

CONSERVATION *Showcase*

Manure Storage Reduces Fertilizer Use for Dairy Farmer

Indiana County, PA

Zolocsik farms is a dairy operation in Indiana County, Pennsylvania, and is owned and operated by Mike Zolocsik and his son Andy. Prior to 2012, the Zolocsiks housed a group of older heifers in a 36' x 36' building that had insufficient space to feed and house the cattle. The cattle were allowed to exit the building where round bales were fed on a non-stabilized barnyard. Additionally, manure was stacked outside atop a steep sloped embankment above a tributary to Plum Creek. As Andy often said, "It's the worst area on the farm and it's the first thing people see." Mike and Andy were both concerned about visitor's first impressions and their animal's health because of the nutrient management issues and contacted their local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) center for assistance.

After applying for the USDA's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Zolocsiks were able to install a slurry store system in 2011 to store the manure from their 100 cow dairy. In 2012, they moved on to address the manure issues associated with one of their heifer barns. Mike and Andy wanted to provide a properly stabilized heavy use area to feed, house, and store the manure for their heifers. Due to space and topographic restrictions, a roofed heavy use area with associated manure storage area was constructed. A feeding pad was added on one side of the heavy use area for grain with head gates to handle the cattle and another feed pad on the other side for feeding forages. Stabilized access to the old heifer barn was non-existent so stabilized access roads were also installed for feeding and handling manure.



New, roofed heavy use area with manure storage alongside existent heifer barn.

This is the first year since the Zolocsiks have been in business that they will be able to store and apply manure according to their recently developed nutrient management plan. The slurry store structure has also allowed them to significantly reduce the amount of purchased fertilizer. Mike hopes to realize further fertilizer savings based on the improved storage of his heifer manure along with improved herd health of the heifers since the cattle will no longer be standing knee deep in mud and manure.



Access before



Access after



Access before



Access road after



Slurry Store Structure nearing completion