

YEAR - 2023



Wood County Land & Water Conservation Department (LWCD)

Annual report

2023 Grazing Tour

A Grazing Tour was held at the Behlen Farm on September 12, 2023. Key topics included a focus on small scale/low cost beef production through managed grazing, the importance of soil health and nutrient management, and options for late fall and winter bale grazing. A huge thank you to Joe Behlen for hosting the tour and demonstrating his innovative operations. Thanks also to Paul Daigle for facilitating the event and sharing his 30 years of grazing experience. If you are interested in starting a grazing operation and opportunities for cost-sharing your grazing operation, call the LWCD office at (715) 421-8475.



2023 Accomplishments:

- Secured funding of \$175,847.00 from the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) for staff salaries and support and training expenses.
- Received \$54,000 in Bond money and \$54,000 in SEG money from DATCP to implement the Wood County Land and Water Resource Management Plan. Funds were used to cost share conservation practices.
- Received \$31,821.64 from point sources for water quality improvements.
- Received \$3,301.00 from the County Board to pay area and state membership dues.
- Received \$147,857.95 from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Large Scale TRM Grant for the Mill Creek Watershed.
- The Conservation, Education and Economic Development (CEED) Committee held 12 regular meetings and 4 special meetings. All cooperating agency staff received meeting notices and minutes.
- Conducted annual transect survey to determine soil erosion rates in Wood County.
- Treated wild parsnip at 15 locations, covering 6.2 miles. Nine new spots were found. Kept wild parsnip map current by taking reports from the public and field mapping.
- As part of the 9-Key Element Plan, surface water samples were tested for total phosphorous and total suspended solids at four locations throughout the Mill Creek Watershed once per month from May to October.
- The 10-foot Great Plains No-Till Drill is in its fifth season of use and was used consistently throughout the growing season. The drill was used by 28 landowners covering 526 acres with 2023 revenue of \$5,211.20 (a flat fee of \$80.00 plus \$8.00 per acre is charged per use to offset maintenance costs).
- Hosted a Grazing Tour at the Behlen Farm – see information on the left side of page.
- Maintained the prairie/pollinator garden outside of the River Block building.

Continued on Page 2.....



Wood County Land and Water Conservation Department

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Phone: (715) 421-8475 Email: landcons@woodcountywi.gov

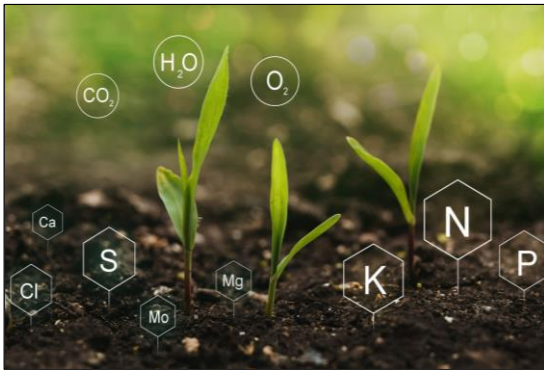
Website: <https://www.woodcountywi.gov/Departments/LandConservation/>

2023 LWCD Accomplishments Continued from Page 1.....

- 15 farmers participated in no-till and/or cover cropping in Wood County or within the Mill Creek Watershed covering 2,281 acres, with funding coming from MDV or LWRM or 9-Key funds. A total estimate of 4,870 lbs. of phosphorous and 3,497 lbs. of sediment were reduced.
- Issued five Animal Waste and Manure Management permits and processed permit fees.
- Conducted stream flow monitoring at six sites once per month for six months as part of a six county-wide monitoring project. Reported data to DNR's Surface Water Integrated Monitoring System (SWIMS) Database. SWIMS is the state's repository of monitoring data for Clean Water Act work and is the source of data sharing through the Water Quality Exchange Network.
- Assisted two new farmers with rotational grazing systems on their property. Roughly, 101 combined acres will be put into rotational grazing systems. Cost-share assistance for perimeter fencing and watering systems for both grazing operations was provided.
- Provided no-cost well water nitrate testing to 10 Wood County residents.
- Completed and cost-shared the following:
 - Two livestock fencing systems
 - One waste storage facility closure
 - One grass waterway/roof runoff control
 - Two well closures
 - One streambank/shoreland protection project
- Held the 2023 Wildlife Tree and Shrub Sale, selling 13,134 trees and shrubs to approximately 162 landowners. The total trees sold equaled 15,975 but 2,841 trees were refunded after one of the nurseries sent notification of unavailability of two tree species due to deer damage. Thirty-four refunds were processed to landowners for the unavailable bundles of trees.



2023 Tree Orders Awaiting Pickup



Nutrient Management / Farmer Education (NMFE)

- Wood County LWCD partnered with Marathon, Clark, Lincoln and Taylor counties to hold multiple courses that qualify farms to write their own nutrient management plan (called the NMFE class). 7 area farmers covering 2,264 acres and multiple farmers from surrounding counties attended the Wisconsin Rapids class. LWCD staff provided assistance to past/present attendees to keep up their plans.
- Received \$854.17 in staff support for assisting with the Nutrient Management Farmer Education (NMFE) classes.
- Worked to get maximum number of nutrient management plans turned in which came to 97. These 97 plans covered 59,047 acres of farmland.
- 4 farmers participated in creating a nutrient management plan in Wood County or within the Mill Creek Watershed covering 1,153 acres, with funding coming from LWRM.

- 7 landowners purchased prairie grass/wildflower seeds as part of the Tree & Shrub sale.
- Tree shelters and generic gel were made available for sale throughout the year.
- During the 2023 tree & shrub sale, 628 tree shelters and 6 ½ pounds of generic gel were sold (sold in 4 ounce & 1 lb. bags)
- Ordered 1,800 tree shelters to replenish supply on hand. Price increased from \$3.08 to \$4.02 per tree shelter.
- Coordinated and hosted the “Central Wisconsin Farm Profitability Expo” in March at MidState Technical College – Wis. Rapids Campus.
- Coordinated the local Conservation Poster Contest. Judged 13 posters for the 4-6 grade category. Prizes were issued to the top three participants. The top poster advanced to the North Central Land & Water Region contest.
- Updated the “Invasive Species” page on the LWCD website to include informative fact sheets for *Aquatic Invasive Species*, *Terrestrial Invasive Species* and *Invasive vs Native Look Alike*. The fact sheets include photos, identification information, ecological impact, and other information. Link to Invasive Species website: <https://www.woodcountyiwi.gov/Departments/LandConservation/InvasiveSpecies.aspx>.
- Participated in the CEED Tour in September 2023 and coordinated a tour of the Novotny reclaimed mine site with a 15.5 acre pond as part of the annual CEED Tour.



LWCD Staff administered the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) with no new enrollments in 2023. The 1,187.04 acres enrolled in CREP in Wood County provide the following benefits:

- At least 1,956 lbs. of phosphorus loss to waterways prevented per year.
- At least 1,022 lbs. of nitrogen prevented from entering waterways per year.
- At least 1,065 tons of sediment prevented from entering waterways per year.

Meet the Land & Water Conservation Department Staff and CEED Committee



2023 LWCD Staff:

(L-R) Rod Mayer, Conservation Program Coordinator; Kyle Andreae, Engineering Technician; Shane Wucherpfennig, County Conservationist; Kendra Kunding, Conservation Specialist; Barb Peeters, Conservation Administrative Specialist; Emily Salvinski, Conservation Specialist



2023 Conservation, Education, and Economic Development Committee (CEED) Members

(L-R) Dave LaFontaine, Vice Chair, Carmen Good, Farmer Representative, Laura Valenstein, Jake Hahn, Tom Buttk, Bill Leightnam, Chair

Land and Water Resources Management Plan Implementation & Other Programs

Starting in 2000, the Land & Water Conservation Department (LWCD) began securing state funds from the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to fund local conservation practices on an annual basis. The selected conservation practices are outlined as priorities in the Land & Water Resource Management Plan that was written for Wood County. On an annual basis, the LWCD selects landowners and practices to be funded from those that express an interest and have resource concerns.

- DATCP has provided Wood County LWCD \$1,891,713 to cost share best management practices over the last twenty-four years. Landowners county-wide are eligible for these funds. In 2023, Wood County LWCD secured \$54,000 for nutrient management/cover crops and \$54,000 to install selected practices.
- Wood County LWCD received a total of \$152,650.41 to cost-share best management practices from 2019 -2023 through the Multi-Discharger Variance (MDV) Program. In 2023, Wood County received \$31,821.64 to cost-share best management practices in the Castle Rock, Lake Dubay and Black River HUC 8 watersheds.
- The DNR provided funds to cost share best management practices through the Mill Creek TMDL grant over the past four year period. In 2023, Wood County issued \$147,857.95 in cost-share received through the Mill Creek TMDL grant. (Landowners in the Mill Creek watershed are eligible for these cost-share funds.)

Practices installed in Wood County and reimbursed by DATCP, DNR & MDV in 2023 include: cover crops (1,457 acres); nutrient management (1,471 acres); residue management (842 acres); streambank & shoreland protection (1); waste storage facility closure (1); wells decommissioned (2); livestock fencing (2) and grass waterway/roof runoff (1).

The following landowners installed Best Management Practices in 2023 (listed by cost share program):



DATCP

- Rick Armagost
- Kurt & Kathryn Eastling
- Ray Fait
- Curt & Angela Fuller
- George & Jill Gilbertson
- Thomas Gotz
- Luke Keuffer
- Ron & Mary Knuth
- Stephen & Barb Pankratz
- Roger Jr. & Lynn Pascavis
- Glen Peplinski
- Barry & Gayle Richardson
- Michael & Paula Rokus
- Randy Schill
- Alan Weiler
- Craig & Melissa Vitort



MDV

- Kenneth Duerr
- Kevin Heeg
- Ronald Schiller

What is a multi-discharge variance? [Link to info: https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/sites/default/files/topic/Wastewater/MDVfactsheet.pdf](https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/sites/default/files/topic/Wastewater/MDVfactsheet.pdf)



Mill Creek TMDL

- Adam Borchert
- Glen Peplinski
- Roth Golden Acres



Non-Metallic Mining (NMM)

The CEED Committee approved increases in nonmetallic mining fees to raise fees that hadn't changed since 2015. Annual permit fees were increased 20%. Financial assurance fees were increased from \$4,500 to \$6,000 per acre to ensure that the county has sufficient funds to cover administrative costs and to clean up and restore nonmetallic mining site(s) should the site operator or owner abandon the site.

- Certified reclamation and closing of two large non-metallic mine sites.
- Approved permit modification of a mine site.
- Received \$43,450 in reclamation permit fees under the Nonmetallic Mining Reclamation Program.
- Held \$3,293,400 in financial assurance for nonmetallic mine reclamation.
- Issued 15 new pond build exemptions to nonmetallic mining.



iBrandl Eisenhower Nonmetallic Site Reclaimed



Altmann Nonmetallic Site Reclaimed

- Inspected 53 nonmetallic mine sites for reclamation progress and active acres; created maps and calculations for each mine.
- Violations found on 7 mining sites with orders for reclamation plan revisions. One site shut down due to non-compliance issues.

Wildlife Abatement Program

- LWCD received \$49,899 from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WiDNR) for expenses and administration of the Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program.
- Enrolled 19 landowners in the Wildlife Damage Abatement program.
- Enrolled 3 crop owners in the claims program, opening 607 acres to public hunting.
- Completed 39 crop appraisals with crop damage claims paid out totaling \$11,905 (paid through WDACP as noted below).
- Inspected 15 deer fences for compliance with Wildlife Damage Abatement Program.
- Administered the 2023 venison donation program. 145 pounds of ground venison was donated to the St. Vincent de Paul Pantry in Wood County.



The Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program (WDACP) is a Wisconsin DNR state program that is administered through participating counties. Currently, all Wisconsin counties participate in the program with the exception of Kenosha and Menominee counties. WDACP provides damage prevention assistance and partial compensation to farmers when wildlife damage their agricultural crops. Wildlife managers issue agricultural damage shooting permits to farmers for removal of deer that cause damage. WDACP compensation limits are \$500 deductible per claim and \$10,000 maximum per claim.



WATER QUALITY PROGRAM

The goal of the Land & Water Conservation Department (LWCD), the Land and Water Resource Management Plan implementation, the Mill Creek 9-Key Element plan and Multi-Discharger Variance is to improve and protect water quality by reducing pollutants from urban and rural nonpoint sources. Nonpoint source pollution comes from a diverse number of activities in our daily lives including runoff from over-fertilized lawns and crop fields; constructing buildings and roads; and plowing our fields for crops. Nonpoint pollution is the leading cause of water quality problems in Wisconsin. LWCD staff would like to say **“thank you”** to all who have installed practices. We appreciate your efforts to protect the natural resources of Wood County and beyond.



Natural Resources Conservation Service

2023 Annual Report

by: Roy A. Diver, District Conservationist

The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment. NRCS Mission: Helping People Help the Land.

In 2023 workload and landowner interest in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) remained high. The CSP obligated \$301,063 to 8 landowners in Wood County to maintain existing levels of conservation and apply new conservation practices on their land; over 20 applications were received, this covered 5,048 acres of land. The EQIP obligated \$313,505 to 14 landowners in Wood County to plan and apply new conservation practices on their land; over 40 applications were received, this covered 2,205 acres of land. The CSP and EQIP in 2023 had 77 active contracts managed that cover over 20,000 acres of Cropland, Farmstead, Associated Ag Land, and Forestland, to continue to protect existing farm resources and implement additional conservation enhancements, all CSP payments for 2023 were processed, and additional funds were paid to landowners through the EQIP and for various conservation practices applied from previous year contracts.

Wisconsin Rapids NRCS staff, Andy Richardson, Resource Conservationist, Tristyn Forget, Soil Conservationist, Russ Biebl, Soil Conservation Technician, Pat Murphy, Retired ACES, Roy A. Diver, District Conservationist (stationed in Stevens Point).

The following is a partial list of landowner accomplishments completed with NRCS assistance from October 2022 through September 2023:

Conservation Plans Written	7,143 acres
Cover Crop Applied	999 acres
Brush Management Applied.....	77 acres
Pasture and Hayland Planting Applied	40 acres
Forest Management Plan Applied	3 No
Prescribed Grazing Applied	163 acres
Residue Management, No Till Applied	590 acres
Livestock Pipeline (Grazing) Applied	3,980 feet
Monarch Butterfly Habitat Applied	8 acres
Heavy Use Area Protection Applied	192 sq ft
High Tunnel System Applied.....	4 applied
Irrigation Water Management Applied	36 acres
Forest Stand Improvement Applied	15 acres
Structures for Wildlife Bat Boxes Planned	3 No
Estimated Soil Erosion Reduction	17,858 tons



Photo: USDA-NRCS

SWRM Grants

The Wisconsin Dept. of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection (DATCP) awards annual Soil & Water Resource Management (SWRM) grants to county conservation committees and other cooperators. These grants assist in funding county conservation staff and cost-share conservation practices installed by producers with assistance through their county. Grant recipients sign & follow a contract with their county. Grant funds must be spent in the year DATCP allocates them, although DATCP may extend cost-share funds an additional year for specific projects.

Who regulates Nonmetallic Mining in Wisconsin?...

County and local zoning bodies are responsible for all mine siting requirements and regulations. Under ch.NR 135, Wis. Adm. Code, the DNR Nonmetallic Mining Program is responsible for ensuring uniform statewide implementation of nonmetallic mining reclamation requirements. It does this by overseeing county & local reclamation programs, known as regulatory authorities (RAs).

NMM Overview.....

Nonmetallic Mining is the extraction of stone, sand, rock or similar materials from natural deposits. An estimated 2,500 mines in Wisconsin provide aggregate for construction, gravel & crushed stone (limestone & dolomite) for road construction, volcanic andesite for shingles, dimension stone for monuments, peat for horticulture and landscaping, industrial sand for export out of state for the the oil industry, and a considerable variety of materials for other uses.



NRCS STAFF (left to right):
Russ Biebl, Soil Conservation Technician
Roy Diver, District Conservationist
Tristyn Forget, Soil Conservationist
 Not pictured:
Andy Richardson, Resource Conservationist
Pat Murphy, Agricultural Conservation Experienced Employee



Extension-Wood County Report 2023...

Extension Wood County assists the Wood County Land & Water Conservation Department by providing educational support for county conservation programs.

Extension educators provide information relating to the development of soil, water, wildlife, livestock, crops and other related resources. Matt Lippert, Agriculture Agent, provides information related to the development of soil, livestock, crops, and other related resources. In addition to conservation, Matt educates about marketing, livestock and crop budgets, integrated pest management, grazing, land rent, farm management, family farm transfers and farmstead design.

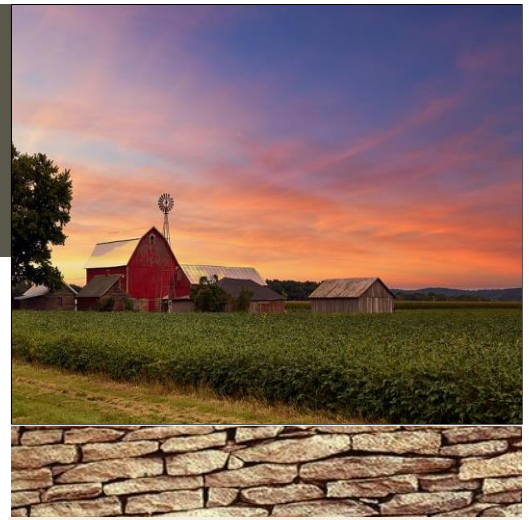
Extension also utilizes its regional and statewide network of UW-Madison specialists and area educators to assist with nutrient and pest management and assisting producers to develop their own nutrient management plans. Richard Halopka, Clark County Crops and Soils Agent, and Dan Marzu, North Central Wisconsin Nutrient & Pest Management Outreach Specialist, work closely with the Wood County Land and Water Conservation Department.

Anna James, Natural Resource Educator, provides resource support to local farmer-led watershed groups and develops educational programming on conservation land management practices. Anna has taken up planning and facilitation of the “Central Wisconsin Farm Profitability Expo,” an annual event modeled after the “Healthy Soil, Healthy Water” program. As part of her regional responsibilities, she assists citizen led watershed and lakes groups with curriculum development and facilitation.

Wood County is the top cranberry-producing county in North America so it is a natural fit to have Cranberry Outreach Specialist, Allison Jonjak, home based with Extension Wood County. Her efforts are focused on improving grower education in cranberry production practices and aligning researcher focus with grower needs. Allison started with Extension in 2020 and has hosted virtual and in-person events focusing on nutrient use efficiency, water use and quality, profitability, and integrated pest management. The Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers’ Association has awarded Allison the Education Advocate award, and cranberry growers appreciate wetlands-specific management decision support and guidance.

Extension also provides educational programs in Horticulture, 4-H and Youth Development, Human Relationships and Development, Community Development, Natural and Environmental Resources and Nutrition Education through the FoodWise program.

Stop by the Extension Office for plat books, farm record books, soil sample information, water quality and radon test kits.



Upcoming LWCD 2024 Events >>

- **Nutrient Management Farmer Education Classes** March 12, 19 and 26, 2024 (full course & refresher course) Registration Link: <https://www.woodcountywi.gov/Departments/LandConservation/Brochures/NutrientManagementTrainingBrochure.pdf>
- **Tree Sale** in April 2024 (order deadline closed 1/15/24...contact the LWCD office to be placed on waiting list for any extra trees (sold on a first-come, first-serve basis)
- **Central Wis. Farm Profitability Expo** – 4/24/24, 10am-3pm
- **Grazing Tour** – late summer/early fall – watch website for info!



Extension Wood County Staff: (pictured on left)

Back (left to right): Jasmine Carbajal (Bilingual 4-H Associate Educator), Wendy Young (Administrative Support), Jeremy Solin (Area 7 Extension Director), Matt Lippert (Agriculture Educator), Anna James-Mitchell (Natural Resources Educator), Jen McNelly (Natural Resources Educator), Michelle Van Krey (Healthy Communities Coordinator), Mallory McGivern (Area 7 FoodWise Administrator), Karli Tomsyck (Administrative Support)

Front (left to right): Hannah Wendels-Scott (FoodWise Nutrition Educator), Janell Wehr (Horticulture Educator), Kayla Rombalski (Community Development Educator)

Staff not pictured: Jackie Carattini (Human Development and Relationships Educator), Malina Carattini (4H Americorps member), Laura Huber (4-H Program Educator) Allison Jonjak (Cranberry Outreach Specialist), and Jennifer Swensen (Wisconsin 4-H Regional Program Manager)

