

ILF videos send message

By CAROL BROWN

BUILDING a culture of conservation involves the passion of many minds, hands and voices. Rekindling the respect, love and preservation of our precious natural resources is at the heart of the concept, as well as the Iowa Learning Farm.

The ILF project was started to encourage all Iowans to have an active role in protecting and preserving these resources. Using a farmer-to-farmer approach, ILF demonstrates cropping techniques that improve water and soil quality while maintaining profitability.

To help promote this idea, ILF produced a seven-minute video, "Building a Culture of Conservation: Iowan to Iowan," which debuted at the state's annual Soil and Water Conservation District conference in November 2007.

County soil and water commissioners enjoyed the video and approached Jacqueline Comito, ILF assistant project manager, about making a series of conservation pieces. They were seeking outreach tools to help educate and inform fellow Iowans about the importance of soil and water.

Comito received a SWCD Initiatives grant from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and five additional videos are now available for use throughout the state.

Producing a film takes time and talent, and producing five films simul-

Key Points

- Through a conservation district initiative grant, five new videos are available.
- The videos are a tool to begin dialogue about the importance of soil and water.
- If you'd like to receive a copy to view, contact ILF by e-mail at ilf@iastate.edu.

taneously can be daunting. Comito served as executive producer for this project. She was surprised and pleased by how many people became involved with the endeavor.

"I'm amazed by the collaboration of all the ILF partners and how many people had a hand in the production," she says. "Much of the content is based on listening sessions we held throughout Iowa over the past two years with staff from various agencies and with farmers. Hopefully, these films will be used to start a dialogue among Iowans — farmers as well as non-farmers — to talk about our land and water use."

The videos can be shown individually or collectively. Each is approximately 7 minutes long. The viewer doesn't need to see one video to understand the next. All carry a specific, individual message.

The five new films will debut at the annual Conservation Districts of Iowa conference in Ames Nov. 19-20.

Rated 'two thumbs up'

In "Don't Call it Dirt: A Passion for Soil," viewers are asked to think about how soil is used and are offered ways in which everyone can improve soil quality and keep it where it belongs.

"The Work of Our Hands" discusses the relationship of societies and agriculture, historically and today. A quote from the video offers a glimpse:

"Humans have lived as both a species within the environment and as innovators in shaping the environment to suit their purposes. Some ancient cultures carefully protected their resources, while

SNAPSHOT: Capturing the conservation message with her camera, Jackie Comito headed the project that produced a series of five new videos.

FILMING: Wading through tall grass in a grassed waterway, Jackie Comito prepares to film on Rick Juchems' Floyd County farm as Rick and daughter Liz lead the way.

others were destructive or, at best, short-sighted in their behavior."

The "Water is Life" video reminds us how important clean water is to our bodies, communities and Earth.

"We All Have a Place in the Watershed" defines watersheds and how we interact within them. "Our watersheds provide water for drinking, agriculture production, irrigation and industry. Lakes and streams are settings for outdoor activities and recreation. Healthy watersheds provide food and shelter for a diversity of plants and animals," says Comito.

The fifth video, "A Culture of Conservation: Reclaiming Stewardship," highlights just a few Iowans working to achieve this goal. Jon Gisleson, Floyd County SWCD commissioner and an ILF conservationist, offers his view: "Everybody has a responsibility to be concerned about what's happening to our groundwater and our surface water. Everybody has a responsibility — whether you own land or not."

Original Iowa

The videos are exclusively Iowan; words, images, music and people. Video production is by Jon Anderson of Iowa State University Extension Marketing and Communications.

Comito served as head script writer



with contributions from Matt Helmers, ISU Extension water-quality engineer; Lois Wright Morton, ISU associate professor and Heartland Regional Water Initiative leader; and Jean McGuire Heartland Regional Water Initiative project coordinator, along with the entire ILF team.

The music in the videos was composed by Ann Staudt, a native Iowan originally from Floyd County. Staudt, along with the musical group Joyful Hearts, were inspired by the themes and images of Iowa presented in the videos. Staudt says she is happy to have the music, which reflects her rural upbringing, as a significant part of the video series.

Brown is communications specialist for the Iowa Learning Farm.



Get your own copies of the videos

THE new videos produced by the Iowa Learning Farm will be distributed to each Iowa Soil and Water Conservation District office, as well as to other offices around the state including the Natural Resources Conservation Service and ISU Extension, beginning in December. Educators and community leaders who want to get a copy can contact the ILF. Curriculum will be developed for middle and high schools, and community colleges for use in the classroom by fall 2009.

The ILF team hopes these videos will inspire dialogue and action by people to help preserve Iowa's vital resources for now and the future.

ILF is a partnership between the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, ISU Extension, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa NRCS, and Iowa Department of Natural Resources, in cooperation with Conservation Districts of Iowa and the Iowa Farm Bureau.

■ For information about the ILF project, visit www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf.

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