

Show-Me Conservation



Winter 2016

A newsletter by and for NRCS Missouri employees.

A Note from Missouri State Conservationist J.R. Flores



Greetings Conservationists,

Happy New Year! I want to thank you for your leadership here in Missouri. With your support, we're helping farmers and ranchers improve the health of their operations and prepare for the future, while at the same time protecting the natural resources we all depend on.

We'll face some tough challenges in the years ahead. I'm sure you've heard this discussed a lot recently, but we'll have another four billion people on the planet to feed in the next 85 years. Just looking at the next 40 years, American farmers will have to produce as much food as they have in the last 500. We're losing agricultural lands to development, including 43 million acres over the past 30 years. Fourteen million of those acres are comprised of prime agricultural soils. At the same time extreme weather events, like severe droughts and flooding, are becoming the norm and making things hard on everyone.

American farmers will continue to step up to the challenge as they've done for generations, in feast or famine. It's our job to help them meet this growing demand for food, fuel, and fiber amidst this new reality and the new challenges that are on the horizon.

2016 is going to be a great year for Missouri. I look forward to the opportunity to visit with you throughout the year.

J.R. Flores

State Conservationist

Beef Winter Feeding Facilities – A Conservation Practice Success Story



Submitted by LaVern Taylor, District Technician II (Perry County)

The old saying of “if you build it, they will come” still holds true for Missouri livestock producers. For the cattle-intensive area of southern Missouri, that is especially true. Using a mix of federal and state programs, beef producers are reducing the amount of nutrients lost from farmsteads. Producers are constructing winter feeding buildings which trap and retain manure and hay waste while providing cattle with shelter from Missouri’s winter weather. The buildings hold the manure all winter while permitting farmers to spread the manure on

fields in the spring, with the bonus of reducing chemical fertilizer needs.

Perry County producer Louise Enke is excited with her just-completed winter feeding facility. “I wanted to improve my herd health and performance during the winter by eliminating the mud that inevitably occurs in hay areas,” Louise said. “I was also concerned about all the nutrients that I was losing from the hay areas and ending up in my neighbor’s pond and washing down the small intermittent grassed streambed that runs through my pastures.” Enke received technical assistance from Perry County NRCS and SWCD personnel, and cost sharing through the SWCD program. These buildings have proven popular among Perry County producers. To date, producers have signed up for 10 EQIP buildings and nine more buildings through Missouri’s state cost sharing program.

Properly sited winter feeding facilities can substantially reduce the severity of muddy conditions in hay feeding areas, a too-common occurrence on Missouri beef farms. Seventy-five percent of manure nutrients in these muddy areas wash into streams, with negative effects to streams, rivers and even the Gulf of Mexico. To date, Perry County producers have completed 18 buildings in time for winter weather. Louise’s building will trap about 52 tons of manure each winter, keeping an estimated 800 pounds of nitrogen and 300 pounds of phosphorous from flowing into nearby streams and ponds. As a group, the 18 buildings that are already completed will trap an estimated 62,000 pounds of nitrogen and 23,000 pounds of phosphorous, holding the nutrients for safe spreading during drier conditions. Perry County has an extensive cooperative effort of federal, state, county, city and private groups to improve water quality for the sculpin and other cave species.

Landowners see the value in keeping nutrients on their farms and out of streams. Low nutrient levels are a common problem in hay fields and pastures, a problem which is usually addressed by purchasing expensive chemical fertilizers. In Enke’s case she stated, “I saw the barn as a way to improve my farm for the next generation, when my son takes over.” A winter feeding facility gives her, and her fellow producers, another tool in accomplishing that goal.