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Answer to Wildlife Land Problem -- Should a poorly-drained area be used as wildlife area or agricultural land? SCS men in northern Minnesota have worked out a possible answer that may make the land more valuable for both. It's an open drain, dug to grade in the usual way. Then, to make it valuable for wildlife, they installed a pothole in the ditch. This pothole is dug about two feet deeper than the rest of the ditch and from 50 to 100 feet long. This way, the land is drained for cropping and also has open water for ducks and other wildlife. Such a setup was put in last fall at the Mud Lake Game Refuge in the Marshall-Beltrami Soil Conservation District. SCS men are watching it to see how the ducks like their custom-built potholes and how well the drainage system will work.

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Less Tilling of Corn Land in Future -- Less tillage will be necessary on corn fields of the future -- that's the opinion of a University of Minnesota extension soils specialist, Harold E. Jones. Some of the coming things are tractor-track planting on the sandier soils and wide-row spacing so that corn serves as a nurse crop for legume establishment.

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Contour Strips Prove Value -- Felix Brain, Hamden Township, Becker County, set up seven strips across a sloping area on his 240-acre farm to prevent further water erosion. After a 10-inch rain, Felix checked to see how much good the strips had done. Even after a hard rain, he found only one place which had gathered enough water to begin a small gully. If he'd farmed it like he did before the strips were put in, he would have had many deep gullies plus a lot of sheet erosion.

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Scientific Reason for Soil Moisture Loss -- Most of the moisture that leaves the soil is "breathed out" through plant leaves. Thus, very little moisture is lost from soil that has weed-free grain stubble or is simply bare. On land where the crop is harvested in midsummer--for example, small grain, peas and sweet corn--there's an increase in the soil moisture reservoir from late summer rains. The land will thus reach its best moisture-storing ability earlier in the spring than land that has grown long-season crops. This interesting bit of soil science comes from George R. Blake, University of Minnesota soil physicist.

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