County Commissioners provided office space; the first SWCD meetings were held in the basement of the county courthouse in Orofino.

Clearwater County covers 2,522 square miles and extends most of the distance across northcentral Idaho. Major crops are wheat, barley, peas, oats, and clover seed. The area also supports cattle, sheep, swine, and dairy operations. The wood products industry is economically important, with several sawmills located in the county.

The SWCD's first five years were very busy. By 1951, 79,140 acres had been surveyed and more than 190 conservation farm plans had been developed. The SWCD acquired several implements including a TD-14 dozer, subsoiler, sheepsfoot roller, hand-operated grader, and plow. The district charged farmers $1.50 to $2 per day to use this equipment.

Strip cropping proved to be one of the best and most popular practices for controlling erosion on steep slopes. Early SWCD supervisors also promoted proper seeding practices, weed control, and experiments with nitrogen fertilizers. Farmers built many stock water ponds with SWCD assistance.

The SWCD began a five-point program in the late 1960s to combat soil erosion on steep cropland. The program calls for no summer fallow and promotes minimum tillage, contour seeding, divided slopes or strip farming, and seeding of critical areas. Many farmers have adopted these conservation practices. In fact, the program has resulted in less than 10 percent of the cropland in the district being summer fallowed.

Clearwater County is now part of the Palouse target area, nationally recognized for its severe erosion problems. The SWCD places a high priority on reducing soil erosion and has purchased a no-till drill which it rents to farmers to introduce them to this conservation practice. Farmers have responded very favorably to no-till farming.

Erosion in the Palouse hills causes sedimentation damage to roadside ditches, streams, and reservoirs. The SWCD helps draw attention to these problems. Grassed waterways, a popular and effective erosion control practice, are visible on many farms in the district. Reseeding and conservation practices have proven effective, but much remains to be done to reduce erosion and improve water quality.

Erosion on agricultural land in the Bedrock Creek watershed, in the Clearwater River's north corridor, is causing serious water quality problems. The SWCD has applied to the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare for a state grant to conduct a water quality project in this area.

Many farmers and ranchers have used the SWCD's services to improve pasture and livestock management. Several animal waste systems have been installed and many woodland grazing systems have been developed.

Many competent employees of the Soil Conservation Service have assisted the SWCD over the years. A soil survey program underway in the district greatly benefits the SWCD's activities and many individual landowners.

A final program in which the SWCD takes great pride is the annual forestry tour for sixth graders, held for more than 25 years. This three-day event introduces youngsters to the district's forest resources and activities including wildlife, grazing, soils, logging, and fisheries.

Custer SWCD

The Custer Soil and Water Conservation District received its Certificate of Organization January 27, 1953. The very large district, which included all of central Idaho's Custer County, was often difficult to serve from the SWCD office in Challis. So, landowners south of Willow Creek Summit, in the Mackay area, joined the Butte SWCD to the southeast in 1967. In 1968 landowners in the northern section of the Pahsimeroi Valley, which was then included in the Lemhi SWCD to the north, joined the Custer SWCD. With these boundary changes, the Custer SWCD encompassed the part of Custer County that drains into the Salmon River and the part of Lemhi County that drains into the Pahsimeroi River. The SWCD includes about 2.5 million acres, of which about 150,000 acres are privately owned.

The original Custer SWCD contained four distinct agricultural areas: the Pahsimeroi area in the northeast, the eastern Big Lost River Valley, the central Challis area, and the East Fork-Stanley area in the southwestern part of the county. Each area was represented on the first SWCD board and supervisors appointed assistants to represent the more remote regions. The first SWCD board, chaired by James F. Jones, Leslie, also included Jack Burstedt, May; Niel Gilchrist, Mackay; Eddie Baker, Clayton; and Lawrence Bradbury, Challis.

Following several public meetings to assess conservation needs in the district, the SWCD drafted its first work plan. Grass was the most important crop in the high, semi-arid district. The SWCD has sponsored many trial seedings of new and improved grasses furnished by the Soil Conservation Service's Plant Materials Centers in Aberdeen, Idaho, and Pullman, Washington. Over the years, more than 50 new plantings of improved grasses and other crops have been made in the district. The SWCD leased a one-acre plot in 1980 from the Idaho Department of Lands in the Bradbury Flat area. With seed furnished by the Aberdeen Plant Materials Center, the SWCD established a trial planting of 17 species of range plants. Six other similar seedings were made in 1982 and 1983 on public land.

In the SWCD's first six months in operation, 59 landowners requested technical assistance for more than 29,000 acres. Demands were high for land leveling and irrigation improvements. In 1956 the SWCD was granted an Army surplus HD-7 crawler tractor and bought a lowboy transport to move it. Thus began the slow process of acquiring equipment for district cooperators to use.

Over the years, thousands of cubic yards of rock have been placed along the Salmon River and its tributaries to help control erosion. Rock riprapping has helped stabilize the river banks, minimize shifting of the stream bottoms, and preserve chinook spawning beds.

High water and flooding on Garden, Challis, and Morgan creeks kept the SWCD busy in 1970. Streambank protection and irrigation water management practices were emphasized that year.

One of Custer SWCD's long-standing goals — to develop coordinated management on public and private rangeland — began to take shape in March 1979. The SWCD joined with Challis area ranchers and others to form the Challis Experimental Range Stewardship program. The program was an outgrowth of the 1978 Public Rangelands Improvement Act which called for "innovative grazing programs" that would result in "an improvement of the range condition of lands under permit or lease." Many conflicts among ranchers, wildlife organizations, recreational users, and other groups interested in the area are being resolved through this program. Through the combined efforts of ranchers, public agencies, and others, range management is improving.

The Morse Creek Gravity Sprinkler project was completed in 1982. Funded through the Resource Conservation and Development program, this project installed more than three miles of welded steel pipe to carry 414 inches of water to six on-farm irrigation systems. The project provides water for about 618 acres and is expected to raise water efficiency from 13 to 65 percent. The Morse Creek project will improve the yield and quality of hay grown there as well as lowering labor and operating costs. Cooperators in the project now have enough water to irrigate a second crop.

East Cassia SCD

Flooding is a periodic problem in eastern Cassia County. But it was two successive years of drought conditions in the mid-1950s that led farmers to form a soil conservation district in this part of southern Idaho. Following a public hearing in Malta, landowners voted 150 to nine to form the East Cassia Soil Conservation District. The new district, officially organized September 5, 1956, included the eastern half of Cassia County. Farmers in the far eastern section of the county had already joined the Oneida District when the East Cassia District was organized, but this area joined the East Cassia SCD in 1977, bringing all of eastern Cassia County into one conservation district.

The original board of supervisors included Rawlins J. Harper, Malta; Albert "Jake" Smith, Bridge; Lewis M. Ottley, Elba; Orson J. Zollinger, Sublett; and Gus L. Erickson, Almo. These men appointed alternates to help carry out the district's program. The first alternate supervisors were J. Vard Chatburn and Joe R. Carlson, Albion; Fred E. Taylor, Moulton; William Roper, Idahome; Raymond H. Johnson, Heglar; and Fred J. Rigby, Bridge.

The SCD set one goal for its program: "to use our resources of both land and water to the best ability of each and every landowner and operator of the District."

The East Cassia SCD contains 972,395 acres. More than 500,000 acres are in public ownership or urban areas. The land types range from mountains to desert. Hay and grain are the major crops in the district. The district includes 121,452 acres of irrigated cropland, 94,524 acres of dry cropland, and 117,606 acres of private rangeland.

Windbreak plantings, range improvements, and grass seed plantings were among the first conservation practices promoted by the SCD. Erosion on steep farmland is a serious problem in the district. Many terraces have been installed on the steeper dryland slopes since the district was organized. These terraces reduce erosion and conserve moisture. Several gravity sprinkler systems have been developed. A two-mile section of mainline for additional gravity irrigation is currently being installed.

Flooding almost always occurs in the district whenever the snowpack is heavy. The Raft River flooded its banks again in 1984, causing thousands of dollars of damage to farms and roads in the valley. Flooding remains one of the major problems confronting the East Cassia SCD.

The district receives operating funds from Cassia County and the state of Idaho. The SCD supplements these funds by renting equipment and selling trees for windbreaks. For a few years the district held an auction to raise additional money.

Until recently, the East and West Cassia Districts hired their own part-time technician to assist cooperating landowners and operators. It became difficult, however, to meet payroll costs. At the districts' request, technician J.J. McLaws was employed by the Soil Conservation Service. The East Cassia SCD has been able to continue employing a part-time clerk over the years. Gail Fisher is the SCD's present clerk.

The East and West Cassia Districts co-sponsor an annual land-judging contest for youth. Supervisors of both districts expend a great deal of time and effort to continue this popular and educational program for young people. Each year the East Cassia SCD provides scholarships to students and teachers who wish to attend natural resource summer camp.

East Side SCD

From an inauspicious beginning, the East Side Soil Conservation District has developed into a powerhouse for dryland erosion control. In 1948, 109 landowners in eastern Bonneville County voted unanimously to form the East Side SCD. The district was officially organized July 22, 1948. It encompasses 959,719 acres east of the Snake River in Bonneville County. Grain, potatoes, and alfalfa are the major agricultural crops in the district. Beef and dairy cattle are also important to the area's agriculture.

Powell Fullerton, Idaho Falls, was the first chairman of the East Side SCD. Serving with Fullerton were William Hatch and John Parker, Idaho Falls; George Grubb, Swan Valley; and Earl Wolfley, Freedom, Wyoming. These men identified the two most pressing conservation problems in the district: irrigation water management, and soil and water conservation on dryland farms. These needs guided the SCD's early programs.

The young SCD confronted an additional need — staff to serve the many applications for technical conservation assistance. Supervisors signed a personal note in 1950 to purchase a land leveler. Equipment made it possible to complete needed conservation work and increased the young organization's visibility.

Significant accomplishments were made during the SCD's first five years: strip cropping was applied on 220 acres; 3,253 acres of irrigated land were leveled; irrigation systems were installed on 2,787 acres; 474 acres of land were irrigated for the first time; and landowners and users signed 296 agreements for conservation planning and work.

During the same time, torrential summer storms and spring flooding severely eroded dryland areas. Public support for flood control measures increased, particularly in the Willow and Sand Creek watersheds.

What spurred early supervisors to give so much time and effort to establish the East Side SCD? Love of the land, concern over the loss of precious topsoil, and a desire to preserve the land for future generations. The same beliefs drive SCD supervisors today.

Dryland erosion, a concern of the first East Side SCD board, is a top priority of the current SCD. Erosion robs the land of fertile topsoil and can also cause water pollution. Starting with the 1981 Willow Creek water quality planning project, the East Side SCD has made great strides to control water pollution from agricultural land. The project established the district as a state leader in agricultural water pollution control.

Realizing its credibility was at stake, the SCD approached water quality planning and implementation slowly and carefully. Supervisors chose a voluntary compliance program and accepted personal responsibility for contacting landowners about taking part in the Willow Creek project. Through these personal contacts, an advisory committee, and an active educational program, and with support from other agencies, the SCD generated strong interest in the project among local landowners and users.

The Willow Creek planning project helped the SCD prepare an application for public grants to carry out needed conservation practices. Badger Creek, a watershed in the Willow Creek drainage, received state water quality funding in 1982. Another state-funded water quality project, for the Meadow Creek watershed, began in 1983.

Local support for these projects has resulted in substantial water quality improvements in the district. Supervisors of the East Side SCD were gratified to receive a Superior Service award from the Environmental Protection Agency in 1983. The award commended the SCD for developing and carrying out a nationally recognized water pollution control program.

The East Side SCD has been a leader in dryland conservation during its 36-year history. The SCD planted trees for windbreaks and wildlife habitat in cooperation with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and seeded eroding areas along Highway 26. More recently, the district sponsored a Resource Conservation and Development project on Blacktail Recreation Road, a flood control project in the Upper Sand Creek watershed, and a Land Conversion pilot project to revegetate highly erosive slopes. District supervisors are ever expanding their vision to see the land within the district adequately protected now and for future generations.

Elmore SCD

The history of the Elmore Soil Conservation District in southwestern Idaho began June 7, 1940, with the formation of the Mayfield SCD, one of the first five conservation districts formed in the state. The Mayfield District contained 408,000 acres in the Mayfield-Orchard area of Elmore and Ada counties and about 50 livestock operations.

W.D. Clayville, Mountain Home, chaired the first Mayfield SCD board. Serving with Clayville were Oliver Lord, C.J. Russell, and C.R. Slater, Mayfield; and Worth Lee, Mountain Home. Until 1943 the SCD provided assistance to ranchers in range reseeding, grazing management, and general range improvements.

Due to World War II, employees of the Soil Conservation Service assigned to the SCD were pulled out of the district in July 1943, and the SCD's program almost died. Only Oliver Lord retained an interest in the SCD program. After the war, interest was revived, new supervisors were appointed, and by December 31, 1946, 36 conservation plans covering 49,616 acres had been written. SCD supervisors obtained war surplus properties and equipment to bolster their range seeding and improvement program.

The SCD expanded in 1948 to include the Smith Prairie-Pine and Cinder Cone areas, enlarging the district to 1,305,305 acres. The district now contained rangeland, dryland farms, and timber, with about 1,000 acres of irrigated hay along the creek bottoms.

A second SCD was formed in Elmore County September 18, 1952. Known as the Elmore SCD, this district included southern Elmore County, primarily the King Hill and Mountain Home irrigation districts, the Bennett Mountain area, and the Hill City area of the Camas Prairie. The Elmore SCD encompassed 620,690 acres, of which 145,238 were private land. The SCD's program focused on irrigation and drainage problems along with range improvements.

The Mayfield SCD operated from an office in Boise while the Elmore SCD's office was in Glenns Ferry. Both SCDs worked on shoestring budgets in the 1950s. Often, only the supervisors' dedication and determination kept SCD programs going. Supervisors sometimes paid state and national dues to conservation organizations from their own pockets.

The Elmore SCD office was moved from Glenns Ferry to Mountain Home in 1957. After protests from cooperators near Glenns Ferry, a field office was reopened there. Little is known about either SCD from 1958 to 1964. In 1965 the two SCDs merged to form the Mayfield-Elmore SCD which operated out of Mountain Home. In 1969 Rich Cornell, Jr., a supervisor of the Mayfield-Elmore SCD, won the Idaho Grassman-of-the-Year award.

The Mayfield-Elmore SCD changed its name to Elmore SCD in 1972. Also that year, after a favorable referendum, 327,338 acres in the northern part of Elmore County entered the district. The addition brought the district to 2.2 million acres, of which 91 percent was rangeland. With this addition, soil conservation districts finally encompassed virtually all of Idaho.

The part of Ada County that was in the Elmore SCD was transferred to the Ada SCD in 1974. This transfer brought the Elmore SCD to its current size of 1,985,300 acres. The district is now 70 percent rangeland. Irrigated cropland in the SCD has increased from 18,200 acres in 1952 to 121,135 acres in 1980. The district also contains some dry cropland and 458,212 acres of timberland.

Supervisors of the Elmore SCD have an impressive record of service to the conservation movement in Elmore County. Some of the current supervisors were attending SCD board meetings in the 1950s. In 1984 Bill Walker became an alternate supervisor after 30 years as a voting board member. The remaining supervisors of the SCD today have served on the board from five to 18 years. The Elmore SCD takes pride in the conservation accomplishments that have been made over the past 44 years and salutes all of the individuals who have given freely of their time to further conservation in Elmore County.

Franklin SCD

Although only 25 names were required for a petition to form a soil conservation district, 337 people signed a petition in 1947 to form the Franklin Soil Conservation District. Why landowners and operaters were so interested in forming a district became clear at a public hearing held August 9, 1947: people needed technical help to stop gullies that were cutting across their land, to repair areas buried in sand by the latest flood, to stop the depletion of native pasture, to conserve water, and to control noxious weeds. On October 13, 120 people cast favorable votes to form the Franklin Soil Conservation District. On December 19, 1947, the new district was formally organized.

J.H. Choules, Clifton, served as the first chairman of the Franklin SCD. Serving with him were A.W. Stevenson, Weston; and George Crockett, Wells McEntire, and Frank Gilbert, Preston.

At its first meeting, three requests for assistance were presented to the new SCD — two drainage projects and a deep gully erosion problem. By October 1948 the board received 17 applications for assistance and by November, 45 applications.

In December 1949 a young man named Norman A. Berg was assigned by the Soil Conservation Service to work with the Franklin SCD. Berg served as District Conservationist for six months and continued to support Franklin SCD programs for several years afterwards. Berg went on to head the Soil Conservation Service in Washington, D.C.

The original Franklin SCD included the southern three-quarters of Franklin County. In 1970 the SCD's boundaries were changed to include all of Franklin County.

From its beginning, the Franklin SCD has worked to control erosion and conserve water by offering engineering and technical help to progressive farmers and ranchers. Initially, the SCD purchased heavy equipment which it rented to landowners to install conservation practices.

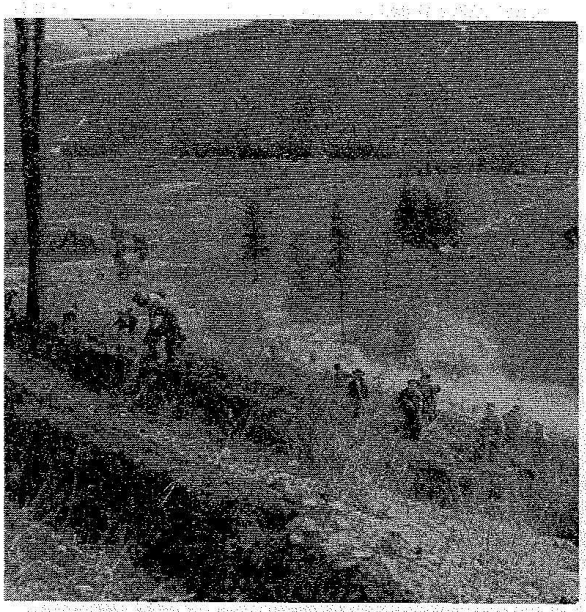
The Franklin SCD has also served as a center for information about soil moisture, water forecasts, soil classifications, and other information needed for maximum crop and forage production and resource conservation.

Water conservation has always been a concern of landowners in the Franklin SCD. The SCD has been instrumental in helping farmers design and incorporate sprinkler irrigation into their farm plans. The district introduced terraces, which have become a popular method of holding soil and water in place on dryland farms. Extensive land leveling has enabled many farmers to better irrigate and cultivate their land. The SCD also helped farmers install drains to reclaim farm ground.

In 1976 the SCD sponsored the Dayton Bench erosion control project through the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program. The SCD promoted another RC&D program in 1977, the Fairview Pump project.

Technical assistance and conservation information are still vital parts of the Franklin SCD's program. Today, modern conservation techniques and advancements in engineering have improved all phases of conservation. The Franklin SCD is committed to bringing these advancements to its cooperators.

CCC



The Civilian Conservation Corps installed some of the first soil and water conservation practices in Idaho. CCC men stationed near Worley (left) in 1936 dug contour furrows on a badly eroding slope. Contour furrows surrounding Pocatello (below), dug by the CCC, still protect residential areas from flooding. Heavy overgrazing left these hills susceptible to erosion from spring and summer cloudbursts.

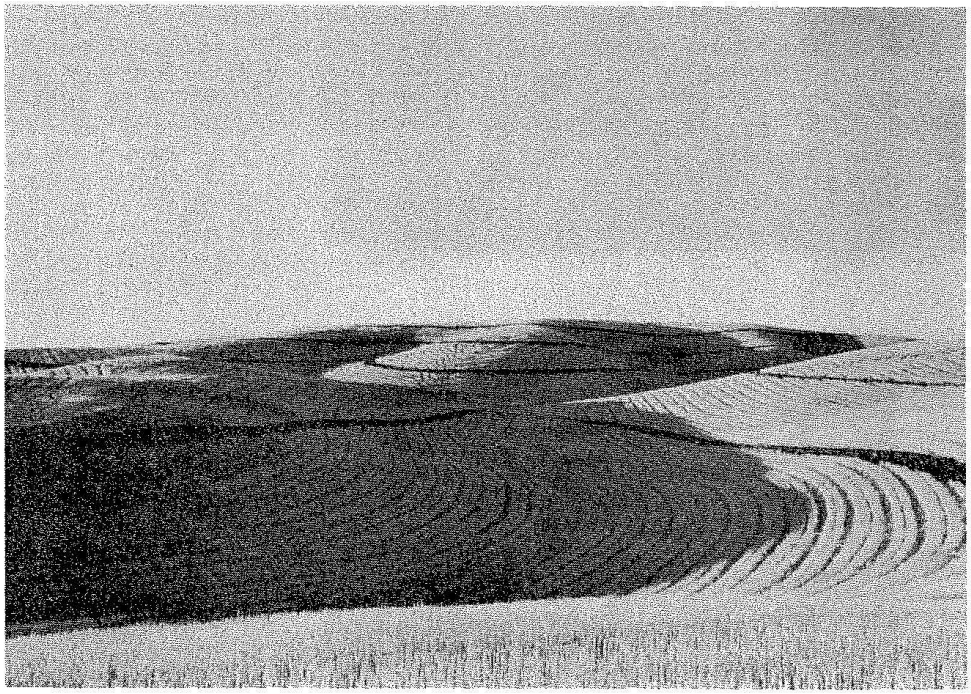


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Contours



Farming on the contour conserves soil on both irrigated and dry sloping cropland. This field near Ririe (left) was brought under irrigation in 1949, after 40 years of dryland farming, and planted to potatoes on the contour. A dryland field near Nez Perce (below) was laid out in 1949 for contour strip cropping, planting crops in alternating strips across the slope.

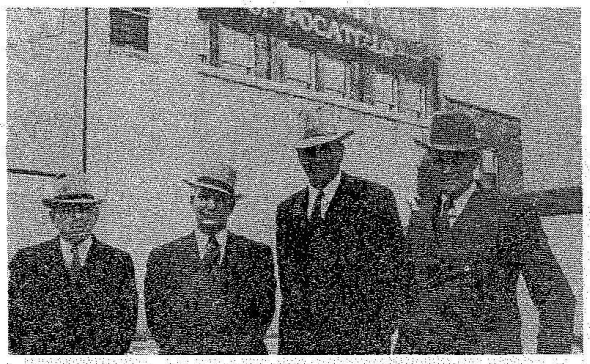


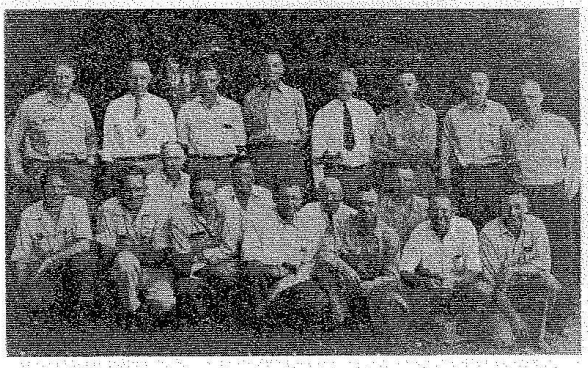
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Conservationists



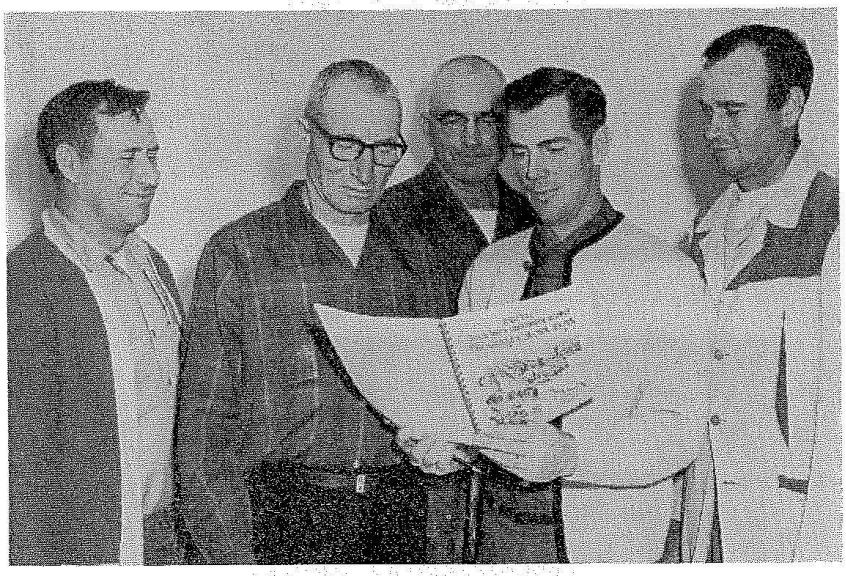
Hugh Hammond Bennett, the father of soil conservation in America, was known for his ability to dramatize the threat erosion posed to the nation. Bennett posed for a photograph in Payette County in 1940 (top) on an irrigated field where serious erosion had occurred. The first Idaho Soil Conservation Commission (middle, left to right) included E.J. Iddings, Moscow, (R. Neil Irving, Moscow, Soil Conservation Service state coordinator and advisor to the Commission), J.M. Isaacson, Malad, and H.E. Nagle, Parker, Idaho. District conservationists of the USDA Soil Conservation Service (bottom) met at a 1945 conference in Moscow.





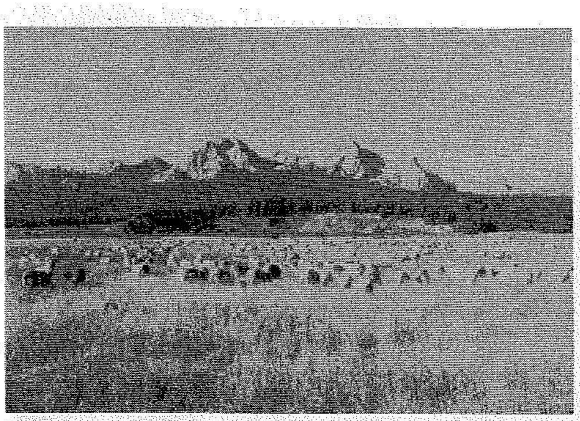
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Conservation district supervisors review natural resource needs and plan activities at monthly meetings. The Walcott Soil Conservation District (top) merged with the Minidoka SWCD in 1969. Long-range programs, which set district priorities and goals, guide conservation activities. The 1968 Payette SWCD supervisors (bottom) review their long-range resource program.

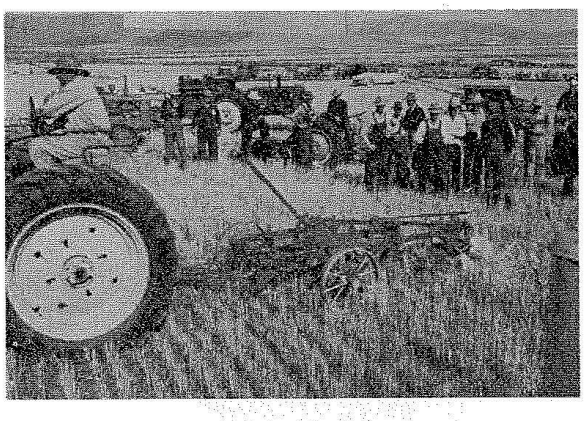
Districts At Work



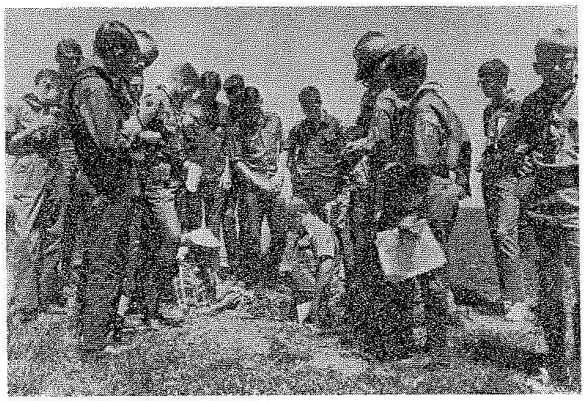




Conservation districts conduct programs to protect and improve range resources (top). Districts have traditionally used demonstrations (middle) to teach farmers how to save soil and water, as shown in this 1949 photograph near Gooding. Woodland inventories like this one in the Latah SWCD (bottom) help private woodlot owners increase production and conserve natural resources.





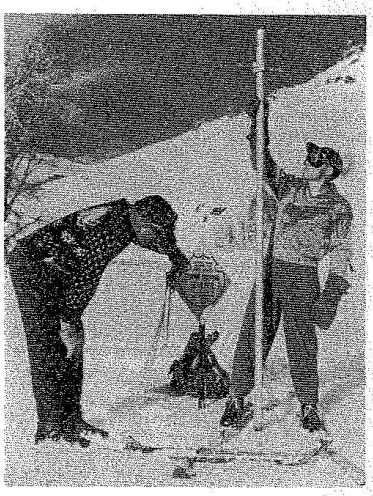


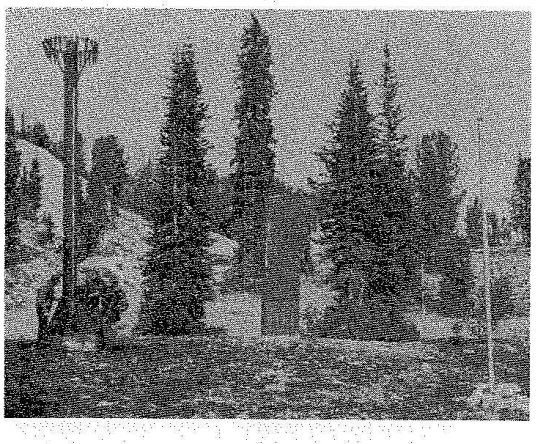
Many farmers attended this tillage demonstration (top) near Downey in 1951. Conservation districts have helped hundreds of farmers plant windbreaks (middle) like this one west of Blackfoot to curb erosion by wind and provide wildlife habitat. Soil scientists discussed soil characteristics with Boy Scouts in Minidoka County in 1967.

Snow Surveys



Employees of the Soil Conservation Service and conservation district supervisors have been measuring snow depth and moisture content to forecast water supplies since 1959 (upper and lower left). Modern snow surveys rely on a telemetry network system called SNOTEL (bottom right). Temperature, moisture, and precipitation can be collected anytime, night or day.

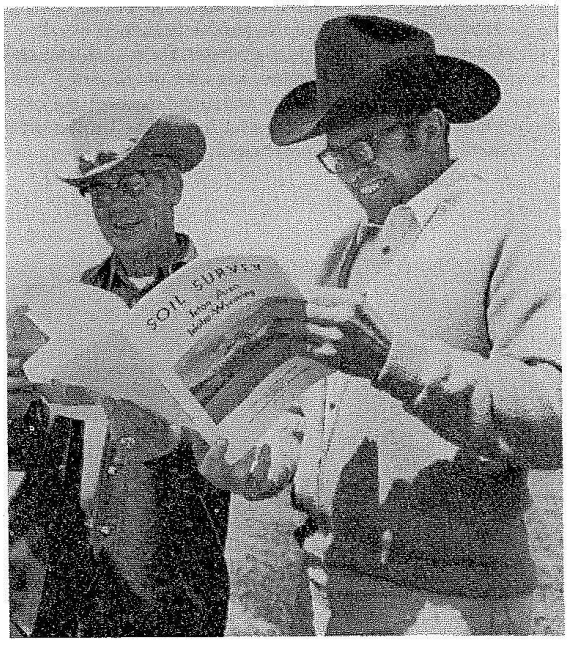




Soil Surveys



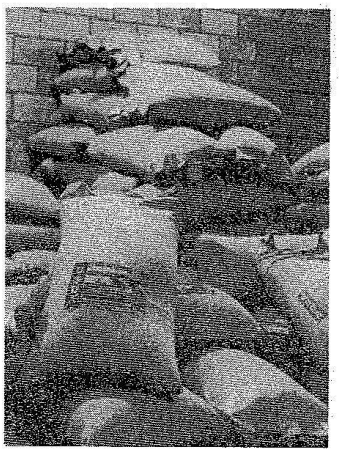
Former Governor Cecil Andrus and Doyle Scott, former administrative officer of the Soil Conservation Commission, participated in the last-acre soil survey for Ada County in 1976 (top, left to right). Andrus signed a state appropriations bill for accelerated soil surveys in Idaho in 1974. Soil surveys provide important information for a variety land use decision-makers (bottom) including farmers, ranchers, and county and state governments.

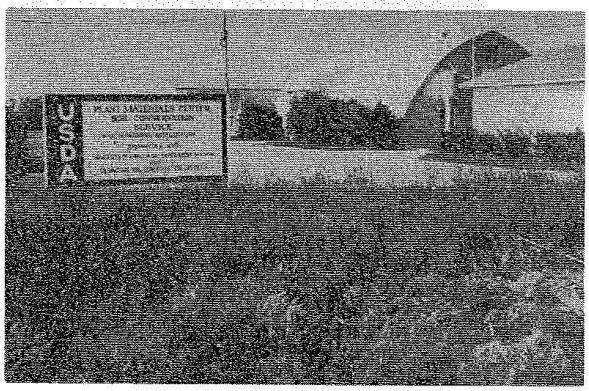


Plant Materials Program



William Lutz (top), chairman of the North Side Soil Conservation District board, examined a crested wheatgrass seeding made in 1954 at the Jerome airport. The Soil Conservation Service (SCS) operates the Plant Materials Center at Aberdeen (below). There, scientists develop new and improved plant varieties for higher production and greater erosion control. The SCS leases land for the Center from the South Bingham Soil Conservation District.





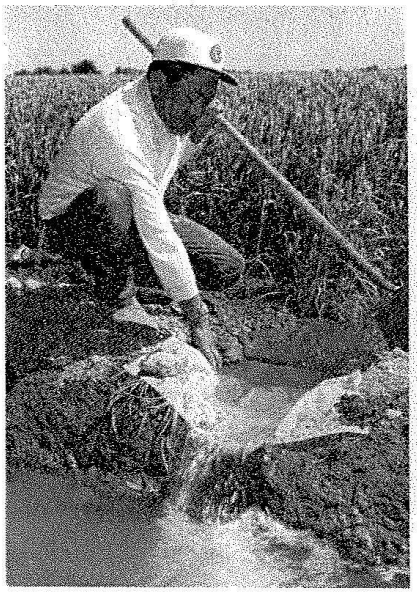
Conservation Farming Today

Palouse farmers are learning that a strawy, rough soil surface (top) helps keep soil on the land. One of the newest techniques for controlling erosion on both dry and irrigated cropland is no-till (bottom). No-till farmers don't plow. They plant crops directly into standing residue.

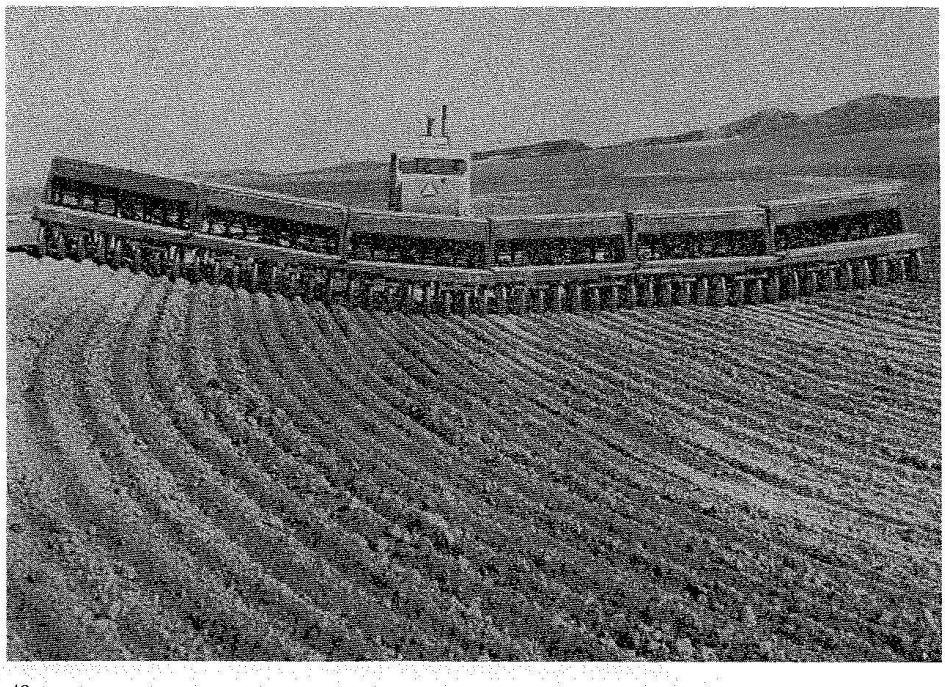




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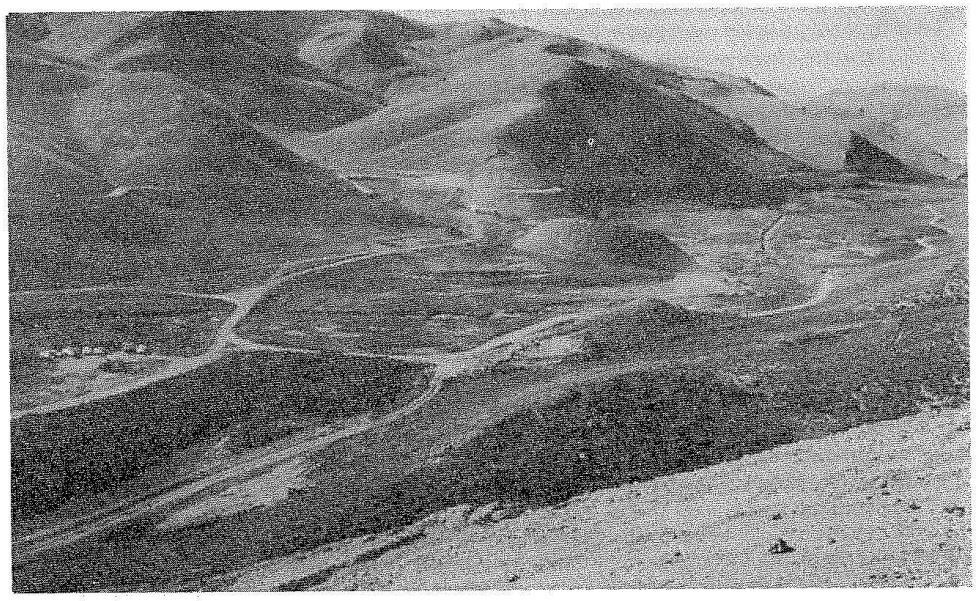


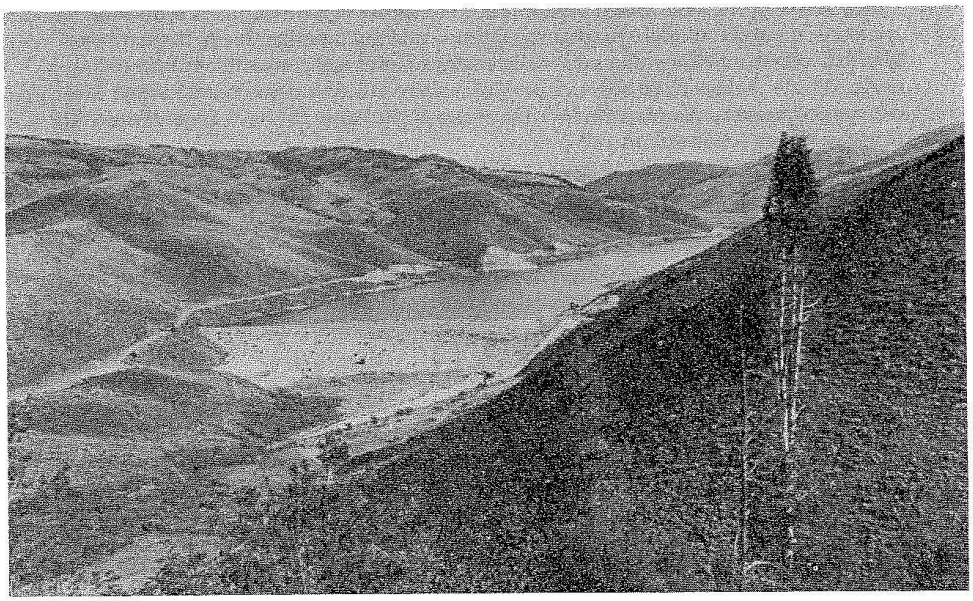
Through proper soil and water management, irrigation runoff can contribute to water quality (top). Modern equipment such as this grain drill (bottom) is well-adapted to soil and water-saving terraces on dryland farms.



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Small Watershed Program





Conservation districts sponsor projects that benefit many people. The Montpelier Creek Dam, completed in 1971, provides flood protection, irrigation water, and recreation in southeastern Idaho. The dam, sponsored by the Bear Lake Soil and Water Conservation District, was funded through the Soil Conservation Service's Small Watershed Program. The photographs show the Montpelier Creek area before (top) and after (bottom) the dam was constructed.

Gem SWCD

After three unsuccessful attempts to organize western Gem County into a soil conservation district, enough votes were garnered to form the Gem Soil and Water Conservation District in 1954. The three previous referendums failed primarily due to opposition from within the city of Emmett. The successful proposal excluded Emmett from the district. The SWCD was officially organized July 2, 1954.

The original Gem SWCD contained about 600 farms. Landowners at the public hearing held prior to forming the district said a district could help them level land, develop irrigation systems, and improve drainage where needed for farming. The SWCD found its first office in an Emmett service station. In June 1955 the district signed an agreement with the Soil Conservation Service which allowed the Service to assign technical staff to the Gem SWCD.

The first supervisors of the Gem SWCD were Gerhart Pook, Walter Conrad, William Charters, Edward Harpt, and Carroll Parks. These men decided that the SWCD's first goal would be to complete a soil survey of the entire district. By 1957 the survey was ready for printing.

Farmers who received technical assistance from the SWCD signed agreements with the district to develop farm conservation plans and were known as "district cooperators." The Gem SWCD's first cooperator was Wayne Conger. More than 200 farmers had signed up as cooperators by 1957 and 30 farm conservation plans had been completed. In its early years, the SWCD encouraged farmers to plant cover crops in orchards, develop grazing management plans, and use conservation cropping rotations. The district also introduced new grass varieties such as Latar orchardgrass to the area.

The SWCD recognized a need for land leveling and smoothing and in 1955 borrowed money from the Farmers Home Administration to obtain an Army surplus tractor with dozer and a 12-yard carryall. They rented the equipment to farmers for $11 an hour. When the Payette River flooded its banks in 1955, district equipment was used to strengthen dikes protecting farmland. The water rose too rapidly, though, topping the dikes and flooding many farms. It wasn't until 1977 that the Payette River dike repair and replacement project reached its final phase — riprapping. In 17 days, 6,000 cubic yards of rock were placed alongside the Payette River. This emergency project was completed with the help of the Army Corps of Engineers and the C.G. Donoho & Sons Construction Company.

The SWCD's chairman in 1977, Larry Finney, helped organize and served as an advisor for the Governor's "Wildlife Tomorrow" conference held in Boise that year. The conference brought together conservation leaders from around Idaho to develop new strategies for maintaining, protecting, and enhancing the state's wildlife.

Americans became concerned about non-point sources of water pollution, runoff from the land, in the late 1970s. Because farmland is a major source of runoff and sediment into Idaho waterways, the Gem SWCD organized a public meeting in 1978 to draw attention to local runoff problems.

There are 153,865 acres in the Gem SWCD. Orchards, row crops, pasture and hayland, dairies, and cattle are the main agricultural products in the district.

The major soil and water conservation needs in the SWCD today are soil protection on cropland, animal waste management, irrigation water management, and land reclamation. Pasture, hayland, and rangeland will also benefit from conservation practices and proper management. Prime farmland is under pressure as rural areas are being developed.

The Gem SWCD relies on an ongoing educational program to attack these problems. Using demonstrations, tours, newsletters, exhibits, and local media, the SWCD offers landowners information about why conservation practices are needed and how they can be incorporated into a farm operation. The district also reviews planning and zoning plats and encourages local planners to protect the area's important farmlands.

Gooding SCD

Water from the Snake River and numerous small creeks, springs and wells made it possible to turn the deserts in southcentral Idaho's Gooding County into productive farms. But managing irrigation water on poorly organized, uneven fields proved difficult. So, in 1947 farmers met at the Gooding County courthouse to discuss how a soil conservation district could help.

Following a public referendum, the Gooding Soil Conservation District was formed on May 7, 1947, to include all of Gooding County. The first Gooding SCD supervisors were Don Fredericksen, Ralph Faulkner, and Sam Simis, Gooding; Doran Butler, Bliss; and Kenneth King, Wendell.

The new SCD first developed a work plan and requested technical staff assistance from the Soil Conservation Service. Then it set out to obtain badly needed leveling equipment. The federal government granted a carryall and bulldozer to the SCD. Supervisors, along with other farmers, donated money to bring the equipment from Mexico. Farmers again chipped in to get the equipment in working order, and the SCD hired a man to operate it. As engineers surveyed and staked fields, land leveling began. The SCD discovered that leveled land still needed smoothing, so supervisors purchased a land plane. The district was hard pressed to satisfy all of the land leveling and smoothing requests it received during the 1950s.

Conservation work often requires expensive equipment that farmers are reluctant to buy until they see that it will work for them. Bringing new conservation technology to its cooperators has always been important in the Gooding SCD's program. In 1984 the district leased a no-till corn planter. Using the no-till planter, farmers will gain experience working with this new technology and one day conservation tillage may well replace traditional tillage in Gooding County.

Irrigation demonstrations and field days sponsored by the SCD in the 1950s were important community events used to teach farmers how to apply water to match the needs of the crops they were growing and the soils they farmed. The 1960s brought a rapid increase in the number of sprinkler systems in the district, as potatoes became the county's leading cash crop. The conversion from surface irrigation to sprinklers also reduced soil erosion. The 93,000 acres of cropland in the Gooding SCD today is almost evenly divided between sprinkler and surface irrigation.

Farmers also learned from the SCD how to reduce erosion caused by strong spring winds. The SCD emphasized the importance of leaving crop residues on the soil surface and encouraged farmers to plant cover crops such as clover, alfalfa, and rye. Green manure crops protected the soil and increased fertility. The Extension Service promoted windbreaks, and many farmers planted trees to shelter their fields from the wind.

There are more than 80,000 acres of private rangeland in the Gooding SCD, along with 469,080 acres administered by the Bureau of Land Management, and 10,200 acres of state land. Beef was the first agricultural enterprise of Gooding County, and cattle still lead the agricultural industry here. Private and public rangeland was in poor condition when the SCD was organized, due to years of overgrazing. The SCD brought in seeds from the Plant Materials Center to replant denuded range, provided drills to do the work, and encouraged ranchers to use rotational grazing. The quality of forage on rangeland has improved and wind erosion had declined. However, some of the rangeland is still in poor condition, and more conservation measures are needed on this land.

The Gooding SCD is proud of the many individuals who donated time, energy and even money to build and expand the district's conservation program. One of Gooding County's conservation pioneers, Don Fredericksen, was elected to the board of directors of the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD). His wife, Pearl Fredericksen, was also a conservation leader, helping develop a strong conservation education program for local youth. Pearl became the first president of the NACD Auxiliary.

Idaho SWCD

The development of soil conservation programs in Idaho County reflects the area's diverse natural resources and land uses. Most of the farm and rangeland is in the western part of the county. However, farmers in the eastern part of the county were first to organize, forming the Idaho SWCD February 2, 1954. The new district included only about 25,000 acres of farmland, mostly along the Clearwater River.

The first supervisors of the Idaho SWCD were Ted Tholl, Clearwater; Cecil Boller and Paul Matton, Kooskia; Milo Spivy, Kamiah; and Glen Simler, Woodland.

In 1956 farmers organized the Salmon River SCD in southwestern Idaho County. The Prairie SCD, formed in 1961, encompassed the northwestern Camas Prairie. The Salmon and Prairie SCDs merged in 1966. In 1969 another merger brought all of Idaho County into one soil conservation district.

The Idaho SWCD recognizes its diverse resources and has developed a conservation program to protect woodlands, cropland, rangelands, and wildlife.

The district contains about 277,000 acres of privately owned woodland. Most private woodland has been logged and much of it is grazed. With proper management and selective cutting, landowners could double the present growth rate of their timber stands. The Idaho SWCD encourages better woodland management through workshops and annual tours.

There are 380,391 acres of private range in Idaho County, mostly in the Salmon and Snake River canyons. Due to historic overgrazing, annual grasses have replaced perennials and forage production is generally low. Reseeding is impractical on steep, rocky rangeland. But with proper management, the quality and quantity of forage can be improved. Some of the conservation measures needed on private rangeland include water developments, cross fencing, salting, and fertilization.

Private rangeland is intermingled with public lands that are also used for summer grazing. Coordinated management of these lands is critical for adequate resource conservation. In 1981 the SWCD supported development of the first coordinated ranch plan in the county. Working together, two public land agencies and a private landowner developed a management plan that promises to improve the soil and water resources on all of the land involved, regardless of ownership. The SWCD is committed to continuing the process of bringing public agencies and private landowners together to protect and restore natural resources.

Farmers raise small grains on about 210,000 acres of dryland farms in Idaho County, mainly in the Camas Prairie. Formed under grasslands, these soils are very suitable for annual cropping. There is adequate moisture to raise a crop each year, but farmers often leave fields fallow to conserve moisture and control weeds. Bare, fallow land allows considerable soil erosion. The SWCD encourages farmers to discontinue fallowing and use conservation tillage, terracing, and strip cropping to reduce soil erosion.

Dryland farms found on some of the woodland soils near Keuterville and east of the Clearwater River are low in organic matter and fertility and are extremely susceptible to erosion. The SWCD encourages farmers with woodland soils to seed fall grains only two out of six years and convert these lands to hay or pasture crops.

Along the Salmon, Snake, and Clearwater rivers farmers produce hay, pasture, and orchard crops under irrigation. To properly manage irrigated land, farmers must apply water according to the needs of the crop and the water-holding capacity of the soil. The SWCD offers programs to teach farmers how to better manage their irrigation water.

Idaho County has an abundance of big game animals including elk, deer, moose, bighorn sheep, and mountain goats. Some upland game birds including blue and ruffed grouse thrive in the county. Lakes and streams offer good trout fishing. Sturgeon and steelhead are found in the main rivers.

The Idaho SWCD encourages landowners to include wildlife habitat in their farm and woodland operations. As tourism and recreation increase in Idaho County, the SWCD will support orderly development based on proper land use.

Jefferson SWCD

The Jefferson County Farm Bureau took the lead in organizing the Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District by holding educational meetings throughout the county in 1951. After a public hearing and referendum, the district was officially organized November 5, 1951. The first supervisors of the Jefferson SWCD were Wilford Taylor, R.O. Lounsbury, and Wilford Hymas, Rigby; Clayton DaBell, Grant; and Seymour Thomas, Lorenzo.

The SWCD has undergone some boundary changes since it was organized. It now includes 247,345 acres east and south of the Snake River in Jefferson County and in the county's southwest corner. The Snake River, Palisades Reservoir, and other storages provide water to irrigate about 82,000 acres. Deep wells provide irrigation water for another 16,500 acres. The rest of the cropland in the SWCD is dry. Soil erosion is serious on about 10,000 acres of sloping, surface-irrigated land. Excess irrigation is a problems on some lands. The SWCD also contains about 9,000 acres of private rangeland.

The first farmers to use the SWCD's services sought engineering assistance with irrigation water management and land leveling. According to the SWCD's 1952 annual report, farmers "passively accepted with moderate interest" the soils information offered to them.

The early SWCD quickly developed an equipment rental program. Farmers made good use of district equipment to carry out their conservation plans. Over the years, the SWCD has replaced worn and obsolete implements to provide its cooperators with machinery that is adequate for the work they are doing.

Interest in soil surveys, farm planning, and land leveling increased in the mid-1950s. The district had signed 334 people on as cooperators by the end of 1955. As it helped more people, the SWCD gained a reputation for offering landowners long-term solutions to soil and water management problems on their land. Many drainage projects and topographic surveys were completed in the 1950s along with extensive land leveling and continued farm planning. The first concrete-lined ditch was installed on the Wilford Taylor farm in 1959.

Once the district got its technical services program operating, it began informing local citizens about resource conditions and the SWCD's program. The district held the first of many tours in 1960, to show the public different types of conservation work that were underway. The SWCD published its first newsletter in 1961. Developing fair booths and displays for community events, conducting workshops, distributing conservation literature to adults and youth, and sponsoring youngsters to summer conservation camps, the district has helped familiarize the public with what needs to be done to protect local soil and water resources. The SWCD Ladies Auxiliary was organized in 1964, with Genevie Scholes as president, to help the SWCD conduct its youth education program. The SWCD's first soil-judging contest for vocational agriculture students was held in 1969.

The Jefferson SWCD is a long-standing and active member of the Rigby Chamber of Commerce. Beginning in the 1960s, the district and the Chamber sponsored an annual Farmer-Merchant banquet. Each winter as many as 500 people attend the banquet, where businesses and individuals are recognized for their contributions to soil and water conservation.

In the aftermath of the 1975 Teton Dam disaster, many farms required leveling. About 1,000 acres had been releveled by August 1976, but as many as 7,000 additional acres still needed releveling. Some fields had lost up to six inches of topsoil to the floodwaters.

Irrigation water management continues to be a top priority in the Jefferson SWCD's program. The district also promotes animal waste management, conservation tillage, an effective weed control program, and tree planting to reduce wind erosion.

Kootenai-Shoshone SCD

In the late 1930s Kootenai County farmers saw the terraces and grass cover crops developed by the Civilian Conservation Corps to reduce erosion near Worley. Farmers knew that by forming a soil conservation district they could get help applying conservation practices and improving their land. Many attended the four public hearings held in 1941 to discuss organizing the Kootenai SCD. According to the hearing records, farmers attending the meetings asked for help clearing land to farm, digging reservoirs, building dams, developing wells and springs, and learning how to plant trees. Interest in organizing a district was so strong that at each hearing there was considerable discussion about whether people elsewhere in the county would support a district and if not, whether it would be possible to organize an SCD for just one area.

The district was organized to include the entire county, except incorporated towns, on March 31, 1941. L.M. Leininger, Hayden Lake; William Sanders, Medimont; Earl Fly, Harrison; Ralph Preuninger, Worley; and J.M. Barnum, Coeur d'Alene, were the first supervisors of the Kootenai SCD. In 1972 part of Shoshone County north of the divide between the St. Joe and Coeur d'Alene rivers entered the district. The next year the district added "Shoshone" to its name. With the later inclusion of several towns, the SCD finally encompassed all of Kootenai and part of Shoshone counties.

The SCD provided badly needed equipment including a gypsum spreader, grass drills, land levelers, and corrugators. During its early history, the Kootenai SCD owned or leased 23 implements for farmers' use. The SCD also supplied grass seed to show the benefits of seeding legume and grass mixtures. In 1946 the district introduced strip cropping as a way to reduce erosion on steep slopes.

Interest in woodland management increased in the 1950s. By 1953 the SCD compiled its first erosion control recommendations for woodlands. The same year, the district developed specifications for all tree species. Farmers used this information to develop woodland management plans.

The first annual "Conservation Day" was held April 10, 1954, in Coeur d'Alene. The event gave farmers a chance to see new conservation implements.

The district added more conservation practices to its program throughout the 1950s. By 1961 the SCD was actively promoting conservation cropping systems, contour farming, crop residue use, pasture and woodland improvements, grassed waterways, farm ponds, and drainage improvements. The district's first newsletter was published in 1963.

Almost all of the Kootenai-Shoshone SCD was originally forested. Today, dryland and irrigated farms, cattle and dairy operations, and tree farms are established parts of the farm and rural economy. Soil erosion has affected more than 52,000 acres of cropland in Kootenai County alone. In critical erosion areas soil losses can average 16 tons per acre per year. Erosion not only reduces yields — it also causes water pollution. There are more than 25,000 acres of irrigated cropland in the SCD. Water conservation and development along with urban sprawl are the major resource problems on these lands.

More than 150,000 acres of private pasture, hayland, range, and forest land are used for cattle grazing. These lands require careful management for production and resource protection. Urban developments and recreation sites are encroaching on these lands.

In a typical year, the Kootenai-Shoshone SCD provides some type of conservation assistance to more than 150 individuals and several units of government. Grassed waterways, conservation tillage, woodland and wildlife management, critical area seeding, and woodland grazing management are some of the most popular conservation measures being installed in the SCD today.

The SCD has been active in Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) projects since they began in 1963. RC&D projects have developed new recreation areas and youth camps, seeded critical erosion sites, and revegetated streambanks.

The district is now seeking funds for intensive erosion control and water quality projects in several areas including the Black Creek watershed and two drainages into Coeur d'Alene Lake.

Latah SWCD

About 80 people attended a public hearing in Moscow on February 13, 1940, to discuss organizing the Latah Soil and Water Conservation District. At the hearing, C.V. Brabb, Palouse, Washington, read a paper he had written recalling how soil conservation programs began in the Palouse. Following are highlights from Brabb's statement:

A Soil Erosion Experiment Station opened at Pullman, Washington, in 1930. The Civilian Conservation Corps camp at Moscow established the first erosion control demonstration project in the Pacific Northwest in 1934, along the South Fork of the Palouse River, and held several demonstrations on farms near Moscow. Demand for more demonstrations led the Soil Conservation Service to establish another CCC camp at Genesee in 1935. Farmers from all over Latah County visited the Pullman experiment station and CCC demonstration projects. The Extension Service helped 15 farmers develop conservation plans to familiarize more people with soil conservation methods. As early as 1936, the communities of Kennedy Ford, Troy, Deary, Moscow, Kendrick, and Genesee formed voluntary conservation groups covering 95 percent of Latah County's cropland.

All of the work Brabb recounted occurred before Idaho authorized conservation districts as a part of state government in 1939. Why did Latah County farmers show such a strong interest in soil conservation almost 10 years before people in most other parts of the state? According to the 1940 hearing record, 80 percent of the county's cropland had lost 25 to 75 percent of its topsoil. Gullies were common. Fires, overgrazing, and clearcutting had severely eroded wooded areas. The many demonstration projects showed farmers solutions to these problems.

The 1940 hearing coincided with a typical winter rainstorm that was washing thawed soil off the sloping Palouse hills. William Smith, Deary, spoke for many other farmers when he testified, "Those of us who don't have much soil left don't like to see the little we do have being washed down the gullies."

The Latah Soil and Water Conservation District received its Certificate of Organization May 1, 1940, and became one of the first conservation districts organized in Idaho. Guy Kitch, Troy; Henry Bottjer and Ralph Naylor, Moscow; Roy Emerson, Genesee; and King Ingle, Kendrick, were the first supervisors of the Latah SWCD.

These men established erosion control, reducing water pollution, and proper use of land and water resources as the SWCD's first goals. Within six months, the SWCD received 163 requests for technical conservation assistance. Within five years, 788 farm conservation plans were completed covering 167,854 acres. Practices that were commonly applied during these years included ponds, the use of green manure crops, grass seedings, and tree plantings. Many ponds were stocked with fish in cooperation with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Like the earlier CCC projects, the Latah's SWCD's main purpose was to introduce new conservation farming methods. The 1949 "Farm-in-a-Day" program was one of the most successful and certainly the most spectacular educational event the SWCD has ever undertaken. On September 15, 1949, between 7,500 and 10,000 people converged on the Ralph Bursch farm southwest of Moscow. There they saw 121 pieces of tillage and earth-moving equipment strip-crop 200 acres, build a 1.4 million gallon stock water pond, and install 5,000 feet of waterways and drainage ditches. The Bursch farm was a typical Palouse farm, with up to 45-degree slopes. Machinery dealers from as far away as Canada demonstrated their equipment as visitors consumed nearly a ton of beef. At least 100 cars stopped at the Bursch farm in the first week after the demonstration.

Soil erosion, water pollution, and poor timber management still exist in the Latah SWCD, although the nature of these problems has changed as farming has become more intensive. Most cropland was planted to winter wheat in a summerfallow rotation in 1940. Farmers burned crop residue because their equipment could not move through it. Leaving land without protective cover lead to tremendous soil losses. Farmers now crop annually and conservation tillage is common. With crop residues protecting the soil, erosion has been significantly reduced.

Lemhi SWCD

After educational meetings and public hearings on forming a soil conservation district were held throughout Lemhi County, referendums were held in Salmon, Lemhi, Leodore, and May on January 16, 1962. Landowners voted 115 to 32 to organize the Lemhi Soil and Water Conservation District. The new SWCD received its Certificate of Organization May 22, 1962.

George Hays, Salmon, chaired the first SWCD board. Serving with Hays were Elby R. (Tex) Schmidt, Leodore; Paul Paytee, Lemhi; Niel Ankrum, Salmon; and Richard McDaniels, Ellis. Lemhi County agent Russell Hillman served as the SCD's first secretary-treasurer.

Soil Conservation Service employee Jay S. Dickens reported to work with the new SWCD August 29, 1962. A soil survey for Lemhi County began in October 1962 in the Tendoy community. The SWCD held its first group planning meeting with landowners near Tendoy October 16.

The Lemhi SWCD includes all of Central Idaho's Lemhi County except the Pahsimeroi River drainage. The district encompasses 2,749,000 acres. About 239,349 acres are privately owned, and today there are about 380 operating farms and ranches in the district.

Cropping patterns have changed little since the SWCD was organized. More than 90 percent of the harvested acreage produces forage crops, mainly alfalfa. About five percent of the cropland, approximately 3,000 acres, is planted to wheat, oats, barley, and peas.

In the four-month period ending December 31, 1962, 28 farmers and ranchers signed cooperative agreements with the SWCD to develop conservation plans on their lands. Technicians assigned to the SWCD conducted 113 on-farm surveys during this time, helping 32 landowners level land, reorganize drainage systems, and make other irrigation system improvements.

The number of SWCD cooperators climbed to 74 during 1963. There was a noticeable increase in production on conservation-improved land. Extensive land leveling made better water management possible.

In 1965 the SWCD completed 11,000 feet of rock riprapping on the main Salmon, Lemhi, and Salmon North Fork rivers. The work involved 27 ranches. The SWCD also hosted the 23rd annual meeting of the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts in 1965; 272 people attended the three-day meeting.

Wells and sprinklers including pumping equipment, costing more than $198,000, were placed in operation on drought-stricken Lemhi County ranches under the Agricultural Conservation Program in 1966. More than 75,000 feet of mainline sprinklers and several thousand feet of laterals were installed; about 2,400 acres of cropland were irrigated with a minimum amount of water.

The SWCD took first place in the 1966 Goodyear Conservation award program. The state association presented its first annual award for meritorious service to the *Recorder Herald* in 1966.

Current resource problems in the district include brush invading rangeland, poor quality and low yields from pastures on wet areas, and low irrigation efficiencies. These are the same problems faced by the early SWCD boards. But the approach to solving resource problems, particularly on rangeland, has changed. Today, cooperative efforts among private landowners, the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, and Idaho Department of Fish and Game are accelerating conservation on rangeland. Lemhi County ranchers such as Clarence and Rodger Swanson have successfully developed conservation measures on their private land and their public range allotments. The Swansons developed a contour ditch irrigation system as well as a crop rotation system to keep their hay fields in top production. Selective breeding and sound range management places the Swansons at the top of the list of pounds of beef sold each year.

To solve the problems of poor quality and low yields on semi-wet meadows, the SWCD has promoted the seeding of Garrison meadow foxtail and encourages farmers to use no-till seeding on these meadows.

Lewis SCD

Farmers who had developed conservation farm plans with the University of Idaho Extension Service led the move in 1941 to organize a soil conservation district in Lewis County. Interest in forming a district centered around the grain farming communities of Nezperce and Craigmont. February 27, 1941, county agent Charles Raney called a meeting of 30 leading farmers to discuss organizing a conservation district. Farmers then circulated petitions to form the Lewis Soil Conservation District, garnering 107 signatures.

Public hearings were held in Craigmont and Nezperce on March 26, 1941. Seventy nine people attended. Farmers described serious erosion that was happening on their fields that spring, as melting snow washed soil off the rolling plateaus. On May 3, 1941, 150 people voted for the new district; ten voted against it. The Lewis SCD was officially organized June 17, 1941, to include all of Lewis County except the incorporated towns, which entered the district in 1976.

Five men led the first Lewis SCD — Wilfred Waters, Nezperce; Glenn Henderson, Mohler; Edgar Rogers, Peck; Chase Haney, Winchester; and H.H. Kauffman, Craigmont. The Soil Conservation Service assigned Don Howe as the SCD's first work unit conservationist; he served until 1944.

Land that is now in the Lewis SCD was originally settled by Indians. Cattlemen were the first white men to use the prairies. In 1895 part of the Nez Perce Indian Reservation was opened to homesteaders. By 1905 most of the desirable prairie lands were being farmed and lumber operations had started in the forests near Winchester. A large part of the forest land on the edge of the prairie has since been cleared and is now farmed.

Rolling plateaus cut by deeply entrenched streams characterize most of Lewis County. Slopes on the agricultural land range from five to 15 percent with some reaching 30 percent. Topography, climate, and traditional farming methods have contributed to erosion throughout the Lewis SCD. Soil losses mainly occur during spring rains, summer cloudbursts, and winter runoff. Overgrazing has also led to erosion and loss of vegetation on slopes.

On more than 160,000 acres in the district farmers raise winter wheat, barley, lentils, and dry spring peas. Today erosion has reduced crop yields, caused water pollution, and resulted in flood damages. Leaving land fallow to kill weeds and fall-plowing land before it is fallowed are still common farming practices that leave soil vulnerable to erosion by wind and water.

More than 70,000 acres of private woodlands in the Lewis SCD are increasingly important to the local economy. These private woodlands need sound management programs. To make economic decisions and ensure that their land will continue producing harvestable timber, small woodland owners need information on thinning, slash disposal, erosion control, grazing management, reseeding, and planting.

There are about 33,000 acres of native range in the Lewis SCD. Rangeland is often overstocked. This leads to poor quality feed, erosion and weed problems, and streambank trampling.

The Lewis SCD contains nine watersheds. In each of them soil erosion from the upper reaches causes sedimentation and flooding in downstream areas, and water pollution. Conservation practices must be applied to an entire watershed to solve these problems. The Lewis SCD is conducting information programs and seeking funds to combat soil erosion on a watershed basis.

The district received a grant from the Idaho Department of Water Resource's Energy Division in 1981 to lease and promote use of a no-till grain drill. In 1982 farmers seeded more than 2,000 acres with the Haybuster no-till drill, protecting their soil and saving energy.

Since 1982 the SCD has co-hosted a conservation tillage workshop which draws more than 100 farmers each year. The district also co-hosts annual tours to view conservation tillage test plots and conservation practices used by SCD cooperators. For the past 11 years the SCD has sponsored a sixth grade tour at Winchester Lake State Park, with 250 students from three counties attending.

Madison SWCD

After the Madison Soil and Water Conservation District was organized February 2, 1948, farmers came to the SWCD primarily for help to modernize their irrigation systems, level land, and control the spread of noxious weeds. Ranchers sought assistance in improving the quality and quantity of forage for their cattle.

The SWCD includes all of Madison County in eastern Idaho. The first supervisors of the Madison SWCD were Wilford L. Jensen and Ed S. Covington, Rexburg; Clendon Gee, Sugar City; James H. Steel, Plano; and Glenn Sharp, Archer.

Agriculture remains the backbone of Madison County's economy. The amount of irrigated cropland has increased from 57,600 acres in 1948 to 112,525 acres in 1980, as farmers have steadily brought dry farmland under sprinkler irrigation. Potatoes, wheat, barley, and alfalfa hay are the major crops produced on irrigated land. Sugar beets, once a major crop in Madison County, have declined in importance but are making a gradual comeback.

Some of the conservation problems found on irrigated land when the SWCD formed are still problems today. Over-irrigation leads to erosion on much of the surface and sub-irrigated cropland. Irrigation systems that grew up with the farms need reorganizing for better water management. The SWCD encourages farmers to apply water according to crop needs and the soil's water-holding capacity. Leaving crop residues on the soil surface and using conservation tillage, along with soil-building crop rotations, will reduce erosion and improve yields on these lands.

Wheat and barley are the main crops raised on the approximately 100,000 acres of dryland farms in the SWCD. Slopes ranging to 20 percent allow early spring runoff to cause considerable erosion. The number and size of gullies on dryland farms is increasing each year, while soil fertility is declining. Wind erosion is also a common problem on dryland farms.

Dryland conservation practices have changed since the Madison SWCD was formed. Farmers have gradually replaced strip cropping on dryland farms with terraces and debris basins. The SWCD promotes these dryland conservation practices as well as stubble mulching, chiseling, and subsoiling.

Four major river channels in the Madison SWCD provide habitat for big game and upland game birds. The rivers are the North and South forks of the Snake River, the Teton River, and the Texas Slough. Fishing in the main channels and numerous streams is rated good throughout the SWCD. Sportsmen and landowners sometimes come into conflict over access to the main rivers and other public hunting and fishing areas. The Madison SWCD supports development of adequate access roads to public hunting and fishing facilities. The district also encourages private landowners to develop waterfowl nesting areas and needed food and cover for game birds.

After the Teton Dam collapsed on June 5, 1976, the SWCD assisted in the cleanup by publishing a county-wide plat book. Only traces of this tragedy remain today.

Minidoka SWCD

Homesteaders began moving to southern Idaho's Minidoka County in 1904 with government assurance that there would soon be water for irrigated farming. Southern Minidoka County was opened for homesteading in 1907, after the Minidoka Dam on the Snake River was completed and Lake Walcott was formed east of Rupert. The Minidoka Irrigation District now administers water in this area.

In the late 1940s well driller Julian Clausen tapped into the Snake River Plain aquifer in central Minidoka County. The Bureau of Reclamation then drilled wells there and finding adequate underground water, opened the Northside Pumping Division of the Minidoka Project. Outside the Bureau of Reclamation projects, people drilled their own deep wells and established irrigation.

Homesteads were mostly limited to veterans; thousands applied. Public drawings for the homesteads were held from 1953 to 1959, with 637 families taking up land in the project. They cleared sagebrush, leveled ground, laid out ditches, dug wells for drinking water, and built barns and homes. The only assistance homesteaders received came from two Extension county agents in Rupert.

Many of the settlers had lived in a soil conservation district elsewhere, and in 1954 some of them formed a committee to establish a district in Minidoka County. A public hearing was held March 8, 1955, in Rupert. County Commissioners, the Extension Service, and farmers who lived on the original Minidoka Project opposed the idea, so supporters decided to limit the district to land in the Northside Project, known today as the A&B Irrigation District. A public referendum passed, and the Minidoka Soil Conservation District was officially organized July 1, 1955.

The first supervisors of the Minidoka SCD were Edward Smith, George Hedlind, Willard Warren, and Roger Dean, Rupert; and George Falkner, Paul.

The Walcott Soil and Water Conservation District was organized for the original Minidoka Project area in 1961. The two districts shared office space and staff. In 1969 they merged as the Minidoka SWCD.

The Minidoka SWCD spent most of its first five years helping farmers level land, build irrigation structures, and develop proper crop rotations. Land leveling equipment was in great demand, so the SWCD obtained a government surplus TD-18 International track-tractor and purchased a land plane and carryall which it leased to cooperators.

Soil erosion on steep ground is a serious problem in the A&B Irrigation District now. Sediment in irrigation tailwater enters the Snake River aquifer through injection wells, possibly contaminating the aquifer. A high water table in some areas of the Minidoka Irrigation District is also a problem, creating high alkaline soils in some areas and high saline soils in other areas. Sandy soils are very susceptible to wind erosion.

The Minidoka SWCD has assisted farmers in converting to sprinkler irrigation. This lessens soil erosion on sandy or steep ground and also helps curb high water table problems. The SWCD also promotes conservation practices to reduce erosion on surface-irrigated land. In many areas of the county concrete ditches, cablegation, gated pipe, and pump back systems make efficient use of water, while reducing energy costs.

SWCD programs are educational, focusing mainly on soil and water resources. Through newsletters, tours, exhibits, and local media the SWCD provides current information on resource conditions and conservation needs.

The district's program also includes conservation activities for children. The SWCD helped develop an outdoor classroom at the Memorial Elementary school. Three teachers in the district, Renee Clark, Anita Beebe, and Marian Weaver, have received Idaho's Conservation Teacher-of-the-Year award. The Minidoka SWCD has received the state Conservation Education District-of-the-Year award four times.

Mud Lake SWCD

The Mud Lake Soil and Water Conservation District was officially organized June 24, 1946. The district includes 396,489 acres in northwestern Jefferson County.

The original Mud Lake SWCD board, led by Ben Matkins and Merritt Owsley, Hamer, faced the task of developing a conservation program and carrying it out. The original board lacked funds and office space. Despite these problems, the SWCD did develop a long-range program and quickly set to work persuading landowners to adopt conservation measures.

Early settlers in the Upper Snake River Valley built dikes along Mud Lake to increase water storage for irrigation. When the Mud Lake SWCD was organized, farmers came to the district for help in developing irrigation systems to get this water to their land and for information on how to properly apply the water. Thousands of acres needed leveling before they could be irrigated properly.

An abandoned barracks used by the Civilian Conservation Corps became the SWCD's first office. With donations from the Owsley Canal Company, SWCD supervisors, and local farmers, the district moved the barracks from Grace to Terreton, Idaho, where a local resident donated land for the building. The barracks became not only an office, but also a home for the conservationist assigned by the Soil Conservation Service to work with the new district.

Many changes have occurred since the Mud Lake SWCD was organized. The number of farms has decreased from 638 in 1946 to 275 in 1984, and farm size has tripled. At the public hearings held before the SWCD was organized, farmers agreed that they needed more pasture and hayland to produce stock feed locally. Perhaps the most striking difference in the SWCD today is the great expansion of irrigation. The amount of irrigated cropland and hayland has increased from 35,000 acres when the SWCD was organized to about 108,000 acres in 1984.

The area covered by the Mud Lake SWCD was once a treeless plain. Today the area supports many mature windbreaks which have been instrumental in reducing erosion as sandy soils were converted from native grass and sagebrush to cropland.

The SWCD began its program with very little resource data. A soil survey has been published and detailed information on soils, water use, cropping patterns, and conservation needs has been collected for many farms. The early SWCD boards emphasized the need for improved irrigation systems and practices. Miles of ditches and drains have been constructed and many sprinkler systems have been installed, including more than 100 center pivot systems. Thousands of acres of land have been leveled. The second laser-operated scraper in the country was used here. As many as 20 of these scrapers are operating in the SWCD each fall now. Land leveling has contributed to improved hay stands which protect against wind erosion, better soil management, higher yields, and more cost-effective farming operations.

In 1978 the Mud Lake SWCD began an annual program to draw public attention to a farmer who had done outstanding conservation work on his land. The Dobson ranch received the first Conservation Farmer-of-the-Year award for their work in leveling, irrigating, and bringing 1,500 acres to top condition. Sylvester Schmitt received the award in 1980, for irrigation improvements that made his water management more efficient and reduced erosion. The H H & M ranch, a family operation that spent years developing conservation practices on their land, received the 1983 conservation award. These awards have brought due recognition to landowners who have improved and conserved their natural resources. The awards also allow the SWCD to familiarize other farmers with conservation practices that they too can use.

The agricultural community has strongly supported the SWCD's program over the years. As the program has matured and expanded, soil and water conservation has become an important concern throughout the district.

Nez Perce SWCD

War loomed on the horizon in 1940 and farmers were urged to give all-out production. In northern Idaho's Nez Perce County, farmers alternated winter wheat with summer fallow, burning off the crop residue after harvest. Thousands of tons of soil poured into the Clearwater and Snake rivers each year.

Several farmers became alarmed, seeing the fertility and livelihood of the land they loved disappear. They set out to correct the problem by circulating petitions to form a conservation district. Fourteen meetings were held around the county, where farm operators and owners discussed their conservation needs. Public hearings were held and on May 2, 1941, 289 people voted to form the Nez Perce Soil and Water Conservation District, which received a Certificate of Organization June 17, 1941.

The SWCD contains 547,000 acres. There are 222,710 acres of cropland, 121,414 acres of rangeland, 141,000 acres of woodland, 22,961 acres of wildlife habitat, and 19,000 acres of hay and pastureland.

Five men had the responsibility of developing and carrying out the SWCD's first conservation program: Walter Halsey, Culdesac; W.H. Mervyn, Genesee; Ernest Butler, Gifford; Bert Schroeder, Lewiston; and J.M. Woodward, Leland. County agent Joe Thometz and specialists from the Soil Conservation Service were instrumental in helping the new supervisors develop a successful conservation program for the county. Supervisors held educational meetings throughout the district. The Lewiston Chamber of Commerce, *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, and local media helped the SWCD spread its message.

The Nez Perce SWCD's main office was in Lewiston. To make conservation services available to farmers in outlying areas, the Nez Perce and Latah districts opened sub-offices in Genesee and Kendrick. These offices remained open until the late 1960s.

Some of the early, dramatic changes that occurred on Nez Perce farmland in the 1940s were the seeding of sweet clover for green manure, water conservation, grass seeding, and less burning of stubble.

The young SWCD faced a dilemma: demands for conservation services were growing, but the district had little money or equipment to do the job. So, the Nez Perce and Latah districts began to share equipment and employed contractor John Barnhard to build stock ponds.

Equipment rentals and other sources finally provided a small bank balance — enough for stamps and post cards. Progress accelerated, although financial problems continued. Without county and state support, the district could not offer a conservation program today.

This history would be incomplete without mentioning Pappy Banks, a man everyone loved and knew well for his ability to find a good place to eat. Pappy, also a locally famous fisherman, was a persistent conservationist. He preached against stubble burning and advised farmers to raise more grass for erosion control and clover for green manure. Pappy gave good advice — and many followed his lead.

The depressed agricultural economy that has forced farmers with small operations into other jobs and increased the size of farms has also created a serious conservation problem in the SWCD. Large farms require large high-speed implements, which have accelerated the rate of tillage erosion.

Another pressing problem concerns land ownership. Land on the Nez Perce tribal reservation is normally rented to local farmers who offer the highest per-acre cash rent bid. Conservation practices that increase the land's production potential tend to drive up land lease bids. Operators are therefore reluctant to invest for conservation on land they may not be farming next year or the following.

The Nez Perce SWCD's overriding goal is to minimize soil erosion so farming can continue here. Great headway has been made since the SWCD formed. Farmers, local supporters, and supervisors who have devoted time and effort to conservation can take pride in helping preserve this land for future generations.

North Bingham SCD

The North Bingham Soil Conservation District was the first conservation district organized in eastern Idaho's Bingham County and the 14th district formed in Idaho. The SCD provides conservation leadership on almost 340,000 acres in the eastern part of the county.

Arvil Millar, Shelley, saw the need for a district in Bingham County, so he asked Extension county agent Claude Johnson for help. Some farmers, fearing government interference, opposed forming a conservation district. But when a public referendum was held December 4, 1945, all 69 people who voted favored the new district. The North Bingham SCD was officially organized April 4, 1945.

Clarence F. Johnson, Shelley, chaired the first SCD board. Serving with Johnson were G. Wayne Esplin, Ferron Blake, and Arvil Millar, Shelley; and Marion C. Esplin, Firth.

There was a great demand for land leveling services from the new SCD. A caterpillar, a carryall and tractor trailer, and an Eversman leveler were made available to the SCD, which hired Sid Balmforth as its equipment operator. Balmforth and Soil Conservation Service technician Ira Clark scheduled the very busy land-leveling work load. As the original equipment wore out and became too small for efficient use, supervisors signed personal notes to obtain equipment for SCD cooperators. The early supervisors were very frugal and made the SCD self supporting. The North Bingham SCD is still reaping the benefits of early supervisors' work.

Arvel Fielding accepted the responsibility of maintaining and transporting the equipment and worked long hours to keep it in repair. The SCD's machinery required a tremendous amount of time to maintain, operate, schedule, and transport. Collecting money from people who used the equipment turned out to be a big problem.

Technical help was critical to meeting the many requests for services which the new SCD received. Unable to find housing for Service personnel, the early board feared it might lose these people. But in 1948 the SCD was able to buy a building in Grace and moved it to Shelley.

The early SCD boards were active in promoting erosion and weed control and windbreak plantings. By 1952, 3,008 acres had been leveled for better water management. Farmers adopted many other conservation practices including crop residue management on 6,028 acres, improved water application on 2,711 acres, and crop rotations on 4,830 acres. More than 200 acres were irrigated for the first time and 2,987 acres were prepared for irrigation. More than 10,000 acres of rangeland were improved during the SCD's first five years. Soil surveys of the district were completed in 1951, and 200 conservation plans were finished.

The first SCD supervisors agreed their primary concern was conservation and orderly development of land and water resources through local self-government. They also agreed to attempt to provide greater local control over all government agricultural and natural resource programs in the district. Some of the early supervisors who contributed much time and energy to forward the district were Arvel Fielding, A.W. Clinger, Roy W. Hansen, Ivan Christensen, Thomas Christensen, and Gerald Stolworthy.

Sprinkler irrigation increased dramatically in 1965 and the SCD assisted in mainline development and installation. Most of the canal system farms in the SCD today are sprinkler irrigated. The SCD considers the conversion from surface to sprinkler irrigation as the major conservation accomplishment in the district. Today the SCD has turned its attention to controlling erosion in the foothills and improving rangeland management.

Erosion in the Blackfoot River drainage, along the eastern edge of the district, is also an important concern of the SCD today. The district has filmed the erosion problems there, measured erosion levels, and hired additional technical staff to help identify specific trouble spots and conservation needs in the area.

North Side SCD

Soil conservation demonstrations were taking place in Jerome County for at least two years before the North Side Soil Conservation District was organized June 24, 1946. A supervisor on the first SCD board, Felix Boguslawski, Jerome, installed the first border irrigation system in the county with help from Soil Conservation Service technicians.

Other original SCD board members were F.F. Phillips, Hazelton; John Roice, Eden; and O.H. Albee and Fred Nelson, Jerome. In the SCD's first work plan, these supervisors cited wind and water erosion, loss of soil fertility, weeds, plant diseases, soil-depleting crop rotations, uneven land, and deteriorating rangeland as the district's main resource problems.

Soil surveys showed that more than one-third of the 113,000 acres of irrigated cropland had lost from 25 to 75 percent of its topsoil. At the SCD's request, the Service conducted irrigation demonstrations to show various methods to reduce erosion on irrigated land.

The North Side SCD opened a second office in Hazelton in 1947. The building was donated to Jerome County in 1978.

The SCD, in cooperation with local equipment dealers, county merchants, and civic groups, sponsored a very popular "Farm-in-a-Day" program in 1952. In one day, more than 1,000 volunteers turned 128 acres of undeveloped land into a conservation farm. A home was built and 103 acres were leveled, planed, chiseled, plowed, harrowed, seeded, fertilized, and corrugated. Three and a half miles of fence, 3,000 feet of underground pipe, and 21,000 feet of irrigation ditches were installed. A woodlot and windbreaks were planted. The 11,320 people attending the event saw how conservation could be integrated into the development of a new farm.

The SCD carried out conservation practices at a record rate in the late 1950s and 1960s as farmers sought to make more efficient use of their land. About 60,000 feet of irrigation pipeline were installed; 886 irrigation structures were built; and 1,637 feet of concrete ditch lining were placed. Leveling took place on 1,900 acres, bringing the amount of land leveled since the SCD was organized to 30,000 acres.

Also in the 1950s and 1960s, cooperators seeded 583 acres of dryland range to crested wheatgrass, increasing yields as much as 500 percent. Deferred grazing was established on 1,500 acres. Altogether, the SCD's technical staff assisted in the conservation management of 3,730 acres of pastureland. More than seven miles of windbreaks were planted, including 18 acres for wildlife habitat improvement.

New possibilities for thousands of acres of sandy soil in southwestern Jerome County were opened up in the 1960s, when two Jerome residents rented a giant disc plow from the SCD and began turning under loose sand to bring approximately 300 acres into production. With deep plowing and sprinkler irrigation, the land could become very productive.

After nearly four years of planning, the SCD brought the Hazelton Butte project into full operation in 1981. Erosion on steep slopes in this area averages 23 tons per acre. Winter storms and surface irrigation runoff cause the erosion; 90 percent of the eroded soil makes its way to the Snake River. The cost-share project was funded through the Small Watershed program (Public Law 566). By the end of 1983, more than 1,400 acres had been chiseled for better water penetration and new irrigation systems had been installed.

The SCD is currently seeking funds for a special project in the 6,227-acre Vinyard Creek watershed southeast of Eden. Vinyard Creek provides spawning habitat for hybrid Rainbow-Cutthroat trout, but large amounts of sediment deposited each year in the creek are smothering the spawning beds. The soil comes from irrigated cropland.

The North Side SCD has conducted many youth conservation education programs. Tours, essay, poster, and slogan contests, land and soil judging events, conservation day programs, and Soil Stewardship Week are all used to prepare local youth to one day assume leadership in resource conservation in Jerome County.

Oneida SWCD

Farmers in the Pocatello Valley area were first to show interest in organizing a soil conservation district in southeastern Idaho's Oneida County. They believed a district could help them protect a section of the valley that was often inundated by heavy spring runoff. The idea caught on throughout the county. On May 22, 1941, the Oneida Soil and Water Conservation District was formally organized. The town of Malad joined the SWCD in 1975.

Members of the first Oneida SWCD board were James Williams, Samaria; O.W. Browder and Colen Sweeten, Holbrook; and John Blaisdell and Ruel Ipsen, Malad. Governor C.A. Bottolfsen appointed Oneida County rancher Joe M. Isaacson to the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission in 1939. Isaacson held this position until 1945, helping organize the first conservation districts in the state.

Oneida County provided $1,500 per year to help the new district carry out its program. In the 1950s the district became self-supporting through the sale of grass seed, by renting equipment for conservation work, and by selling items such as irrigation pipe and headgates. The first farm conservation plan was completed June 10, 1942, on Charles E. Thomas' farm.

The SWCD operated without an office until the early 1950s, when the board was granted two abandoned barracks used by the Civilian Conservation Corps in Downey, Idaho. Personnel of the Soil Conservation Service designed a remodeling plan for the barracks. Supervisors invested about $4,000 and many hours to move the building to Malad and remodel it. The district then offered the Service free office space. The SWCD took great pride in having its own office; the barracks were used until 1964, when supervisor Ray Eliason loaned the district money to build its present office in Malad.

The early Oneida SWCD supervisors devoted a great amount of time to selling their neighbors on the values of conservation farming. John Blaisdell described early SWCD work: "We borrowed equipment for conservation farming and loaned it to farmers on a fee basis. Combines were hired on an acreage basis with which we harvested grass seed on a share basis . . . Some unserviceable equipment was granted to us by the government, which we sold or repaired for rent to farmers."

The SWCD rented 200 acres from the Forest Service, where they planted grass seed in 1951. The district also financed a drainage experiment through which three farmers built drainage canals.

The Oneida SWCD has worked with many individual landowners to help them solve site-specific erosion problems through the years. Farmers used district equipment for some of the first land leveling in the county; this marked the beginning of improved water management. The district has also been active in several larger projects. The Third Creek project was completed in 1972. This project, funded by the Bear River Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program, replaced an open channel with 2,503 feet of 18-inch concrete pipeline. The project replaced an eroded canal, reduced seepage loss, increased water supplies and crop yields, and added to the local economy.

Construction on the largest gravity sprinkler project in the nation began in the Oneida SWCD in 1978. The RC&D Deep Creek Irrigation project included 5,000 acres of dry and irrigated cropland and 860 acres of urban land. The project converted a surface irrigation system to gravity sprinklers and provided full water supply to 3,838 acres, including 338 acres in Malad. It improved on-farm irrigation efficiency from 30 to 65 percent and reduced water loss, erosion, and sedimentation while increasing crop yields and stopping runoff damage to city streets. The Deep Creek project was completed in 1980.

In 1981 the district received a federal grant to develop a water quality plan for the Little Malad River watershed. The plan detailed the erosion and sedimentation problems in the watershed and identified conservation practices that could be used to improve local water quality. In 1982 the SWCD received a state grant to pay part of the costs of installing conservation measures on the land of farmers who are participating in the project. The Little Malad River project will continue for several years.

Owyhee SCD

Landowners in the Reynolds, Wilson, and Opaline areas of Owyhee County voted April 15, 1953, to form the Owyhee Soil Conservation District. Voting took place during Opaline Field Day at the Nolan Prescott farm near Marsing. Eighteen implement dealers from Marsing, Homedale, Caldwell, and Nampa donated machinery and workmen to build a "Farm in a Day" on 80 acres of Desert Entry land belonging to Prescott. About 2,500 people came to help and watch. Of 80 landowners and their spouses eligible to vote in the district referendum, 61 voted, all in favor of forming a conservation district.

The first Owyhee Soil Conservation District board of supervisors was organized December 9, 1953, with Alvin Benson, Melba, as chairman. Benson remains an associate member of the board today. Other members of the original Owyhee board were Clifford McMahan, Melba; Everett Clark and John Koch, Marsing; and George Johnstone, Homedale. Owyhee County Extension agent J.V. Briggs served as secretary. John Noyes was the district's first professional conservationist.

The Owyhee SCD originally included 285,000 acres and 115 farms. Within five years three more areas were annexed into the district — the Marsing-Homedale area, the Owyhee River-Triangle and South Mountain area, and Pleasant Valley. Today the district includes 290,000 acres of private land, 1,030,000 acres of public land, and 690 farms.

In the 1950s agriculture in the Owyhee District was devoted almost exclusively to raising beef, dairy cattle, and sheep, along with hay, grain, and pasture. Farmers and ranchers turned to the SCD for help with livestock water developments, grazing management, halogeton and brush control, erosion control, irrigation improvements, and aid in reducing salt and alkali concentrations.

The district responded with a conservation program aimed at helping landowners and operators use each acre in line with its capabilities and treat each acre according to its needs. Farmers purchased survey stakes for land leveling from the district and rented forms to pour concrete checks for irrigation structures. The SCD purchased and rented out equipment including a three-section sheepsfoot packer, dump truck, scraper, and small tools.

To attack a serious noxious weed problem, the Owyhee SCD began routing county weed-spraying equipment to landowners and encouraged farmers and ranchers to organize their own weed-control groups.

The district also promoted reseeding for improved forage and erosion control on public and private range. In April 1954, using seed obtained from the Civilian Conservation Corps, the district and the Bureau of Land Management fertilized and reseeded mountain meadows.

Land leveling for improved water management was an early priority in the Owyhee SCD program. One hundred acres were staked for leveling in early 1954. In 1963, 710 acres of land were leveled.

The Owyhee District helped pioneer the replacement of earth ditches with concrete to conserve water, improve irrigation efficiency, and reduce erosion on irrigated land. In 1963, 60,000 feet of concrete-lined ditches were installed in the district. In 1967 more than 58,000 feet of concrete ditches were installed.

During the past 30 years, the Owyhee SCD's conservation program has grown and changed to meet the needs of modern, diversified farming and ranching enterprises. Today, along with livestock and forage, sugar beets, potatoes, field and sweet corn, orchards, onions, and beans are also produced in the district. Intensive farming occurs near the Snake River with grain, hay, and pasture grown along major creeks. Livestock predominates higher elevations with much of the district still devoted to grazing. The SCD continues to assist landowners and managers with irrigation water management, erosion control, and range improvements. District interest in the quality of water resources has resulted in helping livestock operators develop and maintain animal waste systems.

Payette SWCD

The Payette Soil and Water Conservation District was officially organized February 26, 1958. The district originally included all of Payette County except the towns of Payette, New Plymouth, and Fruitland and 14,000 acres known as the Oasis area, which was already included in the neighboring Canyon SCD. The Oasis area joined the Payette SWCD in 1963.

Supervisors of the original Payette SWCD board were Ed Patton, Star Route; Joe Schmid and Leon Smith, New Plymouth; Curtis Carico, Payette; and Carl Mogensen, Fruitland.

Natural resource problems in Payette County in 1958 included drainage, slick spots, and poorly organized fields that were difficult to manage. With the organization of the Payette SWCD, farmers were able to receive engineering and surveying assistance in planning and applying conservation practices. The SWCD quickly set out to inform farmers of the types of services they could receive from the organization. Many farm conservation plans were written and conservation practices were applied to the land.

In 1960 the SWCD began an annual observance of Soil Stewardship Week with a breakfast for ministers and a tour of conservation practices in the area. From 1963 to 1965 the SWCD conducted an annual air tour for businessmen and clergy. Since then the district has sponsored "Mr. Conservation" and vocational-agriculture awards, distributed leaflets to churches and supermarkets, given placemats to restaurants, and published a newsletter to inform residents of the need to conserve soil and water resources.

District supervisors were some of the first farmers to use conservation practices. Farmers have often developed an interest in the SWCD and become supervisors after first receiving conservation services from the organization.

Many local, state, and federal agencies demonstrated a willingness to work with the new SWCD. The Soil Conservation Service, Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service, Extension Service, and Farmers Home Administration were a great help in carrying out the SWCD's early conservation programs and have continued to lend valuable support.

Payette County supports a highly diversified agriculture. Crops include many different fruits, potatoes, sugar beets, corn, alfalfa, grain, onions, mint, and grass. Livestock and livestock products account for 38.9 percent of total farm income and sales; dairying accounts for 18.6 percent.

The district contains 259,130 acres, of which 147,014 acres are in farmland. Intensive row cropping is limited to the lowlands and benches found throughout the district. Farm and dairy herd sizes have steadily increased during the last few years. The district's population has also risen steadily. The business area has shifted to Ontario, Oregon, but many people have chosen to live in Payette County and commute to work.

Soil erosion associated with irrigation is currently the main natural resource problem of concern to the Payette SWCD. In the Black Canyon area, water shortages often occur before the growing season ends.

Many of the resource problems have not changed since the SWCD was organized, but the cost of making needed conservation improvements has risen dramatically. In addition, rising energy costs have driven up the total cost of farming, making the decision to apply conservation practices even more difficult. Economics is the key to conservation application today. Farmers who can increase yields and decrease operating costs through conservation are willing to use these practices. The Payette SWCD makes every attempt to identify and promote cost-saving conservation practices.

Conservation tillage is one of the most promising conservation practices available today because it can greatly lower operating costs. The Payette SWCD is actively promoting conservation tillage to its cooperators. The district also encourages more efficient irrigation methods to conserve water and energy and reduce erosion. Gravity sprinkler irrigation installed in the Nu Acres area south of Fruitland has greatly increased productivity there, while reducing operating costs and conserving soil, water, and energy.

Portneuf SWCD

The idea of organizing a soil conservation district in Bannock County was warmly received by farmers at a water facility meeting in Lava Hot Springs in November 1939. Farmers left that meeting carrying petitions which they circulated in the Lava Hot Springs and McCammon areas. Hearing of this, Downey area farmers asked to be included. Petitions bearing 63 signatures were filed with the Soil Conservation Commission, asking that a district be formed to include all of Bannock County except the southeast corner, which drains into the Bear River.

In the meantime, farmers near Grace circulated a petition and asked to be included, too. At hearings held in Downey and Grace, farmers voted unanimously to form a conservation district. Officially organized May 18, 1940, to include all of Bannock County, the Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District became one of the first five districts formed in Idaho.

Leroy Olson, Virginia, chaired the first Portneuf SWCD board. Serving with Olson were Fred M. Cooper, Grace; J.M. Hartvigson, Downey; J.E. Wilson, Lund; and Archie Miller, Lava Hot Springs. At the supervisors' request, the Soil Conservation Service opened an office in Pocatello on July 1, 1940, to assist the SWCD with its program. The new board met with personnel from several public agencies and with members of local farm groups to discuss local soil and water problems. Following these meetings, supervisors developed the SWCD's first work plan.

The Portneuf SWCD contains 741,120 acres. About 354,244 acres are privately owned farmland. The remaining 385,876 acres are publicly owned. Grain, potatoes, sugarbeets, alfalfa, meadow hay, pasture, dairy products, cattle, and sheep are the main agricultural products in the SWCD. Many farmers combine crop production and livestock operations.

The topsoil in Bannock County is very erosive and considerable erosion has occured throughout the SWCD, particularly on dry farmland located on steep slopes. Spring rains, snowmelt on frozen ground, and summer thunderstorms have caused flooding for years in parts of the SWCD. Some erosion also occurs on irrigated cropland, primarily due to irrigation runoff. The SWCD has assisted several canal companies in improving their water delivery systems. The district provides information to farmers to help them better manage their irrigation water. Erosion on rangeland is limited to small, isolated areas. Developing urban areas also experience high erosion rates when rain falls on bare soil.

The SWCD's first work plan identified the following resource problems: seasonal flooding along the Portneuf River; a shortage of irrigation water; drainage; and erosion. The plan outlined a conservation program emphasizing proper land use, erosion control, and flood prevention.

Farmers in the Portneuf SWCD are using a variety of conservation practices today. On dryland farms, terraces, strip cropping, chiseling, and surface residue are used to capture water in the soil and reduce runoff and erosion. Conservation tillage is becoming a popular conservation practice among dryland farmers.

The SWCD uses many educational tools to make landowners, urban residents, and public officials aware of the conservation problems in the district and how these problems can be solved. Tours, workshops, demonstrations, a quarterly newsletter, small group meetings, and local media are all important to the SWCD's education program. The district began a youth conservation education program early in its history. Youth education is still an important part of the district's overall program. Each year the SWCD conducts classroom conservation projects in cooperation with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Forest Service, and Extension Service. The SWCD also sponsors teachers and students to attend summer conservation camps.

Effective conservation programs today require the cooperation of many individuals, groups, and agencies. The SWCD tries to bring a wide range of human resources together to develop and implement solutions to the natural resource problems in Bannock County.

Power SCD

"I would like to leave the ground better than we found it . . . . But it will take a lot of education and cooperation so we can lick the problems on our ground." With these words, Rockland farmer Norman K. Moss in 1948 summed up the prevailing attitude about forming a conservation district in Power County.

May 15, 1948, landowners voted 96 to three to organize the Power Soil Conservation District to include all of Power County in southeastern Idaho. The SCD was officially organized July 6, 1948, with LeRoy C. Lindley, Arbon, chairman. Serving with Lindley were Ivan Wolverton, Fred Tiede, and Ernest Permann, American Falls; and Ben B. Hull, Rockland. Extension county agent Sterling W. Schow served as the SCD's first secretary.

The Power SCD encompasses 903,000 acres. Most irrigated cropland lies near the Snake River and American Falls Reservoir. Northern Power County is largely public land used for grazing. To the south, the Arbon and Rockland valleys contain about 200,000 acres of dry cropland.

In 1949 people viewed the SCD as a group that could deal with a wide variety of agricultural problems. Problems on irrigated land then were inefficient irrigation systems, improper irrigation methods, soil erosion, loss of soil fertility, weeds, and poor drainage. Rangeland also had problems: low grazing capacity, low-quality pastures, soil erosion, and improper livestock distribution. Dry cropland suffered from erosion by wind and water, low soil organic matter and fertility, low protein wheat, weeds, and improper land use.

By 1956 the SCD had signed agreements with 400 cooperators for assistance on 410,099 acres. Contour and contour strip farming were popular conservation measures. With neighboring Portneuf SWCD, the Power SCD bought a contour marker which greatly reduced the amount of time it took to lay out contour and wind strips. A new conservation practice, seeding alfalfa and grass as green manure on dry cropland, took hold.

The SCD, Extension Service, local implement dealers, and the Aberdeen-Springfield Canal Company conducted a very successful irrigation demonstration on the Waldo and Edwin Freisen farm in 1951. Eighty-five farmers attended to learn how to measure water needs, reduce runoff, and control erosion.

Many farmers looked to the SCD for equipment to install conservation practices. Tractors, a chisel cultivator, a carryall, ripper, truck, and sheepsfoot roller acquired by the SCD were widely used.

The SCD built its present office in American Falls in 1960. The SCD now leases office space to the Soil Conservation Service, Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service, and Farmers Home Administration.

Working with the local ASC County Committee, the SCD helped obtain funds for a special dryland project in 1966, the first such project in Idaho. In the first year, farmers installed 33,000 feet of diversion terraces, seeded 27,900 feet of grassed waterways, subsoiled 2,410 acres, and seeded 82 acres of pasture and hayland. 1972 was another banner year for dryland conservation: more than 27 miles of diversions were constructed.

The Rock Creek Small Watershed project (Public Law 566) resulted in many miles of level terracing in the Rockland Valley area. When summer rains caused flooding in the watershed in 1979, erosion on some dry cropland was measured at 447 tons per acre. One area of the Rock Creek watershed, the Sublett watershed, received PL-566 funds for cost-sharing to curb soil erosion in 1981. By 1984, 14 long-term conservation contracts were in effect and 40 miles of terraces had been installed.

Throughout the Power SCD's history, the towns of American Falls and Rockland and the Power County Commission have proven to be committed partners in conservation. Financial support from Power County and Idaho State government have made the SCD's accomplishments possible.

The two critical resource problems in the Power SCD today are dry cropland erosion and the need for more efficient irrigation water management.

Snake River SWCD

Two conservation districts were already operating in Twin Falls County when in 1966 Dick Stafford, a Kimberly farmer, began circulating petitions to form the Snake River Soil and Water Conservation District. The new SWCD would serve about 780 farms located between the High Line Canal and the Snake River and bring all of Twin Falls County into a conservation district. Of 73 people who voted in an April 19 referendum, 61 favored forming the new district, which was officially organized April 21, 1966.

The Snake River SWCD serves one of the most intensively farmed and highly developed irrigated areas in southern Idaho. The district encompasses 1,870 acres of public land and 108,360 acres of private land.

Stafford, and Dean Moore, Lyle Jones, Lester Naylor, and Virgil Wilson, all of Hansen, were the first Snake River SWCD supervisors. Roy Jesser and Keith Rhodes, Twin Falls; and Arthur Reinstein, Kimberly, were appointed to the board in 1967.

Supervisors adopted the SWCD's first long-range program February 20, 1967. The program gave top priority to conservation planning. In its first three months, the SWCD signed agreements with 52 cooperators for conservation work on 9,819 acres. These farmers mainly asked for help with conservation planning, soil surveys, and revising irrigation systems. The SWCD completed soil surveys on 1,730 acres of farmland in 1966.

Recognizing the need for conservation research, the SWCD leased 40 acres near Kimberly in 1966 and then leased the land to the Snake River Conservation Research Center. The SWCD still leases this land to the Center for soil and water conservation research and demonstrations.

The Snake River SWCD took on its first special conservation project in 1974, the Snake River Canyon Rim Study. At the request of the South Idaho Resource Planning and Development Association, the SWCD studied soil, water, and plants in the Snake River Canyon and along the canyon rim from the mouth of Rock Creek to Hansen Bridge, a distance of 14 miles.

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare contracted with the Snake River SWCD in 1976 to conduct a water quality demonstration project on the L.Q. Drain. The L.Q. Drain is a 3,300-acre irrigated watershed northeast of Filer. The purpose of the project was to determine if farmers would voluntarily use erosion control measures that would also improve water quality. The project was a success, proving farmers would use conservation practices and that these measures would substantially improve water quality. The L.Q. Drain was discharging less than 2,000 tons of soil into the Snake River by 1979, compared to approximately 10,000 tons per year before the project began.

The Snake River SWCD, assisted by the Twin Falls SCD, started the Rock Creek Rural Clean Water Project in 1980. One of 13 experimental projects in the nation, the Rock Creek project provided special cost-share funds to farmers to install conservation practices. The project's goal is to improve water quality in Rock Creek and the Snake River by reducing erosion on surrounding farmland. District supervisors are responsible for contacting farmers, approving water quality plans, and directing technical assistance to cooperators.

As the Rock Creek project moved into its fourth summer in 1984, farmers had signed 140 contracts for 16,853 acres in the watershed. This brings over 60 percent of the farmland that contributes to pollution in Rock Creek under conservation management.

Soil erosion is still the greatest challenge facing farmers in the Snake River SWCD. Introducing farmers to new conservation technology is an important goal of the SWCD today. In 1980 the SWCD leased a Buffalo Ridge Till planter to six operators who planted 300 acres with it. In addition to reducing tillage costs, the planter reduces erosion on finely worked, surface-irrigated land.

South Bingham SCD

Farmers and ranchers in southeastern Bingham County organized the South Bingham Soil Conservation District February 2, 1954, to battle erosion by wind and water, deteriorating range conditions, noxious weeds, and irrigation drainage problems. The district contains 188,491 acres of public and private land. The new SCD was led by supervisors Richard S. Savage, Jr., Leonard S. Cornforth, and John Heer, Aberdeen; and Blaine Sasser and Lamar Whyte, Springfield.

One of the SCD's major accomplishments occurred during the organization's first five years. Wind erosion is an historical problem in the district, causing serious losses of topsoil. The new district developed a cooperative agreement with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game through which 57,000 trees were planted. These trees prevented erosion and provided wildlife habitat.

In 1955 the South Bingham SCD borrowed money from other conservation districts in Idaho to purchase a local farm and open the first district-owned Plant Materials Center in the nation. The SCD rents the Aberdeen Center to the Soil Conservation Service. At the Center, scientists conduct trials of grasses and shrubs that can be used for soil and water conservation, serving landowners in southern Idaho, northern Utah, and northern Nevada. The SCD also constructed a Quonset hut for seed cleaning.

The district acquired an abandoned library building in 1954 and established its first office in Aberdeen. From its beginning, the South Bingham SCD has worked closely with other local organizations. During its first five years, the district worked with the Aberdeen Jaycees on a poster contest and helped local Boy Scouts plant 700 trees.

By 1958 the SCD completed soil surveys on 21,681 acres, leveled 1,319 acres, and built 17 miles of irrigation ditches. Fifty conservation plans for 9,215 acres were developed during the first five years, and 2,538 acres benefited from improvements in irrigation water application.

The South Bingham SCD has been fortunate to work with many landowners and operators who have done outstanding conservation work. Jim Pahl and Roy Ruff completed an extensive farm conservation plan that includes a grassed waterway, rock dams, windbreaks, winter cover crops, and crop residue use. Producing grass seeds from plants developed at the Aberdeen Center, Pahl and Ruff are highly respected grass seed growers in the district.

Milton and Richard Line also set high conservation standards on their farm. The Lines gained statewide recognition for their conservation work when they were chosen as Idaho's Grassman-of-the-Year in 1962. Richard Line has been an active member of the South Bingham SCD board for the past 17 years.

Wally Driscoll, currently serving his first term as a supervisor of the South Bingham SCD, has made conservation achievements deemed impossible by some. Driscoll converted swampy, alkali land into productive grazing land. In 1980 he successfully pastured cattle on this land.

Although much conservation has been accomplished in the district, many needs remain. Farms in southern Bingham County are larger today than when the SCD was organized. Farm machinery is larger and heavier, and soil compaction is a serious problem. The operational management needs of large farms often leaves little time to attend to conservation problems.

Much of the gravity-irrigated land in the district has been converted to sprinkler systems since the SCD was formed. This change has been a major step forward in water conservation and erosion control. However, better irrigation water management is still needed in the district.

Despite the planting of many trees over the years, wind erosion still occurs in southeastern Bingham County. Recently, the SCD has helped plant five to six thousand trees a year in the district.

Erosion along American Falls Reservoir, causing the loss of many acres of land, is also a matter of concern to the South Bingham SCD. The SCD is working with individuals, groups, and agencies to solve this problem.

The South Bingham SCD is dedicated to meeting existing and emerging conservation problems. One philosophy guides the SCD's programs: "Save our resources; protect them today — so we will have them to use tomorrow."

Squaw Creek SCD

When Idaho's State Legislature authorized conservation districts in 1939, farmers in parts of Gem, Boise, and Valley counties already knew what could be accomplished through such an organization. During the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps had dug miles of terraces in western Idaho for erosion control, planted brush in gullies, reseeded depleted rangeland, and planted shrubs and trees to hold the soil in place.

Landowners and users who wanted to continue this work held 27 meetings in 1940, primarily working with local Grange organizations. After a public hearing and referendum, the Squaw Creek Soil Conservation District was organized December 21, 1940. The SCD's first supervisors were Burdett B. Perkins and Sherman Glenn, Ola; and Owen J. Dix, Charles Biggers, and Frank Goodwin, Sweet.

The new SCD quickly got to work on a variety of resource problems. Conditions on timbered and valley rangeland were deteriorating. Sage Hen Dam, north of Ola, was almost complete, and many farmers needed help developing irrigation systems and leveling fields for better water distribution.

With assistance from the SCD, ranchers reseeded rangeland and started rotational grazing systems. They developed new water sources and built drift fences to improve livestock distribution. Over the years, many acres of depleted, unproductive, and erosive rangeland have been converted to permanent cover. Perennial grasses provide permanent ground cover that is well utilized by livestock. Thousands of acres of once unproductive range and former dry cropland now provide adequate forage, while soil erosion is low, water quality is protected, and fragile soils are kept in place.

Pasture renovation programs have also been very successful in the Squaw Creek SCD. Many renovated and reseeded pastures can be found throughout the district.

The new SCD quickly began working with farmers, too. With SCD assistance and equipment, many farmers leveled land, planted eroding gullies, built irrigation systems, and subsoiled to break up hardpans and allow better water penetration.

The Sage Hen Dam was completed in 1939, providing irrigation water and recreation. The first conservation practices installed after the SCD was formed included a water impoundment, drift fences, and stock water developments in the Willow Creek area south of Emmett. This area later was divided between the Ada and Gem SCDs.

The young SCD worked closely with the Forest Service and the Grazing Service to control erosion on public lands. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducted predator and rodent control programs, working with the SCD and private landowners.

The original Squaw Creek SCD contained 300,000 acres. As landowners in other areas petitioned to join the organization, the district grew to its present size of 1,451,678 acres. Private land makes up about one-third of the district today.

The SCD has experienced tremendous population growth since 1940. Most of the population increase is the result of new logging operations and recreational developments. In 1980 almost 4,000 people lived in the district; 15 percent of the population worked in agriculture and 40 percent in forestry. The district includes the towns of Sweet, Horseshoe Bend, Garden Valley, Idaho City, Ola, and Lowman.

Population growth and recreational developments have created new and serious soil and water conservation needs in the Squaw Creek SCD. Summer home sites and multiple home subdivisions have been developed on steep and fragile soils. The SCD, in an effort to prevent further erosion, makes recommendations to developers on soils, topography, sewage disposal, and many other aspects of urban development. The SCD recently published a booklet for summer homeowners, describing various soil and water protection measures designed for recreational home sites.

Noxious weed control is also one of the SCD's priorities today. The district helps landowners identify and treat noxious weeds and works with public agencies to control the spread of weeds from public to private land.

Teton SCD

Farmers in Teton County, on Idaho's eastern border, showed some interest in organizing a soil conservation district in the 1940s. A few landowners signed petitions, but nothing came of this until the local Farm Bureau decided to promote the idea and organized several meetings to get farmers' reactions. Farmers responded very positively, and 104 landowners signed petitions requesting a public hearing on the matter.

At the public hearing on August 11, 1949, farmers said a conservation district could help them remodel irrigation systems, develop additional cropland, identify which crops their soils were most suited to produce, and show them how to reduce erosion on dry and irrigated farmland. One hundred people voted in the August 29 referendum, 93 for the new district and seven against. The Teton SCD was officially organized February 10, 1950, to include all of Teton County.

The five original supervisors of the Teton SCD were Asa Drake, Victor; Rueland Ward, Felt; Donald Jardine and Adrian Cook, Tetonia; and Roy Griffith, Driggs.

The Teton SCD contains 229,255 acres. Approximately 65 percent of the land is privately owned; two percent is state land; and one-third is under federal management. Dryland grain farms comprise about 40,000 acres. About 27 percent of Teton County, almost 80,000 acres, is irrigated cropland where farmers grow certified seed potatoes, alfalfa, and grain. More than 35,000 acres of pastures and meadows are also irrigated. Most all of the irrigated land in the SCD is found along the Teton River and its tributaries. Dairy farming is an important part of the agricultural industry. Many farmers also raise cattle.

Strip cropping was one of the first dryland conservation practices used in Teton County. This practice was not only effective in reducing water erosion, but crops planted in strips at right angles to the prevailing winds also cut soil losses from wind erosion.

Today the Teton SCD places top priority on working with cooperators having severe erosion problems. Wind erosion on dry cropland is often a serious problem in the spring. Much erosion also occurs on dryland when the ground is frozen during spring runoff. On irrigated land, water measuring facilities are often inadequate, making water management difficult.

The SCD encourages farmers to adopt proven conservation practices to solve these problems. Conservation practices such as stubble mulching, contour farming, terraces, sediment basins, critical area seedings, and grassed waterways can be seen on many of the dryland farms in the Teton SCD. Some dryland farmers have permanently seeded sod-type pastures or hay to eliminate open field erosion during summer storms. The SCD's windbreak program, which provides trees to farmers at minimal cost for windbreak plantings, entered its fourth year in 1984. The district has conducted chemical fallow trials and in 1984 began a no-till demonstration.

In the irrigated areas, farmers have installed many sprinkler systems, gravity pipelines, and irrigated structures to give them more control over their irrigation water. Since the SCD was organized, it has helped farmers plan and apply conservation measures to more than 87,000 acres in Teton County.

As a member of the High Country Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program, the Teton SCD has provided assistance to two gravity irrigation development projects, an erosion control project in Teton River Canyon, a noxious weed control program, and development of a ball park in Driggs.

Each year the SCD offers adult and youth programs that teach and motivate people to take personal responsiblity for the land under their management. Through tours, presentations to schools, public meetings, fair booths, and local media, the Teton SCD is helping develop a conservation ethic among the people it serves.

Twin Falls SCD

Water shortages and noxious weeds headed the list of problems that led farmers south of the High Line Canal in Twin Falls County to petition for a soil conservation district in 1950. A public hearing was held October 12. On November 21, farmers voted 157 to 32 to form the Twin Falls Soil Conservation District. The district contains 586,839 acres of public land and 228,095 acres of private land. The SCD held its first regular meeting August 5, 1951. The first Twin Falls SCD supervisors were W.A. Laughmiller and Glenn J. Nelson, Twin Falls; Ralph Schnell, Rogerson; Orion S. Butler, Kimberly; and Truman Clark, Roseworth.

People in the Twin Falls SCD hauled domestic water about six months each year in 1950. Water shortages left many fertile fields uncultivated and rangeland undeveloped. Farmers and ranchers faced other problems: water erosion on irrigated fields; wind erosion on cultivated fields; water losses in canals and laterals; reduced yields; loss of organic matter; destructive rodent pests; and uncontrolled range fires. The new SCD set forth a simple goal — to promote conservation farming on every acre in the district and thereby build a more stable and prosperous agricultural community.

The SCD pursued this goal through land leveling, reorganizing irrigation systems, designing irrigation structures and pipelines, developing ponds for stock water and irrigation storage, providing seeding mixtures for irrigated pasture and alfalfa grass hay, and conducting range improvement programs.

On September 17, 1953, the district sponsored a "Conservation Day" on the Buddy Rayl and Glenn Nelson farms in cooperation with the Twin Falls County Farm Bureau and 21 local equipment dealers. The day-long demonstration of sprinkler irrigation systems, pumps, gated pipe, and backhoe ditchers, rock pickers, brushbeaters, heavy disk plows, soil surveys, engineering surveys, and stubble mulching equipment drew 1,500 people.

SCD supervisors also harvested 40 acres of crested wheatgrass seed at the Twin Falls City airport in 1953. They got 1,500 pounds of clean seed for their work, which they sold to cooperators for 25 cents a pound. The district began buying equipment in 1954, which it leased to cooperators for a small fee. Supervisors also began measuring and forecasting water supplies that year, a project they continue today with 13 snow-measuring courses.

Harry Noh, one of the organizers of the Twin Falls SCD, netted the honor of Idaho Grassman-of-the-Year in 1956.

The SCD began the Cedar Creek Watershed project south of Castleford in the early 1960s. Cedar Creek provides irrigation water to approximately 5,000 acres. The goals of the project were to improve irrigation water supply, prevent distribution system failures, and improve irrigation efficiency.

In 1963, 8,200 feet of 54-inch concrete pipe was installed in Cedar Creek Canyon to replace a rapidly deteriorating flume. Five miles of main canal were rebuilt in 1964. A regulating reservoir and new canal system were installed in 1965 to complete the project. The Cedar Creek project met its goals and still serves farmers today.

On August 25, 1966, fire struck the South Hills, charring 76,500 acres of public and private land in the SCD. The fire destroyed all vegetation, 151 miles of private fences, 550 head of sheep, and 600 head of cattle, along with equipment and water developments. This tragedy set in motion a rehabilitation program that is a prime example of what local farmers, ranchers, and state and federal agencies working for a common goal can accomplish. Before winter set in, they completed 38,000 acres of reseeding and 29,323 acres of contour ripping for erosion control. This area now supports abundant grass stands and soil erosion is low. Increased carrying capacity has boosted the economy of the entire area.

Now, as when it began, the Twin Falls SCD operates on a philosophy that conservation begins in the minds of farmers and ranchers who see a need for conservation on their land. Conservation can succeed only as landowners and users take responsibility for maintaining a conservation program on every acre.

Valley SCD

Investors, developers, and recreationists had not yet discovered Valley County in the 1950s, and small family farms dotted the agricultural landscape in the western part of the county. Grain was the major cash crop. Farmers also raised clover seed, lettuce, and peas, and ran cattle on public and private land.

Irrigation systems grew with the farms here. Farmers sought help from a soil conservation district to level uneven fields, realign irrigation systems, and install laterals to bring irrigation water to their land. Following a public referendum, the Valley SCD was officially organized February 11, 1957. The SCD includes all of Valley County except the southwestern High Valley area. The first supervisors of the SCD were Ben Goslin and Arthur Cantrell, Cascade; Ed Sizemore, McCall; William Melton, Donnelly; and Ed Ashton, Lake Fork.

The new SCD obtained surplus war equipment and began an extensive land-leveling program. Repairing and maintaining equipment occupied much of the district supervisors' time. Collecting rental fees proved difficult. It was not uncommon for board members to loan the SCD money for equipment repairs.

Serious erosion occured mainly in the Lake Fork area where farmers raised seed potatoes under surface irrigation. As landowners converted to sprinkler irrigation, erosion was greatly reduced.

Agriculture in Valley County underwent tremendous changes beginning in the 1960s. Fewer young people continued farming. The cost of farming increased while commodity prices remained stable or dropped. Treasure Valley residents discovered that the Payette and Boise National Forests in Valley County supported many recreational opportunities. The county's population increased 55 percent from 1970 to 1980. Growth was evident in McCall, Donnelly, and Cascade as well as the countryside where retiring farmers sold small plots for recreational homes. Some small farms were sold to developers or farmers with larger landholdings. As the commodity market worsened, farmers converted land to pasture and hay. The 1970s also saw an increase in the number of "suitcase" farmers in Valley County — people whose primary residence and source of income was in the Treasure Valley.

Valley County had only a preliminary soil survey when the number of subdivisions began to climb. Urban development was primarily controlled by the marketplace. The county adopted a land use plan in 1982. A modern soil survey of the county has now been published. The SCD now provides soil analyses on proposed developments to the county's Planning and Zoning Committee.

Demands on soil, water, and other natural resources in Valley County are more intense and the problems more complex today than when the SCD was organized. The SCD's program has adapted to meet the needs created by changing land uses and a growing population and recreation industry.

The Valley SCD decided in 1984 to spearhead an effort to solve a variety of problems in the Gold Fork watershed east of Cascade Reservoir. Solving problems including barriers to fish spawning, erosion, sedimentation, and water pollution will require the cooperation of private landowners, public agencies, and recreational visitors. The SCD sponsored a meeting at which people concerned about the watershed's future discussed how to improve environmental conditions there. The SCD will continue working for an integrated program that addresses all of the problems in this watershed.

In addition to tackling emerging conservation problems, the Valley SCD continues offering technical assistance to private landowners and users. Providing this assistance has been a challenge made increasingly difficult by federal spending cutbacks. Currently the SCD is served by Soil Conservation Service staff shared with Gem and Squaw Creek SCDs out of Emmett. The Service has assigned a soil conservationist to the Donnelly office effective December 9, 1984. The Valley SCD will continue working to obtain full-time technical services to meet the needs of the people in Valley County.

Weiser River SCD

Nine soil conservation districts had been organized in Idaho when in the summer of 1941 Extension county agent Jay Pierson called several meetings in Washington County to discuss forming a district there. Many farmers had gotten help from the Civilian Conservation Corps in planting windbreaks, building reservoirs and ponds, and constructing waterway diversions, and were interested in continuing that work. Public hearings were held in Weiser and Midvale in October 1941, and on November 24 a referendum was held. Landowners voted 197 to 19 to form the Weiser River Soil Conservation District. The SCD received its Certificate of Organization December 22, 1941.

The original district included most of Washington County; through three subsequent referendums the district expanded to include the entire county. Lack of conservation management on cropland was the major resource problem facing the new SCD. Farmers were generally unfamiliar with proper irrigation methods, and erosion had ruined many fields. Many farmers needed water storage ponds and help improving their irrigation systems. Rangeland, hayland, and pasture needed better management to increase production.

The first supervisors of the SCD were William H. Linder, W. Clay Sutton, and Dewey Alexander, Midvale; Duane Brent, Weiser; and James L. Warren, Cambridge. They met monthly to discuss work that needed to be done and prioritize requests for technical assistance.

The first SCD boards promoted improved crop rotations, land leveling, and irrigation improvements. The SCD began renting land leveling equipment to cooperators in 1943. Several areas in the district needed drainage for crop production.

Early in the Weiser River SCD's history, supervisors developed the philosophy that their job was to introduce landowners to new ways of using and caring for soil and water resources. They distributed booklets on conservation practices, conducted tours to show resource problems and solutions, and worked with many other agencies to get this job done.

James J. Hurley, a Soil Conservation Service technician who assisted the SCD from 1942 to 1945, recalled how farmers' attitudes about conservation changed during this short time: "I remember getting run off more than one farm or ranch at the end of a pitchfork for daring to suggest that soil erosion should and could be controlled. But I remember much better a short time later when the farmers wre proud of their soil conservation efforts and the Soil Conservation Service was a respected organization," said Hurley.

The Weiser River SCD contains 525,097 acres of private land and more than 400,000 acres of public land. Farmers grow alfalfa, alfalfa seed, sugar beets, corn, onions, wheat, safflower, mint, fruit, potatoes, and sunflowers, and raise livestock. Recreation is the major non-agricultural land use in the district. Washington County provides opportunities for camping, hiking, swimming, boating, water and snow skiing, fishing, and hunting.

More than half a dozen irrigation districts provide water for agriculture in Washington County. These districts have contributed significantly to soil and water conservation by improving their water control and delivery systems.

Streambank erosion along the Weiser River and its tributaries is the major resource problem of concern to the SCD today. Some farmers and ranchers have controlled erosion where waterways run through their property. However, the problem is serious in many areas and much worse today than when the SCD was organized. Many of the problems associated with the Weiser River today have been caused by altering the river's natural course. The SCD is seeking a state grant to correct the most serious streambank erosion problems now occurring along the Weiser River.

The Weiser River SCD still relies heavily on educational programs to promote soil and water conservation. Each year several farmers are nominated for their conservation work, and the SCD conducts a tour of their farms. Other farmers, county commissioners, and community leaders participate in this annual event.

West Cassia SWCD

Following public hearings in Oakley and Burley in March 1958, landowners in western Cassia County voted to organize a soil conservation district on May 27, 1958. The West Cassia Soil and Water Conservation District received its Certificate of Organization September 22, 1958.

The first supervisors of the West Cassia SWCD were C. LeRoy Garner and H. Reed Bowen, Burley; Duane Perkins, Murtaugh; Ralph Gorringe, Oakley; and Clayne Zollinger, Declo.

The West Cassia SWCD originally included the Milner Low Lift project area near Murtaugh in Twin Falls County. This area was later annexed to the Snake River SWCD. The West Cassia SWCD now encompasses 676,636 acres. Almost 200,000 acres are irrigated cropland. There are about 12,000 acres of dry cropland and 54,000 acres of private rangeland in the district. The SWCD contains more than 350,000 acres managed by federal agencies.

Land in the SWCD varies from small gravity-irrigated farms to very large sprinkler-irrigated farms to dryland farms in the foothills. The Sawtooth National Forest provides many mountain recreation opportunities.

The SWCD has maintained working agreements with many local, state, and federal agencies over the years including the Soil Conservation Service, Bureau of Land Management, Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service, Army Corps of Engineers, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Idaho Department of Lands, and Cassia County. District supervisors work closely with these agencies, especially county commissioners, to conduct soil and water conservation programs.

SWCD conservation programs are funded by annual appropriations from Cassia County and state government. In the past, the SWCD supplemented these funds by conducting snow surveys for the Soil Conservation Service and holding an auction. The SWCD also rents equipment and sells survey flags.

The West and East Cassia districts until recently hired a part-time technician to assist district cooperators. When the districts found it difficult to meet payroll costs, the Service agreed to employ the current technician, J.J. McLaws. The two districts continue to hire a part-time clerk; Gail Fisher currently fills this position.

The West and East Cassia districts, with the Extension Service and a local land-judging committee, sponsor a land-judging contest each year. Youngsters from throughout the state take part in this event.

The present priorities of the West Cassia SWCD are improved water management on irrigated land and installing terraces on dry cropland. The district is also active in repairing damages caused by flooding in the spring of 1984. District supervisors and technical staff of the Soil Conservation Service constructed drain channels to prevent major flood damage in 1984.

The SWCD is working with the West Cassia Water and Power Commission in the Oakley Fan area to complete a study to determine how to best augment underground aquifers. The SWCD has also worked with local power companies to increase the efficiency of irrigation pumps.

West Side SCD

Amid headlines of American soldiers fighting in Europe, a July 30, 1944, story in the Idaho Falls *Post Register* noted the beginning of efforts to save and protect soil and water in the upper Snake River Valley:

"The West Side Soil Conservation District, the first one in the Upper Snake River Valley, has been approved by the State Soil Conservation Commission, according to word which has been received here Saturday by the county agent's office . . ."

A Certificate of Organization was issued to the West Side SCD August 1, 1944. The original SCD contained 56,000 acres in southcentral Jefferson County and almost 82,000 acres in western Bonneville County. In 1946 an additional 149,120 acres in western Bonneville County were added to the district.

Emil Johnson, New Sweden, chaired the first West Side SCD. Serving with Johnson were Thure Anderson and Lowell Moore, Roberts; Norbert Brinkman, Oakland Valley; and Walter Pancheri, Osgood. The SCD's first annual report cited the following concerns: lack of money, equipment, and technical staff.

The SCD made a great success of its first demonstration project, and effort to prevent erosion by improving irrigation systems. According to Gordon Boyle, who farmed in the 1,250-acre Tughartburg project, "Head gates, checks and drops, in addition to land leveling, were very successful in reducing erosion."

The young SCD attracted attention for working with farmers in groups — a new idea in the 1940s. Conservationists from California and Oregon came to observe how the SCD worked with neighbor groups.

West Side SCD supervisors diligently worked to promote conservation, often using their own equipment and fuel. Two of the original supervisors, Brinkman and Anderson, loaned the SCD money to buy a crawler tractor.

Supervisors in 1955 looked back on the SCD's accomplishments with some amount of satisfaction, evident in that year's annual report:

"We can take credit as the first to carry out many things which have furthered soil and water conservation in our area, state, and nation." The 10-year summary went on to describe more than a dozen "firsts", including:

In eastern Idaho . . . first to hold educational meetings on sprinkler irrigation and dryland conservation . . . first to hold neighborhood farm group action meetings . . . first to hold irrigation demonstrations . . . first to conduct a field-size trial planting of tall wheatgrass . . . first to seed an improved grass-legume pasture mix on a cooperator's farm.

In the West . . . first involved in reconstruction of a major irrigation canal system, the Butte and Market Lake Canal . . . first to develop farmer-installed, permanent drop structures to control water in fast-flowing irrigation ditches . . . first to install automatic pumping control of irrigation wastewater and subsurface water.

In the nation . . . first to furnish Idaho potatoes at a national conservation meeting . . . first to install district boundary signs.

Over the years, the SCD has taken on a variety of projects. Supervisors assisted the neighboring East Side SCD in the Willow Creek water quality project and helped the Northwest Flood Control Cooperative obtain a state grant to control flooding northwest of Roberts.

Conservation youth education has been an SCD priority for many years. In 1983 the SCD's nominee for Conservation Educator-of-the-Year placed first in the state and region and second in the nation.

Wind erosion, particularly on sandy soils in the Osgood area and along Interstate 15, is a major concern of the West Side SCD today. Spring runoff on irrigated lands is also a problem. The SCD began a project in 1984 to eradicate noxious weeds.

The current SCD board supports the original board's philosophy of involvement and commitment to resource conservation. With equal dedication, the SCD today is working to protect and improve the natural resources of the West Side SCD.

Wood River SWCD

Farmers who obtained homestead land in western Lincoln and eastern Gooding counties sought to organize a soil conservation district there in the spring of 1943. They were primarily interested in obtaining technical help to plan irrigation systems and determine which crops could best be grown on the newly developed land.

Petitions were circulated throughout the area in May and a public hearing was held June 29, 1943. All of the 86 landowners who voted in a July 31 referendum favored forming the district. The Wood River Soil and Water Conservation District was officially organized September 10, 1943.

The original Wood River District contained about 138,622 acres in a rectangular-shaped area in western Lincoln and eastern Gooding counties. The district contained no towns, but the village of Shoshone was located south of the district. Roscoe C. Gerard, Shoshone, chaired the original board of supervisors. Serving with Gerard were Sam Danner, W.B. Whittekiend, Charles Bartlome, and Donald Sandy, all of Shoshone. The original board met monthly at the Lone Star School north of Shoshone.

Supervisors immediately compiled information needed to develop a conservation program. They completed a rough draft of the SWCD's first conservation program in December 1943. By the end of 1943, the SWCD had received 30 applications for assistance on 3,443 acres.

Even before conservation work began, farmers in other parts of Lincoln County were asking how they could be included in the district. In 1945 the Dietrich and Marley areas were added to the district and in 1950 Richfield joined the SWCD, bringing the district to its current 777,600 acres.

Renting heavy equipment, particularly for land leveling, was one of the first services the SWCD offered to its cooperators. The Soil Conservation Service loaned equipment to the SWCD, which rented it to farmers for a nominal fee. Supervisors were responsible for specific implements and kept machinery at their homes until the late 1970s.

The Wood River SWCD was chosen as Idaho's "pilot district" in 1951 to determine if conservation districts could help improve forage production on public land. Sam Danner chaired the committee that led this effort.

The SWCD's auxiliary conducted conservation education projects including youth poster contests, exhibits at county fairs, and essay contests.

From its beginning the Wood River SWCD has emphasized conservation education for farmers and city folk. Tours showing new farming methods and ways to control erosion have always played an important role in the district's educational program.

The advancements in conservation made in the district would not have been possible without help from the many groups and agencies which have worked with the SWCD. The Soil Conservation Service, Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service, Farmers Home Administration, Extension Service, Lincoln County Commission, and local canal companies have made conservation a community-wide effort in the district.

The SWCD has been involved in several larger projects. A project to improve irrigation in the Dietrich area was completed in 1978. The SWCD also participated in riprapping a section of the Big Wood River running through the Shoshone City Park. The Big Wood River project was accomplished through the Resource Conservation and Development program.

In 1983 the SWCD was asked by the Big Wood River Canal Board to develop a project that would include gravity sprinkler lines, hydropower electric plants, and irrigation system improvements. The SWCD has completed the preliminary study of the Richfield Tract and is working with the canal board to obtain funds to implement the proposed practices.

Conservation tillage is an exciting and increasingly popular new conservation practice in the Wood River District. Farmers including Kenneth Koeppen, Gary Robbins, and Roy Hubert were among the first to adopt conservation tillage practices in the district and have found it a great benefit in reducing erosion and lowering fuel costs.

Yellowstone SCD

In May 1944 Fremont County farmers met in Ashton and St. Anthony to find out what they could accomplish by forming a soil conservation district. Farmers cited weed control, drainage, soil testing, and irrigation development as problems with which a soil conservation district could help. Both hearings ended with unanimous votes to hold a referendum and organize a district.

The Yellowstone SCD was officially organized August 3, 1944, to include all of Fremont County. Sitting on the first SCD board were J.J. Remington, Parker; Henry Bauer, St. Anthony; Paul Allen, Newdale; Blaine Baird, Drummond; and Willard Bonneru, Ashton.

Fremont County contains 367,936 acres of private land, mostly in the southern part of the county. Soil and water conditions vary greatly on this land. For example, west of Henrys Fork, near St. Anthony, lies the Egin Bench. When early settlers tried to surface-irrigate the bench they found water quickly percolated into the porous soil and ditches ran dry. After several disappointing years, the water table began to rise and crops flourished in wetter areas. Sub-irrigation has been successfully used to raise crops on the bench for more than 40 years. Wind erosion on the bench is a problem during the spring and attempts to establish windbreaks have been unsuccessful.

Farmers were rapidly developing irrigation systems when the Yellowstone SCD was organized. The SCD found that both wind and water were causing erosion on irrigated and dry farmland. The district placed a high priority on helping farmers improve their water management and protect soil against erosion. The SCD promoted crop rotations that left cover on the soil and built soil fertility. Canal companies and individual farmers got help designing and reorganizing their irrigation systems. Surveys for land leveling were in great demand. Often the SCD had trouble keeping up with the number of requests for technical assistance.

Burning stubble on dryland farms was a common practice when the SCD was organized. Supervisors spent many hours persuading farmers to discontinue this practice and leave crop residues on the soil surface to reduce erosion. Many farmers adopted strip cropping to protect against wind erosion.

The trend toward irrigation has continued steadily over the last 40 years. More than 140,000 acres in the district were under irrigation by 1982. Erosion is moderate to severe on sloping uplands in the southeastern portion of the SCD, even when these lands are sprinkler irrigated. Wind erosion is serious on newly developed irrigated land in southwestern Fremont County. To counter these problems, the Yellowstone SCD encourages farmers to use irrigation water management practices such as low-pressure sprinklers and to maintain adequate amounts of crop residue on the soil surface between harvest and planting.

More than 95,000 acres in the SCD were in dryland farms in 1982. The Yellowstone SCD considers dryland erosion to be the most serious erosion problem on agricultural land in the county. Roadside erosion caused by dryland runoff is also a problem. Many dryland farmers switched from a grain-fallow rotation to annual cropping during the 1970s. About 75 percent of the dryland is now cropped annually. This change has significantly decreased erosion on dryland farms. The district encourages dryland farmers to conserve water and reduce erosion by using stubble mulching, strip cropping, and conservation tillage, and constructing grass waterways and terraces.

More than 117,000 acres of privately owned rangeland in the SCD is in generally good condition due to adequate precipitation and proper management. In some areas, intermingled public and private lands make management difficult. This SCD supports coordinated planning to properly manage these lands.

Fremont County contains nationally known fisheries and a large and varied game population. The Yellowstone SCD works with private landowners to improve fish and wildlife habitat in several ways: to reduce livestock trampling of streambanks, to keep sediment out of waterways, to protect big-game winter range, and to develop habitat for non-game wildlife.