

## 2008 Year in Review

**A**s the Iowa Learning Farm concludes its fourth year, there are many successes to highlight, especially in the wake of a crop season wrought with unforgiving weather. Spring and summer floods and early winter weather slowed planting and harvest, and in some areas stopped things altogether. The silver lining--if there can be one--is that during this summer's flooding, conservation practices already in place were tested and proved that they work.

The research and demonstrations by the Iowa Learning Farm this summer support this fact. Our outreach has been on-target, spreading the word of the importance of conservation practices, no matter what the weather.

Our agency partners have been invaluable in support of this project. Our cooperators and conservationists are key players, and are seen by their neighbors as knowledgeable resources.

In addition to our spokespeople, the rainfall simulator remains popular and continues to be requested across the state. Our presence at this year's Farm Progress Show did not go unnoticed. Farmers interested in strip-till were able to discuss, one-on-one, challenges and benefits with those who actually use this practice.

We are just starting to see the impact of the new video series, which was rolled out late in the year. Distribution is ongoing and curriculum is being developed. It will be fascinating to watch how this project unfolds.

We are truly building a Culture of Conservation in Iowa and the midwest. We look forward to a successful 2009.

—Jerry DeWitt  
*project manager*



# Field Days

The Iowa Learning Farm hosted or sponsored nine field days this summer across the state, talking to hundreds of producers about a variety of topics such as strip-tillage and conservation measures to slow water runoff from fields. The field days were:

- June 11 - Doug Nolte farm, Muscatine County
- July 16 - Dan Eklund farm, Webster County
- June 17 - Western Iowa No-till Field Day, West Pottawattamie County
- July 1 - Northeast Iowa No-Till Field Day, Collin Jensen farm, Fayette County
- July 10 - Tom Wagner farm, O'Brien County
- July 29 - Rick Juchems farm, Butler County
- August 6 - Operation Strip-Till, Smelzter Trust Demonstration Farm, Webster County (plus introduction seminar, March 17, Fort Dodge)
- August 26-28 - Farm Progress Show, Boone County
- September 24 - North Iowa Tillage Field Day, Mitchell County



*Dan Eklund talks about challenges he experienced with no-till at a field day on his Webster County Farm.*



*Tom Wagner farm, O'Brien County*



*North Iowa Tillage Field Day, Mitchell County*



*Farm Progress Show, Boone County*



*Operation Strip-Till seminar, Fort Dodge*



*Rick Juchems farm, Butler County*



*Northeast Iowa No-till Field Day, Fayette County*



*Western Iowa No-Till Field Day, W. Pottawattamie County*



*Doug Nolte Farm, Muscatine County*

## **Other Projects**

**Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG):** “Stewardship in the Bioeconomy: An Iowa Market-Based Model” supports development of a profitable and environmentally-sound model for market-based pricing and procuring of biomass for cellulosic ethanol as well as residue management and removal. Education and outreach opportunities will be offered to industry, farmers, crop consultants, and technical service providers across Iowa. A pilot program will be developed for farmers to implement environmentally and socially responsible procedures in biomass harvest. Erin Harpenau will be coordinating soil conservation education with farmers.

**Watershed Project:** The Leadership and Performance Driven Watershed Management project, funded through the USDA-CSREES Integrated Water Quality Program, will build on neighbor relationships and seek solutions to difficult nonpoint source pollution concerns. It will focus on establishing watershed groups across the state, which will set agricultural performance goals at the watershed level that are environmentally sound and economically practical. Impaired sub-watersheds throughout Iowa will be selected and local farmers will participate in the watershed groups. Lois Wright Morton and Matt Helmers lead the project; Jamie Benning is project coordinator.

**Residue Management Campaign:** This group, led by Bill Ehm (DNR) and Jerry DeWitt, is working to implement a marketing plan that builds awareness about the importance of residue management. The group consists of representatives of all ILF partner agencies and organizations plus Iowa Soybean Association, Iowa Corn Growers Association, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and Iowa Agribusiness Association. The group has been meeting for some time and is approaching the roll out of this campaign this spring in northwest Iowa with the aid of Ag Partners, Albert City. DeWitt, Brown and Harpenau have been representing ILF at these meetings.

**Cover Crop Working Group:** An ILF/PFI Cover Crop Working Group, including ILF and Practical Farmers of Iowa team members, National Soil Tilth Laboratory researchers, Dr. John Sawyer of the ISU Agronomy Department, and Iowa producers who have successfully incorporated cover crops on their farms has been established to serve as advisors for the project. The working group had their first formal meeting in December. Cover crop demonstrations will be with ILF Cooperators Bill Buman, Randy Caviness, and Rick Juchems, and three Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI) cooperators in Greene, Grundy, Guthrie counties.

# 2008 Outreach Summary

Hosted and sponsored Field Days	9
Rainfall Simulator Engagements	47
Displays	10
Presentations	20
Newsletters	4
Wallaces Farmer articles	11
Videos	5



Above: Rick Juchems speaks at the Leopold Center sponsored conference "Learning From the Floods of 2008."

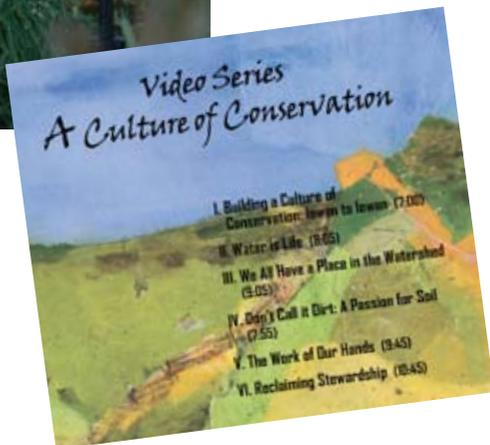
Left: Barbara Johnson talks with a visitor during the 2008 Conservation Partnership Day in the Capitol, Des Moines.



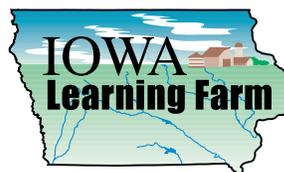
2008 Winter Cooperator meeting



Jackie Comito pauses from filming footage for one of the five new videos produced this year. The cover of the DVD, below, features original artwork, created by her sister, Cecilia.



New Iowa Learning Farm web site launched in May.



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