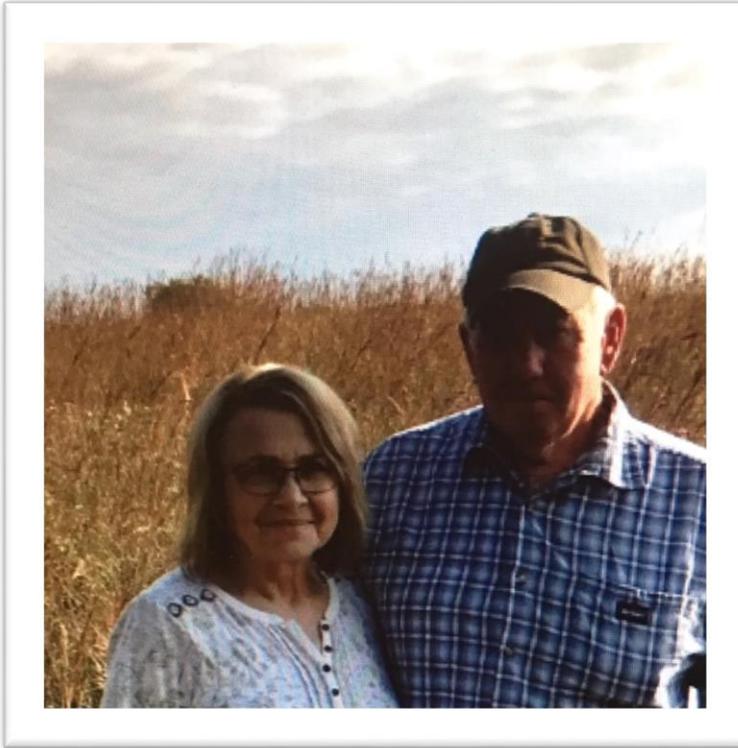


Gary and Diana Veenstra Honored as Brown SWCD 2018 Outstanding Conservationist



The Brown SWCD has named Gary and Diana Veenstra as its 2018 Outstanding Conservationist. Through the years, the Veenstra's have demonstrated a passion for environmental stewardship through the implementation of various conservation practices. Since he began farming in 1968, Gary has tried new and various ways of land stewardship that have benefited the conservation of the land's valuable resources.

The Veenstra family resides in Stately Township just south of the City of Springfield. Gary and Diana have two children, Travis and Tracee along with a son in law, Eric,

and granddaughters, Addison and Kenzie. The Veenstra's are active members of the community, holding various offices and positions throughout the years. They are involved with local commodity groups, corn and soybean growers and beef and pork producers, along with being past members of 4H and the Brown County Fair Board. Besides farming, Diana teaches at the local public school, and they also operate a construction business with their son called, Veenstra and Son, LLC. This company does earth work, construction, and tiling as well as culvert replacement for individuals, townships, and counties around the region.

The Veenstra's farm approximately 1500 acres in southwest Brown County. The farm grows primarily corn and soybeans, along with some livestock, and varies between minimum, conventional and no till based on the need. There is no fall tillage done except for compacted areas or low ground without tile. They have been no tilling soybeans into standing corn stalks since 1988 and recently started incorporating cover crops into the rotation. To be more efficient at production, variable rate seeding is done with both soybeans and corn. For the past twenty years, three different maturities (98 to 115 day corn) have been planted in the same planter swath to establish a longer pollination time. Variable rate herbicide and nutrient application is also utilized within the operation. In 2018, the Veenstra's went back to using all-natural fertilizer with the computerized application of nutrient tested poultry manure.

All of the farms that they work with, either rented or owned, directly benefit from conservation methods. Over the past two years, four terraces and water and sediment control basins have been installed within their operation. There are now plans for several more terraces and basins in years 2018-2021 to help slow down soil erosion and preserve the landscape. Shelterbelts, grassed waterways, filter strips, and CRP are other practices that have been added throughout their farming operation, especially in sensitive areas within the Mound Creek watershed.

The Brown SWCD has chosen to honor the Veenstra family as its Outstanding Conservationist of the year due to their exemplary passion for conservation through the years. Gary and Diana have contributed to conservation with the belief that we only have one Earth and we need to take care of it for future generations.



Along with other Outstanding Conservationists from across the entire state, Gary and Diana were recognized at the Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts Annual Convention in Bloomington this past December.