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Leading Edge

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No·till
On The Plains

Reinventing the Corn Belt

by Roger Long

We've probably all heard the saying, "Down the creek,"—as in, a lost cause or a lost possibility. For an agriculturalist, it isn't just the flotsam that's getting away—the water itself is a lost resource, since it could have been stored in the soil for use by a crop, if only infiltration rates and soil organic matter were high enough. It was thinking along those lines that inspired Randy



Rink to totally reinvent his farm operation in the last 7 years.

The Rink farm near Pender, NE—not so far from Sioux City, Iowa—is where Randy, his father, Harold, and hired man Dave Frederickson crop 2,000 acres amidst a seemingly endless sea of corn and soybean fields. Yet Randy has moved beyond the standard corn and soybean rotation, as well as dramatically revamping his operation to rebuild his soils. Randy is resolute in his crop diversity,

which includes wheat, proso millet, field peas, and cover crops, along with some spectacular corn and soybeans. All these crops, all this diversity, because Randy saw far too many bushels were gushing down gullies, waterways, and creeks after spring rains: "Seems like we catch rain events of 3 – 4 inches at a time here in northeast Nebraska. If you can't take that rain in quickly, it runs off and it's gone. We still can run out of moisture [later in the year] so we need those 4 inches. For instance, the 4 inches of rain that ran down the river in early June this year would be very beneficial if it could



Photo by Roger Long.

In the steep hills of northeast Nebraska, Randy Rink finds a successful mix of diverse crops, no-till, and smart management.

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