

Dunn County Success from the Field

Drinking the Successes of Improved Water Quality

Background

Jason and Melissa Schutz own and operate a beef farm in tranquil Boyceville, Wisconsin. The farm is nestled in a peaceful valley with springs feeding Annis Creek, a class one cold water trout stream. In 2016, Melissa attended an informational meeting on a local initiative to improve the water quality in the Wilson and Annis Creek watersheds. Melissa's interest was sparked when hearing about opportunities to improve farm efficiency while improving water quality. Soon after, the Schutzes contacted the local NRCS office in Menomonie, Wisconsin, to discuss technical and financial assistance opportunities.

Program Successes

The Schutz's operation consists of 50 cow-calf pairs split between two locations, an upper pasture and lower pasture. The upper pasture utilizes a groundwater spring to fill a watering tank that animals drink out of year round. The excess water is collected by a tile and flows into an outlet pond. The outlet pond is where the lower pasture watered with continuous access. During the spring, summer, and fall, the animals utilized the pond for drinking and cooling. When temperatures dropped below freezing in the winter months, Jason broke the ice daily for the animals to drink. The continuous access to the headwaters of Annis Creek posed a water quality risk with the potential of excess nutrients and sediments entering surface waters.

The local NRCS office was able to offer Jason and Melissa technical and financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program to improve surface water quality. With careful planning to meet Jason and Melissa's objectives, the NRCS was able to capture the overflow from the upper pasture tank in a waterline, and install a new watering facility in the lower pasture, greatly improving the water quality. "This is an excellent project, simple, but very effective in improving the water quality within Annis Creek; the cattle have dry feet and manure is not being deposited in the stream," stated John Sippl, NRCS District Conservationist. Jason and Melissa's angus cattle are now drinking fresh spring water. During the early winter of 2017, Dunn County received a two week spell with temperatures not reaching zero. Jason was



Lower pasture watering area with continuous cattle access to the headwaters of Annis Creek.



The newly installed watering facility for the lower pasture with a constant flow of spring water. Notice the gravel surrounding the tank. This assists in stabilizing the area and improving the cattle access during times of high moisture.

happy to report "during the coldest weeks of December I didn't have to go out and chop ice for my cattle to drink." With the cattle now having fresh spring water to drink year round, Jason is spending more time with his wife and child.

