

Conservation Success at Cedar Hill Farm



Jerry Butler and son Calihan manage Cedar Hill Farm, a mid-size dairy of about 500 cows and heifers in Bristol, Vermont. The farm also raises 280 acres of corn, 265 acres of hay and a sugar bush as well. Anyone who talks to Mr. Butler will recognize the pride and commitment to the farm's continual improvement. Mr. Butler's desire to enhance his farm operation and commitment to protecting his natural resources is the keystone of the successful partnership he has had with the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Over the past few years, Mr. Butler has been working with NRCS's Soil Conservationists, Engineers and Technicians to address several of the farms resource concerns. The process started with a resource assessment that was completed with the assistance of NRCS Soil Conservationist, George Tucker. The assessment determined Cedar Hill's largest issues were related to waste management.

A heifer barnyard at the north end of the farmstead was found to be causing sediment and nutrient run-off. The barnyard's high water table and cattle traffic would regularly turn the soil to mud, making

it vulnerable to runoff into the nearby brook. Mr. Butler believed the barnyard was detrimental to cow comfort, health, and production. He stated that not only was it inconvenient for the workers and the cows, "I didn't want the next generation to have to deal with a muddy destroyed farmstead." The waste water from the milking parlor and the leachate from the bunk silos were also resource issues of concern.

To deal with these issues, Mr. Butler and NRCS staff crafted a series of plans for the construction of a new waste storage facility and several supporting waste management practices. A waste transfer system from the milking parlor to the new manure storage facility was installed. Runoff from the bunk silos was directed to the new storage facility. And concrete heavy use area/barnyard was constructed that ties the whole series of practices together.

The barnyard keeps Mr. Butler's heifers out of the mud, year round. He indicated an added benefit of this conservation practice has been in management, with the ability to use heavy machinery in every day chores such as: feeding, transporting, and cleaning. While the practices made Mr. Butler's operation more efficient, they also conserved the soil and protected water quality.

Looking back on the various projects, Mr. Butler said, "even though I had some resistance to change, my efforts with the Conservation Service were well worth it in the end". As a result of their efforts the farm received the 2013 Conservation Farmer of the Year Award from the Otter Creek Natural Resources Conservation District. Thanks to the dedication of Mr. Butler to protect his natural resources and the NRCS staff that provided technical assistance Cedar Hill Farm is poised to continually adopt conservation practices for the betterment of the environment and the farm as a whole.

Before and After Conservation Images:



Pasture Land Conservation



Silage Leachate Treatment Area Conservation



Cropland and Pasture Conservation

