ANNUAL WORK PLAN

Polk Soil & Water
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

FY27

COMMISSIONERS
Chip Mathis
Lee Tesdell
Paul Gibbins
Mary Cory
Autumn Ogden

Staff
Jennifer Welch
Megan Fleming
Riley Bass
Alex Ludolph

"The goal of Polk SWCD is to protect water quality and conserve soil resources in Iowa."
polkswcdiowa.gov

POLK SWCD ANNUAL GOALS

Goal 1: Promote Good Stewardship of Soil & Water Resources

	Action Items	Goal	Assignees	Timeframe
a)	Continue to improve efficiency, keeping commission effective and efficient in its work.	Monthly	Comms.	Ongoing
b)	Promote soil health.	Ongoing	Staff	Ongoing
c)	Work to improve water quality.	Ongoing	Staff	Ongoing
d)	Support Urban Agriculture.	Ongoing	Staff	Ongoing
e)	Promote outdoor recreation activities that introduce and keep people in harmony with nature.	Ongoing	Staff	Ongoing

FY26 Achieved: 1 Agriculture field day event, social outreach on outdoor events, wetlands, and water quality practices.

Goal 2: Run Organized & Concise Polk SWCD Meetings

	Action Items	Goal	Assignees	Timeframe
a)	Promote use of Robert's Rules of Order between.	Ongoing	All	Ongoing
b)	Coordinate meeting agendas with SWCD staff.	Ongoing	Staff	Ongoing
c)	Plan to finish monthly meetings in two hours or less.	Monthly	Comms.	2h

FY26 Achieved: Effectively following Robert's Rules of Orders and conducting monthly meetings within the time range.

Goal 3: Encourage soil health preservation & building of Iowa topsoil by promotion erosion control, tillage reduction, cover cropping, & sustainable stewardship of urban and rural lands.

	Action Items	Goal	Assignees	Timeframe
a)	Use social media to plant seeds or facts about good soil health & history of Polk County Soils.	Ongoing	CA	Weekly
b)	Promote existing local soil health events & activities.	Ongoing	All	Ongoing
c)	Promote a range of ideas & solutions to prevent & correct soil loss issues in urban and rural landscapes.	Ongoing	Staff	Ongoing
d)	Educate residents on benefits of plant & crop diversity.	Ongoing	Staff	Ongoing
e)	Develop & distribute instructions for DIY projects (worm boxes, soil testing, raised garden beds).	Ongoing	Staff	Ongoing
f)	Support education projects in schools and FFA programs.	Ongoing	Staff	Ongoing
g)	Facilitate/sponsor/partner with organizations conducting soil health field days.	Annual	Staff	Ongoing
h)	Collaborate with education programming for students to show connections between soil health and water quality.	Ongoing	Staff	Ongoing
i)	Teach importance of holistic systems approaches that	Ongoing	Staff	Ongoing

promote local foods & diversified markets for farm products.

FY26 Achieved: Soil health & history shared monthly on socials. Boosting nearby soil health events, promoting soil and water quality practices for urban and rural residents. Staff participation in Envirothon, partner and district field days, collaboration with school programs.

Goal 4: Work for water quality that is suitable for human consumption and wildlife.

	Action Items	Goal	Assignees	Timeframe
a)	Promote & sponsor local events such as bike rides along Fourmile Creek Trail (Gay Lea Wilson trail) to learn about stormwater and other practices placed by Polk County & the City of Des Moines.	Ongoing	Staff	Ongoing
b)	Demonstrate what water conservation is and share good conservation habits (List of 5-10 things households can do, turn off faucets while brushing teeth, irrigating after dusk).	Ongoing	Staff	Ongoing
c)	Advertise watershed cleanup efforts and participate wen possible (Walnut Creek Cleanup in April).	1-2 Annual	Staff & Comms.	Ongoing
d)	Compile county wide edge-of-field inventory. How many saturated buffers & bioreactors do we have in the county?	Ongoing	WQI CILSP	Ongoing
e)	Recognize improved methods of urban and rural land use that preserve and conserve soil resources for future generations.	Ongoing	Staff	Ongoing
f)	Define water quality and provide access to water quality data for all citizens of Polk County.			
g)	Identify major water uses in Polk including data centers, irrigation, manufacturing, lawn watering, household.	Ongoing	Staff	Ongoing
h)	Data collection & information availability to improve awareness of soil & water quality and impact of community effort can have over time.			
i)	Sponsor a source that aggregates soil & water quality information.	1		

Achieved FY26: Promoting local events & conservation sites. Sharing and participating in cleanup efforts. Working on expanding edge of field practices and developing inventory, collecting soil productivity and water quality data through CILSP.

Goal 5: Supporting Urban Agricultural Projects

	Action Items	Goal	Assignees	Timeframe
a)	Support urban ag where possible. Edible fruit & nut trees, shrubs, honeybees, backyard chickens.	Ongoing	Staff	Ongoing
b)	Support converting lawns to gardens for water quality and soil health.	Ongoing	Staff	Ongoing
c)	Promote urban agriculture soil health.	Ongoing	Staff	Ongoing

Achieved: Promoting practices and ideas on socials that can apply to both rural and urban farming.

Addendum

- **Roberts Rules of Order**: https://robertsrules.com/

Polk SWCD Data Collection & Information Resources

1. **Publish Polk Soil Erosion Estimates**
    a. Estimate tons of soil erosion from wind and water.
    b. How many acres of full-width tillage do we have?
    c. How many acres of conservation tillage do we have?
    d. How many acres of highly erodible farmland do we have?
    e. How much development land do we have?
    f. How many acres of land are lost to urbanization/suburbanization each year?
2. **Cover Crop Inventory**
    a. How many acres of cover crops do we have?
    b. How many acres are seeded each year and how many are on soybean acres?
    c. Are cover crop acres increasing, staying steady, declining?
3. **What happens to our storm water in Polk?**
    a. How much stormwater do we generate?
    b. Does it flow directly into Des Moines & Raccoon Rivers?
    c. How much sewage water do we generate and what happens to that water?
    d. In flooding situations, how much stormwater and sewage water converge?
4. **Water use data collection in Polk**
    a. Data centers that use water: 2-7% consumption (6/18/25 KCCI Report)
    b. How much do they use in our county?
    c. Do they recycle the water in some way?
    d. Do they access deep, ancient aquifers or shallow water?
    e. Agriculture: how much irrigation is there?
    f. Industry: which industries use water/how much?
5. **Data Resources to share with the public:**
    a. Explore the potential uses of gray water waterconservationsummit.com/unveiling-the-potential-of-graywater-a-sustainable-solution-for-water-conservation
    b. IA Environmental Council Water Quality Information: polkcountyiowa.gov/sp/conservation/water-quality
    c. Polk County Conservation: polkcountyiowa.gov/sp/conservation/water-quality
    d. Iowa Water Quality Info System: https://iwqis.iowawis.org/
    e. USGS data: waterdata.usgs.gov/monitoring-location/05485640/#dataTypeId=continuous-000650&period=P7D&showMedian=false&period=P7D&showMedian=true
    f. Municipal water system use – Central IA Water Works: https://www.ciww.gov/

g. CISWRA Water Report Information: polkcountyiowa.gov/board-of-supervisors/board-of-supervisors-news-and-press-releases/polk-county-launches-central-iowa-source-water-research-assessment/
h. CISWRA 2025: polkcountyiowa.gov/public-works/water-resources/polk-county-water-quality-initiatives/