

# Conservation SHOWCASE



## Keeping Watch Over The Valley

Calvin and Joyce Sebranek operate a 400 acre cash grain and beef farm in Richland County, in the Driftless Area of southwest Wisconsin. The farm has been in the family since 1942, with Calvin and Joyce taking over in 1985. With their three children, they now farm with a corn-soybean-hay rotation, and custom raise 80 Holstein heifers and 300 Holstein steers annually.

Conservation and environmental protection has always been a priority on the farm. In 1975, Calvin's dad constructed the first grade stabilization dam on the farm. Calvin initiated other practices, including no-till on cropland, with contour and conservation buffer strips. Through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) Calvin completed a comprehensive nutrient management plan including the development of a 285 acre nutrient management plan.

Calvin works with NRCS District Conservationist Carlton Peterson and Soil Conservation Technician Todd Cockroft to address resource concerns. One long-term problem on the farm was the increasing loss of cropland due to the encroachment of eroding streambanks. Fancy Creek runs through the most highly productive cropland on the farm. In recent years, several major storms and flash flooding have washed out streambanks, damaging cropland and the stream itself. Through the assistance of EQIP, approximately 5,400 feet of streambank protection and habitat improvement has been completed since 2008.



*Calvin Sebranek (l.) and Todd Cockroft, Soil Conservation Technician review his conservation plan on a regular basis.*

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The streambank project was a huge success. A neighbor joined in on the project after seeing what Calvin was doing. Over a half mile of streambank is now protected in the valley, and trout are being spotted in this stretch of stream.

“Thanks to Carlton because he is the one that got the wheels turning on this project,” says Calvin. “These projects would have not happened without the help of NRCS.”

The Sebranek farm was successfully enrolled in the Conservation Stewardship Program in 2013, becoming the 800,000th acre enrolled in Wisconsin. Through CSP, Sebranek is credited with existing conservation work that protects soil and water quality, plus new

conservation enhancements on the farm, such as harvesting hay in a manner that protects wildlife.

A Spring Development is in the works for his farm to channel hillside seeps into a tank and then release the clean water to an area below the yard.

The farm is a family business. Through the farm, Calvin is helping to pay for college for his nine grandkids. Every year Calvin gives each one a steer or poultry that they will be responsible for raising for the fair and the sale will go into their college fund. Calvin and Joyce have long believed in their duty to leave the land better for future generations and to inscribe a strong sense of sustainable farming and environmental protection for family and community.

## Fancy Creek Streambank Protection



*Severely eroding streambanks needing protection.*



*Wooden “lunkers” are placed in the stream to provide fish habitat.*



*Rocks are placed on top of the lunkers to hold them in place.*



*Final grading and placement of riprap on the streambank.*



**Beautifully restored streambank on the Sebranek Farm.**