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and Saskatchewan's Prairies, soil erosion
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article.
The land belongs to the nation.

Block all the loosest storm water, I have paid for son.

But erosion came creeping in.

Now this is the Law of the Land, son—weeds, we are also selective. It was found in local weed control surveys. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management and other agencies were involved in these surveys. The state of California was involved in these surveys.

When the job is set you is done.

I have roed it now seven times. I have roed it seven times, and you is the heater bank.

In the town of Lamont I put the nod on your worthes, and just to top the roll you hold the son.

I don’t see your fault from a fortune. I take this roed right.

Let it grow before you grow old.

The law is on the land.


For more information on this topic, please refer to the Saskatchewan Conservation News, Vol. 1, No. 6, 1979.
In 1990 the north west had some of the worst wind erosion it has ever seen. The combination of dry soil conditions, and strong winds in May and June removed thousands of tonnes of topsoil from this region. There were problem areas in all seven districts but the Unity and Turtleford Districts were hit the hardest. What caught everyone off guard was that it wasn't just the light land that had problems. Some of the good heavy land that had rarely blown had the worst erosion. Several fields were eroded down to the plow layer. Even attempts at emergency tillage were futile.

The main factors that contributed to the severe erosion are:
- poor soil moisture
- very strong winds
- large field size — over 100 acres
- summerfallow on 1989 or prior residue

This combination of climatic and field conditions had some devastating effects. This was particularly true on canola fields which had no crop residue and very few lumps. Some canola fields were reseeded three or four times.

The events of this spring were very effective at convincing producers of the need for soil conservation. There is an increase in the amount of chemfallow in the Macklin area according to Lloyd Phillips, a farmer member. Whether this will happen again next year is yet to be seen. The attendance at soil conservation tours and field days has also been good. Although the crops look good in most areas, there is a large area in the north west that will have below average yields. Some of the fields will not be sown or fallow next year. It is important that the producers in these areas make an effort to maintain crop residues. This will require some planning.

The first step in any plan is to set goals. In the north west, we recommend a target level of 500 to 1,000 lb/ac of cereal residue depending on the soil texture. To get a rough estimate of the starting residue level in lb/ac, take your yield in bu/acre and multiply it by 100 for wheat, 80 for canary seed, and 50 for barley. An estimate of the amount of remaining residue can be made by estimating the number of tillage operations. Modifications can be made to the plan to help retain desired residue level.

A number of practices have been successfully used by farmers in the north west to help. Applying 2-4-D in the fall controls winter annuals including hard to kill weeds like narrow-leaved hawkweed. Rodweeds can be used for secondary tillage. Wide blade cultivators work well in the drier areas of the region. A deadest can be used to replace mounded narrow-leaved hawkweed. Barrier strip seeding can be combined with other operations like a midsummer application of granular trifluralin. Herbicides can be used to replace tillage.

Conservation fallow systems vary from farm to farm and can even vary from field to field. They only require a commitment to carry out the plan. It anyone would like help to develop a conservation fallow system, feel free to give me a call.

Garry Meier
Regional Soil Conservationist

As producers watched their crops deteriorate in the July sun, they were again reminded that moisture is most frequently the limiting factor to crop production in the north east. It is at this time that farmers can ask themselves what they might have done differently to hold some of that moisture that they saw blowing across their fields in the form of snow or water running off their fields as the snow melts in the spring.

The whole area of residue management and minimum till direct seeding can play a major role in conserving that extra moisture that just might make the difference between harvesting or not harvesting a crop. There have been several direct seeding projects established across the north east region in 1990. A wide variety of equipment was used, from specialized and expensive machines designed specifically for zero till seeding to air-seeders and hoe drills that are commonly used on many farms. Local tours have been organized where producers can look at these projects and discuss their merits and problems of such a farming system. The heat of late July and early August has helped to visually illustrate the benefits that direct seeding can offer over the systems that use extensive tillage to prepare land for seeding in the north east.

Field shelterbelts are another soil and moisture conserving tool. Planting a well-fluralin product at 3 times the recommended spring rate should be done in the fall. Control of persistent perennials such as quickgrass and thistle also must be done the year prior to planting. The north east region ADD Boards are utilizing a variety of systems to co-ordinate their tree planting efforts. However, the contract planting program implemented by ADD District 27, Melfort, can be singled out as the most successful in 1988. The ADD Board provided surveying services, soil incorporated granular fertilizer and also planted the trees. The farmer was charged $150.00 per mile for this service. If the producer maintained his tree rows over the next two years he would be credited back $60 per year for doing this, so in effect the farmer could receive a mile of shelterbelt for no cost. If he chose not to maintain his trees the ADD Board would take responsibility for this. The District 27 tree planting program established about forty miles of trees in 1990 with plans for about 100 in 1991.

Again, I encourage producers to contact any of the personnel working on soil conservation in the north east to discuss your conservation ideas and concerns. Remember, it is our hands and individually we can contribute to conserving our land resource in Saskatchewan.
The south east Region is very prone to both wind and water erosion, and is keen on taking swift and sure action to minimize the effects of these by subscribing heavily to programs currently being offered.

Residue Management is recognized as probably the simplest and easiest method to be adopted by the producers in the area and applications are at a high level in all districts of the south east. A large part of the area suffered shortages of moisture during the past three or four years and had a lower than usual crop residue left in the fields as a result. This is making it difficult to sustain the required percent of trash cover to qualify in the program, but nearly all producers are making a superb effort to do the best they can with what they have, and I’m sure will succeed in controlling the growth without the excessive use of tillage. Herbicide control products and the under-cutting machines available today are far superior than the past and are proving to be most effective in soil conservation schemes. Where a producer does consider it necessary to till, most have understood the reason for travelling slower in the field, and have lifted the mulch harrows behind the implement.

Direct seeding in the region has been widely accepted and tried, where a sufficient number of machines were available, and the results have been very favourable, as shown in the summer conservation tours of producer fields. Producers now realize the importance of following the past three or four years and had a superb effort to do the best they can with what they have, and I’m sure will succeed in controlling the growth without the excessive use of tillage. Herbicide control products and the under-cutting machines available today are far superior than the past and are proving to be most effective in soil conservation schemes. Where a producer does consider it necessary to till, most have understood the reason for travelling slower in the field, and have lifted the mulch harrows behind the implement.

There will be a one day seminar on conservation farming in early November for west central members and guests. It will include a panel discussion with conservation farmers and will encourage group discussion. A detailed notice will be sent out in October. 

Remember to keep that stubble up!

Dave Buckett and Garth Patterson

FRASER, SSA staff member, and Zahiya Aboqandha, Regional Rangeland Specialist with Lands Branch, led several workshops this summer across the region. This is an area of involvement which will be expanded in the south west.

The school program will also be expanded. Presentations are designed to educate students about soil conservation issues and practices. As with any extension effort, the spin off of such efforts will benefit the students’ families and neighbourhoods.

A note or two on offices! In August, Gerald’s office was moved to the combine, temporarily. Meanwhile, Pat’s office has moved, with the new Rural Service Centre, to the Hillside Plaza on the north edge of Swift Current. Drop in or call anytime, the phone number has not changed. Your experience and inquiries are welcome.

Gerald Girotat and Patricia Flaten

Question: What’s the first question you would ask a farmer?

Answer: How are your crops?

Well, in this region, the crops are variable as usual. However, we would say that the crops are average to above average except for the Leader district. Moisture conditions there have been dismal, to say the least. In fact, the word is out that the Rural Service Centre took down their “Wipe Muddy Footwear Off sign until further notice.

The Save Our Soils program has been proceeding well. Most districts have had 1 - 5 fields days each over the summer. Those involved in the program have been excellent to work with. We look forward to Mr. Wide Blade (Reg Mount) returning to the Assiniboia SOS office after being slowed down by health problems. Careful range management results in obvious benefits for soil conservation. Nancy their son Lionel, tree planting was started in 1889 to control wind erosion and trap snow. They built their own tree planter which is trailed by a 500 gallon water tank to inject water into the soil at the time of planting. In 1989, caragana grew up to three feet high during the first season. Weeds are discarded and hand hoes when they are small to reduce competition with the trees. Maurice joined the SSCA because he is concerned about soil conservation. He is interested in annual barriers, snow trapping management of light, erodible land and chemical fallow.

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Moisture enhancement techniques such as snow trapping by straw diverters, hi-lo, and barrier trap strips in the stubble, all help in the effort to extend cropping rotations, and thus eventually, to improve -ment in the organic matter content of the soil. Barrier strip seeding during the sum- merfallow operation has also proven to reduce wind erosion on open summefallow over the winter period, and assist the moisture situation, by trapping considerable quantities of snow.

There has been extensive interest in the establishment of field shelterbelts throughout all districts, and many ADD Boards have greatly escalated this valuable program by the purchase or acquisition of tree planters and disc preparation and maintenance equipment. The Shelterbelt Nursery has been working extremely hard to assure supplies of recommended species for next year’s planting, and the landscape over the entire province will reflect the interest in this important program.

Many tours of cooperator fields have taken place over the summer, and the results of demonstrations of new techniques have been shown to virtually hundreds of potential conservation minded producers. Congratulations and thanks conservationists.

Gerry Wilkord and Bob Linnell

Greetings fellow soil conservationists!

The field day season has passed, harvest is now here and it will soon be time to plan for 1991. Those of you interested in snow management should remember to leave the stubble standing over winter. Up to one-third of our precipitation falls as snow (in a normal year). An extra inch or two of mois- The south east Region is very prone to both wind and water erosion, and is keen on taking swift and sure action to minimize the effects of these by subscribing heavily to programs currently being offered.

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