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# FOSTER COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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"Fostering" Our Natural Resources

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log on at: [www.lincolnoakes.com](http://www.lincolnoakes.com) or  
[www.ag.ndsu.edu/trees/handbook.htm](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/trees/handbook.htm)

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FOSTER COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

# Conservation Communicator

## "The Worst Hard Time"

You have heard about how the Soil Conservation Districts operate and the great job they have done in promoting the conservation of our Natural Resources. But you have not heard how and why they got started.

They called it "The Worst Hard Time". A time in our nation's history never before experienced, The Dirty 30's, the Dust Bowl, and that terrible day on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 1935 'Black Sunday', along with the 'Great Depression'. But Black Sunday was our nation's wake-up call!

The worst dust storm ever, started in North Dakota on the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup>, Palm Sunday. Temperatures drop 30 degrees and by mid-morning the windblown soil slid down over South Dakota. When the big roller hit Kansas, it was two hundred miles wide. The front edge appeared two thousand feet high. Carrying so much static electricity it stalled cars. By 8:00 P.M. it reached the Texas Panhandle clawing through five states.

It is hard to imagine just how bad it was. Prior to Black Sunday there were forty nine dusters in 3 weeks. Farmers had a diet of canned rabbit and pickled tumbleweed. There were thousands of people with respiratory problems, people going blind from all the blowing dirt, and cattle losing their hair. People were struggling to stay alive, find enough money to buy shoes, fuel and goods they couldn't make at home.

What was happening to the land went unnoticed at first. The first dusters were a mystery to farmers and meteorologists. But a young soil scientist knew different, Hugh Bennett in the 1920's warned people of trouble ahead. The government continued to promote soil as "the one resource that cannot be exhausted". It encourages the plowing of some 40 million acres of grasslands of the plains, leaving the soil very vulnerable in the dry years.

Hugh Bennett started "Operation Dust Bowl" in order to get the public informed on what was happening and what the country can do about it. Five days after Black Sunday he was in Washington testifying at a senate hearing on soil conservation. Most of the senators there were bored at what he was saying, but he kept talking. He tried to drive a point across about soil loss. "An inch of topsoil can be blown away in an hour, but it takes a thousand years to restore it". A senator gazing out the window interrupted him saying, "It's getting dark outside." It was early afternoon and it was getting dark. Soil from the southern plains fell on the capitol causing the sun to vanish. "This, gentlemen, is what I'm talking about," said Bennett. "There goes Oklahoma."

Within a day, Bennett had his funding for a new agency to restore and sustain the health of the soil. The Soil Conservation Act was passed and the Soil Conservation Service was formed, later called Soil Conservation Districts. A grass root organization lead by locally elected citizens. Hugh Bennett once said, "Natural conservation action must spring from people on the land, and to large extent, be advanced by them as individuals with the help of government."

A productive agriculture depends on a healthy land. America is blessed with farmers that do an outstanding job taking care of our Natural Resources. Soil Conservation Districts have played a huge part in educating farmers and ranchers on the importance of keeping our Earth healthy and sustainable.

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### Foster County SCD 2012 Supervisors, Advisors and Staff

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### Till it to me Straight....

- Foster County Soil Conservation District Board meetings are tentatively scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on January 9, February 13, and March 13 (second Wednesdays). Please contact the district office at 652-2551 to confirm dates and times.
- USDA Service Center will be closed for Christmas Day on Tuesday, Dec. 25; New Year's Day on Tuesday, Jan. 1; Martin Luther King Jr's Birthday on Monday, Jan. 21; and Washington's Birthday on Monday, Feb. 18.
- "Talking Dirt" on KDAK (1600 AM) will be at 8:20 am on Jan 2, Feb 6, and Mar. 6 (first Wednesdays).
- Check us out online at [www.facebook.com/fosterscd](http://www.facebook.com/fosterscd) and coming soon at [www.fosterscd.org](http://www.fosterscd.org)

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We have come such a long way from the 'Dirty 30's', let's not go backwards now. Our air and water is cleaner now than 20 years ago, let's keep it going. Are we as farmers and ranchers keeping it going? At times it looks like the same scenario. Twenty miles of trees taken out in one county alone, fence lines, quarter lines and section lines taken out, and fields of 1000 acres or more. Acres and acres of rolling pasture being broke up and converted to crop land. With modern farming practices, the Dust Bowl could never happen again. Well just a look in Texas, long time no-till ground was blowing this summer! We should strive to become better stewards of the land and have as our goal to leave this Earth in better shape than we came.

**"It is the American farmer who must weave the greater part of the rug on which America stands."** Aldo Leopold  
Curtiss Craig Klein Supervisor, Foster County Soil Conservation District

## Living Snow Fence

Do you have a piece of road where drifting snow is often a problem or blowing snow tends to make travel more hazardous in a storm? Have you considered planting a living snow fence to improve the situation?

Blowing and drifting snow is a perennial winter problem on North Dakota roads. It can lead to road closures and accidents, and snow removal is often a major expense for the state, counties, and townships.

Living Snow Fence refers to plantings of trees, shrubs, or other vegetation along roads to control the effect of snow on those roads. They can also be used to protect farmsteads and communities. These windbreaks reduce wind speeds and control where snow will be deposited. Properly positioned and designed living snow fence can:

- Help prevent large snow drifts on the road and road closures
- Improve visibility during ground blizzards, decreasing vehicle accidents, and
- Reduce the amount of snow removal required, saving the public money

Living snow fence can also be planned to have other functions, such as soil erosion control, livestock protection, or protection for crops to improve yields.

Field windbreaks can also be used to control the effect of snow on roads. These can be designed either to spread snow evenly across fields, or to help confine it in a relatively small area.

Most living snow fence is planted on the north or west side of the road. For these, the most windward row in a living snow fence needs to be at least 200 feet from the edge of road to be effective, and the leeward row should be no closer than 100 feet. When placed too close to the road, windbreaks are likely to cause snow deposition problems rather than solving them. Taller windbreaks capture more snow – doubling the height quadruples the amount of snow captured by a windbreak. Planning for vegetation density of 50% is often best to capture and store the most snow. Multiple rows are encouraged, but living snow fence is often planted as a two-row shelterbelt or even sometimes a single row of conifers or suckering shrubs where conditions are suitable.

For assistance with tree orders and tree plans, please stop in or contact our office at 652-2551.



**"EACH GENERATION PLANTS FOR SOMEONE ELSE."** Gordon Kadrmas, North Dakota farmer



## Attention Hispanic and Women Farmers and Ranchers

If you, or someone you know, believe the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has improperly denied you farm loan benefits between 1981 and 2000 because you are Hispanic or female, you may be eligible to apply for compensation.

Claims MUST be filed between September 24, 2012 and March 25, 2013 to be considered for cash payment or loan forgiveness.

If you think you might be eligible to file a claim, please access the Farmer and Rancher Call Center or Website:

**1-888-508-4429** or [www.farmerclaims.gov](http://www.farmerclaims.gov)

For guidance, you may contact an attorney or other legal service provider in your community. If you are currently represented by an attorney regarding allegations of discrimination or in a lawsuit claiming discrimination, you should contact your attorney regarding this claims process. USDA cannot provide legal advice.

### Atención Agricultores y Ganaderos Hispanos o Mujeres Agricultoras o Ganaderas

Si usted o alguien que usted conoce considera que el Departamento de Agricultura de Estados Unidos (USDA por sus siglas en inglés) le negó indebidamente beneficios de préstamos agrícolas durante los años 1981 y 2000 por ser hispano o mujer, es posible que cumpla con los requisitos para solicitar compensación.

Las reclamaciones DEBEN recibirse entre el 24 de septiembre de 2012 y el 25 de marzo de 2013 para ser consideradas para pago en efectivo o alivio de deuda.

Si usted considera que califica para solicitar compensación, por favor llame al Centro de Llamadas para Agricultores y Ganaderos o ingrese a la página web: **1-888-508-4429** o [www.farmerclaims.gov](http://www.farmerclaims.gov)

Para recibir asesoramiento, comuníquese con un abogado u otro proveedor de servicios legales en su comunidad. Si a usted actualmente lo representa un abogado o ha iniciado una demanda alegando discriminación por el USDA, debe ponerse en contacto con su abogado con respecto a este proceso de reclamaciones. El USDA no le puede ofrecer asesoría legal.

## Watershed Q & A

### What is a watershed?

Simply defined, a watershed is an area of land that drains to a common point, usually a stream, lake, river, or wetland.

### Do I live in one?

Yes you do, everyone lives in a watershed!

### What does a watershed look like?

There is no hard and fast rule when it comes to the size and shape of watersheds. If the water from a few acres drains into a stream, then those few acres make up its watershed. This stream and others like it drain into larger rivers or lakes, and those small watersheds make up larger ones.

### What is the purpose of the Kelly Creek Watershed Project?

The project is funded with an EPA 319 grant whose purpose is to reduce the impacts of non-point source pollution on the local watershed.

### What is nonpoint source pollution?

The EPA defines nonpoint source (NPS) pollution as pollution that comes from many diffuse sources. NPS is caused by rainfall or snowmelt moving over and through the ground. As it moves across the landscape, the water picks up and carries away natural and human-made pollutants, finally depositing them into lakes, rivers, wetlands, coastal waters, and even our underground sources of drinking water. These pollutants can include:

- Excess fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides from agricultural lands and residential areas;
- Oil, grease, and toxic chemicals from urban runoff and energy production;
- Sediment from improperly managed construction sites, crop and forest lands, and eroding streambanks;

- Salt from irrigation practices and acid drainage from abandoned mines;
  - Bacteria and nutrients from livestock, pet wastes, and faulty septic systems;
- NPS is the leading cause of water quality problems in the US. Every day, whether we mean to or not, we all contribute to NPS.

### Why do I care?

The Kelly Creek watershed encompasses 120,000 acres and 187 miles in Foster, Wells, and Eddy Counties, which means that if you're reading this newsletter you probably live in the watershed. Everything we do impacts our watershed, even when the activity is not directly associated with or near a water body. Land uses from any part of the watershed -- such as polluted runoff from homes, forests and farms -- eventually affect the health of the watershed. When looked at individually, most human activities have little effect on the overall health of the watershed. However, when you add all of those activities together, the health of the watershed can be greatly diminished.

### How can I help?

Great water quality starts with you! How you manage your land, agriculture or urban, makes an impact on our water; planting buffer strips along stream beds, putting in windbreaks, installing fences and water developments to facilitate grazing systems on expired CRP acres, and properly disposing of automobile oil are all good ways to diminish your impact on the watershed. The district offers technical and financial assistance to anyone that is interested in participating in the Kelly Creek Watershed Project. Please contact the office today for more information!

Katie Gussiaas, Kelly Creek Watershed Coordinator

## Cover Crops and Drought

Many have said that it was subsoil moisture from the previous year that got us through the dry weather in 2012. What to do if the coming year is also dry? Consider cover crops as one way to help conserve moisture. By covering the soil, they prevent water loss through evaporation. They can also increase water infiltration, ensuring that the rain that does fall is useful, rather than running off. By using cover crops that winterkill, or ensuring that they are terminated in a timely manner, the cover crop will contribute to the moisture available for cash crops rather than taking up water in the spring. They contribute to increasing the soil's organic matter, one of the most important changes we can make to improve soil health. At the same time, they can hold residual nitrogen and bring up nitrogen from deeper in the soil that might otherwise be leached away before the next planting, making it available for the next crop. They prevent dry soil from blowing. They also help to maintain the soil organisms, which support the growth of future crops and which also improve the soil's ability to absorb water. A growing cover will do much more for your soil's health and ability to grow future crops than residue alone. For more information on cover crops, stop into our office or call us at 652-2551.

## The District is Now on the Web!

Check out our new website: [www.fosterscd.org](http://www.fosterscd.org). There you can find copies of the tree order form, past newsletters, a list and descriptions of all of our products and services, and information about the district and what we do.

Also be sure to "like" us on Facebook!

[www.facebook.com/fosterscd](http://www.facebook.com/fosterscd)

## Soil Health Theater

NRCS has a series of soil health videos available on YouTube. You can find them at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) by searching for "soil health" and looking for the series called "Unlock the Secrets in the Soil". You can also find them on the NRCS website by searching for "NRCS soil health theater."

