

2013 Conservationist of the Year

Conservation has long been an important part of Arden and Judy Willford's farming operation beginning in 1961 when Arden's dad developed his conservation plan with the Soil Conservation Service and SWCD. Over the years, they have maintained and installed over 21,000 feet of terraces, 15,000 feet of grassed waterways, and 5,000 feet of contour buffer strips and also maintain three miles of stream buffers.



The Willfords have no-tilled corn and soybeans for over 10 years on 220 acres they own and 110 rented acres near Harmony. Another 23 acres are in pasture and CRP. The Willfords have their soil grid sampled and use variable rate technology to apply their fertilizer in a split application. Basal stalk nitrate tests are used in the fall to evaluate their nitrogen fertilizer program. They utilize cover crops on their soybean acres into which corn is no-tilled in the spring.

Manure from the Willford's hog finishing building and half the manure from their son's building is injected into their crop ground according to their nutrient management plan which follows University of Minnesota recommendations.

Pheasants are raised in cooperation with the Pheasants Forever Chapter and released on their CRP acres. A wet area on their rented acres is maintained in permanent grass along the stream bank, is home to many bird species, and is mowed every year after nesting season to control the weeds.

Both Arden and Judy have been long time Ambulance Service volunteers and are active in their church and community.

As local winners, Arden and Judy competed for the title of State Outstanding Conservationists at the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) annual convention held December 1-3, 2013 at the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel Bloomington-Minneapolis South. The awards program recognizes farm families, individuals, conservation organizations, and other groups for their accomplishments in implementing conservation practices and improving Minnesota's natural resources.

The Fillmore SWCD congratulates Arden and July Willford. They are continuing the long tradition of conservation and have passed along their stewardship ethic to their family to ensure that the practices and management on their land are carried into future generations.