

MORROW



# Soil and Water Conservation District

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Golden Anniversary

## Annual Report

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### Drake conservation farm of the year for 1991

### Chairman urges compliance

By Joe Rietmann, Morrow Soil & Water Conservation District Chairman

Morrow County Soil and Water Conservation District urges all producers with highly erodible farm land to review their farm plans to assure compliance and protect farm program eligibility.

Morrow County's farm plans for HWL were developed using an Alternative conservation System which is based on what was considered to be best management practices used in our area. Morrow SWCD was and is still involved in the process of determining best management practices for our county.

Under most conditions producers in our county should have no trouble living up to the requirements of their farm plans, but it is very important that you the producer understand what your plan calls for and what will happen to your farm program payments if you are found to be out of compliance.

It is important to remember that even a 2,000 acre farm with two acres of HEL land could lose all farm program benefits if those two acres are found to be out of compliance with their farm plan.

Many of the farm plans written for Morrow County specify a percentage of cover (residue) to be left on the ground surface after seeding. It is important to learn what your farm's required percentage cover looks like. The SCS will be happy to come out to your farm and help you in this process.

If your HEL farm land produced an average yield in the preceding crop year and you have followed the procedure of conservation tillage referred to in your farm plan, there should be no problem meeting the percentage cover required in your plan.

If your HEL farm land did not produce an average crop it is very

important to notify the SCS and work with them in determining what course of action should be taken.

The current SCS policy for the State of Oregon is, in the case of a crop failure or other conditions beyond the producers control (drought, hail, insects) to allow a variance from your HEL farm plan for the year following the failure. The determination of what constitutes a failure currently is made by the SCS State Conservationist. Morrow SWCD is making an effort to have this determination done locally by your conservation district or written into your farm plan, I.E. a percentage of your farms average yield.

Some farm plans for HEL include a conservation cropping sequence. In reviewing your plan, check to be sure that what your plan is calling for is actually what is taking place on your farm. In most cases your plan can be modified to show the correct cropping sequence.

Your HEL farm plan may include various other requirements that need to be fully understood.

As a Conservation District Board we would like to urge all farmers to conserve soil and water and appreciate the role that SCS has played in providing assistance to Morrow County farmers for more than 50 years.

The SCS staff in Morrow County and your SWCD board hopes to be able to avoid future problems with conservation compliance by bringing the details of your conservation plans to your attention now.

As Chairman of the Morrow SWCD Board I would urge you to remember that the SCS role in Morrow County has changed from strictly assisting farmers in their conservation efforts to include determining your farms compliance with your government mandated HEL farm plan.



L-R: Carley, Amy, Kevin and Doug Drake

The 1991 Conservation Farm of the Year in Morrow County is the Douglas and Carley Drake farm in Sand Hollow. They farm 1250 acres of owned land and 1000 acres of land leased from Carley's father, Roland Bergstrom. It is in a wheat/fallow rotation, with some barley and a few cattle "to keep things interesting," said Doug.

Doug is the third generation Drake on his farm. His grandfather moved to the Sand Hollow ranch in 1927, and purchased it in 1952. Some of the structures, such as the diversion ditches, were designed and built by Doug's father.

In 1986 Doug and Carley began to buy the farm from his mother and to lease land from his father-in-law. Since then he has built new terraces, planted grass waterways, renovated streambanks, started new practices designed to conserve moisture and soil, and participated in special projects.

In Sand Hollow, in addition to the 20,000 feet of old, graded terraces that were built by his father and grandfather, he installed 24,300 feet of new level terraces. He also completed 3.2 miles of streambank improvement, to include shaping and seeding to grass, under a long term agreement with ASCS. In addition to this, Doug improved a lot of ditches on his own.

In Gooseberry there were 12,000 feet of old, graded and level terraces and he added 51,600 feet of new, leve terraces, with Roland's cooperation. He seeded a half mile of streambank. He participated in the Dry Fork watershed project, a special project requiring Doug to subsoil, reduce tillage, build terraces and manage residue more stringently than on the rest of the farm.

Between the two places there is 1100 acres of land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program.

Doug built his own subsoiler, and has used it extensively on much of his farmland to good effect.

Doug's interest in conservation has also extended to a cooperative study with the Oregon State University Extension Service. Donating 30 acres of land for the purpose, the study looks at the differences between chemical and conventional fallow, and between annual cropping and crop/fallow rotations.

Doug has been a member of the Morrow County Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Committee (ASC County Committee) for nine years. He is conservation minded and believes in leaving the soil in at least as good condition as he found it. His conservation actions since he began managing his farm proves this out. "Doug and Carley are excellent representatives of conservation in Morrow County, and deserve the honor of Conservation Farm of the Year," said Lundin.