Sustainable agriculture and wildlife: a multi-organizational field day

James L. Pease
Iowa State University, jlpease@iastate.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/leopold_grantreports

Part of the Agricultural Education Commons

Recommended Citation
Pease, James L., "Sustainable agriculture and wildlife: a multi-organizational field day" (1994). Leopold Center Completed Grant Reports. 54.
http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/leopold_grantreports/54

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Leopold Center Completed Grant Reports by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
Sustainable agriculture and wildlife: a multi-organizational field day

Abstract
In 1989 Iowa State University Extension hosted the first "Farming with wildlife: a land management field day" at the Iowa 4-H Education and Natural Resources Center near Madrid, Iowa. The event was considered very successful in terms of interagency and inter-organizational cooperation. The 230 attendees from six states consisted of farmers; farm managers; rural, suburban, and urban land owners; conservation agency and conservation organization personnel; high school vocational agriculture students and their instructors; and college and university professors and staff.

Keywords
Animal ecology, Wildlife and recreation

Disciplines
Agricultural Education

This article is available at Iowa State University Digital Repository: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/leopold_grantreports/54
Sustainable agriculture and wildlife: a multi-organizational field day

Background
In 1989 Iowa State University Extension hosted the first “Farming with wildlife: a land management field day” at the Iowa 4-H Education and Natural Resources Center near Madrid, Iowa. The event was considered very successful in terms of interagency and inter-organizational cooperation. The 230 attendees from six states consisted of farmers; farm managers; rural, suburban, and urban land owners; conservation agency and conservation organization personnel; high school vocational agriculture students and their instructors; and college and university professors and staff.

The event featured tours, how-to seminars, demonstrations, exhibits, and take-home handouts. Presenters included people from six different agencies and 12 additional groups; the Leopold Center participated as an exhibitor. Media coverage and financial support from other organizations were cited as contributing largely to the event’s success. Evaluation comments from the 1989 event suggested that it be repeated yearly, every two years, or every three years.

Since 1989, the agricultural and non-agricultural land of the 4-H Center has improved as a result of management that was funded in part by a Low Input Sustainable Agriculture/Agriculture in Concert with the Environment grant to Practical Farmers of Iowa. Staff from PFI and the Leopold Center cooperated with 4-H Center staff to incorporate some of the practices that were emerging from Leopold Center-funded research. A ridge-till demonstration area, a strip-intercropping demonstration field, a small rotational grazing pasture, and pest detection practices were begun at the 4-H Center in spring 1992; these augmented the filter strips, timber management, food and habitat plots, constructed wetland and pond, alternative roadside vegetation management, and backyard habitat practices already in place there. These practices demonstrate the value of alternative land management practices for wildlife. In addition, interpretive signage at these demonstration areas was funded by the Research Enhancement and Protection Act’s conservation education program in 1992.

Educational design
The goal of this 1992-1993 project was to expand the concept of the 1989 field day described above; investigators thus planned a field day that would address the interaction of various environmental factors (especially wildlife) with sustainable agriculture. The project set the following objectives:
• to demonstrate to farmers and other land managers the results of sustainable agriculture research,
• to demonstrate to farmers and other land managers how wildlife and agriculture can co-exist, and
• to educate farmers and other land managers about specific sustainable agriculture techniques that they could transfer to their own operations.

The planning committee included ISU Extension personnel, educators, farm management representatives, and representatives from various other organizations including the Leopold Center. Publicity efforts included distribution of posters, brochures, news releases, and newsletter and magazine articles. The field day was scheduled for September 8, 1993, because it preceded harvest time; while the date was less than optimal in some respects, it posed the least conflict overall with other activities already scheduled for the fall.

Principal investigator
James L. Pease
Animal Ecology
Iowa State University

Budget
$7,920 for one year
Field day attendees learn that making an upland area valuable as wildlife habitat requires plantings that provide food and shelter throughout the year.

The field day consisted of one overview tour in the morning and another in the afternoon. This tour included the following 11 stops: prairie restoration and management, roadside management, wetland restoration, wildlife area establishment, windbreaks, ponds, rotational grazing, ridge-till demonstration fields, a strip-intercropping demonstration area, filter strip demonstration areas, and unconventionally constructed soil saving structures. A summary description was provided at each stop. Participants were transported from site to site in “people carriers” or hay wagons. Following the overview tour, participants could return to a site for more in-depth demonstration/discussion lasting approximately 45 minutes. Three in-depth sessions were held concurrently during the course of the day.

In addition, nearly 30 posters and exhibits, staffed by participating organizations and researchers, were set up in a shelter on the 4-H Center grounds; more than half of these posters and exhibits featured projects sponsored by the Leopold Center. Participants could interact with these exhibitors following their overview tour or during the lunch period.

Investigators had also explored the possibility of planning special activities for high school students and their teachers; however, logistical limitations required that these attendees be integrated into the regular sessions. All participants received a packet of take-home materials; these materials were selected for their usefulness in helping participants to put wildlife-friendly sustainable agriculture practices into place on their own land.

Results and impact

Results: Although this event had to be scheduled during a week that happened to feature similar, possibly competing events, some 260 persons attended. They included farm managers (15%); conservation agency personnel (Soil Conservation Service, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, County Conservation Boards: 11%); graduate students (9%); university professors and administrators (8%); high school students (38%); and teachers, agribusiness representatives, and others (19%). Attendance was considered very good given the variety of agriculture education events that took place in central Iowa during that week.

In a follow-up evaluation, the planning committee arrived at these conclusions and recommendations:

1. If held again in the fall, the field day should be scheduled either one week earlier or later to avoid Labor Day and other conflicts that may limit turnout;
(2) June should be considered to avoid conflicting with other field days; however, it would likely preclude school groups from attending;

(3) This topic constitutes a unique niche—the connection between agriculture and wildlife—that is not being filled by other activities or events;

(4) The field day should be offered either every two or every three years, but not annually;

(5) The idea of conducting special, separate programs for youth should be explored further for future field days;

(6) An attempt to "target" specific audiences should be considered;

(7) Exhibits and posters were an important component of the event—they should be continued;

(8) Publicity, while adequate, can be improved by earlier announcements and broader, more intensive targeting of different public relations groups; and

(9) Organizers should consider hiring a professional caterer to provide the lunch and charging a small fee for the field day if necessary.

**Impact:** Participants verbally expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the program. Organizers also evaluated the event more formally by various methods:

(1) Every participant was asked to complete a standard Extension program evaluation at the end of the workshop; response via this form was low.

(2) A sample of 54 participants was chosen from among the farmers, land owners, and youth attending (because these individuals were considered more likely to implement practices); this group was mailed a follow-up evaluation a month after the event (see Fig. 1). Non-respondents received another mailing in April 1993. Results indicated that the pond management, woodland management, and prairie management sessions were attended by over one-third of this sample group. The least popular sessions included the buffer strips (likely because this tour site was furthest away from other sites) and the ridge-till site (probably because it was

**Posters and exhibits on display at the field day included:**

- Sustainable tree-shrub-grass buffer strips
- Biological control of musk thistle
- Renovation of established switchgrass
- Rotational grazing systems
- Fall planted spring oats as a cover crop
- Influence of native roadside plants on biological control of Iowa crop pests
- Contour strip-cropping
- Bird use of roadside habitats
- Bird use of restored wetlands
- Vegetative filter strips
- Strip intercropping
- Willow stream bank planting for erosion control
- Agricultural pesticides and wildlife
- Practical Farmers of Iowa
- Wetland Reserve Program (Soil Conservation Service)
- Planning for the end of CRP—Adams Co. grazing project
- *Successful Farming* magazine
- Aquaculture
- Iowa Prairie Network
- "Iowans Living with Nature" (display by Leopold Center central educational delivery team)
- Pheasants Forever
- Iowa 4-H Foundation
- "The Living Soil" (curriculum by the ISU Agricultural Education Department)
- Ducks Unlimited
- Hertz Farm Management
- Walnut Creek National Wildlife Refuge
- Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture

*This field day participant watches a video on multipurpose riparian buffer strips (see p. 21 of this volume). This poster was one of more than two dozen displays featured at the event (see list above).*
For more information contact J. Pease, Animal Ecology, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, 50011, (515) 294-7429.

near, and was thus somewhat assimilated into, the other residue management presentations/sites). Over 12% of the sample planned to implement rotational grazing and new woodlot management ideas learned at the field day.

(3) A spot check of some participants via telephone during summer 1993 indicated that few new practices were being implemented due to the heavy rains of that growing season.

This field day filled a unique niche in educating people about sustainable agriculture by making the connection between sustainable farming techniques and the production of wildlife and fish species, both game and non-game. Groups from Wisconsin, Nebraska, and Minnesota have since contacted the investigator for information presented at this field day that would assist them in planning similar educational events in their own locales.

The follow-up evaluation revealed a clear intention on the part of a significant portion of the participants to implement the practices suggested at the field day. Others, particularly students, who may not implement specific practices immediately, gained an understanding that sustainable agriculture involves not only crop production techniques but the survival of the whole system of nature that supports crop production.

Cosponsors of this event included Practical Farmers of Iowa, the Soil Conservation Service, Successful Farming magazine, Hertz Farm Management, and the Iowa 4-H Foundation. In addition, the Iowa DNR, County Conservation Boards, Premier Fence Systems, the National Soil Tilth Laboratory (USDA-ARS), and private individuals contributed by making presentations. This field day represented a concerted effort to promote the conservation ethic espoused by Aldo Leopold, for whom the Center is named.