

# Progress City gets drainage upgrade

By JOSH FLINT

**L**UCKILY for 2009 Farm Progress Show visitors, the Conservation Expo crew spent a full three days improving drainage at Progress City in Decatur.

Each year, members of the Illinois Land Improvement Contractors Association get together for a Conservation Expo. Jon Seevers, president of Seevers Farm Drainage and an ILICA board member, says in the past they've held the event in a farmer's field. However, Seevers says Progress City allows for better public access and is easier to find.

From Aug. 19-21, members of ILICA brought their bulldozers, graders, backhoes and dump trucks to upgrade various aspects of the show site. First on the to-do list was installing drain tile in the field parking lot. Michaelaalen Gerken, University of Illinois Extension natural resources educator, estimates 9.75 million acres of Illinois soil are tile drained. Another 3 million acres need to be tiled, she adds.

"In most of Illinois, the problem is the soil is too wet, rather than too dry," Gerken says.

At Progress City, contractors installed lines in a random pattern, designed to

### Key Points

- Contractors made upgrades to Progress City in August.
- Improvements included drain tiles and wetland restoration.
- Visitors were able to see the conservation practices firsthand.

target trouble spots. East of the tiling demo, contractors repaired a drainage ditch with grading equipment. Further south, contractors installed a rock embankment, which takes water from the drainage ditch and deposits it in a water detention pond.

Workers also installed a rain garden where the show site adjoins Richland Community College. Water runoff was becoming a problem from the college's asphalt parking lot, Seevers explains. The rain garden is designed as a place to hold water and beautify the scenery.

Just to the east of this project, contractors beautified Progress City's other water detention pond. A wetland area was created for native birds and fish.

At next year's Farm Progress Show, look up the ILICA booth to learn more about the improvements. In the meantime, visit ILICA at [www.ilica.net](http://www.ilica.net).



**1. DIG IT DEEP:** Jim Kiley of ILICA says most tile main lines are 6 to 8 inches in diameter. They feed 4-inch lines, which are controlled via underground gates. Kiley estimates tile runs \$2.50 per foot, installed.

**2. CHEMICAL FILTER:** Jon Seevers, Seevers Farm Drainage president, pulled samples from bioreactors at Progress City. This particular bioreactor uses a bed of wood chips to filter the water. Seevers estimates a 20-year lifespan on the wood chips.

**3. CONSERVE IT:** Roger Windhorn, NRCS soil scientist, gave visitors a tutorial on the makeup of Illinois soil. The area above Windhorn's knife is all topsoil.

**4. WATER CONTROL:** Phil Algreen, Agri Drain, says, on average, one drainage control structure is sufficient for approximately 20 acres. This particular control structure is solar powered and sends updates via satellite. Landowners can control it remotely via the Internet.



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