

CWF FARMER PROFILE: Chris Visser

Clay County Lower Republican Watershed

By Connie Pantle



AFTER: Chris Visser received cost-share from the Kansas Rural Center for a new fuel storage system including containment tanks or dikes to protect water quality on his farm and downstream..
Photo by Connie Pantle

Wakefield, Kans.—To some, the changes that Chris Visser made on his Clay County farm may appear small. But to Chris, these changes are a move in the right direction.

“The possibility of grant money to improve things” on Chris’ farm prompted him to complete the RFFP environmental assessment through the Kansas Rural Center’s Clean Water Farm-River Friendly Farm Project (CWF-RFFP). Chris said the assessment caused him to look at things with different eyes. And once a farmer completes the assessment, he is eligible to apply for up to \$5,000 in cost-share through the CWF-RFFP. Chris applied for and was approved for cost-share to make changes on his farm that the notebook.

The farmstead assessment portion of the RFFP assessment illustrated the hazard of the farm’s fuel tanks. “I didn’t really think of the tanks before,” he said. Chris was concerned because the diesel tank had a slight seep from the factory weld. Therefore, he replaced the leaking tank with a newly constructed tank, refurbished the remaining unleaded gasoline tank and placed both tanks in steel containment tanks or dikes. Chris chose two steel containment tanks rather than concrete because of the convenience. “If I needed to, I could move the tanks later on,” he said. Each containment tank holds 110 percent of the fuel tanks contents in case of a major spill. Chris plans to add a roof over both units this winter to prohibit rain water from standing in the containment tanks.



BEFORE: The former fuel storage system on Chris Visser’s farm included a diesel tank with a seep. After completing the RFFP environmental assessment, Chris saw the need to replace the tank and implement containment tanks.
Photo by Mary

Water Quality Concerns:

- Update fuel storage and containment
- Improve pesticide and herbicide record keeping
- Clean up previous owners’ dump site

Best Management Practices Implemented:

- Installed two containment tanks; refurbished one tank and purchased a new tank
- Cleaned up ditches, hauled refuse to salvage yard for recycling

As the notebook pointed out, Chris was especially concerned as the fuel tanks are located less than 100 yards from the family's household water well. Chris said making these changes has protected his family's water supply. In addition, an important factor in the community is also protected since Chris' farmstead is located 500 yards from Quimby Creek which drains into Milford Lake just two miles away.

Chris said the community is a little more aware of water quality due to Wakefield's location on the shore of Milford Lake. "It is talked about more now than it was 10 to 15 years ago," he said.

Another area that Chris highlighted while completing the notebook was the dump site of the farm's previous owner. Chris said he wanted to clean up the trash for environmental and stewardship reasons. "It is the right thing to do," he said. Therefore, Chris removed several truckloads from Quimby Creek and another area south of the farmstead and hauled it to



BEFORE: The above photo illustrates the proximity of the leaking fuel storage tanks to the family's drinking water well. This was a major water quality concern. *Photo by Mary Howell*

the salvage yard for recycling.

The potential to enroll in the Conservation Security Program (CSP) (if it becomes available in Clay County) motivated him to make changes now. Chris said the changes are "a side benefit for what may come." He is also making improvements in tracking his crop and field histories, pesticide/herbicide usage and nutrient management on his milo, wheat, soybean and hay fields.

In 2006, Chris also received cost-share from the Environmental Quality Initiative Program (EQIP) through the Clay County Natural Resource and Conservation Service (NRCS) for conservation (converting cropland to no-till) and to improve his pesticide management system.

With these changes, Chris is moving in the right direction. That direction is one with water quality and the future in mind.



AFTER: Protecting water quality was a concern for Chris Visser, therefore using CWF-RFFP cost-share funds he implemented BMPs on his farm. *Photo by Connie Pantle*