

Catoctin SCD 2020 Cooperator of the Year

The Catoctin Soil Conservation District is proud to announce that Whispering Acres Farm, Mike, Brandy, Matthew, and Luke Lewis, has been selected as the District Cooperator of the Year for 2020. The Lewis' own 30 acres near Myersville that they have completely overhauled and converted to rotational grazing for their 40 head of beef cattle. There was originally only one pasture field on the farm with the rest in row crops.

Four pressure troughs, a well to supply the troughs, and fencing including streamside fencing were built to provide water and interior and exterior boundaries to the pasture paddocks. Old fencerows were pushed out and paddocks established. While most of the fencing was cost shared, the Lewis' installed some at their own expense and did the installation themselves on the cost shared troughs and fencing. The pastures each have a different mix of forages specifically selected by the Lewis' to be utilized at their peak during different times of the year.

The Lewis' worked with the District to design and erect a covered HUA structure to be used in conjunction with a rotational grazing plan for their beef cattle. The covered HUA was the largest project undertaken with the Mike and Brandy. Mike and his family did most of the grading work for the building. The structure provides shelter and manure storage for their cattle during periods when weather conditions make it impractical to have the cattle on pasture. They are very happy with the way the structure fits in with their management of the herd. It allows them to feed hay, which is stored nearby, along a fence-line feeding area along the rear of the structure. The cattle have access to all the pastures as they exit the structure depending on how the gates are aligned to direct the cattle to a specific pasture.

In addition to the cost shared projects, they have installed a very nice 'built to last' culvert stream crossing without any cost share assistance. All this was accomplished with Brandy and Mike both having jobs off the farm. Our congratulations to the Lewis family for their conservation efforts to improve water quality in our county and state.