

# WHAT ARE DRAINAGE DISTRICTS AND LEVEE DISTRICTS?



**D**istricts are locally organized lands established to provide an outlet, or bring an outlet nearer to those lands, for purposes of drainage or to relieve and protect those lands from flooding and damage by erosion. District improvements usually consist of subsurface drains, open ditches and levee embankments. Drainage and levee districts are authorized by laws contained in Chapter 468 of the Code of Iowa. There are more than 3000 districts in Iowa. Most are concentrated in north central Iowa and in the floodplains of Iowa's border rivers.

## IDDA: IOWA DRAINAGE DISTRICT ASSOCIATION

### PURPOSE

It is the purpose of the Iowa Drainage District Association to promote the benefits of drainage districts and levee districts and to safeguard the rights and privileges of established drainage and levee districts as provided in the code of Iowa.

### MEMBERSHIP

Any drainage district, levee district, individual, business, corporation, firm, manufacturer or association who subscribes to the purposes and basic policies of the association, may become a member.

### ACTIVITIES

Monitor state and federal legislation to help drainage district trustees and county boards of supervisors keep informed of pending legislation affecting drainage districts. Maintain a grass roots network to inform elected officials of the concerns of drainage districts. Work with various governmental agencies to insure their rules and regulations do not adversely effect drainage districts and levee districts. Administer a Mutual Protection Fund to assist landowners and districts in legal and administrative appeal cases concerning issues of importance to drainage districts and levee districts. For more information about IDDA contact your County Auditors office

Public Information About:

## Drainage and Levee Districts



## IN THE STATE OF IOWA

- ◆ What they are? (What they do.)
- ◆ How to request repairs or improvements
- ◆ Who pays and how
- ◆ The benefits they bring

*Compliments of the Iowa  
Drainage District Association*



# Benefits of Drainage and Levee Districts

*Successful drainage improvements perform in an inconspicuous manner. Usually buried out of sight and functioning noiselessly, they attract little attention, so that, it is difficult for the present generation of Americans to visualize the original condition of large areas of what is now our most productive land.*

*Excerpt from  
"Des Moines River Basin Study-Drainage Report"  
prepared by USDA SCS 1983*

## WHY DO DRAINAGE DISTRICTS AND LEVEE DISTRICTS EXIST?

Natural drainage outlets are not always available or accessible for all lands in a particular watershed. Use of a natural outlet that is sufficient in capacity and depth may require the extension of that outlet across one or more landowners. Other landowners may benefit from such an extension. Similarly, a system of levees is often required to protect land from flooding. Districts provide an organized means to construct and maintain adequate outlets and levees for the benefit of all lands capable of using the common outlet facility.



*Levee - Little Sioux River  
shown at right*



## WHO PAYS FOR DRAINAGE AND LEVEE DISTRICTS?

Only those lands within the boundaries of an established district are assessed for the construction, maintenance and repair of district facilities. Assessments are based on relative benefits and may be spread over several years. Districts are administered by either elected Trustees or County Boards of Supervisors acting as Trustees.

## WHERE ARE DRAINAGE DISTRICTS AND LEVEE DISTRICTS LOCATED?

District records are kept by the County Auditor. In most cases either the County Auditor's office or County Engineer's office will be able to help determine if your land is within a District.

## HOW ARE DISTRICT DRAIN TILE, OPEN DITCHES, LEVEES AND ETC. REPAIRED OR IMPROVED?

Contact your County Auditor for assistance. Work is usually initiated by petition from landowners. Trustees and supervisors investigate requests and administer repair proceedings. Iowa law requires that district drainage facilities be maintained to original efficiency and capacity. The law also allows for the construction of improvements to a district.

## CAN NEW DISTRICTS BE ESTABLISHED?

Yes, new drainage or levee districts can be established. For more information contact your County Auditor, trustee, or county supervisor. There are also several Iowa attorneys who are experienced in drainage law, who could assist you.

## GOOD DRAINAGE...

- ... increases crop yields
- ... aerates the soil and allows an environment conducive to plant root development.
- ... can reduce runoff and downstream flooding, by improving soil permeability and by creating a reservoir within the soil.
- ... reduces crop loss due to drowning
- ... increases the number of days available for plant growth and field operations.
- ... facilitates no-till and conservation till methods.
- ... increases land values.
- ... promotes energy-conserving, efficient farming practices.
- ... reduces pressures to bring into production additional wetland and land now pasture or timber.
- ... reduces road maintenance