

Laura Bihl Awarded “Outstanding Conservationist of 2017”

Every year the Wright Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) honors an individual or conservation organization with the “Outstanding Conservationist” award. Selected by the SWCD, this award recognizes the recipient for their work and accomplishments implementing conservation practices. This year, Laura Bihl (Clearwater, Minnesota) was selected to represent the Wright District as their “Outstanding Conservationist”.

Over forty years ago, Laura Bihl and her husband, Marvin (deceased), established their farm,

Homeplace Beef Organic Farm. Laura’s experiences as a public health nurse, with a degree in Public Health from the University of Minnesota, greatly influenced the Bihl’s farming approach. In this profession, she saw what the effects of antibiotics, pesticides, hormones and other chemicals have on the human body. Laura truly believes that by farming organically you not only improve the health of consumers but also the animals and the land.



Herefords on Bihl's farm

Using a sustainable method of farming known as “holistic agricultural management”, Laura and her family keep the well-being of people, their cattle and the land in mind. Laura believes that “the key to a healthy grow is healthy soil” and feels strongly that pesticides and fertilizers basically do more harm than good. The only fertilizer Bihl uses is composted cattle manure. At any given time, this 240 acre farm raises approximately 45 Hereford cattle. The Herefords graze on organic rotated pastures and always have access to free choice mineralized salt and Diatomaceous Earth which is a natural de-wormer. Calves are born in the spring on fresh green grass and nurse until they are 10 months old when they are weaned. Their beef is direct marketed where their customers know they are buying local, healthy and clean meat and are assured that

the soil and water is being protected for future generations. Wooded areas, grasslands, fence lines and wetlands provide habitat for pollinators and wildlife. A bee keeper and his bees thoroughly enjoy being on the Bihl farm. Laura’s farming ethic made **Homeplace Beef Organic Farm** an excellent applicant for the Natural Resource Conservation Service’s Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). As a participant of this program, Laura selected water quality activities to enhance her farming practices.

In early December, Laura will receive and be honored as an “Outstanding Conservationist” at the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Annual Convention. This award is given by “The Farmer” magazine. The Wright Soil and Water Conservation District congratulates and thanks Laura Bihl for her hard work in conservation which helps improve Minnesota’s natural resources.