

CONSERVATION *Showcase*

Land Conservation Helps Improve Beef Cow Health on Frystak Farm - By Ain Welmon, District Conservationist, 2017

The James Frystak Beef Farm consists of more than 70 acres of hay and corn farm land in Forest Lake Township of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania. The Frystak family manages an angus beef herd that currently consists of 81 cows and 75 calves. The beef cattle are marketed and sold locally. An additional plot of about 260 acres is rented for hay land to feed their growing beef operation. Frystak has been farming since he was a boy (over 40 years ago) on his father Walt's Holstein Dairy Farm just down the road from his current farm. Walt Frystak had his first farm conservation plan written in 1984. In 2009, Frystak started to work with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) District Conservationist (DC) Ain Welmon, to see how NRCS might be able to help him and his farm. They worked together to develop a farm conservation plan which identified the natural resource concerns on the farm. Jim was dealing with resource concerns such as an inefficient manure storage system, poor land uniformity, and soil erosion. These resource concerns resulted in extra time spent in the field trying to productively grow his crops (hay and corn).

The farm conservation plan addressed the concerns and suggested solutions such as putting some of the land into the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), pasture management, rotational grazing, relocating a concrete barnyard, and installing a manure storage facility. Over the next seven years, Frystak applied for Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) for CREP buffers, the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Growing Greener Program with the Susquehanna Conservation District (SCD).



Hay is grown on 260 acres of land to feed the beef cows on the farm.

The CREP riparian buffers improved water quality in the streams and helped the environment. Through CREP, the Frystaks also received technical (i.e. engineering) assistance from NRCS and financial assistance from FSA to install watering facilities (water troughs), stream crossings, and hi-tensile fencing. The fence protected surrounding ponds, streams, and other sensitive areas from livestock. The installation of these soil and water conservation practices has made a significant difference in the beef cows' weight gains and overall health.

In 2011, received a Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contract that covered such enhancement practices as wildlife friendly harvesting of hay to let wildlife flush and escape, cropland annual payment, pasture annual payments, locally grown and marketed farm products, intensively managed rotational grazing and non-chemical livestock pest control.

In 2012, Frystak was interested in continuing improvements to his farm and applied for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding. Once he was offered a contract, Frystak proceeded to work with NRCS DC Ain Welmon to develop the EQIP contract for technical and financial assistance. He completed his Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) that year.



James Frystak looking over plans with District Conservationist, Ain Welmon.



Completed concrete barnyard with roofed shelter.

The implementation of his CNMP not only guided him to applying the right amount of nutrients (manure, lime, and fertilizer) but included recommendations for a concreted barnyard area and a waste storage location to store manure during the winter months when the cattle can-not be on pasture. In the summer of 2016, James's Growing Greener application with the Susquehanna Conservation District for a roofed concreted barnyard and waste storage facility was funded. Using technical assistance provided by NRCS and a private engineer, and financial assistance from the Susquehanna Conservation District the roofed heavy use area protection (concreted barnyard area) and roofed waste storage facility were installed during the autumn of 2016.



The installed conservation practices are a great success. They have eliminated the need to spread manure when the ground is frozen and improved water quality. Manure is spread when the pasture and crop plants are capable of fully using the nutrients.

With the assistance of the Susquehanna Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Frystak was able to identify resource concerns on his farm, as well as develop and implement a conservation plan that addressed the concerns. Frystak has reduced soil erosion on the crop fields using conservation crop rotations, no-till, and cover crops. He has also been able to conserve and better utilize nutrients on the farm through the implementation of the roofed heavy use area protection and a roofed waste storage facility. All of these practices have helped to keep clean water clean by eliminating the amount of sediment and nutrients in surface and ground water.

“I could not be happier with the technical assistance I received from NRCS. I would encourage anyone that wants to solve resource conservation concerns on their farm to contact their local NRCS office,” Frystak said.

