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Project aims to improve, preserve Big Creek Lake

By Whitney Sager

Big Creek Lake is shrinking, and those who live on or own land within the watershed can help.

For the past two decades, the man-made lake has been decreasing in volume. The decrease is being caused by sedimentation as soil erodes off sur-

rounding land and enters streams and other water sources that feed into the lake. When the lake was constructed in 1972, it was estimated to be just less than 16,000 acre-feet in volume. A study conducted in 1993 showed the lake's volume had shrunk to 15,659 acre-feet. In 2006, a similar study was

conducted that showed the lake had lost an additional 1,086 acre-feet, falling to 14,573 acre-feet, according to information published in the January 2013 Big Creek Advisor newsletter.

Zach DeYoung, watershed coordinator with the Polk Soil & Water Conservation District, said the main cause of the sedimentation is stream bank erosion. Also contributing to the sedimentation is erosion caused by water that flows over land and picks up particles as it goes, depositing them into water sources that feed into Big Creek. He said some of the best agricultural soils are sitting at the bottom of the lake.

After an initial stream and water assessment was conducted in 2008, officials with the Boone and Polk Soil & Water Conservation districts decided actions needed to be taken in order to save the lake and improve its water quality.

"We want to jump on it now while we still can and get things done," DeYoung said.

Part of their efforts to maintain the lake is to encourage landowners to implement conservation practices in their fields, such as grassed waterways, sediment basins, stream bank stabilization or terraces. Cost-share funding is available, thanks to grants the districts applied for, to lessen the financial impact any implemented practices have on landowners. DeYoung said the cost-share rates range from 75-90 percent.

"This is a really good opportunity to get things installed that need to be done

BIG CREEK

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Local women to attend MFH conference

By Marlys Barker and Whitney Sager

Four Story County-area women are among a select group of women who have been recognized for their contributions to agriculture and the communities in which they live. Some of these women will gather with other women from around the state at the 85th anniversary of Iowa Master Farmer Homemakers (MFH), which will take place Saturday, April 13, at the Gateway Hotel and Conference Center in Ames.

Mary deBaca of Huxley is one of those four area women who are MFH members. DeBaca has been a member since 1989, though in recent years has become less active in the organization. Others include Shirley Pilgrim of Nevada, a member since 1995; Esther Frandsen of Roland, a member since 1992; and Evelyn Cook of New Providence, a member since 1993.

MFH was founded in 1928 and is sponsored by Wallace's Farmer. DeBaca said members of the organization are selected by a committee after they have been nominated and information is submitted regarding their involvement in agriculture and the community. DeBaca played a role in Pilgrim's nomination to the organization.

"Many (MFH members) are involved in their church or youth organizations, in addition to having a fairly notable agricultural enterprise," deBaca said.

For many years, deBaca and her husband had a cow-calf operation in the Huxley area. They also published a semi-technical beef newsletter, "The Ideal Beef Memo," that was sent to 26,000 readers around the U.S. and the world.

Pilgrim, who married a farmer and worked for 20 years with Story County Extension as a 4-H program assistant, said her farm-centered background probably earned her membership. And she loves being a part of something that stands for what she believes in.

"Master Farm Homemakers recognizes the things that you have done as a farm wife to not only help on the farm, but in your community and beyond," she said. "Their purpose, their mission, is one that benefits the nation."

That purpose and mission, Pilgrim said, is one that promotes the values which she and many others hold dear – farm life, family life, children and community-mindedness through volunteerism. "It's a nice recognition for things that you have felt are important in your life."

When the Iowa group gathers, usually once in the spring and once in the fall, Pilgrim said, "It's exciting to meet with women from around the world that have the same goals you do."

The fall meeting, she said, is always nice because it recognizes new incoming members of MFH and their families. "Wallace's Farmer goes out and takes pictures and does a DVD to show each family. It's a nice program."

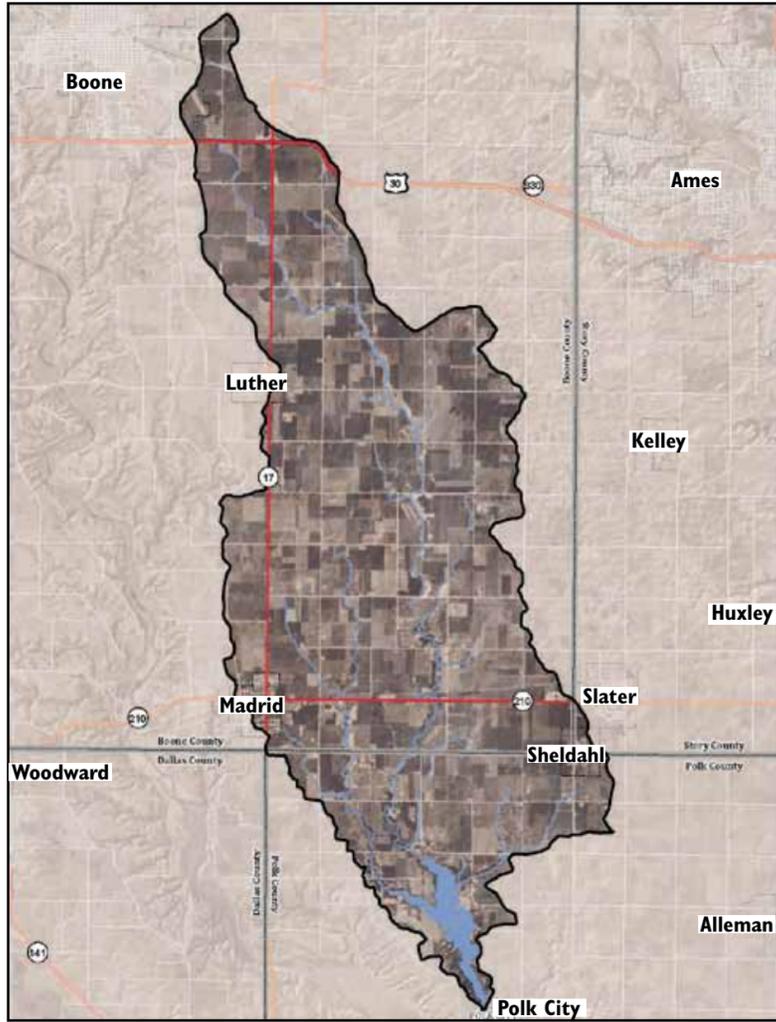
When the group gathers this April, Pilgrim said a meeting will take place from 10-11:30 a.m., followed by lunch and then a special "Women Walk the World" event will take place. "We will walk the 1.3-mile paved trail next to the Gateway Center to benefit Pennies for Friendship," she said. Pennies for Friendship is a program of the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW).

Pennies for Friendship supports grants and projects that help in rural areas throughout many Third World countries. ACWW has helped fund beekeeping in Botswana, palm oil production in Ghana, sunflower production in Cameroon, goat raising in Haiti and other similar initiatives.

Those attending this spring's MFH gathering will also get to meet special guest Beverly Earnhart of Indianapolis. She is the ACWW USA area president.

A history of MFH tells that in 1928, five Iowa farm

MFH CONFERENCE *please see page A7*



Map courtesy of Boone and Polk Soil & Water Conservation districts

The Big Creek Lake Watershed extends from east of Boone south to Big Creek State Park on the north side of Polk City. The watershed is 47,665 acres and 24 miles long. Efforts are being made to reduce the amount of sediment that enters water sources that feed into the lake, causing the lake's volume to decrease.



Submitted photos

Before the grade stabilization structure, right, was installed last summer, the left picture shows where water flowed out of the field. If left alone, the area would have continued to erode and cause sediment to leave the field and enter nearby water sources that feed into Big Creek Lake. Water from overland runoff and underground tile systems will run through the structure, preventing erosion and sediment loss from occurring.

Our Family Veterinary Clinic opens in Maxwell

Submitted article

Sarah Myers, DVM, has opened a new veterinary clinic in Maxwell. Our Family Veterinary Clinic LLC is located at 401 Main St. in Maxwell.

She is originally from Cedar Rapids. She attended veterinary school at Iowa State University and graduated with a minor in microbiology. Sarah and her husband have three beautiful children, a son and two daughters, that keep them very busy.

When asked why she became a vet, Sarah said that growing up, she was always that kid who brought the stray animals home. She loves helping animals and people, so she pursued vet school.

She cares for both large and small animals. Sarah said, "My general rule is I will

look at anything once, and if I can't take care of it or help it, I will call a mentor and ask their opinion. That's what's so wonderful about this profession; we are lots of people who all have the same goal - helping animals."

A grand opening for the clinic will be held April 13, from 1-3 p.m. The clinic's hours are as follows: Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays, from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Tuesdays, from 9 a.m. – 7 p.m.; Wednesdays and Saturdays by appointment only. The clinic is closed Sundays.

A website will be coming in the near future, but you can contact Our Family Veterinary Clinic at 515-387-8685, or check them out on Facebook.



Submitted photo

Veterinarian Sarah Myers recently opened Our Family Veterinary Clinic LLC in Maxwell. She is pictured with one of her patients, Chloe the basset hound.

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