

FRYE POULTRY FARM

Hardy County, West Virginia

Josh Frye is the third generation farming his family's land in the Cacapon watershed in Wardensville, WV. Mr. Frye hopes to preserve this piece of property for future agricultural use by enrolling in the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP) to put a conservation easement in place. Frye Poultry manages over 260 acres, which includes the operation of three broiler houses with a flock capacity of 93,000 birds. The annual production is approximately 700,000 birds.

Mr. Frye recently enrolled a 7.0 acre riparian forest buffer through the Conservation Reserve Program (CREP). USF&W built over 3,300 feet of fence to exclude cattle from the protected area. Many conservation partners were interested in this riparian project, as there are populations of native trout in the headwaters of Slate Rock Run. Trout Unlimited (TU) has been using the site to monitor water temperatures and improve stream habitat. Hardy County students planted 160 trees in addition to the 720 that were planted by a private consultant as a way to learn about conservation. Mr. Frye updated his well pumping system and installed 760 feet of pipeline to supply an off-stream watering system for the cattle. These improvements compliment the prescribed grazing system that had been put in place approximately 6 years ago when Mr. Frye worked with the new tenants who lease the farm and practice sound grassland management. Currently, approximately 100 head of cattle are kept on this farm and the adjoining property (owned by brother, Joe Frye) during the grazing season.

Mr. Frye has installed a Waste Storage Facility and follows an approved Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP). He was awarded the first-ever Clean Energy Award in 2009 by the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection for his efforts in his poultry litter gasification project. This incinerator, the only one of its kind in the region, is the result of Josh's personal research as he grappled with a problem most poultry growers face: the rising cost of heating with propane. Research led Frye to an Illinois-based company, Coaltec Energy, which produced gasifiers for agricultural use. Frye applied for grants and low-interest loans from NRCS as well as other government agencies. He was awarded a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to install the necessary technology. He currently heats one of his poultry houses by burning his litter. It is hoped that research at this facility will help make the system more affordable for other farmers and provide a solution for excess manure in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and reducing dependence on foreign oil. The byproduct of the gasifier, biochar, contains high levels of carbon and is a very effective organic fertilizer. One of Josh's primary focuses is the benefits of using biochar to replace organics in depleted soils to improve productivity. Researchers also are investigating using biochar to capture carbon in soil to lessen global emissions and as a way to remediate coal fields and Superfund sites, since the material readily absorbs toxic metals. Mr. Frye is dedicated to continuing research on the possibilities of the biochar material. Mr. Frye's interest in energy issues recently led him to be one of the first agricultural producers in the nation to have a Farm Energy Audit completed by EnSave with funding through EQIP.

Mr. Frye has hosted many agricultural researchers and members of Congress at his farm to promote what he believes can be a great opportunity for farmers in our region.

