

CONSERVATION *Showcase*

Amish Farmer A Model for Conservation

Lancaster, PA

April 2013

Raymond King is a model conservationist who is enthusiastic about passing on what he has learned to other farmers, especially those within his plain sect community.

With the help of NRCS and partners, Raymond has implemented a variety of conservation practices on his dairy farm over the past few years that provide numerous environmental and operational benefits.

After seeing how no-till farming worked for other farmers in the area, he adopted the practice on his fields in addition to contour strips and a diversion. These practices help improve his soil health and reduce erosion by minimizing soil disturbance and directing runoff away from the fields.

Later, Raymond worked with NRCS and the Lancaster County Conservation District (LCCD) to develop and carry out a conservation plan to address stream protection, manure storage, barnyard runoff, and nutrient management. The variety of conservation practices were funded with help from USDA's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative (CBWI).

To protect the stream that runs through his pasture, in April 2012, a Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) technician helped him plan and install a stream crossing, streambank fencing, and a buffer of mixed tree and shrub planting, with shrubs near a road intersection for better visibility. These practices help improve water quality by limiting livestock access, filtering excess nutrients, and stabilizing stream banks to prevent erosion.

Raymond reports that he's glad that he got a certified Nutrient Management Plan, which was required with the new manure storage design, because that showed him he could save on nitrogen by applying only what the plants need for crop uptake, and placing it directly where the plants need it. Too much nitrogen can affect crop yields by harming plants; cause soil acidification and affect the life of soil organisms, including earth worms; and damage water quality and aquatic life. Because Raymond had been broadcasting nitrogen, he saw a significant decrease in his nitrogen costs since following the plan.

Raymond understands and appreciates the cost-saving and environmental benefits of these conservation practices. He has also enrolled in the Farmland Restoration and Preservation Program to prevent any future development on his land and is encouraging fellow farmers to develop a conservation plan.

Submitted by Wendy Coons, Soil Conservation Technician



Before (top) and After (bottom) buffer installed along stream.



Barnyard before construction.



Barnyard after construction.