

# CONSERVATION Showcase

## Takes One to Know One

The old adage “It takes one to know one” couldn’t be truer when it comes to farmers. It takes a farmer to know what a farmer really needs. That is why when a farmer like Jimmie Fisher from Aztec speaks up and tells his neighbors how conservation improvements have worked for him, people listen.

Fisher’s voice is particularly important because his area has been the subject of an intense nonpoint source pollution study under a grant received by the San Juan Watershed Group. The rivers in the watershed were designated as impaired, and the Group became interested in what programs and technical assistance NRCS could provide to help landowners develop buffers, install irrigation improvements, and adopt other management practices to turn the watershed around. Allen Maez, Aztec district conservationist, being committed to watershed improvements, in turn explained the NRCS programs and assistance that could be used to help landowners including the Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP), Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), and technical assistance. In addition, a representative from the Watershed Group became a member of the NRCS Local Work Group.

The Watershed Group is also applying to the New Mexico Environment Department for 319 funds which can be used for grassland improvements and installation of other best management practices.

Yet, the success of the Watershed Group and NRCS’s efforts depend on the Jimmie Fishers who

have used programs like NRCS’s cost-share options and can tell those who may not know of their choices, or are hesitant for some reason, about how a conservation effort could benefit them. Fisher has involved himself in the Watershed Group and is a member of the San Juan Water Users Association. He has installed irrigation improvements, and is planning to better manage grazing on his property. Fisher knows the benefits of conservation, and truly has earned his reputation as a conservationist.

Because NRCS offers conservation assistance to private working farm and ranch lands, all participation on the part of New Mexico’s private landowners is voluntary. NRCS is firmly committed to the watershed approach that is locally-led by the Jimmie Fishers and others who understand ... that it takes one to know one.

