

CONSERVATION *Showcase*

Cropland to Grassland Conversion Helps Protect Lake Ontario

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The Thomas farm, a family owned dairy located in Potter County, Pennsylvania, sits astride the headwaters of the Genesee River, a tributary of Lake Ontario.

The Thomas' wished to implement a grazing system in order to convert their farm to a grass feeding operation. In 2013, with technical and financial assistance from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), over 35,000 feet of fence; 7,500 feet of pipe; 2,200 feet of animal walkway; and 16 watering facilities were installed, and over 380 acres of dedicated cropland was converted to permanent grassland for pasture and hay production.

This conversion has resulted in a drastic reduction in fuel use, as well as reduced soil erosion, and pesticide and herbicide use, all of which were previously migrating to the Genesee headwaters from the Thomas farm. A new stream buffer that passes through the center of the farm also offers additional protection to the Genesee headwaters.

These reductions are contributing to ongoing improvements to the Great Lakes watershed that are still being realized.



The headquarters of the Thomas farm is visible on the center right, as is the new stream buffer passing through the center from left to right that protects the Genesee headwaters. All of the visible fields were previously used for crop production.

