

Farmer Leads Spike in Neighborhood Conservation Practices

By Dick Tremain
Iowa NRCS Public Affairs Specialist

Northeast Butler County is home to a neighborhood of farms well protected by conservation measures. District Conservationist Lawrence Green credits farmer Rick Juchems as the cause. He says because Juchems leads by example, the area around Juchems' farms are a hot spot of conservation activity.

Green, with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, says Juchems fixed so many resource concerns on his own farms that his neighbors are following his lead. "Juchems' neighbors see what Rick has done to his land, learn why he did it and they end up adding conservation practices to their farms, too," said Green. "More conservation work for us means more good is being done on the land."

Juchems and his wife, Jane, farm 600 acres in Butler and Bremer counties. They raise corn, soybeans, alfalfa and have 250 head of finished cattle and 2,400 head of feeder hogs. He also custom farms.

Green says Juchems' farms have complete conservation plans in place which are tailored to his soils and his farming practices. "He uses field borders, buffer strips and grassed waterways on sloping ground and highly erodible land (HEL). These practices protect soil and improve water quality. He no-tills and plants rye cover crops in fields to keep soil in place where he takes off corn silage," said Green. "It seems he is doing it all."

Green credits Juchems with working to improve his livestock operation while protecting the environment. Juchems installed windbreaks to protect his livestock. He built a 380,000 gallon manure holding structure designed and constructed with financial assistance from NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). Juchems says the tank captures manure and all runoff from his open feedlot and stores it for use as fertilizer.

Green said Juchems has a strong conservation ethic. "If there is a problem on one of Rick's farms, he'll be in to talk with us. We will work with him to fix it," he said.

"I have seen how conservation practices have added to our farms and our bottom line," said Juchems. "I want to prosper and I want other farmers to prosper, too. Soil can disappear without conservation and so can farms. With conservation, my farm and any farm can do well and be handed down better than it was found. I know the value of conservation practices on my farms and I want others to take advantage of these benefits as well."

Juchems says he promotes the use of conservation practices on Iowa farms as an active member of a number of farm organizations. Most notably, he is chairman of the Butler

County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and president of the Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI).

He is also an Iowa Learning Farm (ILF) cooperator. As an ILF cooperator, Juchems agronomic and economic farm data are available for all to see on the web.

“I’m convinced. Conservation doesn’t cost. It pays,” said Juchems. “These proven practices simply add to my bottom line and they improve the environment. I want other farmers to follow my lead and enjoy the same benefits I find with conservation.”

--30--

Word count: 511

Juchems' Conservation Practices include:

- Field borders
- Buffer strips
- Grassed waterways
- Cover crops to prevent erosion and add soil organic matter
- Manure storage
- Terraces to slow water flow and reduce erosion
- Pattern tile
- Riparian buffers to protect stream banks
- Upland bird buffers

Want to know more about Rick Juchems' operation? See the results of Iowa Learning Farm experiments on Juchems' farm at:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf/cooperators/juchems.html>



Butler County farmer Rick Juchems and NRCS District Conservationist Lawrence Green stand in front of a 380,000 gallon manure holding tank built on Juchems' farm. NRCS helped design and provided financial assistance to build the structure. The tank provides Juchems over a year of manure collection capacity. Juchems says the tank allows him to maximize the manure's value and to time its field

application.



Rick Juchems stands in a switchgrass filter strip with NRCS District Conservationist Lawrence Green. Juchems installed the filter strip and other conservation practices on his Butler County farm as part of a comprehensive plan to conserve soil, improve crop production and lower production costs.



Rick Juchems, farmer, Butler County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) chairman and president, Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI).



Lawrence Green, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) district conservationist for Butler County.