

# 2018 Conservation Farmer of the Year

## The Forejt Family



Greg Forejt, Sr. between former Westmoreland Conservation Directors Dorothy Stoner and Roy Kemerer at Windy Heights in 2005.



Gregory attributed much of the farm's success to conservation: "What's good for the environment is good for the bottom line," he said, noting the operation's



use of a split application of nitrogen to lessen the chance that heavy rains will wash this important nutrient away before the crops can absorb it. This conservation practice also helps to protect

water quality in the streams that run through the Forejt's fields, including two unnamed tributaries to Jacobs Creek.

The Forejts also incorporate native grasses and legumes as a nitrogen source, practice crop rotation, and use deep-rooted crops such as tilled radishes to relieve compaction. "They go down about a foot and a half deep, and act like a post-hole digger," Gregory explained.



There's an intensity on the Forejt family farm that's palpable. It's the way Greg Sr. worked – "all in or all out" – and an ethic he clearly imparted to his sons Garrett and Gregory who, in their first spring of managing the farm with their mother Lesley, beat their own record for harvesting sweet corn (June 24).

The Forejt's operation, Windy Heights, is an agriculturally preserved home farm of 149 acres in Ruffsdale and a network of 52 rented parcels that brings the total acreage to more than 2,500. On this large agricultural operation in Westmoreland County, the Forejts employ a variety of conservation practices and produce a full farm-stand variety of produce, along with chickens, beef, and pork. Later this summer, they're taking their first venture into raising turkeys.



Greg Sr., who founded Windy Heights in 1993, was an early proponent of no-till, a planting method that helps prevent soil erosion, and his sons are, too. Every field crop they produce is done this way, with the exception of the early sweet corn. Two 20' X 72' high tunnels yield tomatoes that arrive early to market and keep producing all season long.



Sophisticated technology, including a GPS-guided planter/sprayer and drift-reducing nozzles, also supports the Forejts' conservation efforts by ensuring that chemicals aren't over-applied and lessening the chance for drift. On pastureland, weeds are controlled by mowing instead of spraying.

"Our father cared for the land and people with a great intensity, so we're going to do the same," Garrett said.

The Forejts have a Natural Resources Conservation Service Grazing Plan, a Conservation Plan, a Manure Management Plan, and participate in the Conservation Stewardship Program. Their home farm was the first in the county to be preserved through the Westmoreland County Agricultural Land Preservation Program.

