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Master Conservationist Presentations 2008

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District A

Our first Master Conservationist award this evening goes to Curtis and Sandi Roth of Gordon, in the Panhandle, District A. Would Curtis and Sandi please come forward? When Roth decided to change his 2,030 dryland corn acres from a conventional to a no-till system in 1993, most of the information came from newsletters and magazines about experiences farther east. He began by adapting methods and equipment to the climate and soils of northwestern Nebraska. Today Curtis uses no-till exclusively and follows a rotation of winter and spring wheat, sunflowers, corn, alfalfa, and millet. This no-till system has allowed Roth to reduce the use of fertilizer 10 percent. He also uses less fuel and machinery. Since the Upper-Niobrara White-Natural-Resources District received a grant to promote no-till back in 2001, Curtis has been involved in various aspects of the no-till education program. The first annual NRD No-Till Field Day was held on the Roth farm and they hosted the event again in 2008. Congratulations to the Roth family.
District B, North-Central Nebraska (“Troester”)

Master Conservationist honors in north-central Nebraska, District-B, go to Dave and Sharyn Traster and their son, Aaron, who operate DT Farms, Inc. near O’Neill. The operation includes 4,960 acres for production of corn and soybeans and 515 acres designed for wildlife. The Trasters began conservation tillage in 1980 and conservation crop rotation in 1984. Traster began low pressure conversion of the irrigation system in 1978 and became a pioneer leader by installing drop-nozzle-heads back in 1979. He 'spoon feeds' nitrogen through center pivots to match nutrient uptake of the crop while minimizing leaching. Insects are managed by using chemigation. The family has enhanced wildlife by planting 28,552 trees and shrubs in pivot corners. By using lighter-weight tractors and implements, they have reduced soil compaction, minimized field traffic, and preserved soil structure. The Traster family received a Soil Stewardship Award from the Upper Elkhorn Natural Resources District. Congratulations to the Trasters!
**District C**, Northeast Nebraska

James and Jeanine Bliven of Dakota City are the Master Conservationists in District C, northeast Nebraska. Their 1,460-acre row-crop operation includes 1,220 acres of bottomland on the Missouri River, irrigated-land, and rented-out pasture land. He has applied a wide-variety of soil and water conservation techniques as well as wildlife habitat practices on various types of land use including 240 acres of highly-erodible land north of Newcastle in Dixon County. He has used no-till since 1990 and plants all soybeans into standing-corn stalk-residue in 15-inch rows with a split-row planter. An active promoter of many conservation practices and programs, Mr. Bliven is a proponent of wetland restoration in the historic Missouri River oxbow-area south of Dakota City. He encourages farmers to enroll wet, marginal crop land in the Wetland Reserve Program. Mr. Bliven has offered his tract as a site for interested landowners as well as for natural resources and education professionals to learn more about native plant restoration. Congratulations to the Blivens!
District D, South-Central Nebraska

Master Conservationist honors in District D, south-central Nebraska, goes to the Tecker Ranch, Inc. at Parks. Jon, Christy, and Si Tecker will receive the award. Their operation includes 300 cow/calf pairs as well as alpacas, llamas, and sheep. They have 7,300 acres of rangeland and 1500 acres of crop land, including 1400 dryland acres and 100 irrigated acres. The Teckers installed 32,000 linear feet of livestock-water-pipeline, five livestock tanks, and a new livestock well. Fence lines were established in the 1980s when the family implemented cross-fencing. They plant both winter wheat and rye on the 1,400 acres of dryland for spring grazing. The 100 acres of irrigated-crop-land is planted to cane and wheat. The cane is baled into round bales and used as winter feed for cattle. The Upper Republican Natural Resources District presented its 2007 Rangeland Award to the Tecker Ranch. Congratulations to the Tecker Family!
Community Public

The Master Conservationist Award in the Community-Public Category goes to the Keep Sidney Beautiful entry. Ashley Hart, director of the program, and Ramona Joyce will accept the award. Keep Sidney Beautiful was established in 2002 and is affiliated with Keep Nebraska Beautiful. Each spring, the Keep Sidney Beautiful team presents “Recycling Groundwater” at the Western Nebraska Children’s Groundwater Festival. They explain and demonstrate how proper efforts and practices at a landfill can help protect and conserve groundwater. Each April, the Great Trash Race makes picking up trash “fun.” Teams collected 270 bags of refuse in 2007. The team sponsors “Tire Amnesty Week” every summer. They collected 531.62 tons of tires in 2007 which surpassed the group’s goal of 400 tons. A number of recycling-projects have been conducted since 2002. Last year Keep Sidney Beautiful worked with city officials to establish a Beautification Corridor along Highway 30, the main traffic way running through the city. Another first-time effort in 2007 involved collection of 10,580 pounds of potentially hazardous waste. Last year team members also worked with preschool children to teach them the importance of recycling and reducing the amount of waste entering landfills. Congratulations to Keep Sidney Beautiful!

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