

June 25, 2020

Leopold Conservation Award

Missouri Farmers Care

c/o Kari Asbury

4481 Brown Station Road

Columbia, MO 65202

Leopold Conservation Award Committee:

Please accept our application for the first Missouri Leopold Conservation Award. Directly below, please find all requested personal information.

Nominees:

## **Joshlin and Addie Yoder**

1009 Hwy B, Leonard, MO 63451

(573) 881-5248 and (573) 881-5247

***A Northeast Missouri family farm consisting of 1100 acres of row-crops, hay production, and beef cattle backgrounding. We are a part of a larger operation involving Joshlin's father and brother. Each manages their own farms while pooling labor and equipment to operate the farms.***

On the following pages, please find:

- Responses to application questions
- Signed statements
- Signed letters of recommendation
- Additional attachments

We are excited to submit our application and want to thank all parties involved in sponsoring this award.

Sincerely,

Joshlin and Addie Yoder

## 1. Conservation Ethic

Growing up on my family's farm, I loved watching the crops grow during the spring and summer. It seemed magical to watch the corn as it emerged, grew tall, tasseled, and then put on ears of corn. When I was old enough to start working beside my dad, I quickly learned that magic had nothing to do with it. There was a tremendous amount of science that went into producing the crops we raised. As my dad taught me about being a good farmer, one thing stood out more than any other. No matter how great the latest technological advancements are, your potential comes from the quality of soil that you are planting seeds into.

Dad stressed how important maintaining the soil through conservation practices, water management and crop rotation were. His wanted to make sure that my brother and I had every opportunity to come back to the farm and be successful. He felt that an important part of his job was to make sure the land would continue to be in great shape for producing crops.

When Addie and I moved back to the farm in 2008, a major factor in our decision was wanting to give our children the opportunity to grow up on a farm and learn about agriculture. As we bought a farm and were incorporated back into the family operation, we made it our mission to be able to give our children the opportunity to continue farming if they desired. Today as Addie and I farm and manage 1100 acres of row crops, we are constantly looking to challenge the traditional ways of looking at farming and continue to look to implement new practices to reach our goals of building soil health, improving production efficiency, protecting water quality, developing quality habitat for wildlife, and running a farming operation that is sustainable for the future.

To accomplish these goals, we have worked to implement the following practices.

### **No-Till/Minimum Tillage**

When we moved back to the farm in 2008, very few local farmers were using no-till on their farms. My dad, like many others, was still using traditional tillage in the fall and spring due to concerns about residue management, wet soils in the spring, controlling weeds, even emergence of crops, and reduced yields. However, when we bought our farm, we decided to work towards a no-till system to help control soil erosion and reduce compaction from tillage. Today, we currently no-till 100% of our soybeans and no-till about 25% of our corn acres. We have not mastered no-till corn, but we continue to try new methods to learn how to make it work on our farms.

### **Cover Crops**

I will admit that I was a cover crop skeptic when the concept was first gaining traction. However, understanding that preventing soil erosion is a major concern, I began to incorporate them into our operation.

We have had the most success using cereal rye seeded into standing corn stalks. This has provided an excellent cover during the winter months. With the actively growing plants and root systems, we have seen major reductions in soil erosion during the early months of the year when rain events are likely to move soil. The rye helps to control winter annual weeds and is easily terminated in the spring right in front of or behind the planter. The layer of biomass helps to hold moisture during the summer growing season and also helps to increase the levels of organic matter in the soil.

