Dust bowl Conservation Speech

We all have those great grandparents and grandparents that at some point start a story with the phrase “back in the day” or “when I was kid”. Then they ramble on about how they had to work at young ages or that money was always a struggle, how they to sleep four to a bed, or that skunk grease solved everything, and how things were so much harder for them. They go on and on how lucky our generation is that we didn't have to endure the hard times of the past, like the fear of nuclear war in the fifty's or the hardships of the Dust Bowl. And the truth is we don't, we don't face the problem of being in constant fear of not being able to full-fill the basic acts of life, such as breathing, eating or even taking a step. You may ask yourself why that is? Its because conservation saved us from another dust bowl.

The dust bowl of the 1930's lasted a decade, during this time the land was ravashed with severe droughts, causing the crops to die out and great dust storms to appear affecting 75 percent of the country and effectively hurting 27 states. Dust storms blocked out the sun, sand banks like snow banks appeared. Hundred years of top soil was gone in a matter of minutes leaving only barren clay. As John Steinbeck wrote in his 1939 novel *The Grapes of Wrath*: “The kids are hungry. We got no place to live. Like ants scurrying for work, for food, and most of all for land." These people were faced with many challenges of not always having enough to eat or a roof over our heads or a way to survive. What these people endured is nothing like what we do today. So when we take a look at how conservation has saved us from another dust bowl there are many ways it has helped us. and a few of the main are: No-till Farming, CRP program and Irrigation.

Enter now into the 1920's where farming was till everything, even dry areas. Tilling was allowed and used to dig up weeds, shape the soil and allow for irrigation, but this lead to unfavorable acts such as seen in the Dust Bowl. The idea of modern no-till started in the 1940's. No-till farming was designed as an agricultural technique used to increase the amount of water that goes into and stays into the soil, this is used to eleminate that chance of soil erosion. This also allows for soil biological fertility, this makes soils more resistant. By putting the no-till farming in place this stopped us from pulling up the unnecessary ground and can be more profitable if done correctly it also has helped minimizing fuel and labor costs. Which is definitely a win for conservation in preventing another dust bowl.

Now lets take a step away from the no-till farming and take a look at the second way we have avoided another dust bowl and this would be the CRP or better know as the Conservation Reserve Program that took out of production marginal farmland. This program has many purposes such as helping farmers reduce the chances of soil erosion, enhance water supplies and reduce the damages caused by floods and other natural disasters in times of need the CRP opened emergency hay reserves. Benefits of this is that it provides wildlife habitats, and hunters by providing them access to land for hunting. The original program started back in the fifty's but the farm bill of 1985 was the first to establish the CRP program that we know of today. The major intent was to keep farmers and others from destroying lands and grounds, by initially paying them to let people on their properties and keeping them as natural reserves. This program has been helping people and families keep their land pure and most of all the habitats clean.

Lastly, lets dive into Irrigation. Irrigation isn't just a form of watering plants, irrigation is a form of watering designed to controll the flow of water, were it goes to and the amount that is spread out into fields and onto the crops. Irrigation flow helps keep soil erosion from happening, when the soil is washed away it causes plants to be up rooted. Which leads to crops being destroyed and the dirt to be moved and allows for it to be blown around. Across the United States, nearly 3,000 conservation districts—almost one in every county that are helping local people to conserve land, water, forests, wildlife and related natural resources. They also implement farm, ranch and forestland conservation practices to protect soil productivity, water quality and quantity, which include protecting plants against frost, suppressing weed growth in grain fields and preventing soil conservation. For ranching

Conservation Districts provide funding for ranchers to dig in wells and install solar powered pumps. This has stopped stream erosion by keeping cattle out of streams. To reduce water erosion and nutrient runoff they grade stabalization structures, contour buffer strips and also grassed waterways. The Conservation Districts play a large part and role in irrigation and have helped keep us from seeing the effects of another dust bowl.

The dust bowl that occurred in the 1930's could happen again, but the good thing about today is we have many different ways to help prevent a dust bowl from reoccuring, today we have very much to be thankful for. Our great grandparents and some of our grandparents faced a lot when they were growing up and it was hard times for them. So next time when they start a story with “When I was a kid” or “Back in the day” open your ears and listen closely to what they have to say, because we are lucky and today the things such as No-till farming, CRP and Irrigation are only a few of the conservation methods that have helped save us from another Dust Bowl.