

2022 Outstanding Conservationist – Scott and Janet Hermel



Beauford Township, MN – The Blue Earth Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) Board recently recognized Scott and Janet Hermel as their 2022 Outstanding Conservationist. Scott and Janet are passionate about water quality and soil health. They wanted to have a more active role in carrying out conservation efforts on their property. Scott, with the help of his farm renters, implemented minimal tillage on all fields. By implementing the minimal tillage practice, the land is being less disturbed and therefore holding the soil in place. This keeps the healthy and nutrient rich topsoil from eroding off their land and protects the sediment from entering nearby water bodies.

With the help from the WHIP (Windbreak) program, Scott and Janet also planted over 1,000 trees throughout their property, including Red Cedar, Meyer Spruce, and Black Hills Spruce. These windbreaks help reduce

soil erosion as well as reduce their soil's evaporation rates by blocking high wind gusts. Not only do they benefit the soil, but windbreaks are also a great wildlife habitat for deer and turkeys.

Protecting wildlife and enhancing their habitat is one of the many conservation goals of Scott and Janet Hermel. As an avid hunter and wildlife enthusiast, Scott wanted to create an area where animals can thrive. They accomplished this by enrolling 114 acres of marginal cropland into the CREP program through their local SWCD. This program creates a permanent easement that is a combination of the Federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the State Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Program. By enrolling this land into the CREP program, they were able to have four different wetlands restored on their property, creating a great habitat for waterfowl. Using the SWCD's seeding services, they also had a diverse seed mix of native grasses and forbs planted on the entire 114 acres. This mix of native grasses and forbs is beneficial for deer, turkeys, pheasants, songbirds, insects, and other pollinator species. The grasses create nesting cover for birds and bedding areas for deer, while the forbs offer a large number of options for a variety of pollinators to use.

Before the Minnesota's Buffer Law was written into law, Scott and Janet Hermel had already planted buffer strips along their waterways, making them compliant before most. They are proponents of keeping their sediment in place and not allowing it to degrade the water resources on their land. Buffer strips increase water infiltration, slow down and absorb excess sediment or nutrients running off the land and stabilizes the banks of streams and ditches. The Hermel's knew that buffers are not only better for water quality and reducing erosion, but they also create better wildlife habitat for animals and insects that flourish in those areas.

Beyond conservation, Scott and Janet Hermel also enjoy submersing themselves in their community. Janet volunteers at work, donating her time to raise money for The United Way and the local food shelf. She also aids the local lake association on coordinating events, clean ups, and promoting the overall health of the lake. Scott helps with the local Sportsman's Club on fundraisers and the promotion of the club.

Scott and Janet Hermel are remarkable stewards of the land and water here in Southern Minnesota and we are proud to announce that they have received the honor of representing South Central Minnesota as the Outstanding Conservationist Area Finalist!