

Sean Riley - Breckinridge County Conservation District 75/25 Soil Technician Success Story



Sean Riley has been employed with the Breckinridge County Conservation District since February 2021 as a 75/25 Soil Technician. Sean is a native of the county and has always been an avid outdoorsman, so when this position became available, Sean felt this would be a good opportunity to work outdoors and with the farming community. Since he originally pursued a degree in Veterinary Science, he had to undergo the necessary training to educate himself in conservation practices and programs offered to implement these practices. During the time frame of this initial 6-month report, a bulk of Sean's time was spent in training on field visits with NRCS staff Benjamin Stith, Brad Haney, Brooke Lucas, and Bridget Pile.

One of the largest projects Sean has worked on is Pat Henderson's EQIP project. This active contract consists of several conservation practices including Pasture and Hay Planting, Cover Crop, Field Border, Grade Stabilization

Structure, Grassed Waterway, Mulching, Livestock Pipeline, Watering Facility, Heavy Use Area, Prescribed Grazing, and Critical Area Planting. Upon completion, the contract will implement over \$126,000 in conservation practices. One of the main goals of this project was to treat cropland gully erosion and part of the plan used to accomplish this was installing 18 grade stabilization structures, which provided Sean with some valuable training.

Sean surveyed several waterways in addition to the grade stabilization structures. Since he had no prior experience with GSS's, he was able to learn how and why they are constructed. When the structures were completed, he went back and verified the dimensions to confirm they met NRCS standards. This helped him learn proper methods of measuring weirs/GSS dimensions and improve farm map reading skills to determine exact locations of the waterways/GSS's. Since several sinkholes had formed and collapsed between the startup and completion of the GSS's, this resulted in some relocation and revision of the current plan. Through this experience Sean learned how to record survey data and adjust conservation plans as new information was presented.

This project not only gave Sean field experience, but it also gave him the opportunity to work with one of his supervisors and help learn his role in the Conservation District. Throughout his many years of service as Chairman of the Breckinridge County Conservation District Board of Supervisors, Mr. Henderson has been able to stay informed of the latest conservation practices

implemented by NRCS, as well as their benefits. He is a huge advocate for these programs at the local and state level and wants to make sure other farmers are informed about the programs and their benefits as well. Mr. Henderson has also been a big supporter of the 75/25 Technical Assistance program in which Sean was chosen for and understands the advantages of seeking and hiring qualified candidates for the job. He feels this is a good opportunity for both NRCS and an individual who wants to possibly advance in this field.

The District and NRCS are pleased to have Sean as a technician for our farmers and our programs and look forward to seeing what he accomplishes in the future.