

Franklin County Holds its Annual Summer Conservation Farm Tour



The Franklin County Conservation District (FCCD) held its third annual Summer Conservation Farm Tour on August 1, 2018, which was made possible through a PACD Nonpoint Source Pollution Prevention Educational Mini-Grant Project. In addition to recognizing the FCCD's Conservation Farmer of the Year, this tour also provided attendees with a first-hand look at Best Management Practices (BMPs) that reduce soil and nutrient runoff leaving the farm. This year's Conservation Farmer of the Year was Martin Farms (Josh and Brandi Martin and Josh's parents, Robert and Patsy Martin) in Chambersburg.



Martin Farms is a larger dairy operation with 993 mature cows (lactating and dry) with approximately 1,450 acres of cropland. The farm has been in the family since 1974 and employs around 21 employees. By the year 2000, Martin Farms was no-tilling 95% of its cropland. The Martins like to try something new every year in order to improve their operation, and this year, it was planting green.

After the FCCD Chairman, Evan Burkholder, presented the Conservation Farmer of the Year Award to the Martins, FCCD staff gave a brief presentation on agricultural topics, including nitrogen and phosphorus basics, meeting today's regulatory requirements, soil erosion, and using Best Management Practices (BMPs) to reduce nonpoint source pollution. The attendees then boarded buses and traveled to the farm to get a first-hand look at the BMPs that have been installed at Martin Farms. Attendees included local farmers, the general public, County Commissioner Bob Thomas, and Senator Bob Casey's Regional Manager, Sandra Garcia.

During the tour of the farm operation, the Martins shared their experiences with BMP construction, including what it was like working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The Martins also discussed what it takes to maintain the BMPs to ensure that they continue to operate properly. Some of the BMPs that were seen first-hand included concrete liquid manure storages, a covered stack pad, an agri-chemical handling facility, an improved barnyard with a vegetated treatment area for runoff, and a field that was planted green.

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