

County Soil and Water Conservation Award

Lafayette County has a rich history of promoting conservation efforts for many years. Since 1977, the Land Conservation Department has recognized nearly 300 farmers, educators, business leaders and non-profit organizations for their part in improving the county's soil and water quality. These conservation leaders have modeled the key decision-making and conservation practice implementation necessary to achieve these outcomes.

This year's Conservation Farm of the Year is Stauffacher Highway Dairy Farms. Highway Dairy Farms, LLC implements best management practices, which meet the economic, environmental and social goals necessary for their dairy to remain viable. These best management practices include a series of targeted decisions and actions necessary for the improvement of soil and water quality.

Highway Dairy Farms, LLC maintains established field conservation practices from the past while adding new practices. Crop rotation, contour strip cropping and grazed pastures are conservation practices from decades ago that remain on the farm today. With the addition of precision Ag, no-till planters, nutrient management and cover crop adoption, the farm adds to the impact of practices from the past with targeted decision-making for improvement into the future. Grazed pasture is a land use practice the dairy continues to implement despite not utilizing the feed for the farm's own cattle. The farm's pasture has an economic return when rented to a local cow/calf operator. The pasture has an environmental return by reducing the risk of nutrient and soil loss through perennial grass vegetation and rotational grazing. The pasture also has a social return by increasing the diversity of farmland within the county.

Highway Dairy Farms, LLC collects and stores the manure nutrients produced within their milk production system. The manure is lab analyzed, measured and entered into a SNAP+ nutrient management plan to identify the precise application location, rate and timing. Fall seeded cover crops like winter cereal grains, tillage radish and legumes have many soil and water quality benefits. Cover crops aid with nutrient retention, enhance soil structure with living roots and protect the soil surface from erosion.

Adding conservation practices for the future with conservation practices from the past has proven to allow Highway Dairy Farms, LLC to remain economically, environmentally and socially viable in the dairy industry. Targeted decision-making and conservation practice implementation helps farmers meet soil and water quality goals. Contact Lafayette County Land Conservation, NRCS or Extension for further assistance with soil and water conservation planning. A video interview discussing these practices with Jay Stauffacher is coming soon to lafayetteagstewardship.org. -Josh Kamps, Extension-Lafayette County

Picture 1: Land managed with crop rotation, contour strips and grazed pasture



Picture 2:
Highway
Dairy
Farms

