



I am Roger Erickson.
I am a conservationist.

Water Quality Top Priority at Four Star Dairy

Wisconsin NRCS Public Affairs Staff

Four Star Dairy, located in Clark County, Wis. is a family affair. Roger Erickson grew up on the dairy farm his grandfather started. Roger works with his sons, farm co-owners, and his parents, to manage the operation. The Erickson family has partnered with the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) since the early 1980's. Erickson applied and was accepted into the NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), encouraging producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by undertaking additional conservation activities, and improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities.

The farm, located near Neillsville, is a sizable operation. The dairy milks 700 cows daily and

employs 14 workers who keep the farm running smoothly and tend to the animals and crops. An additional 700 heifers are housed at an adjacent acreage.

“CSP has allowed me to tailor conservation improvements to my farm that meet my resource concerns.”

- Roger Erickson, Dairy Farmer

Over the years, Four Star Dairy has implemented a long list of conservation and water quality practices to improve their land. In 2003, Erickson adopted nutrient and feed management practices along with implementing a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan. “NRCS gives us quite a few ideas and guidance, helping us make good decisions on the use of our land,” said Roger. “We have constructed and maintained many acres of grassed waterways on our 3,000 plus acres. We constructed lot

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runoff and filter strips along with abandoning several wells and an old manure storage structure.”

Clean water is one of the biggest concerns at Four Star Dairy. Roger strives to protect water quality and is active in ensuring water supply is not impaired for his property and surrounding farms, including wells they depend on daily to sustain their operation. Jane Reigel, NRCS District Conservationist in Clark County explains, “Roger is a forward thinking, dedicated farmer. He is always planning ahead, looking to make the right conservation improvements on his farm.”

Erickson’s decision in enrolling in CSP shows his willingness to adopt new practices that contribute to his farms viability and sustainability. “Roger decided to choose five CSP enhancements, which is fairly rare and progressive,” said Reigel. Erickson’s conservation priorities shine in choosing enhancements targeting air, water, and animal health. To address air concerns, Erickson updated and

The balance of good land management and livestock is important for a sustainable operation.



Jane Reigel (left), NRCS District Conservationist and Roger Erickson (right), work together to plan Conservation Stewardship Program enhancements at Four Star Dairy.

enhanced their spraying system and uses a nitrification inhibitor on some areas of the farm. To address animals, Roger hays in a wildlife-friendly manner, leaving some standing grain, along with extending grass filters to provide nesting cover and further protect water quality. One of the most impressive enhancements Erickson implements is reducing

Conservation practices like these grass filter strips help improve water quality.



concentration of nutrients imported on the farm. This enhancement requires for manure to provide at least 50% of the Nitrogen, and 90% of the Phosphorus and Potassium. It also requires at least 75% of livestock feed to be grown on the farm. “This enhancement is key because the balance of livestock and land is critical for a sustainable operation.”

CSP works for farmers, like Erickson, to enhance their conservation activities on the farm. “CSP has allowed me to tailor conservation improvements to my farm that meet my resource concerns,” said Erickson.

Want to learn more about the Conservation Stewardship Program?

nrcs.usda.gov/farmbill

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