

CONSERVATION PROFILES

“It is always a rewarding part of my job to work with landowners so willing to ‘do the right thing’ to protect and maintain their resources. Matt Matthews serves as a great example...”

Skip Mourglia, NRCS Forester



Missouri

Matt and Denice Matthews surrounded by family

Good Enough? Show Me More in MO

Maybe it’s having five active children that makes Matt and Denice Matthews manage their 900-head M&M Cattle Company with a strong calculation of the future. For them, a strategy just isn’t good enough unless it reaches beyond the immediate need to benefit the big picture—a picture that includes neighbors and the next generation.

Matt embraced rotational grazing in a very committed way, not only erecting 10 miles of fencing to create pastures but taking many other steps to assure that the system would be sustainable. He dug two new wells, installed several miles of waterline and numerous automatic waterers and established over 500 acres of diversified grass and legume stands to provide high-quality forage throughout the season.

When Matt decided to fence cattle from the pristine spring-fed White Oak Creek that dissects his farm, he didn’t stop there. He buffered the stream with vegetation for wildlife and to trap sediment. He also fenced livestock away from a natural spring, most farm ponds, a natural rock outcropping that contains threatened and endangered plants, and from a 200-acre stand of timber. With the timber fenced, Matt launched an effort involving both a biologist and a forester to reshape and manage the woodlands. Daughter Stephanie helps, too, since the tree planting, selective harvest, and timber stand improvement work has become her FFA project to add income and wildlife habitat improvements.

For more information:
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CONSERVATION AT A GLANCE

Key Practices:

Rotational grazing
Riparian buffers
Tree planting and thinning
Pipeline installation

Fencing
Ponds
Terraces
Livestock watering

Programs Used:

Conservation Technical Assistance
Environmental Quality Incentives
Program (EQIP)
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
Missouri Soils and Parks Program

At one point Matt decided to clean up the trash along the roadsides bordering his ranch. Before long he had contacted the Missouri Department of Transportation and joined the Adopt a Highway program, extending his beautification efforts far beyond the reaches of his own property. Given his track record of going one better than what is required, no one should be surprised.



From fencing to forestry, the family gets in the act on the Matthews ranch. In addition to creating multiple pastures for rotational grazing, the Matthews have created acres of protected riparian buffers with their fencing program. Above Matt tests new space-age looking watering stations. Cattle press the blue bubbles to get a drink.

