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1988 Annual Report

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Morrow County Leads State in Conservation



Frank and LaVonne Mader with Oregon's Governor Neil Goldschmidt at Conservation Day, honoring the Maders' 1987 Oregon Winners.

A Morrow County family, the Maders, have turned barren ground into rich productive land for future generations to farm. Their ac-

complishment has earned them the title "1987 Oregon Conservation Farm of the Year".

A state-wide tour honoring the

Frank and Lavonne Mader family this spring featured Neil Goldschmidt along with 300 guests who paid tribute to the conservation winners. The Maders have done an excellent job of managing soil and water resources on their farm, noted the governor.

The state winners will now vie for the title of National Soil and Water Conservation Farm.

The Mader's 66 Ranch, located near Butter Creek Junction, has five miles of the Oregon Trail passing through the ranch. The farm was first honored as 1987 Morrow County Conservation farm before receiving state honors.

The 66 Ranch is operated by Frank and LaVonne along with daughter and son-in-law Shannon and Tim Rust; son, Kirk and employees, Chad Startin and Harry Geer. They farm 20,100 acres of ir-

rigated and dry cropland and pasture for 170 head of cattle. They raise fall and spring white wheat and hard red spring wheat. Lentils and peas are

also grown on the farm.

The Conservation winners first began employing good farming practices nine years ago when they purchased the farm. The land then averaged 17 bushels per acre with blowing dust a major problem coupled with weeds, overgrazed pasture and abandoned wheat ground.

Frank set out to tackle these problems with conservation in mind. He used chemicals to control weeds and employed farming practices that minimize disturbance of the soil, conserving both the moisture and reducing erosion.

Over the years, Mader combined a "minimal till" system, with chemical fallow and "no-till". In the spring, chemical fallow is used followed by a tillage operation. In the summer, rod weeding is done to control weeds. This allows for trashy fallow that leaves 1.5 tons of residue on the surface at seeding time.

Most of the 66 Ranch is seeded with a no-till drill, a drill which has proven to be effective for the Maders. The drill minimizes trips

across the fields by permitting the application of fertilizer at the same time seeding is done. This also insures the precise placement of fertilizer just below the seed.

Today, with these conservation practices, the Mader farm averages 47 bushels per acre on dry-land and blowing dust is no longer a problem.

The irrigated circles raise a variety of crops including wheat, peas, and lentils. The circles run on a low pressure system which saves water during windy conditions. Another tool to effectively use water is a neutron probe which measures water availability to plants.

The Maders are careful not to overgraze, using stubble to pasture in winter and grass stubble in spring. During the summer months, the cows are on mountain pasture. The most highly erodible ground on the 66 Ranch has been put into the Conservation Reserve Program.

Maders ninth state winners from Morrow County.

1988 M. C. Conservation Winner

Versatility comes second nature to Bob and Josie Kindsfather, owners and operators of the Morrow County's 1988 Conservation Farm of the Year.

After selling their cattle ranch in Montana in 1979, the Kindsfathers took to farming when they purchased a dryland farm near Lexington, a challenge which has been very rewarding and successful.

The Kindsfather farm consists of 2,400 acres plus an additional 1,355 acres which they lease on Social Ridge. The farm presented many problems when Bob started farming, with erosion the chief enemy. The farm is predominantly hilly and the soil is silt loam, both features making it vulnerable to soil erosion.

The first year of farming Bob contacted the Soil Conservation Service and, with technical assistance, over 12 miles of terraces were installed. "We started in the fall and finished in the spring," stated Bob. Existing terraces were also upgraded.

The next step was to farm the land

with as little disturbance to the soil as possible while trying to retain moisture. Bob initiated a program of minimal-till to leave crop residue on the surface for erosion control. The practice includes the use of chemical herbicides and "chisel and rod" weeding to leave as much residue as possible. Bob has found the moldboard plow a disaster and discing is done as a last resort only.

Kindsfather has tried his luck with a no-till drill which he built himself. The results were not satisfactory since the drill was built on too light a frame.

Weeds are another problem that faces the Social Ridge farm and Bob has found chemical herbicides an effective control. Bob's usual practice

Kindsfather farm a fine example of conservation increasing productivity.

is to spray weeds in the spring with Round-up and then to chisel plow. He keeps a close check on problem weeds that spring up such as goatgrass and morning glory.

At seeding time, Bob has good residue cover. He prefers to seed

with disc drills on a 7" base rather than using a deep furrow drill.

A county-wide tour honoring the conservation winners was held in June. In November, Bob and Josie Kindsfather will be competing for the state award in conservation.



Bob Kindsfather, 1988 Morrow County Conservation Man of the Year.

MSWCD Meets First Tuesdays

Regular meetings of the Morrow Soil & Water Conservation District are held on the first Tuesday of each month at 8 p.m. except during the winter months when the meetings are held at 1:30 p.m. Special meetings will be held as need arises. Agendas are available one week before scheduled meetings. Meeting locations rotate between north and south Morrow County.

Meeting notices are published in the local newspaper one week prior to meeting dates.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Conservation Compliance
- Elk Tagging Study
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