



FOGGY MEADOW FARM

Will and Becky Hitchcock and their family operate a 100 cow dairy on approximately 80 acres of pasture and 225 acres of cropland in Farmington Township.

The Hitchcocks have increased their cow numbers in recent years and have also increased their pasture acreage to accommodate these additional animals. The pasture was expanded by converting cropland to pasture. This provides forage for the cows in the grazing system, and also reduced nonpoint source pollution by reducing soil erosion on the field. A corn field with large areas of bare soil is much more susceptible to soil loss than a hay field or pasture where the ground is covered and an extensive root system helps to hold soil in place. Cropland conversion to pasture includes seeding the field with a grass and legume mix, building fence, and developing a water system. The Hitchcocks are working with the Conservation District on the current pasture expansion and the project is being funded by the Small Farm Agricultural Stewardship Program.

To get the most out of the pasture, water needs to be provided in each paddock. The Hitchcocks had a water system in the pasture, however with continued improvement of the pasture, the water system needed to be expanded. They

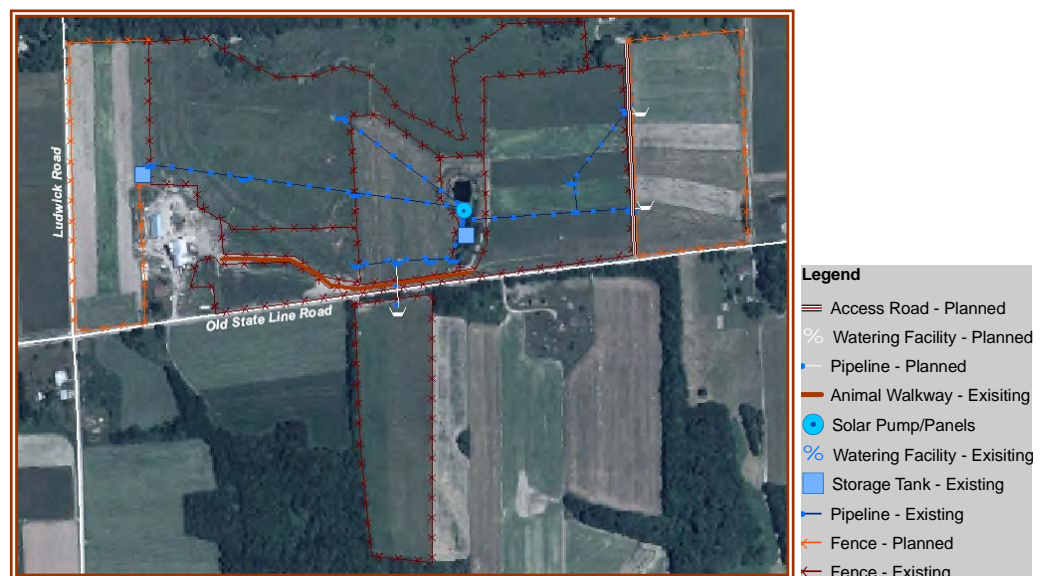
worked with USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service to design a watering system that included a solar panel and pump, pipeline, storage tank, and hydrants. This project was funded by a DEP Energy Harvest Grant and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The CREP portion of the project also included fencing to exclude the cows from a stream and wetland area in the back of the pasture.

On dairy farms that practice managed grazing, the animals must travel between the barn and the pasture several times a day. Heavily used travel lanes are susceptible to erosion. A solution to the problem is to stabilize the travel lane with geotextile fabric and gravel.

The Hitchcocks completed

construction of a 1300 foot laneway in 2005 as part of the Conewango Agricultural Stewardship Program. Fencing was also built along the laneway to contain the animals to the stabilized area.

The Hitchcocks are also working on other conservation projects on their farm including cover crops following corn silage harvest in the fall, and development of a nutrient management plan. Cover crops help to protect the soil from erosion over the winter months and also retain nutrients in the field. A nutrient management plan allows for better distribution of animal manure on croplands reducing nonpoint source pollution. More precise application of manure for plant uptake of nutrients also reduces fertilizer costs.



Aerial view of the Hitchcock grazing system and conservation practices.