

By Keith Olsen

Nebraska Farm Bureau President

April 22 will mark the 40th anniversary of Earth Day. I am old enough to remember when Earth Day was first celebrated. It seems strange now, but the environment was not a priority with many people. Industrial pollution in some rivers was so bad that they could literally be set on fire.

I am proud to say that caring for the environment—what farmers call conservation—has always been a priority on my farm.

I was raised, as most farmers are, to make sure that the ground I farmed was in better shape when I passed it on than it was when it came to me. That's one of those basic rules of farming.

Another one: you feed your animals before you eat your own supper.

I had been farming only a few years when Earth Day began in 1970. My ground is in Perkins County, just east of Colorado. Moisture is short. Soil erosion is a big concern for us, but we worry far more about wind moving soil than water.

In 1970 we planted summer fallow wheat. That means we harvested a crop every other year, and the land was not planted on the off-year so it could accumulate moisture for the next crop.

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