

## Bill and Kris Eckstein Honored as 2019 Outstanding Conservationist

---

The Brown Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) recognizes Bill & Kris Eckstein as 2019 Outstanding Conservationist in Brown County.

The Ecksteins reside south of Sleepy Eye on the family farm they purchased in 1978 from Bill's grandfather's estate. Their farming operation began with growing corn and soybeans on this 240 acre site as well as a farrow to finish hog operation until 2005. Bill began irrigating this acreage and eventually worked with the Natural Resource Conservation Service office through the EQIP program to implement water quality conservation management techniques which he still follows currently. They expanded the farm



operation by purchasing another 240 acres of land in Bashaw Township, of which, 14 acres were already enrolled in the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) permanent wetland protection program.

In 1999, the Ecksteins enrolled 58 acres of that land into the permanent Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Those acres had become too difficult to continue farming profitably due to higher water tables, a natural spring in the hillside, and rising levels of the Little Cottonwood River. Not long after, they entered the remaining 168 acres into the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) as they soon realized the benefit of converting the land to what it was best suited for, in this case, a wetland restoration. Over the past year, Bill and Kris have chosen to enroll those acres to permanent wetland restoration CREP easements. They believe the land is well suited to be a wetland and should remain that way permanently. In total, the Ecksteins have 240 acres enrolled in the conservation easement program allowing them to enjoy the outdoors and wildlife habitat for many more years.

Bill is retired as an Agronomist but continues to custom farm the 240 acre home farm in Stark Township. Kris is a teacher and is currently working in Sleepy Eye as a long-term substitute but does have plans to retire in the near future. They have four children; Susie, Steven, Michelle, Julia, and seven grandchildren. This keeps Bill and Kris very busy when spending time with the family at their lake home on Pelican Lake. Their son lives in nearby New Ulm and helps Bill maintain the conservation easement acreage. They are members of the local Pheasants Forever and Quality Deer Management Area chapters and thoroughly enjoy hunting on the restored land in Bashaw Township.



Bill and Kris look forward to enjoying the countless benefits of their conservation easements for years to come.

*Along with other Outstanding Conservationists from across the entire state, the Ecksteins will be recognized at the Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts Annual Convention in Bloomington this December.*