

Houston poultry farmers receive Environmental Stewardship Award

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Harrington, DE – Poultry farmers Randy and Jordan McCloskey were recognized during Delaware Ag Week for their efforts to improve water quality and reduce nutrient runoff with the 2017 Delaware Environmental Stewardship Award.

The McCloskey's farm is located in Houston, where they grow broilers for Allen Harim Foods. On top of the four poultry houses, with a capacity of 136,800 birds per flock, the McCloskey's farm 500 acres of grain. As part of their efforts to be good environmental stewards, the McCloskey's have utilized diverse road-side plantings to help reduce dust, control odors, and increase aesthetics; a storm water pond on the farm is fed by seven swales; and they follow a nutrient management plan that utilizes their poultry litter for soil health benefits. When farming is done for the day, both Jordan and Randy serve as ambassadors for the industry speaking with neighbors about the antibiotic-free chickens they raise and debunking myths surrounding the industry.

The Environmental Stewardship Awards were presented Monday to the McCloskey's and three other runner-ups by Nutrient Management Commission Chairman Bill Vanderwende and Nutrient Management Administrator Chris Brosch.

"Each of the poultry companies nominates a Delaware poultry grower that excels in preserving and enhancing environmental quality on their farms," Brosch said. "These farmers are great examples of the hard work and dedication that Delaware farmers have in protecting our land and water resources."

Runners-up were:

- Josh Parker of Bridgeville who began farming in 2008, grows for Perdue Farms, with a capacity of 100,500 roasters per flock. Parker has planted a diverse assortment of flowering native shrubs and trees as visual buffers and windbreaks. He has planted bald cypress trees in swales between houses to help take up nutrients, while storm water from the production area drains into a farm pond for treatment.
- Norris and Phyllis West of Laurel, who grow for Mountaire Farms, have six poultry houses with a capacity of 168,000 broilers per flock. The West's have been raising chickens since 1968. The farm has four modern and well-maintained poultry houses. On the property, the West's utilize three manure sheds and two composters. They have created a drainage pond and planted the banks in trees as a buffer.
- Brian Kunkowski of Laurel, who grows for Amick, raises 144,000 broilers per flock in his four poultry houses on 32 acres. Along with a manure shed, the storm water engineering includes stone beds along the houses, grass swales draining to a 2.5-acre pond lined with giant trees and a screened drain. Kunkowski also owns horses, but leaves the hayfields un-mowed in the winter so that wildlife can benefit.

The McCloskeys will receive \$1,000, a plaque and sign for their farm. The runners-up will receive \$500, plaques and signs.

Past recipients of the Environmental Stewardship Award include Ted Layton and Scott Willey (2016); Chris Lesniowski of Marydel (2015); Georgie Cartanza of Little Creek (2014); Connie Carmean of Laurel (2013); Marilyn and Lee Ellers, Sparrow's Song Farm, Houston (2012); Douglas and Deborah Vanderwende, Locust Grove Farm, Greenwood (2011); Frank Robinson and family, Dead Broke Farm, Harrington (2010); Mary

Bryan, Laurel (2009); Joe Bauer, Harrington (2008); Scott Peterman, Milford (2007); and Guy and Nancy Phillips, Georgetown (2006).

The awards are supported by Allen Harim Foods, Amick Farms, Mountaire Farms and Perdue Farms.

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