

Streambank Work Controls Damage

(Continued from Page A1)

As Shade indicated, with a chuckle, "Mother Nature is cleaning house."

But Shade's efforts over the years may have controlled the damage, to a certain extent. The Dauphin County Conservation Farmer of the Year noted that his extensive work installing streambank protection devices — including fencing, grass, and trees — helped to save the soil from washing out.

The protective plants act as a barrier to hold the soil in place. Matted down grass simply catches a lot of the silt.

"You'd be surprised at all the silt that (the grass) sifts out of the water," he said.

On Tuesday evening, Shade was honored for his work in conservation by the Dauphin County Conservation District at a banquet at the Natural Resources Center in Dauphin.

The Shade family farms about

235 acres (200 tillable) in the hollow below Tannery Hill in the Lykens Valley. With wife Lily and sons Todd, 27, who works full-time and Jason, 18, a senior at Upper Dauphin High School who works part-time, Larry manages about 75 Holsteins. Daughter Crystal, 29, who works for a local catering service, helps milk on the weekends.

The milking herd numbers 66 of all grade Holstein. Milking is from tiestall to pipeline. The latest DHIA test indicated a herd average of 17,500 pounds.

The Shades also rent an additional 75 acres. The farm operation includes three farms altogether within about a mile radius. The Shades grow about 100 acres of corn, 60 acres of alfalfa, and about 50 acres of wheat, the rest covered with clover/timothy. Larry Shade uses 80 percent minimal till and 20 percent moldboard plowing on the farm.

Larry said the use of cover crops such as rye rotated onto the corn silage helps "keep the soil covered pretty well." The droughty Clymer very stony loam is easily subject to drought stress.

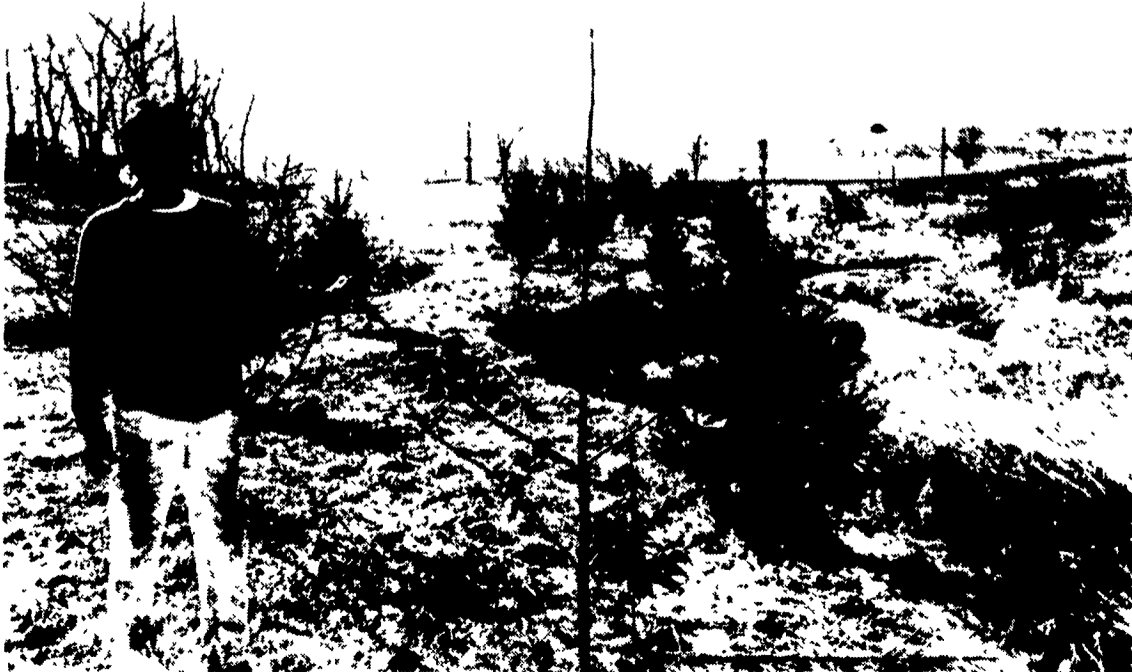
Indeed, because of the droughts, the past several years have been especially challenging. Last summer, the drought which began in July and lasted through August gave the dairy family only about 2,000 bushels of shelled corn for



Jason is busy with the shelled corn grinder.



Shade said he was "really surprised" by receiving the Conservation Farmer of the Year honor. "I didn't think I did any better than the neighbors. I didn't go out after it, let's put it that way." With him is his dog Red.



Extensive work installing streambank protection devices — including fencing, grass, and trees — helped to save the soil from washing out. Here, Todd checks out the trees.



Fortunately, as indicated here by Larry, grass that lined the creek worked to contain the soil.

about 60 bushels per acre.

"It didn't rain here until September," said Lily. "A Saturday in July it got so hot. I don't think it rained much after that."

Larry grew up on the main farm in Elizabethtown. After he married Lily, the Shades purchased a nearby farm. Larry joined the district in 1969 and laid the farm out in contour strips according to district plans.

The hilly region demanded that some type of contours be laid out. "It just stands to reason that water follows the corn rows, if you got them going around a hill, everything's always level."

Grass strips next to the hilly corn rows catch any soil that moves from the corn.

Allen and Beatrice Shade, Larry's parents, had begun contouring the fields on the main farm long

before Lily and he moved there with their family in 1978. Additional contours were installed in the late 1980s, and other practices were put in place, including grass waterways and 150 feet of tile drainage.

In 1990, a glass-fused-to-steel circular manure storage tank with a capacity of 330,000 gallons was installed with cost-share money from the Chesapeake Bay Program. The manure is stored and spread twice a year, once in the spring and again in the fall.

While the Shade Farm did all it could to ensure soil erosion was controlled, it was the events of last January that proved deeply challenging — and troubling.

After the severe snowstorms early in January, in mid-month, the 40-plus inches of snow and ice that

(Turn to Page A27)



Todd Shade works a self-propelled forage box feeder.