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EC65-168 Federal, State Agencies, Local Groups Assisting Soil and Water Conservation Programs in Nebraska

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SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION

INFORMATION FOR SPEAKERS DISCUSSING
SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS EXTENSION SERVICE
AND U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATING
E. F. FROLIK, DEAN J. L. ADAMS, DIRECTOR
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local County Organizations</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watershed Conservancy Districts</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Extension Service</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Agencies</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Commission</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal Agencies</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soil Conservation Service</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers Home Administration</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureau of Reclamation</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corps of Army Engineers</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Information Check Sheet</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOREWORD

There are public speaking and essay contests held each year for Future Farmers of America, 4-H Club members, elementary and high school students. This circular has been prepared to help these people obtain facts about the various duties and purpose of some of the agencies and groups working in the field of soil and water conservation in Nebraska.

The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance received from the Soil Conservation Service and the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Commission.

WORKING TOGETHER

Wise use and management of our soil and water resources in Nebraska benefits all citizens. Everyone in Nebraska, regardless of whether he lives on a farm, ranch, in a small town or city, shares in the overall cost of protecting our two great natural resources - soil and water.

Federal and state laws have been enacted to permit the cooperation of all Federal, State and Local Agencies in the state. Each agency has specific duties, rules and regulations.

Unless you have a specific interest in the overall program, the duties and responsibilities of these agencies may seem confusing. However, by study you will see the need for each agency and how each can serve to make a better Nebraska.

In Nebraska, we are fortunate that an understanding and a spirit of cooperation exists among agencies and groups. All are interested in the best possible use and care of our natural resources.
SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

1. Q. What is a soil and water conservation district?

A. It is a legal subdivision of state government organized by petition and referendum vote of the local landowners as authorized by the Soil and Water Conservation District Act.

2. Q. By what legal authority are soil and water conservation districts organized?

A. Soil and water conservation districts were organized by authority of an act passed by the Nebraska State Legislature in 1937. Districts were formed by petitions and a referendum of landowners within the proposed district.

3. Q. What are the purposes of a soil and water conservation district?

A. (1) To manage and conserve the land and its resources in a systematic, effective and economic manner.

(2) To enable individual farm and ranch operators working cooperatively to execute conservation measures in the district.

(3) To provide a means whereby individual farm and ranch operators may obtain from local, state and federal agencies the help necessary for establishing proper soil and water conservation measures.
A Soil & Water Conservation District Board
(5 members)

Note: The Soil Conservation Service technicians are not members of the Board.

4. Q. Who governs the district?
   A. Five locally elected supervisors who are usually farm operators or landowners in the district.

5. Q. How much salary does a soil and water conservation district supervisor receive?
   A. He receives no salary. However, he is paid mileage and miscellaneous expenses to attend official meetings of the board. He can also receive expenses for attending state commission authorized activities, and assisting with district educational meetings, tours, soil stewardship, FFA-SWCD programs, etc.

6. Q. Why is it desirable to have local farmers run the district?
   A. Supervisors who are also residents of the district provide local control of the soil and water conservation program being applied to their own and their neighbors' farms.
7. Q. What are some of the responsibilities of local soil and water conservation district supervisors?

A. (1) To outline, promote and maintain a technically sound soil and water conservation program in the district.

(2) To determine priorities of work within the district.

(3) To approve each conservation farm and ranch plan as developed by the soil conservationist assigned to that district; also, to approve each Great Plains conservation plan that is developed under that program.

(4) To carry on an active educational and informational program.

(5) To coordinate the facilities and services of all soil and water conservation agencies working within the district.

(6) To work out an annual plan of work and activities calendar, and to make an annual report to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

8. Q. Can land in the district be taxed for this work?

A. The district cannot levy any taxes, make assessments or issue bonds against any land within the district. However, the district is authorized to receive contributions in money, materials and services from individuals, groups and county, state and federal governments. Districts can obtain tax funds through the County Flood Control Act. Approval for fund appropriations must be granted by the county governing board.

9. Q. How does the soil and water conservation district finance its operations?
A. Since the district cannot levy taxes, make assessments or issue bonds against any land within the district, it has to operate on technical and other assistance provided by the county, state or federal government or through grants or donations and proceeds from equipment rental, building rental and sale of trees, seed and other special items.

10. Q. Are all landowners or operators in the district required to cooperate?

A. No landowner or operator is required by law to cooperate with the district. Cooperation is accomplished by voluntary action of the landowners and/or operators.

11. Q. How can a group of interested farmers or landowners obtain information concerning the operation and benefits of a soil and water conservation district?

A. Information is available from county agricultural agents, the local Work Unit Conservationist, the Area Conservationist of the Soil Conservation Service, the supervisors of any soil and water conservation district, the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission, or the Extension Soil Conservationist at the Agricultural College.

12. Q. How can an individual farmer in the district get the assistance he desires?

A. On application to the district supervisors, he can obtain technical assistance, information and surveys to assist in establishing and developing the combination of practices considered best for soil and moisture conservation and wise land use on his individual farm or ranch. The practices may consist of grassed waterways, contour farming, terracing, strip cropping, pasture furrowing and grooving,
retirement to grass, improved crop rotations, water spreading, irrigation, drainage, gully control and proper construction of farm ponds.

13. Q. **Besides technical services, what assistance have farmers received from soil and water conservation districts now in operation in Nebraska?**

A. Many soil and water conservation districts in Nebraska have special equipment such as tractors, graders, bulldozers, terracers, grass drills, sub-tillers, treaders, packers, mechanical tree planters, interseeders, pre-emergence weed sprayers, and pasture grooving machines for rent at a reasonable cost. Few farmers own all of the specialized equipment they might want to use. Also, tree and shrub planting stock, native grass seed and steel pipe for dams have been purchased by districts for sale to cooperating farmers.

14. Q. **How much does a soil and water conservation program cost the individual farmer on his farm?**

A. There are no charges for surveys or other technical services that the district renders in helping the farmer plan and establish his conservation program. The farmer pays a rental fee for any equipment he uses.

15. Q. **Are there any advantages to be derived from having a farm or ranch in a district even though the owner may not be particularly interested in soil conservation at present or may not have any particular conservation problems?**

A. In any community project, there are intangible advantages that affect any and all in the community. There is at least one very real benefit felt by everyone in a soil and water conservation district:
The free technical assistance provided to farmers who do have conservation problems enables them to maintain and, in most cases, increase the value of their farms. This naturally helps protect the tax base for both the present and the future.

All Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Nebraska are grouped into 8 areas and numbered as shown above.

16. Q. If future legislation should change the present law, will districts organized under the present law be affected?

A. The Attorney General of Nebraska states in regard to this: "Retroactive laws may not be enacted where the effect is to disturb vested rights or impair the obligation of a contract." In other words, a new law cannot be made nor the present law changed in such a way that it will interfere with either the privileges or obligations specified in the present law.

17. Q. Do the activities of soil and water conservation districts conflict with the Agricultural Conservation Program?

A. No. The two programs supplement each other. The Agricultural Conservation Program authorizes cost-sharing payments on approved soil and water conservation practices. The soil
and water conservation districts furnish planning and technical assistance and can provide special equipment and materials for establishment of conservation practices on individual farms and ranches.

18. Q. How successful has the soil and water conservation district movement been in Nebraska?

A. The first Nebraska district was organized in Washington County in 1938. All the farm and ranch land area in Nebraska was within the 87 districts by December 1950. There are now 86 districts - two districts were combined in 1965.

WATERSHED PROTECTION AND FLOOD PREVENTION ACT (PL-566)

19. Q. How is Soil and Water Conservation carried out under this act?

A. It is carried on by the local people in a community organizing a watershed district.

20. Q. Where can I obtain more information about a watershed district?

A. This program is explained in University of Nebraska Extension Circular No. CC 176 entitled "The Watershed Program in Nebraska."

WATERSHED CONSERVANCY DISTRICTS

21. Q. What is a Watershed Conservancy District?

A. A Watershed Conservancy District is a subdistrict of one or more existing soil and water conservation districts. It provides legal authority to resident taxpayers to meet local responsibilities in carrying out a watershed protection and flood prevention program.
22. Q. Where can I obtain more information about Watershed Conservancy Districts?

A. This program is explained in University of Nebraska Extension Circular No. CC 175 (Revised 1961) entitled "Questions and Answers about Watershed Conservancy Districts in Nebraska.

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE

23. Q. What is the Agricultural Extension Service?

A. The Agricultural Extension Service is a part of the University of Nebraska. Its responsibility is to carry the results of research and teaching in the field of agriculture and home economics to the people of Nebraska. The Extension Service also has Federal connections. It has been referred to as the educational arm of the United States Department of Agriculture.

See him for advice on

- 4-H club work
- Soil testing and fertilizer
- Weed control
- Farm crops
- Insect control
- And many other farm problems.
24. Q. How is this work carried out?
   A. By a staff of specialists in specific fields at the College of Agriculture, outstate experiment stations, and county agricultural extension and home demonstration agents.

25. Q. How does the Extension Service help in soil and water conservation work?
   A. By helping with educational work in soil and water conservation such as meetings, tours, field trials, demonstrations, radio and television programs, land judging, range and stubble mulch judging contests.

NEBRASKA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

26. Q. What is the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Commission?
   A. The Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Commission is the official state agency which directs the overall program of soil and water conservation, watershed protection and flood prevention within the state.

27. Q. Who is on the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Commission?
   A. The committee consists of thirteen members:

5 & 6. Two appointees by Governor
   One represents irrigation
   One represents Chamber of Commerce

7. One watershed director elected by watershed directors at annual convention.
8. One member elected by State Irrigation and Reclamation Association at their annual meetings.

9 - 13. Five soil and water conservation district supervisors elected at the supervisors annual convention.

There are non-voting members of the State Commission who include: Advisors - Federal U.S.D.A., Dept. of Defense, Dept. of Interior, State Game, Forests, & Parks Com., Highway Dept., Health Dept., and Extension Service.

28. Q. Where is the Soil and Water Conservation Commission Office?

A. Their office is in the Nebraska State Capitol Building.

29. Q. What are the duties of the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Commission?

A. (1) To coordinate the programs of all agencies in the state interested in soil and water conservation.

(2) To secure the cooperation and assistance of the United States and any of its agencies and of the agencies of the state in the work of the districts.

(3) To keep supervisors of the districts informed of the activities and experiences of all other districts, to facilitate an interchange of advice and experience among them and to suggest cooperative action where advisable.

(4) To coordinate the programs of the soil conservation districts so far as this can be done by advice and consultation.

(5) To disseminate throughout the state information concerning the activities and programs of soil and water conservation districts.
(6) To encourage the formation of soil and water conservation districts, receive watershed applications requesting technical assistance in watershed planning, make watershed application approvals and recommend watershed planning priorities to the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

(7) To help in obtaining a slate of candidates for supervisors of soil and water conservation districts. Supervisors are elected at the General Election.

(8) To help wherever possible in the promotion of soil and water conservation in the state.

(9) To represent the State of Nebraska in the field of watershed protection and flood prevention.

30. Q. Do the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Commission members receive a salary?

A. The Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Commission members receive no salary for their services. However, they are entitled to receive a per diem allowance for conducting official business of the commission.

31. Q. How does the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Commission get its funds to carry on this program?

A. Each biennium the Nebraska State Legislature authorizes an appropriation to the Commission whereby the Commission can carry out its functions and provide direct assistance to soil and water conservation districts.

NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

32. Q. What is the Nebraska Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts?
A. It is an informal organization of all the soil and water conservation district supervisors in Nebraska.

33. Q. Does the Nebraska Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts have a state office?

A. The Association has no state office. However, the business is conducted at their annual convention and throughout the year by their officers, board of directors, and area committee chairman.

34. Q. Do the officers, board of directors, area and committee members receive a salary?

A. All officers and directors serve without salary but are entitled to their actual expenses while on association business.

35. Q. Where do the funds come from to pay for the actual expenses of the Association?

A. The Association is financed by voluntary contributions from the 86 soil and water conservation districts and other donations and contributions from individuals and organizations in Nebraska.
36. Q. What are the objectives of the Nebraska Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts?

A. (1) To create a general awareness for conserving and developing our natural resources.

(2) To convince farmers and ranchers to use their land within the limits of its capabilities and the treatment of each acre in accord with its needs.

(3) To secure for soil and water conservation districts such financial, technical, educational and scientific services from public and private sources as are required to insure universal adoption of conservation farming and ranching methods.

SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

37. Q. What is the Soil Conservation Service?

A. The Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (U.S.D.A.) is responsible for developing and carrying out a national program of conservation and development of land and water resources.

38. Q. What are some of the services that the SCS gives to the individual?

A. Some services available from the SCS are:
(1) A detailed soil and land capability map of the cooperator's farm or ranch, or a range site and range condition map if rangeland.

(2) Local and specific information about the different safe uses and adapted crops for each kind of soil.

A farmer discusses his conservation farm plan with an SCS man.

(3) Information about the conservation practices needed on each kind of soil.

(4) Assistance to help the individual farmer or rancher record his conservation decisions. This is commonly called a basic conservation plan.

(5) Technical services to design, lay out and check the construction of dams, terraces or other structures to decide on the varieties of plants, seeding methods and rates, and cultural practices to use in establishing grass or trees as planned; and to answer technical questions that arise in managing pastures, woodlands, or wildlife.
39. Q. Who is in charge of the local soil conservation service program?
   A. The Work Unit Conservationist.

40. Q. What is the work of the SCS soil scientist?
   A. He makes the detailed soil survey of a farm or ranch.

41. Q. What does the soil survey show?
   A. The soil survey shows the classification of the soils on the particular farm or ranch, the distribution of each soil, and other soil characteristics that affect their use.

42. Q. What is a Conservation Farm Plan?
   A. A conservation Farm Plan is a recorded series of decisions that have been made for the treatment and use of your land.
43. Q. What is a Conservation Ranch Plan?

A. A Conservation Ranch Plan is a plan to make better use of soil, water, and plants on a ranch.

AGRICULTURAL STABILIZATION & CONSERVATION SERVICE

44. Q. What is the Agricultural Stabilization & Conservation Service?

A. The Agricultural Stabilization & Conservation Service is a federal agency in the U.S.D.A. administered by state and county committees to advance the overall conservation accomplishment of the nation. These committees administer the agricultural conservation program.

45. Q. How is this program carried on?

A. It is accomplished by sharing with individual farmers and ranchers the cost of carrying out soil and water conservation practices which otherwise would not be carried out to the needed extent.

46. Q. Where does a farmer or rancher find out about obtaining cost sharing for conservation work?

A. He should contact the local ASCS office.

FARMERS HOME ADMINISTRATION

47. Q. What is the Farmers Home Administration?

A. The Farmers Home Administration is a federal agency in the U.S.D.A. authorized to make loans to eligible farm operators.

48. Q. How can the Farmers Home Administration help in soil and water conservation?

A. The Farmers Home Administration may make loans to eligible organizations for watershed...
projects if they have legal status and meet all other requirements of the FHA.

The Farmers Home Administration will also loan money to individual farmers for the improvement of their soil and water resources if they are eligible to obtain such loans.

49. Q. If a watershed organization, farmer or rancher is interested in obtaining a loan, whom should they see?

A. They should contact the local supervisor of the Farmers Home Administration and discuss the situation with him.

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

50. Q. What is the Bureau of Reclamation?

A. It is a department in the United States Department of Interior.

51. Q. What is the role of the Bureau of Reclamation in Soil and Water Conservation?

A. The Bureau of Reclamation constructs water storage reservoirs, irrigation canals and related structures for the purpose of irrigation. The water storage structures have other uses including flood control, hydroelectric power, and recreation.

52. Q. Is the Bureau of Reclamation active in Nebraska?

A. Yes. Completed Bureau of Reclamation Projects include: North Platte project, Mirage Flats, Frenchman-Cambridge, Bostwick division, Sargent Unit and the Farwell Unit. Also, several other projects are planned including the Mid-State Division in the Grand Island-Kearney areas.
53. Q. Where do you contact the Bureau of Reclamation about work in Nebraska?

A. There are two district offices in Nebraska. They are located at McCook and Grand Island.

CORPS OF ARMY ENGINEERS

54. Q. What is the Corps of Army Engineers?

A. The Corps of Army Engineers is a division of the United States Department of Defense.

55. Q. What is the role of the Corps of Army Engineers in Soil and Water Conservation?

A. They develop flood control projects on the major rivers and their principal tributaries and in urban areas.

56. Q. Is the Corps of Army Engineers active in Soil and Water Conservation in Nebraska?

A. Yes. They have built projects in several communities including the Harlan County Dam, Salt-Wahoo watershed structures near Lincoln, Gering Valley watershed structures, Gavins Point Dam and other smaller projects throughout the state.

57. Q. Where do you contact the Corps of Army Engineers about work in Nebraska?

A. There are two district offices in charge of the work in Nebraska. They are located at -

1. Kansas City, Missouri for the area in the Kansas River Basin.

2. U. S. Post Office and Court House, Omaha, Nebraska for the remainder of Nebraska.
CONSERVATION INFORMATION CHECK SHEET

Check one or more:

1. Soil and Water Conservation Districts are a:
   A. [ ] federal agency
   B. [ ] legal sub-division of state government
   C. [ ] information organization
   D. [ ] none of the above

2. The Nebraska Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts is a:
   A. [ ] federal agency
   B. [ ] state agency
   C. [ ] informal organization
   D. [ ] none of the above

3. The Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Commission is a:
   A. [ ] federal agency
   B. [ ] state agency
   C. [ ] informal organization
   D. [ ] none of the above

4. The Soil Conservation Service is a:
   A. [ ] federal agency in the U.S.D.A.
   B. [ ] state agency
C. □ local agency

D. □ none of the above

5. The Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service is a:
   A. □ federal agency
   B. □ state agency
   C. □ local agency
   D. □ none of the above

6. SWCD's have the following authorities: (mark the correct ones)
   A. □ power of eminent domain
   B. □ hire personnel, both clerical and technical
   C. □ operate conservation equipment and charge for its use
   D. □ levy a tax
   E. □ receive contributions
   F. □ sell trees, grass seed, fertilizer, etc.
   G. □ request legal counsel of the State Attorney General
   H. □ require farmers to apply a conservation plan
   I. □ charge for services of tax paid employees
   J. □ charge for service of district paid employees
   K. □ establish priorities for work schedule
L. □ sponsor watershed projects
M. □ carry on educational activities
N. □ conduct demonstrational projects
O. □ require county boards to financially assist them
P. □ obtain grants from state and federal agencies
Q. □ invest money outside businesses
R. □ purchase, exchange, lease mortgage, real or personal property
S. □ construct works of improvement
T. □ sue and be sued
U. □ execute contracts and regulations
V. □ draft a comprehensive plan of soil and water conservation for the district
W. □ issue bonds
X. □ adopt land-use regulations

7. **Soil and Water Conservation Districts are established by:**

A. □ the Nebraska Soil & Water Conservation Commission
B. □ Soil Conservation Service
C. □ University of Nebraska
D. □ Board of Supervisors
E. □ petition and referendum of landowners
F. □ petition and referendum of resident taxpayers of legal voting age
8. Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors are:

A. ☐ elected for a four-year term
B. ☐ entitled to actual expenses incurred as supervisors
C. ☐ entitled to compensation and/or per diem
D. ☐ entitled to a flat rate for expenses
E. ☐ elected for a two-year term
F. ☐ only landowners
G. ☐ only males
H. ☐ none of the above

9. SWCD's are eligible to receive county assistance by virtue of:

A. ☐ county general fund
B. ☐ county flood control act
C. ☐ soil and water conservation districts law
D. ☐ none of the above

10. SWCD supervisors are entitled to expense from State Committee funds for:

A. ☐ attending regular SWCD board meetings
B. ☐ managing district equipment and/or business
C. ☐ attending state association functions
D. ☐ attending state commission authorized activities.
E. □ assisting or directing such activities as: educational meetings, conservation tours within the district, supervisor's elections, awards programs, soil stewardship, FFA-SWCD program, etc.

11. SWCD's may finance their operation by:
   A. □ county assistance
   B. □ state assistance
   C. □ federal assistance
   D. □ contributions
   E. □ operating conservation equipment
   F. □ sale of trees, grass seed and fertilizer
   G. □ all of the above
   H. □ none of the above

12. The state agency in soil and water conservation, watershed protection and flood prevention is:
   A. □ Governor's office
   B. □ State Legislature
   C. □ Water Resources
   D. □ University of Nebraska
   E. □ Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Commission
   F. □ SWCD
   G. □ SCS
   H. □ State Department of Agriculture
   I. □ none of the above
13. The basic conservation plan is:
A. □ recording of a farmer or rancher's conservation decisions
B. □ approved by SCS
C. □ approved by SWCD
D. □ agreement between the cooperator and SWCD
E. □ a mandatory contract
F. □ basic to sound soil and water conservation

The correct answers to the above questions are:
1. B
2. C
3. B
4. A
5. A
7. E
8. A, B
9. B
10. A, D, E
11. G
12. E
13. A, B, C, D, F
For more information about soil and water conservation in Nebraska, obtain a copy of the following Nebraska Extension Service publications:

E.C. 1-34-2 Range Judging in Nebraska
E.C. 5-31-63 Soil and Water Conservation (a beginning project for 4-H members)
E.C. 18-84-2 Stubble Mulch Judging
E.C. 5-36-63 Land Judging in Nebraska
E.C. 55-107 Stop Wind Erosion
E.C. 57-119 Planning and Conducting Your School Conservation Day
E.C. 62-137 Watershed Development
CC 175 Questions and Answers about Watershed Conservancy Districts
CC 176 The Watershed Program in Nebraska
CC 191 Recreational Development in Watershed Projects
E.C. 63-139 What Causes Soil Erosion?
E.C. 63-140 Kinds of Erosion
E.C. 63-141 What Causes Gullies?
E.C. 63-142 How can Gullies be Controlled?
E.C. 63-143 What is a Terrace?
E.C. 63-144 What is a Grassed Waterway?
E.C. 63-145 What is Wind Cropping?
E.C. 63-146 How should Farm Ponds be Managed?
E.C. 63-147 Conservation Practices in Eastern Nebraska
E.C. 63-148 Conservation Practices in Western Nebraska
E.C. 63-149 Conservation Practices in the Nebraska Sandhills
E.C. 63-150 Shelterbelts?
E.C. 63-151 Who Helps Nebraska Farmers with Soil and Water Conservation?
E.C. 63-152 Grass in Soil and Water Conservation
E.C. 63-153 Stubble Mulch
E.C. 63-154 Conservation Rotation
E.C. 63-155 Bench Leveling