

# Our LAND



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Wilkin District in High Gear -- Fifteen miles of drainage ditches have been dug on 25 farms in the Wilkin County Soil Conservation District as the district gets into full swing with area drainage problems. Frank Mallinger, board chairman, says 90 per cent of the farmers who get help with drainage projects are cooperators with the district or sign on when they begin to get help. This year, 22 of the 25 farms on which ditches were built were or became cooperators. Of the 22, 14 have soil conservation plans for their farms. The other eight say they will develop plans by signing on as cooperators. The district has its own TD-18 tractor and scraper. Last year it dug nearly half the 91 miles of field ditches. The other half were dug by private contractors aided by district SCS technicians.

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Ask Neighbor About Strip-crop Benefits -- Concerned about "adjustment pains" during the change-over to strip-cropping or terracing? See a neighbor who's gone through it. He will suggest many helps in reaping benefits of a terracing or strip-cropping system from the very beginning. This advice is from Arnold Wiebusch, Goodhue County Soil Conservation Agent at Red Wing. Example: Arthur and Kenneth Richter, father and son, own a 280-acre farm in Goodhue township. Until last spring they rented and although they were on good land and farmed it well they adopted their conservation plan "by pieces". Now, on their own farm, they're seeding a whole field to a legume and grass mixture and next year they'll plow out every other strip for corn or grain. This will give them the rotation they want -- right from the beginning -- and they won't get the disturbing yield lows and highs when strips are laid that come across the old field arrangement.

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Draining Surface Water Helps Peat Soil Settle -- Removing surface water by ditching or tiling often aids decomposition and settling of peat soils. This was demonstrated on the Ernie Vermerskirchen farm near Jordan. In 1948 a field drainage ditch designed by SCS was built to drain a 35-acre area. The ditch entered the area through a culvert which is in its original position. Surveys show that the soil in the drained area has settled 18 inches in the six years. Lesson: settling of peat soils should be considered when planning drainage or tiling systems.