

Grassland FFA'ers Return To Black Creek Project

BY PAT PURCELL
NEW HOLLAND
(Lancaster Co.) — "The first thing they learned in this project was how the different agencies must work together. Our group of students has really been the catalyst to get all the necessary agencies working together as much as they should," said Bob Lauffer, Grassland FFA advisor.

For the Garden Spot High School Grassland FFA chapter, completing their stream improvement project on Black Creek has been a lesson in red tape.

The Building Our American Communities project was begun in 1987 by Grassland FFA'ers who graduated in 1988. The project, which was scheduled to be completed last year, has been progressing at a slow pace due to delay in approvals from some government agencies.

Now, with the guidance and the 'okay' from the Lancaster County Conservation District, Fish Commission and Game Commission, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of Environmental Resources, the Grassland FFA'ers have brought the Black Creek stream improvement project near completion.

The project was scheduled for completion in June of 1988. A channel change request brought the project to a stand still. Channel changes are an unusual request and most met with defeat, but due to the condition of this particular stream, although slow in coming, an approval was given.

Also, an archeological study was required to determine if the earth to be moved for the channel change would harm any possible artifact sites.

"Because it is a model project everything had to be done exactly right. And the investigation into the archeological significance was a requirement. Our cultural resources are just as important as the natural resources," said Lauffer.

Recently FFA members from the Garden Spot chapter were able to take up where the initiators of this project were forced to stop. This project is located on the farm of Tom and Harold Wentzel just outside of Terre Hill. As on many farms cattle have access to the stream. The cattle's constant trampling of the stream banks leads to excessive stream bank erosion. As a result, excessive sediment in the stream and a high level of nitrates in the stream water from cattle urine and feces makes the water a breeding ground for bacteria which leads to mastitis in cows. The water is also unsuitable

for the cattle to drink and undesirable for aquatic life.

By fencing the stream off to the cattle and permitting only one access area, the stream banks will not be exposed to additional trampling. Stream bank excavation was recently completed by Brubacher Excavating of Bowmansville. Banks were excavated to a 3:1 slope to reduce stream bank deterioration.

After excavation students raked stream banks and sowed tall fescue grass seed to stabilize the soil on the banks and discourage erosion.

Where cattle can cross the stream FFA'ers fortified the bank area with railroad ties. More railroad ties will be laid on the stream bed and when the project is completed, which may not be until spring, the access area through the stream will be fortified with cement to allow the Wentzels to move machinery and cattle safely across the stream.

The stream was restored to its original pathway through a channel change. A channel change is not a recommended practice and rarely meets the approval of the Department of Environmental Resources or the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. The delay in completing the BOAC project was caused by the delay in gaining approval from these agencies.

"Normally the fish and game commissions would not approve a channel change because of the loss of stream, but the stream as it exists now does not have much value to the sportsmen or to the fish because of the stream's poor condition," said Lauffer.

The channel change has been dug except for 10 feet or so. Due to the lateness in the season, the proper seeding of the stream banks could not be completed to assure stream bank and soil stabilization. Once the final cut is made, the stream banks will need several tons of rock for rip-rap which fortify the banks and prevent further erosion.

Total funding for the project has been secured through the fund-raising efforts of FFA members.

"In each case where we have received funding the FFA member has gone to the organization and made the presentation explaining what the chapter is doing at this site. I think that has really helped a lot and it helps the student to know what is expected of him or her. It's good for the organization to see the students are motivated," said Lauffer.

More than \$2,000 of

the \$3,000 price tag needed to complete the project has been contributed by the Adult Farmer Program, Adamstown Rod and Gun Club, Lancaster County Conservation District, Northeast Lancaster Rod and Gun Club and Penn Dutch Sportsman's Club.

Brubaker Excavating did all the excavation. Stanford Seed Co. of Denver donated 100 pounds of tall fescue seed. Eventually, plantings for wildlife including food plots and evergreens for nesting will be added.

With the stream banks resloped and seeded the Wentzels will be able to manage their pasture better with the channel change. Sedimentation will be greatly reduced and clear water will provide a healthier environment for both cattle and aquatic life.



Grassland FFA'ers fortify cattle crossing at Black Creek on the Wentzel farm by planting railroad ties. When the chapter project is completed, fencing will surround the entire stream to restrict cattle crossing to the access area only.

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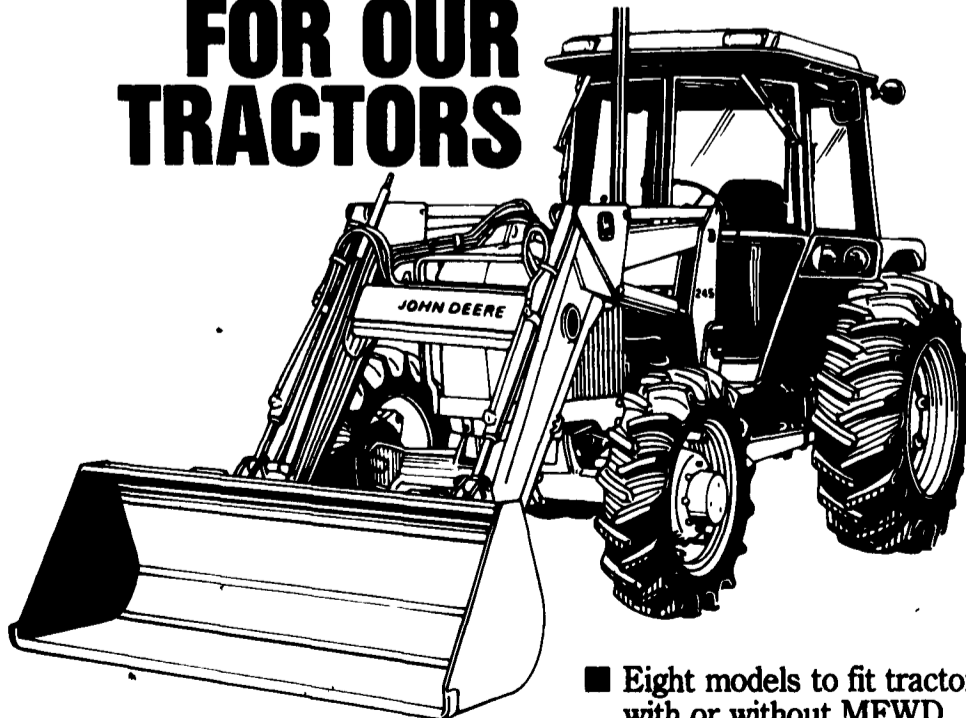
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