

Let's ditch the poor management

Published on Nov 2, 2018 by Mollie Aronowitz, AFM



As a landowner, do you know what to look for on your farm when it comes to good stewardship practices? And more importantly, why you should be asking for those practices? As Land Managers we see the good, the bad and the ugly. The photo above shows an example of a worst-case scenario on a farm.

The picture is a prime example of herbicide application that overlapped the edge of the drainage ditch boundary causing the grass buffer to die off. If not reestablished, the bank will eventually slough off and the ditch will need to be dredged out and rebuilt. This is a costly repair with reduced farm value when rich topsoil is in the ditch instead of in the farm field.

Without established grass in place, the water running off the field doesn't have a chance to filter before entering the ditch and our water systems. Instead of fertilizing the corn crop, the chemicals applied on the perimeter of the field are funneled directly into the ditch.

From a pure economic standpoint, the outside rows of corn have little chance of survival and likely won't produce a viable harvestable ear. This scenario is a lose-lose for conservation and production.



The drainage ditch in the second photo has a solid established grass edge that maintains the integrity and purpose of the ditch. Soil is held in place and the water that enters the ditch will flow to its intended destination without taking the topsoil and excess nutrients with it.

Why does it pay for the farmer to maintain the grass buffer? Maximizing every acre of productive land is vital for return on investment (ROI), but pushing the limits of the field boundaries is not the way to maximize ROI. Even by simply bumping the outside row over one row (typically 30 inches), the edge of the grass ditch can be maintained. On a square 80 acre field, that equates to less than a quarter of an acre less that is planted, in turn to save the road bank.

If the farmer simply planted a quarter of an acre less in this scenario, crop input expenses would be saved and average field yield would likely not be affected. From a conservation perspective, the integrity of the ditch would be maintained to keep topsoil in the field and water runoff filtered before entering the ditch.

In the first photo, the landowner should work with his/her farmer to reseed the bank of the ditch as well as a grass strip along the perimeter of the field. Peoples Company Land Managers often address conservation issues like this and more. We can identify where erosion is occurring and overlap this information with field profitability maps to address and achieve both economic and environmental performance on each farm.

Please contact Peoples Company today if you would like to speak with a Land Manager about maximizing production and protecting sensitive acres on your farm.