

Watershed Our Water Our Home

Matthew Morgan

Lamar FFA

Fall 2018

Matthew Morgan

Lamar FFA

Fall Speech

November 2018

Watershed Our Water Our Home

It's my birthday, April 14, 2018. There's a thunderstorm brewing west of my farm. I could be doing homework but the fish might be biting. I cast out my favorite chartreus lure and a bass hits it hard. Thirty seconds later I land a 3-pound largemouth bass. Within the next twenty minutes, I catch eleven bass between 2 ½ and 3 ½ pounds. This is enough to feed my family two meals of fresh Missouri farm pond fish. I must get home before the storm hits to clean fish, do livestock chores and then schoolwork. I reach down and grab my two stringers of fish and the water is cool clear water. And a song is stuck in my head for the rest of the night. Cool clear water water over and over again. This is a 1936 hit song written by Bob Nolan and sung by the Man in Black, Johnny Cash. (Cowboy Lyrics)

But why is my farm pond water clear? This past September, I visited my local Barton County Soil and Water Conservation office several times to conduct interviews and to do research for this speech. It quickly became as clear as pure clean water that this well-known tune could be the theme song for the Missouri Soil and Water Association.

My local office is a valuable resource for the environment and working farms. It provides planning, technical assistance and funding for farms to keep the soil in place. This stops erosion and makes the land productive for the long haul. The immediate effect is cleaner water today, by keeping soil sediments, fertilizer and pesticides out of the water.

To say we enjoy clean water is an understatement. Having clean water is not an accident, it is hard work. Our lake collects water from over 500 acres of pasture and crop ground. My family started years ago by building grass waterways and then terraces. NRCS has been with us every step of the way.

“Missouri has a 1/10 of a cent sales tax to support state parks and Missouri soil and water conservation efforts. (Butler) The majority of the soils side of this tax is used to assist agricultural landowners through voluntary programs that are administered by the Soil and Water Conservation District Board in each county.” (Reed) Missouri was the first and is still the only state to have a sales tax dedicated to soil conservation. HJR 21 was the last bill handled by the 82nd General Assembly. It passed at 5 minutes till midnight and allowed Missouri voters to vote on a constitutional Amendment. This Constitutional Amendment barely passed on August 7th 1984 by a 50.1% majority (Lutes). It generates approximately \$50 Million dollars annually statewide for Missouri soil and water conservation efforts. (Reed) Ben Reed is the District Manager at our Barton County Soil and Water Conservation office. He assists Barton County Landowners with the Missouri State cost share program. “Our local office reimburses close to \$450,000 dollars each year to landowners when they have finished approved and planned conservation practices” States Mr. Reed. We have built all these waterways and terraces using our farms tractors and a dirt mover. In our lakes watershed we have constructed 5 grassed

waterways totaling over $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. My dad spent countless hours building 6 terraces for a total distance of 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ mile (Morgan). These earth structures have kept many tons of soil in place because they slow the waterflow and prevent erosion. When my dad was young he plowed, then disked the wheat stubble to double crop beans. The fields that were planted to milo, corn, and beans were deep chiseled and then worked several times with a field cultivator. These multiple passes tilling the ground took lots time, horsepower, fuel, plus wear and tear on equipment because the ground was bare, erosion occurred. The terraces and waterways could only keep part of the soil in place. My family farm began to adopt reduced tillage in the early 1990's (Morgan). I am proud to say I have never seen a working plow on our farm. Together these terraces, waterways, reduced tillage and no-till prevent nearly all erosion on our farm. Together all of these practices keep our lake water clean.

Keeping soil in place is only part of how we keep our lake water clean because we raise livestock. Morgan Farms has a small feedlot where we finish our own cattle to 1300 pounds. We also have an independent 80 sow herd that we farrow to finish. Feeding livestock creates nutrients. We dry scrape the concrete and mounds in the cattle feedlot. The sow pens are also scraped and spread dry. There is a settlement basin at the bottom of the cattle feedlot. It catches rainwater runoff and is pumped into crop fields through a watering gun. To keep nutrients out of lake, our farm has a nutrient management plan. My dad takes soil test and he has me collect nutrient samples. My job can be a little dirty and smelly but it is necessary. These tests show us how much waste nutrients to use and what land to apply them to. When applying nutrients, we use setbacks. We stay 200 feet away from waterways and do not spread in terrace channels to keep the nutrients out of our lakes.

It is not easy having clean water. It takes a lot of hard work, but the reward is worth it. I can't wait till next June to ride jet skis and go fishing on a Sunday afternoon in our cool, clean water.

Works Cited

Butler, Brandon. "Tax Will Help Conserve Missouri's Water and Soil." *Columbia Tribune*, 30 Oct. 2016, www.columiatribune.com/. Accessed 15 Nov. 2018

Cowboy Lyrics (2014). In *Lyrics Mania*. Retrieved September 20, 2018, from www.cowboylyrics.com/lyrics/JohnnyCash/cool-water-11883.html

Lutes, L., & Hamer, D. (2013). MASWCD 65 Years of Progress. Retrieved September 21, 2018, from <http://www.maswcd.net/historydoc.htm>


Morgan, Rick, Personal Interview. 12, September 2018

Reed, Ben, Personal Interview. 17, September 2018


Lamar FFA Chapter

Advanced Speech

This speech is the sole work of Matthew Morgan



Mr. Jim Weber –FFA Advisor



Matthew Morgan