

CONSERVATION *Showcase*



Windbreaks for Wildlife Lead to Wellness

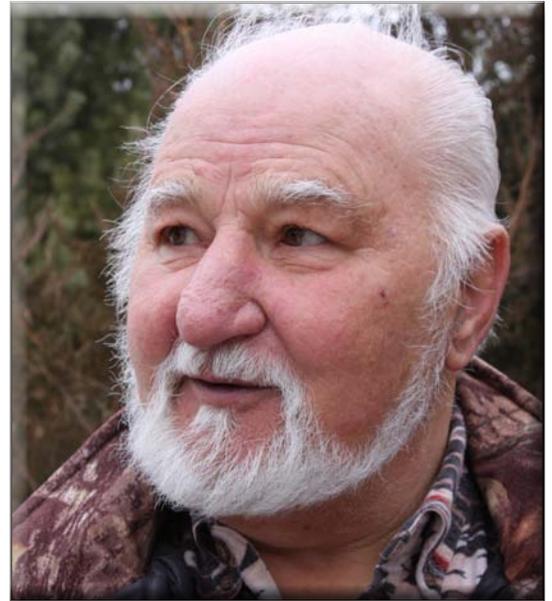
Conservation improvements on Mel Pacovsky's farms are giving him an unexpected benefit: better health. Pacovsky, 71, calls his windbreaks, Christmas trees, black walnuts and other conservation practices his wellness centers.

"My land is my wellness center. Get me into a mall and I hurt," said Pacovsky. "I can walk around my land and rest and relax. I can walk my woods and enjoy myself. I'd rather be in my woods."

The New Hampton man and his son, Lynn, own rather large "wellness centers"; five farms totaling 650 acres. Pacovsky says he has 150 acres of trees and his son row crops 250 acres. "I exercise in the woodlands at least every other day; oftentimes on the way home from work," he said.

NRCS District Conservationist Scott Switzer and IDALS State Technician John Christoph check a white pine in one of farmer Mel Pacovsky's wind breaks.

Scott Switzer, a district conservationist with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), says Pacovsky (pronounced pa TOO ski) is following a complete conservation plan for each farm. "I've



Mel Pacovsky

been working with Mel for 18 years. Our office files go back to the 1950s. He believes in conservation and it shows," Switzer said.

Pacovsky's conservation practices extend well beyond his farmland. He is an Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) facilities engineer for northeastern Iowa. Pacovsky says his work area spans from the Mississippi River to Algona and he is responsible for building everything from porta-potties to rehabilitating entire lakes.

He has been a State of Iowa employee for 53 years and with the DNR the last 26 years.

"As a DNR engineer, Pacovsky is not a typical NRCS client," said Switzer, "but the results are the same. Mel comes in two or three times a year to review his conservation plans and talk about programs and potential program eligibilities. We look at what he



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has, what he wants to do to improve his land and we offer suggestions. If there is a need, we update his conservation plan and we start work to meet those needs.”

Pacovsky says he purchased his first farm in 1959 and added four more over the years. He says he has a soft spot for birds and animals and he helps wildlife by building wetlands, planting trees, windbreaks and enrolling land in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

He also wants to preserve the past. One of his farms includes 19 undisturbed Indian burial mounds and Pacovsky says he wants them to stay that way.

He says he works closely with Switzer and John Christoph, state technician with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS), on his conservation plans, but they seem to change. “I’ve got all kinds of daydreams,” he said. “NRCS works with me on conservation plan improvements; they approve the practice, make sure it’s within their guidelines and provide financial assistance when possible.”

The farmer/engineer adds, “We want to put in more windbreaks and develop an 18-acre wetland. I want more food plots. In fact, I don’t think we’ll ever be done.”

“That’s fine,” said Switzer. “As good as any plan is, there is always room for improvement; even a conservation plan for a man like Mel Pacovsky.”

Pacovsky Conservation Practices

Field Windbreaks	65.6 acres
Riparian Buffers	27.3 acres
Planted to trees/shrubs	
Wildlife Habitat	14.9 acres
Planted to grass/trees/shrubs	
Grassed Filter Strips	37.5 acres
Shallow Water Ponds (2)	1.5
(For wildlife)	
Grassed Waterways	0.6 acres
(For erosion control)	

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