

The dollars and sense of saving the soil

Saving the soil for present and future generations is being faced up to by farmers and ranchers of Morrow County, if percentages of cooperators are any indication.

About 85 per cent of farmers and ranchers in the county have now or in the past, cooperating with the Rural Environmental Assistance Program and the Agricultural Stabilization & Conservation Service in soil-saving programs. Seventy-five per cent of county farmers are, in varying degrees, involved in preserving their topsoil today.

There is more reason today than ever for farmers and ranchers to redouble their efforts to preserve their lands from erosion. There are 388,000 acres of cropland in the county, with half of it in grain. With wheat at \$5 a bushel and the average yield at 29 bushels per acre, a farmer can well afford to spend more money to keep that producing soil healthy and intact.

Practicing good soil management and conservation not only means money in the bank almost immediately, it also means having land tomorrow for an increasingly hungry world. Topsoil washed down canyons and ravines is lost forever.

Now that restrictions on crop production are lifted about 10 per cent more grassland will be plowed up this season and planted. This means more land to erode, more soil to be washed off the land without diversion terraces.

Cropland soils, excluding that of the north end of the county, average from 18 to 40 inches before hitting basalt rock. Only the first 6 to 12 inches can be tilled productively. Lose one inch of that precious topsoil to wind or water erosion and about 25 per cent of productive soil of this \$180-an-acre land is gone. That one inch of lost soil is equivalent to a 10 bushel per acre reduction in crop yield.

Clearly, it is in the interest of the farmer to preserve the soil, at whatever the cost. It is equally clear that if the farmer does not act to preserve the soil, the government may find it in the public interest to do it for him.

More and more we hear people talking about "land stewardship." What they are saying in polite words is that the land no longer belongs to its erstwhile owners. The concept is that the "owners" merely hold the land "in stewardship" for the people (translated, means, government ownership). No one would dare use the terms "peasant on the land" these days, but if a farmer has only stewardship rights to his land, is there a better way of putting it?

Those who scoff at such a notion as nationalized farms might consider the demands now heard in Congress for nationalization of the oil industry. Such an event would reduce the oil executive to the position of "steward."

It is clearly in the interest of the farmer to respect his land, and it is in the public interest that the land is respected. We all eat off it. And if the land isn't respected, government has a history of stepping in and "acting in the public interest."

Morrow County farmers have recognized their responsibility to conserve the land and keep it productive, but they have a long way to go before it can be said that the job is done.

Within the last 2½ years 2 million feet of diversion terraces have been built. The work done in Shobe Canyon proved its worth only a few days ago during heavy water runoff. The terraces held the soil and the water.

Shobe Canyon is just a drop in the bucket compared to what needs to be done.

Shall we get on with the job?—E.V.J.

Election changes is paying off

By DICK McELLIGOTT

In the 1974 annual meeting we will not have an election. This is not prompted by a desire to have a fast moving annual meeting with a minimum of uncertainty, but this is our response to the action of the 1973 legislature.

From now on the district directors are to be elected at the general elections on a non-partisan ballot. Under provisions of House Bill 2848 our names have been changed from supervisors to directors, and voting requirements have been changed. Now all eligible voters residing within a district may vote on district directors.

Also since the election is to be held at general elections we will no longer have elections each year, but on alternate years. To accomplish this the law directs the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission to extend the terms of

district directors so that the terms of office will coincide with the elections.

Although requirements for voting have been broadened to include all registered voters, the law requires that the board must have no more than two non-land owners. This is unchanged from the previous law. The district board will be required to divide the district into zones for positions on the board. This will insure equal representation throughout Morrow County.

We hope that it will be possible to get people to run for the district board, and that no one will be bashful about having his name appear on the ballot at the general election. The requirement is that to file for office the candidate must have a petition with 10 signatures of registered voters on it. Many of us on the board were elected with fewer votes than that at an annual meeting.



"Someday this will all be yours, son."

Observation by a new county resident

By BRUCE MARTIN

Due to poor conservation and inadequate road maintenance, our paved roads have become a hazard far worse than any freeway or state road in Oregon.

The problem is mud covering both lanes of travel on the roads that trail through our farming community. This problem is not only the county road crews' responsibility, but the farmers' as well. With better cooperation between farmer and county this problem can be eliminated.

The cost of road maintenance is coming from our pockets in the form of increased taxes, and again from the farmer's pockets by the increased erosion of once useful land. I'd list ways of solving this problem, but we the people of this county know what has to be done. We are all affected and all responsible.

Sabre, EO farms on soil care

By KEN TURNER

Cropping practices and soil management on North Morrow County soils was the subject of an important meeting late last fall.

Detailed plans for first year cropping were outlined by Sabre Farms and Eastern Oregon Farms to the directors of the Morrow Soil and Water Conservation District. Jim Vomicil, soil management specialist, Oregon State University, headed up the discussion that pin-pointed wind erosion hazards and precautionary measures that should be taken.

Minimum tillage, leaving vegetation on surface, was stressed by both farms. Other first year precautions to be taken are:

1. Availability of water prior to disturbing native cover.
2. Concentrate development on small parcels rather than development of large contiguous blocks.
3. Avoid disturbance of non-cropped areas.
4. Maximum use of cover crops.

The apparent experience of Sabre and Eastern Oregon Farm personnel, along with their dedication to good soil practices was evident at the session.

It was agreed by everyone that no one wants any dust storms since the farmers can't afford them, and the public and adjoining neighbors won't tolerate it.

Annual Financial Report

Bank balance as of Jan. 1, 1973		\$1610.50
Court check for survey	\$1000.00	
Flag sales	164.00	
Drill rentals	159.00	
Interest	25.00	
Soils maps	700.00	
Co-op	121.25	
Total income	\$2169.25	<u>\$2169.25</u>
Total balance and income		\$3779.75

DISBURSEMENTS FOR 1973

Repairs	\$206.32	
Dues	225.00	
Miscellaneous	54.70	
Soil surveys	1324.00	
Soil maps	1498.00	
Gifts and awards	79.00	
Annual printing	65.00	
Postage	44.96	
Flags	98.00	
Total disbursements	\$3595.74	<u>\$3595.74</u>
Total bank balance Dec. 31, 1973		\$184.01
Time deposits	\$1368.65	\$1368.65
Accounts receivable	1315.50	<u>\$1315.50</u>
Total in bank, deposits & receivables		\$2868.16