

Dearborn County Farmers Receives Statewide ‘River-Friendly Farmer’ Award

Dearborn County, IN - August 24, 2021 – Indiana’s lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands are valuable natural resources. Protecting these water resources is imperative and forty-seven farmers received accolades on August 18 at the Indianapolis State Fairgrounds for their ‘river-friendly’ efforts.

“Honoring these farmers annually for their conservation efforts is a high priority for the state association of soil and water conservation districts. We are so pleased to be able to meet in person and show our ‘thanks’ for helping us improve water quality and build soil health statewide,” states Bobby Hettmansperger, Board President, Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. “We need everyone to get on board like these farmers and make the protection of natural resources a priority so they are here to enjoy for future generations.”

The Dearborn County Soil & Water Conservation District is honored to work with all the great farm families in the county, striving to meet the same goal to protect and improve our natural resources.

We are very pleased to recognize our two River-Friendly Farmer recipients:

Cutter Family Farm and Jeffries Farms, both from the Dillsboro area, were named Dearborn County’s River Friendly Farmers this year.

Clay Cutter along with his wife Natalie, and parents Curt and Cathy work together on the Cutter Family Farm raising show and beef cattle. Clay has implemented many conservation practices, which continually improve the operation. Recent practices installed include alternative watering facilities allowing him to fence the cattle out of previous water supplies, such as a pond and streams. He implements rotational grazing, for healthier soils and forage, and reducing compaction and erosion. He also does routine soil testing and applies fertilizer per recommendations, accordingly, saving less runoff and adding only the required nutrients for healthy sustainable forage growth. No-till is used to interseed into the pastures and hay ground. Heavy Use Area Protection pads are in place at round bale feeding areas, at walkways through gates, and around all watering facilities, reducing ponding and pooling, sediment runoff, and provides a healthier environment for the cattle preventing them from standing or walking in mud. These practices have prevented erosion of the soil and sediment in the streams that run through their farm ground and improves soil health.

Clay was a longtime member of 4-H and is still very actively involved with the local 4-H program. The farm has been in the Cutter family for nearly 90 years and has been passed down three generations.

Twin brothers, Matt and Mark Jeffries of Jeffries Farms, have been raised farming with their parents and grandparents. Parents Marilyn and Paul, still live on the farm that has been in the family for over 150 years. They farm approximately 2,000 acres of row crop fields corn/soybean rotation, and manage 60 head of beef cattle. Best management practices are very important to them as they continue to strive to improve their land continuously. Their farming operation involves no-till, cover crops, precision soil testing, precision chemical applications, manure management, rotation grazing, grassed waterways,

livestock exclusion from woodland and waterbodies, alternative watering systems, and heavy use area protection pads. Their goal is to implement conservation practices that reduce sediment runoff and erosion, improve soil health and water quality, use less chemicals and increase production while spending less hours in the field.

Matt and Mark both attended 10 years of 4-H, received Star Chapter Award and Green Hand Award in FFA. Matt was recipient of the Ripley County Conservation Farmer Award in the past and serves on the Board of Directors for Laughery Valley Ag Co-op. Both are 30 year members of the local Friendship Volunteer Fire Department.

The annual River Friendly Farmer Award ceremony recognizes farmers for their implementation of conservation practices, like no-till and cover crops, which ultimately protect waterways and improve water quality in Indiana. These farmers were nominated by their local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD).

Sponsored by Indiana Farm Bureau, the River Friendly Farmer Award program began in 2000 and has honored over 1,000 Indiana farms.

This year the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts hosted the event and IASWCD Board President Bobby Hettmansperger opened the ceremony and remarks were made by Randy Kron, Indiana Farm Bureau President; Jerry Raynor, Indiana State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS); and, Trevor Laureys, Director of Soil Conservation, Indiana State Department of Agriculture. Amie Simpson, Brownfield Ag News, emceed the ceremony.

For a complete list of this year's winners along with a short bio, go to:
<http://wordpress.iaswcd.org/river-friendly-farmer-award/>.

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