

Bob Schrock

Bob was raised in a farming family, his grandfather and father both farmed. Growing up running tractors and equipment were a part of being part of farming family. It seemed like a natural fit even though he didn't really plan to return to the farm after graduating. He was just an equipment operator. He didn't feel a real attachment to the farming.

As time passed he started noticing that the fields were different in soil type, slope, etc that the crops performed differently when treated the same way. As he got more involved with the operation Bob would recommend treating the fields in different ways. He indicated that at first his father didn't always understand why. Bob was curious as to why some of his neighbors were no-tilling; did it really make a difference? He took a shovel and dug into a no till field of theirs and then went to his conventional till field and dug in to compare what he saw. He saw a big difference. He wasn't getting the same moisture profile the no-till field had. He also realized that his fields were blowing after being worked while the no-till fields didn't. This convinced him to look into no-till. Could it work for him?

As Bob started to notice these differences he realized he needed to know more. His goal was to raise a good wheat crop while managing the inputs to help the farm become more profitable. By attending meetings and workshops, at Oklahoma State and listening to wheat expert, Phil Needham, he was able to pick up many ideas on how to improve yields.

Bob has been no-tilling for about 8 years now. He has been implementing several new and different improvements in their farming operation. One of the many items is terrace building, rebuilding and constructing waterways. They had the equipment and at times the man power to do this work themselves. He will tell you that waterways are a necessary evil. Hard to farm around with big equipment but needed in some fields, even when no tilling. He told me that in the past they would have taken on a project like this one themselves but he could see this was a horse of a different color. Very unusual topography made layout more difficult. This is why he called the Barber County NRCS office for assistance. He could see the need for a system designed for the entire field not just treating one area at a time.

After visiting the site with Bob it was apparent there were some concerns and yes it was an unusual field to lay out terraces and waterways. Water was exiting the field in 4 different spots. Water was entering the field from the north and east from neighboring crop ground. Many little high spots made terrace layout a real challenge. We could see why he was concerned about just a band aid approach. With the help of several NRCS staff and much head scratching we came up with a good answer for his concerns. Bobs crew was able to build the waterway and terraces that were a part of an EQIP contract with NRCS. While the equipment was there working, additional terraces were built and rebuilt.

The field for which the award was won represents just a small amount of the acres farmed by the Schrock family; several thousand acres would be more accurate. By implementing grid sampling, no-till planting, crop rotations and conservation practices like terraces and waterways, he learned several

things. Grid sampling showed them where nutrients were needed so they could apply what was needed in those areas of the field instead of the entire field. Using a holistic approach for pest management prevents spraying just because your neighbor does and allows you to target the area of the field that needs it. No-till, improves the moisture profile of the soil and reduces the blowing. Conservation practices save soil.

Bob would tell you that 20 years ago he didn't think about the importance conservation or protecting the environment. Today he is kind of an environmentalist. He likes seeing clear water leave his fields instead of the muddy water like it was before. Technology allows for some of this to happen and he embraces that technology. The real story is in the individual who sees the need to protect the soil and environment, and is willing to implement the appropriate practices to achieve this goal. As Bob has found out, better yields and more profitable farming can be a result. He is excited about the future for farming.

When the Barber county Conservation District was putting on a no till tour, Bob was willing to share some of what he has learned with other producers during a field visit. This allowed many producers to see a little of what he does and ask questions about his results.

The NRCS vision is "Productive working lands in harmony with a healthy environment"; Bob Schrock's vision is very similar.

We salute Bob for his work in conservation and his willingness to share what he has learned with others.