



Dave and Tiffany Hemmes 2020/2021 Outstanding Conservationist

The Kittson Soil and Water Conservation District is pleased to announce Dave and Tiffany Hemmes of Humboldt MN. as the 2020/2021 Outstanding Conservationists. The Kittson SWCD board of supervisors chose Dave and Tiffany for their exceptional farmstead shelterbelt, dedication to their land, and commitment to their community.

The Hemmes's farm has been operating for 104 years since Dave's great Grandpa established the homestead in 1917. Today they farm Wheat, Soybeans, and Sugarbeets. Dave has been farming full time for 14 years and he says the best part of being a farmer is the freedom. They practice conservation because "it's good for the land but it's good for the checkbook too." In addition to their farmstead shelterbelt, Dave and his dad are experimenting with flying on Barley in the spring as a cover crop to protect their Sugarbeet seedlings. They also implement best management practices like: soil testing, scouting, and crop rotation; of which they find crop rotation is most effective because it reduces weed and insect pressure and improves nutrient availability for the crops. Crop Rotation has also been shown to reduce erosion and protect the soil. These best

management practices work together to protect their land for future generations of farmers.

Their farmstead shelterbelt was planted in 2014 with State Cost Share funds. As of 2020, they have planted at least 2,000 trees. Surrounding their house on three sides and across the street they planted Flame Willows, Green Ash, Cottonwoods, Dogwoods, Lilacs, Apricots, Crabapples, and Black Choke Cherries. They've also planted these species south of their home across the highway. During the planning and design process Dave and Tiffany worked with the Kittson SWCD and the Natural Resources Conservation Services(NRCS). Jim Schwab, a Soil Conservationist with the NRCS, was particularly helpful with choosing which trees and shrubs to plant. They decided to install a shelterbelt because they wanted protection from wind and snow. Dave says, since planting the trees they "seem to make a big difference for snow removal." He says they used to be moving snow constantly but now it doesn't seem to be much of an issue for them.

After planting their shelterbelt, Dave and Tiffany have maintained and improved it. Some of the original trees didn't make it, Dave says they were damaged by wind and snow. Each year they replanted the trees that died to prevent gaps in their tree rows. They applied fabric to help with weeds between the tree rows, but they've found that weeding around the trees by hand and then spraying once the trees were old enough has been more effective. Tending the trees is a family affair and the kids have been a big help, Dave says. They help water, weed and seed the trees and the kids love it, he says.

All the work has paid off. Dave says they receive many compliments on their trees especially the flame willows. They do all the legwork of cutting the snow and they're a good fast-growing tree. The lilacs that surround the house are attractive and make their yard fragrant in the spring. Since planting the trees, they've seen an increase in small colorful birds and wildlife. They even had a bear visiting their tree row this spring. The Hemmes's are pleased with their shelterbelt and say "This has been a good project. We're glad we have them (trees)."

In addition to their land stewardship, Dave and Tiffany are active in their community. They support their township by serving on the Humboldt United Methodist Church Board of Trustees and the Humboldt Township Board. Dave is a Hockey Coach and they both sit on the Youth Hockey Board. As leaders in the agriculture community, they serve on the FSA Committee. In addition to their current leadership positions, they are past members of the Humboldt City Council, the American Crystal Sugar Company Truck Haul Committee, and the Kittson County Crop Improvement Board. In recognition for their service to the

community past and present, they were chosen for the Emerging Leadership Program through the University of Minnesota. This is both an honor and an opportunity to engage with their community on a deeper level.

Tiffany and Dave Hemmes are local leaders and excellent stewards who have carefully tended their farmstead shelterbelt, so that it is a prime example of the practice. They show excellent care for their land, their community, and their family.



Figure 1: Aerial view of the Hemmes home and Farstead Shelterbelt.