

Brubakers Receive Prestigious Environmental Award

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Lancaster Farming Staff
MOUNT JOY (Lancaster Co.) — Luke Brubaker and sons Mike and Tony recently received the prestigious 1999 National Tyson Poultry Environmental Award for environmental quality practices installed here.

The Brubakers were one of five farms chosen throughout the country for implementing conservation best management practices to improve the environment.

Don Robinson, administrator for the Lancaster County Conservation District, said industries, including pork and poultry, "are becoming very much aware of their environmental responsibility." The Tyson-sponsored award helps

bring an "awareness to the non-agricultural community that farmers are doing the right thing."

Luke, in partnership with sons Mike, 33, and Tony, 28, manage about 800 tillable acres, including rented land, and maintain 470 cows. The Brubakers manage 250,000 boilers under Tyson contract per year.

Two of the three farms are under farmland preservation, noted Luke. Another is on the farmland preservation waiting list.

Chairman of the county Farm Service Agency, Brubaker said that it's "good for our people to try to get into the 'winners' circle." The farmers are good stewards of the land."

Mike and Tony Brubaker received the award in Arkansas in

February.

Brubaker was one of 22 landowners on 6.7 miles of the creek who contributed to the Donegal Creek Restoration Project, conducted over a three-year period in the late '90s. The project included stream restoration work such as creek fencing, streambed stabilization, stream habitat improvement, and other projects. In all, said Brubaker, the farm implemented 17 best management practices. Included is a wellhead protection area crucial to improving water quality on the farm.

The farm, the "centerpiece of the award," said Robinson of the conservation district, included tree planting along the side of the creek in addition to creek narrowing, to help keep

the stream water cool and speed up the flow to accommodate trout and other species.

It's a "very prestigious honor," said Robinson.

In December, a team of Tyson judges arrived from company headquarters in Springdale, Ark. on corporate jet to analyze the farm operations and learn about the practices to improve the environment.

Said Brubaker, "We're not just doing something better than anybody else. There are a lot of good farms — we're not the only ones who are doing it. We're just thankful for everybody's help."

Brubaker noted that many different agencies were involved

in the partnership to improve the stream, including township officials, USDA, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, the conservation district, Donegal Fish and Conservation Association, and others. The partnership of various groups makes a "perfect mix," he said.

"There are so many good things for farmers to participate in," Brubaker said. The agencies are "hoping to promote programs for farmers to do environmentally sound things."

Large family farms such as the Brubaker operation are "lightning rods for environmental conservation," said Robinson.

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