

Letâ€™s ditch the poor management

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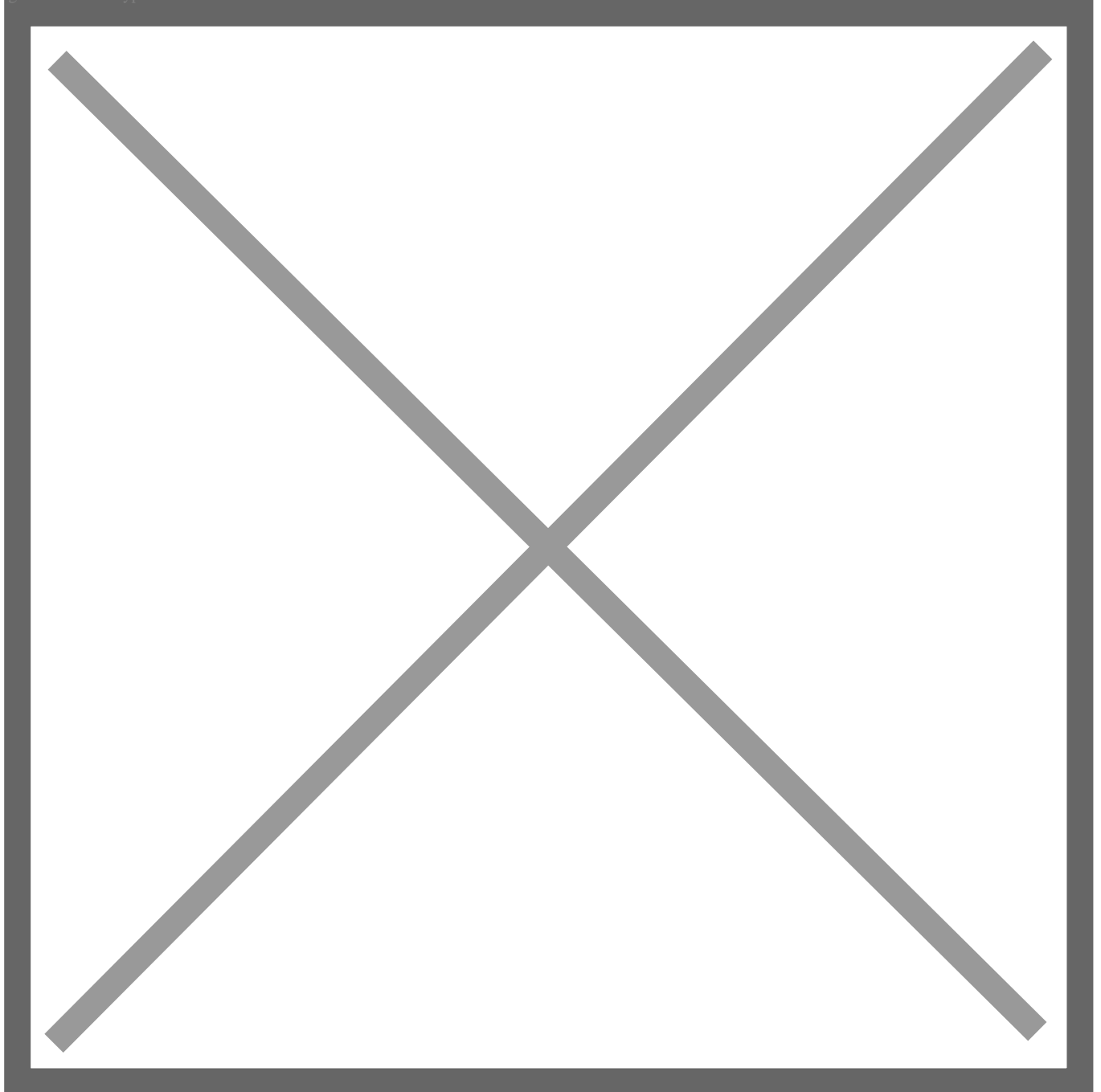
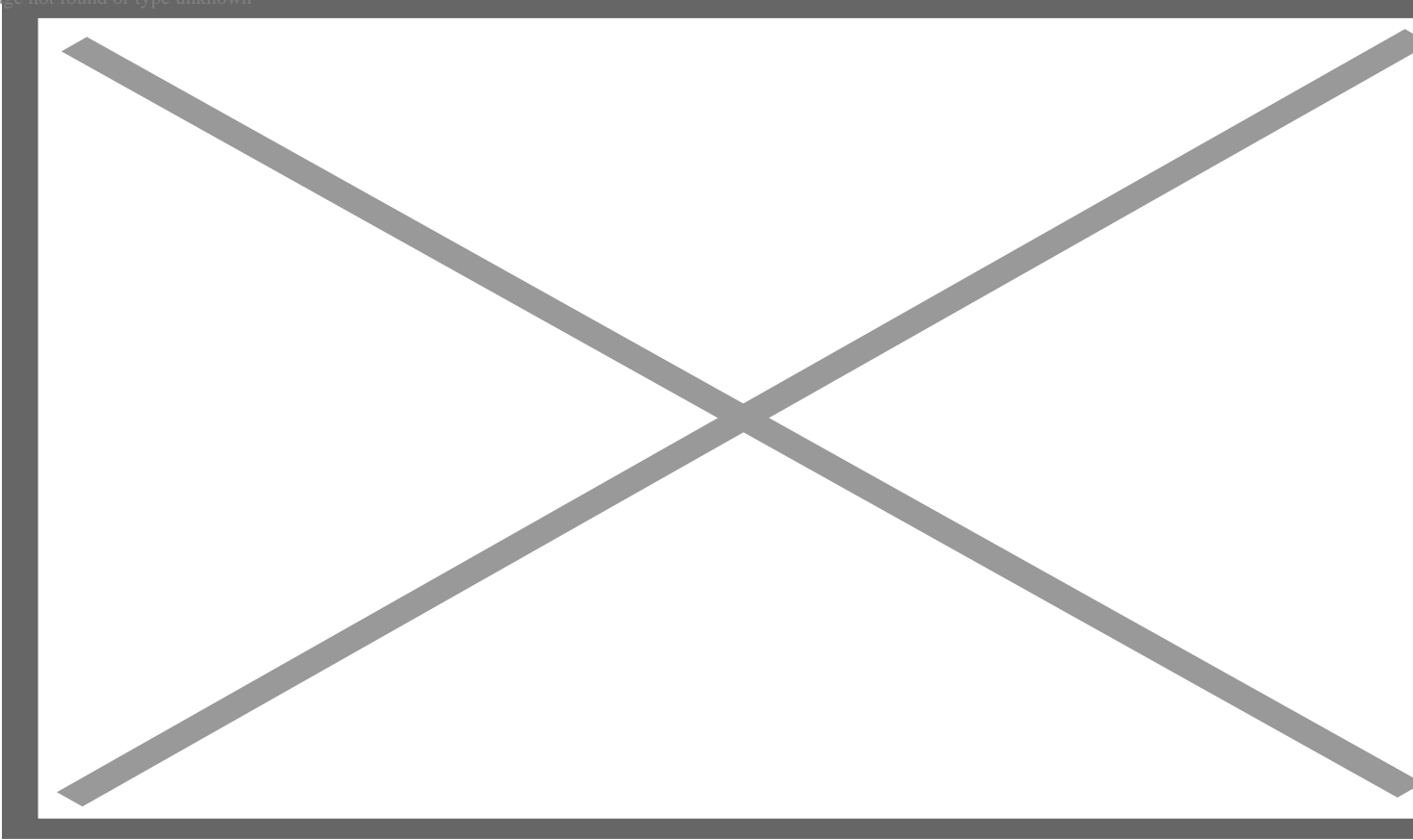


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We talk with land owners on a daily basis about good stewardship on Iowa farmland. With a wide variety of farm knowledge and background, are we really all on the same page when it comes to what to look for when walking the land?

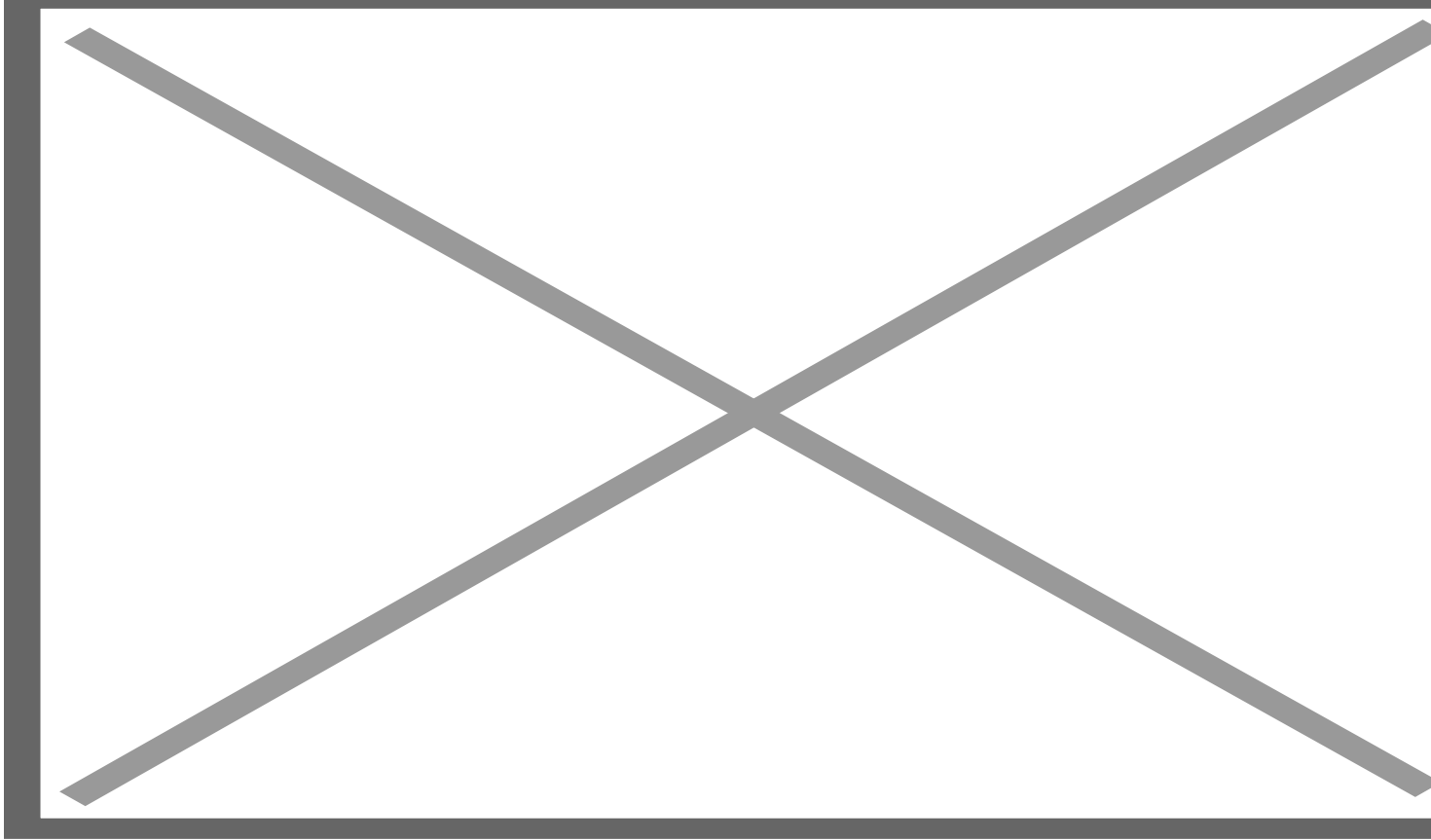
As a land owner, do you know what to look for on your farm when it comes to good stewardship practices? More importantly, why you should be asking for those practices?

As Land Managers we see the good, the bad and the ugly traveling across the state. The above photo is a good representation of the worst case scenario to find on a farm.

This photo is a prime example of herbicide application that overlapped the edge of the drainage ditch boundary causing the grass buffer to die off. And if not reestablished, the bank will eventually slough off and the ditch will have to be dredged out and rebuilt. This is a pricey repair as well as lost farm value when that rich Iowa topsoil is in the ditch versus in the farm field.

With no established grass in place, the water running off the field also has zero filtering opportunity before entering the ditch and our water systems. Instead of fertilizing the corn crop, the chemicals applied on the perimeter of this field are funneled directly into the ditch.

From a pure economic standpoint, those outside rows of corn also have very little chance of survival much less producing a viable harvestable ear. This scenario is a lose-lose for conservation and production.



Just across the road, the drainage ditch has a solid established grass edge that maintains the integrity and purpose of the ditch. Soil is held in place and the water that enters the ditch will flow to its intended destination without taking the topsoil and excess nutrients with it.

Why does it pay for the farmer to maintain that grass buffer? Maximizing every acre of productive land is vital to return on investment (ROI), but pushing the limits of the field boundaries is not the way to maximize ROI. Even by simply bumping the outside row over one row (typically 30 inches) the very edge of the grass ditch can be maintained. On a square 80 acre field, that equates to less than a quarter of an acre less that is planted, in turn to save the road bank.

If the farmer simply planted a quarter of an acre less in this scenario, crop input expenses would be saved and average field yield would likely not be affected. From the conservation perspective, the integrity of the ditch would be maintained to keep topsoil in the field and water runoff filtered before entering the ditch.

In the first photo, the land owner should work with his/her farmer to reseed the bank of the ditch as well as a grass strip along the perimeter of the field. Peoples Company Land Managers can address conservation issues like this and more.

With the tools available, we can identify where erosion is occurring and overlap this information with field profitability maps to addresses and achieve economic and environment performance on each farm.

Please contact Peoples Company today if you would like to speak with a Land Manager about maximizing production and protecting sensitive acres on your farm.