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Bear Creek Riparian Buffer Project Update

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Bear Creek Watershed Project: On June 16, 1998 the United States Department of Agriculture dedicated the Bear Creek Watershed Project as the Bear Creek Riparian Buffer National Research and Demonstration Area. The dedication was part of the Iowa Conservation Buffer Tour hosted by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the USDA State Technical Committee, Conservation Districts of Iowa, and Trees Forever. Over 100 conservation and agricultural professionals from around Iowa attended the tour. In his comments, Craig Cox, the Acting Deputy Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment in the USDA, cited the major impact the Bear Creek Watershed Project has had in fostering buffer adoption and demonstrating the effectiveness of the technology. In 1999 an additional 1.2 miles of Bear Creek is being planted on the Jon and Steve Risdal properties. These plantings will consist of nearly 20,000 tree and shrubs and over 17 acres of native grasses. Research is ongoing to assess the effectiveness of the buffers to improve water quality and wildlife habitat. These efforts will be bolstered by new competitive grants awarded from the USDA National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources/US Environmental Protection Agency Nonpoint Source Water Quality Program.

Mark Twain Watershed Project (MO): The riparian buffer research group is expanding their efforts into Missouri through a collaboration with the Agroforestry Research Center of the University of Missouri at Columbia. The six year project is funded by the US Environmental Protection Agency and will investigate the effectiveness of riparian buffers in reducing non-point source pollution as well as quantifying the perceived market and non-market value added to land developed with buffers. The project is being undertaken in three watersheds that drain into the Mark Twain Watershed in Northeast Missouri.

Figure Caption:
Photo taken at the dedication of Bear Creek Riparian Buffer National Research and Demonstration Area. Back: Landowner/cooperators Ron and Sandy Risdal, USDA Acting Deputy Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment, Craig Cox, landowner/cooperator Lon Strum. Front: Ron and Sandy Risdal’s grandchildren.