

Economic Phases of Erosion
Control in Southern Iowa and
Northern Missouri

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Economic Phases of Erosion Control In Southern Iowa and Northern Missouri

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EROSION—A PUBLIC ISSUE

Erosion means more than the mere washing away of the fertile top soil on farms.

It means, if it is not checked, the decline of communities with all their schools, churches and other institutions, in addition to the ruin of farms.

Erosion has become an important problem in the Corn Belt, for within the life of farmers now living, much of the rich top soil has been washed away in many areas.

The control of erosion is not a simple problem which is solely up to each farmer. Erosion control is affected by economic and social forces which are largely beyond the control of the individual farmer.

The following are the principal economic and social factors which, in general, tend to hinder or assist erosion control:

These Hinder Erosion Control

1. Small farms.
2. Corn-hog type of farming.
3. Farms operated by tenants.
4. Heavy debt burden and high interest rates.

These Assist Erosion Control

1. Large farms.
2. Dairy and beef cattle type of farming.
3. Farms operated by owners.
4. Small debt burden and low interest rates.

This bulletin attempts to show how these and other factors are related to erosion control.

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PREFACE

The Soil Erosion Service of the United States Department of Agriculture has 32 Erosion Control Projects under way in 31 states. More projects will be initiated in the near future. One of these demonstrational and experimental projects embraces about 152,000 acres of the Big Creek watershed area in Ringgold and Decatur counties, Iowa, and Harrison County, Missouri. The headquarters for this project of the Soil Erosion Service are at Bethany, Mo.

The government invites the farmers of this area to enter a cooperative agreement, under which the Soil Erosion Service agrees to assist the farmer in controlling erosion, and the farmer agrees to follow an erosion control program for 5 years. This program is worked out individually, for each cooperating farmer, by the farmer himself and the soil erosion experts. The government furnishes special equipment for terracing and gully control, as well as a portion of the seed, fertilizer and limestone necessary for an erosion control program.

The staff of the Soil Erosion Service includes experts in the fields of forestry, crops and soils, agricultural engineering and farm management. The Regional Director and his staff coordinate the activities of these experts so as to work out a balanced soil and crop management program for each farm. A definite crop rotation is outlined for each field on the farm, covering 5 years.

Inasmuch as the erosion control program requires changes in the crop system, subsequent changes in the livestock system and general farming organization are involved. The Soil Erosion Service in Bethany, Mo., therefore, asked the Agricultural Economics Section of the Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station to make a survey in the Big Creek watershed area in cooperation with the Agricultural Economics Department of the University of Missouri, for the purpose of analyzing the broader economic and social implications of the erosion control program. The present study is the result of this survey.

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