

CWF FARMER PROFILE: Michael Scheer

Washington County
Little Blue Watershed
Buffalo Creek tributary to
Mill Creek

By Connie Pantle



Michael Scheer uses a solar powered pump to bring water into a 4,000 gallon supply tank. Michael implemented the pump and tank using CWFP cost-share funds. Photo by Mary Howell

Haddam, Kansas—Several years ago, Michael Scheer, Haddam, discovered he had a problem. “I was out in my pasture in the middle of the summer and thought I had an abundant amount of nutritious grass,” he said. But he said the cows acted unsettled and hungry. At that point, Michael knew he had to find out how to make his grazing techniques more effective.

Michael, who runs a 160 head cow/calf herd in Washington County, began to attend range management and grazing schools. “I’ve become studious in what I do out here,” he said. After educating himself on the practice, Michael implemented management intensive grazing.

In order to educate himself even more, Michael completed the River Friendly Farms Environmental Assessment Tool notebook (RFFP) through the Kansas Rural Center’s Clean Water Farms Project (CWFP). The RFFP helps a farmer assess the farm’s environmental and management strengths and weaknesses and identify solutions. According to Michael, the notebook causes a farmer to look at issues that wouldn’t normally be considered, like erosion and run-off in pastures. Now Michael asks himself questions like “Do I have a good grass cover to catch the rain?” and “What can I do to prevent run-off?”

Prior to completing the notebook, Michael said identifying problem areas was a weakness for him. However, when he applied for Conser-

Water Quality Concerns:

- Water quality for livestock
- Water quality for household consumption
- Erosion of land (especially around water sources)
- Grass vigor and grass production of warm season grasses

Best Management Practices Implemented:

- Converted abandoned windmill well to solar powered pump with 4,000 gallon supply tank
- Implemented three tanks for cattle to drink supplied with water from the solar powered pump
- Implemented management intensive grazing
- Fenced pond, providing access ramps for cattle to drink

vation Security Program (CSP) through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) last year he said recognizing these weaknesses put him one step ahead. Now, Michael participates in Tier I of the CSP program where he is compensated for his attentiveness to soil and water quality issues.

While completing the notebook, Michael developed goals for his pasture including water quality for livestock and household consumption; erosion of land (especially around water sources), and grass vigor and grass production of

warm season grasses. When he learned there were some available cost-share funds through the CWFPP, he applied for funding to implement his goals. One of Michael's main goals was to establish more water sources in a 400-acre pasture for his rotational grazing practice. The west half of the pasture lacked a natural, reliable water source. To prevent further erosion and run-off, Michael wanted to detour the cattle from the un-dependable, highly eroded creeks in that portion of the pasture.

Therefore Michael developed an existing, but abandoned windmill well by adding a solar powered pump with a 4,000 gallon supply tank. The water is then pumped to three stock tanks in various locations in the pasture via 3,500 feet of underground waterline. Michael says the condition of the water being pumped out of the well is ideal. "The water coming out of this well is cool and clean," he said.

Michael then built fenced paddocks radiating from each of the water tanks with electric fence and fiberglass posts. In addition, Michael created a paddock around the pond by fencing the pond and providing access ramps for the cattle to drink. This eliminates the cattle from lingering in and near the pond, reducing shore erosion and contamination of the water. All together, Michael used over three miles of fencing.

Michael's winter grazing plan includes rotating his cattle on stock fields typically from October to mid-February. As needed, Michael unrolls bales of alfalfa during these months. Unrolling the bales prevents the cattle from standing in one area, as they would if he used a stationary bale feeder. This also reduces the amount of manure concentrated in one location and trampling of grass.

Michael continues to learn by attending CWFPP tours and grazing tours. "I enjoy going to other farms and seeing first hand how the farmer addresses his problems," he said. He also values the input of the CWFPP Field Organizers. "More than likely, they have seen these problems al-



Michael shows his family and friends how to assemble the solar panel for the pump. His family and friends were instrumental in the process of adding the solar-powered pump, waterlines and three tanks to Michael's pasture.
Submitted Photo



Using electric fence, Michael rotates his cattle herd around each of three tanks in his pasture supplied via 3,500 feet of underground waterline running from the solar powered pump.
Photo by Mary Howell

ready and know how to address the issues."

This isn't just the start for Michael. He is motivated to continue improvements to the pasture. "I don't look at yesterday. I look down the road a month, a year, or even ten years," he said. Throughout the project Michael has encouraged his families' and friends' involvement. "My goal is to educate them in order to sustain what I've done. I don't want to see the work I've done to the land go backwards."