

# CONSERVATION *Showcase*



## Conservation Vision Now Shared with Thousands Each Year

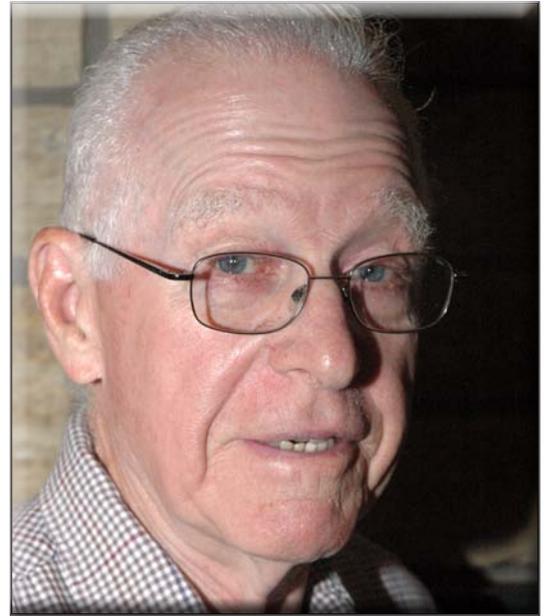
In 1992, Mildred and Leonard Grimes had a dream. Their vision was to donate 22 acres of land for the construction of a wetland and conservation center to benefit the people of Marshall County.

Today, their vision has a name: the Grimes Farm Nature Center. It is owned by the Marshall County Conservation Board and it is visited by thousands of people each year including every fifth-grader in the Marshalltown school system. It features a well-liked walking path, nature classes at the conservation center and connects to a very popular bike path.

Leonard was an attorney and Mildred was a music teacher. The Grimes couple bought their farm in 1964 and started working with the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) soon after.

Leonard says SCS, now called the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), helped them to improve their land. Leonard says NRCS made a number of suggestions including planting native grasses and trees, constructing grassed waterways and terraces, planting on the contour and using no-till, and building a dam as an erosion control structure. He credits implementing the NRCS suggestions with significantly reducing soil erosion on their land.

Grimes says he is especially happy with the benefits of another NRCS conservation suggestion: building the Grimes Farm wetland.



*Leonard Grimes*

The Grimes Farm wetland complex takes up five acres of the 22 acres the couple donated to the county. Melinda Tague, an NRCS soil conservation technician, designed the wetland which was built in 1999. Financial assistance from USDA's Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) and the Marshall County Conservation Board funded construction of the wetland.

Tague designed the wetland to take water from Linn Creek, stair-step it through a series of three wetlands and return the water to Linn Creek. "The creek water gets filtered by the wetlands," said Tague. "When it is returned to Linn Creek, it is noticeably cleaner and more healthful to the environment."

# CONSERVATION *Showcase*



Conservationists often refer to wetlands as nature's kidneys, recognizing their ability to clean and filter water that passes through them.

Tague also says the wetlands attract wildlife and help reduce flooding on Linn Creek. "When there is heavy rain, the wetlands fill up with water reducing flooding pressure downstream," said Tague. "Wetlands offer a lot of benefits to the environment and to the taxpayer."

Grimes likes the wildlife the wetlands attract, too. "Birds, ducks, frogs and deer are all attracted to the wetlands," said Grimes, now 84. "I like to watch them from my window or walk the nature trail."

*Melinda Tague, an NRCS soil conservation technician, stands next to a wetland she designed a decade ago. The wetland is a popular feature at the Grimes Farm Nature Center near Marshalltown.*

Grimes is very happy with the wetland. He was asked if he would encourage other landowners to build wetlands. Grimes answered with an emphatic, "Oh, my, yes!"

Landowners are encouraged to contact their local NRCS office for more information

on wetlands, WRP, and other conservation programs.

## **WRP**

This fall, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is celebrating the enrollment of more than 2 million acres in the Wetlands Reserve Program.

Iowa NRCS State Conservationist Rich Sims said, "We have gained wetland acreage, thanks to the stewardship ethic of the Nation's farmers and ranchers. In Iowa, there are 80,083 acres in enrolled in WRP."

WRP was reauthorized in the 2008 Farm Bill. It provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to address wetland, wildlife habitat, soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on private agricultural land. The program provides financial incentives to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. This voluntary program strives to achieve the greatest wetland functions and values and optimum wildlife habitat on every enrolled acre.

The enrollment options for landowners are permanent easements, 30-year easements, and a restoration cost-share agreement, as well as 30-year contracts on acreage owned by Indian Tribes.

*Dick Tremain, Public Affairs Specialist  
USDA-NRCS, Des Moines  
November 2008*



*Helping People Help the Land*

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.