



2009 MORRIS COUNTY BUFFER AWARD WINNERS

Kickhaefer Brothers – Harvey & Roy

By: Angela A. Beavers, Buffer Coordinator

Sponsored by the Morris County Conservation District



This year the Conservation District Board of Supervisors is proud to present the Buffer Award to Roy and Harvey Kickhaefer. Roy and Harvey were born and raised on Clarks Creek just about a mile from their home of the last 65 years. In their younger years they were both avid athletes laying on may area baseball and then fast pitch softball teams. Harvey was a catcher and Roy placed positions on the infield. They both told me that “All we ever wanted to do was farm.” Their commitment to the stewardship of their land is what has earned them this recognition.

Roy who is now 87 and Harvey who is 85 have put together an impressive operation totaling 1240 acres of crop and grass lands. Over the past few years they have begun to lease out their cropland to younger farmers who need a start. Crops on most of their ground now are raised using no-till methods. Up until this last year they ran cattle, but the recent weather conditions have made them glad that they don't have to get out and do chores in the cold and mud.

In 2006 the Kickhaefers contacted the Morris County Conservation District and FSA to inquire about enrolling their field edges into the Buffer Program. Roy said that they were tired of the tree branches along the edges of the field hitting and causing damage to their tractor and combine while they were working in the fields. The brothers worked with Katie Miller, who was then the buffer coordinator, and she helped them come up with a plan to install the grass filter strips along the stream edges of their fields. They have also installed a grass waterway through the buffer program. In all, 31.5 acres have been enrolled through the buffer program with an additional 10 acres being returned to grass through the regular CRP program.

Roy and Harvey have always tried to practice good conservation on their property. They are on the list for funding through the Morris County Conservation District to have a terrace system placed in the field with the waterway to further reduce erosion in the area. Adding the filter strips is one more step in improving the conservation practices of their operation. By installing and maintaining the grass stands along the creek they have put a very effective filter between the water coming off of their fields, and the sediment and nutrients that it carries, and the surface water flowing in the creek.

Side benefits of the filters have also been noted by the Kickhaefers. The populations of turkey and quail found in the area have utilized the grass for cover to nest and raise their broods. The deer frequently bed down for the night in the strips out of the wind and weather. The proximity of the strips to water and the growing crops for food make the buffers ideal habitat for these and the many other wildlife species in the area.

The Kickhaefers maintain their buffers and grass stands by periodically burning them and making sure no noxious weeds or small trees, especially locust, find a foothold in the grass.

Clarks Creek has been listed on the EPA's list of impaired waters since 1999. It has listed impairments of bacteria, nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment. All of these problems can, and have been, reduced by the installation of the native grass filters by the Kickhaefers and many other landowners along the stream's course. Conservation minded landowners and producers participating in conservation programs such as the Buffer Initiative have helped to clean up the water to the point where KDHE is going to apply to the EPA to have Clarks Creek taken off their list. This is quite an accomplishment as Clarks Creek will be the first water course to be delisted in Kansas.

Thank you, Roy and Harvey, for your work in protecting and improving the important and scenic resources of the Clarks Creek Watershed. Your efforts are very much appreciated.

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