

## Christian Nelson

Christian is an engineer who lives and works in the Twin Cities. He recently inquired about the MN Ag Water Quality Certification Program as a way to gain additional insight in how to protect land resources and positively impact his future plans for the family farm. He and his five siblings recently decided to take over operation of the family farm in northwestern Douglas County. The farm cropland has been rented out for crop production for many years. Over the past several years, Christian noticed a general degrading of the soils due to excessive erosion from row crops on the hilly terrain. His concern led him, and his brother Lars, to decide to take over operation of the farm to control the erosion, improve the soil



condition and restore the productivity and health of the land. To achieve this goal, the Nelsons decided to convert the cropland to pasture and build a cow/calf herd to utilize the new pasture resource. The initial step led Christian to the local NRCS/SWCD office in 2020 to develop a plan for installing pipeline and watering facilities that would support a rotational grazing system using multiple paddocks. All paddock and property boundaries have been secured with the installation of new fencing. The pasture seeding plan was developed to include a mixture of five grass and two legume species. Due to the dry conditions this year, the pasture will be no-till seeded in the spring of 2022. Cost share funding through the EQIP program helped with installation of the water system, fencing and the seeding. Christian and his family intend to produce quality beef that can be marketed to consumers both locally and in the Twin Cities. A pollinator plot will be established providing habitat for not only pollinators but many other wildlife species.

Christian regularly works with the ProAg crop consultant. All fertilizer and pesticide applications are custom applied. Nutrients applied to the pasture closely follow the U of MN recommendations.

Christian and his brother also have interests in protecting and maintaining land for wildlife. Several wetlands will be maintained and animal access limited. A wooded area on the farm will be excluded from grazing to maintain the woodland habitat.

The Nelson farm will be quite the showcase for how to manage a challenging landscape that both protects and enhances the land but also benefits the landowner.