



USDA-CSREES 2007 National Water Quality Conference

Promoting Conservation Practices One-to-One

One-to-one educational outreach was used within a Northeast Nebraska watershed to promote the installation of conservation practices and improved water quality. In this program called “FarmLink”, four local farmers/landowners were hired on a part-time basis and given training by University of Nebraska Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Natural Resources District personnel. Training topics included basic conservation practice design and benefits, government support/incentive program availability, and “sales” techniques. These “advisors” then contacted their neighbors to explain the need for and benefits of various conservation practices. During 2003, 42 landowners were contacted, leading to contracts for the establishment of 16 separate conservation buffer practices on 24.8 ha (61.3 acres) of farmland. These included just over 8 ha (20 acres) of grassed waterways or similar plantings and 14 ha (35 acres) of streamside buffers. In addition, because of the information he received in the training sessions, one of the advisors also installed 1.7 ha (4.3 acres) of streamside buffers, 0.45 ha (1.1 acres) of grassed waterways, and established 2.0 ha (5.0 acres) of grasses and forbs on his own land. In aggregate, these practices converted 29 ha (72 acres) of cropland to grass, which will reduce soil erosion by an estimated 325 Mg (360 tons) per year, and create excellent wildlife habitat. The streamside buffers will physically protect 5.3 km (3.3 miles) of stream bank and filter the runoff from approximately 800 ha (2000 acres) of upslope cropland, while the grassed waterways will help filter and control the runoff from in excess of 100 ha (250 acres). Direct payments to the landowners will provide an influx of nearly \$100,000 within the local area over the life of these contracts. Thus, this program will have a significant impact both environmentally and economically within the watershed.

Although one-to-one programming cannot be used in all cases, it has been an effective educational tool in this watershed, and may be appropriate in other areas.

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