



CONSERVATION CHRONICLE

Newsletter of the Conservation, Planning, and Zoning Department

To conserve natural, cultural, and community resources by promoting, planning, and implementing efficient and effective programs.

Volume 24

Number 2

September 2013

Recycling Silage Bags and Ag Plastics

Agricultural plastics are used extensively for silage bags, bunker covers, bale wraps, and horticultural mulch. Managing large, dirty plastic sheets can be a major headache and cost for farmers. Sauk County will offer free disposal of agricultural plastics on Friday, October 18, from 10:00 a.m.-noon at the Sauk County Highway Shop, 620 STH 136, West Baraboo. It is best to keep the plastics as clean and dry as possible to maximize recycling opportunities.

Plastics do not need to be sorted. They can be brought to the Highway Shop in a supersack or unbagged. Supersacks are reusable and can hold up to 400 lbs. They keep the plastic dry and protected, take up less floor space, and are easier to handle than loose storage.

Farmers can pick up free supersacks and instructions at the following locations throughout the county:

- ⇒ **Reedsburg Farmer's Cooperative**
300 South Walnut, Reedsburg
- ⇒ **United Cooperative**
1360 Laukant Street, Reedsburg
- ⇒ **United Cooperative**
E11145 Hwy. 60, Sauk City
- ⇒ **United Cooperative**
E11725A Co. Rd. Z, Prairie du Sac
- ⇒ **McFarlane's Manufacturing**
780 Carolina Street (temporary location), Sauk City
- ⇒ **Hillsboro Farmer's Cooperative**
S1729 County HH, Hillsboro
- ⇒ **Hohl Farm Supply Inc.**
W11942 State Road 33, Portage
- ⇒ **Blain's Farm & Fleet**
1100 South Boulevard, Baraboo



Benefits of recycling ag plastics are:

- ✓ Reduced costs compared to other disposal methods
- ✓ Keeps plastics out of landfills
- ✓ It is illegal to burn plastics; burning plastic is a dangerous source of air pollution
- ✓ Useful products, such as sidewalks, can be made from waste ag plastics

For more information about this recycling opportunity, contact Sauk County Agricultural Agent Katie Pfeiffer at 355-3257 or katie.pfeiffer@ces.uwex.edu or Education Coordinator/Fiscal Manager Penny Pohle at ppohle@co.sauk.wi.us or 355-4839. More information is also available on the Sauk County website at: <https://www.co.sauk.wi.us/landconservationpage/recycling>

Wisconsin law: Agricultural plastic cannot be burned. Wisconsin rules can be found in the Department of Natural Resources Administrative Code, NR 429.

Inside...

Funding to Abandon Wells.....	page 2
Public Hearing Being Held	page 2
Nutrient Management Plan Cost Share	page 2
Welcome, Melissa!	page 3
Value of Cover Crops During Drought	page 3
Think About CREP	page 4
Training Opportunities.....	page 5
Emerald Ash Borer in Sauk County	page 6
Converting CRP to Cropland.....	page 8
Where is This?	page 9
Read Your Newsletter Online!.....	page 9
Sign Up for Conservation Programs	page 10
Deadline to Establish AEA	page 10
The Cropland Transect Survey	page 11
Hazardous Waste Clean Sweep	page 12

Funding to Abandon Wells

Landowners who wish to abandon their unused private wells can receive financial assistance through the Wisconsin DNR Well Abandonment Grant Program, which will cover up to 75 percent of the eligible costs.

Hundreds of unused wells can be found throughout Sauk County, posing a significant threat to our groundwater quality and safety. Whenever you see an old deteriorating windmill or an old hand pump like in the picture, there is likely to be an improperly filled and sealed well underneath, providing a direct line for contamination into clean groundwater. When contaminated water enters the unused well, the water bypasses the natural purifying process that would typically take place as water moves through the soil toward the groundwater table. Once contaminants reach the



groundwater table, they are free to flow with the groundwater and may flow toward active private and municipal wells that are used for drinking water. In order to protect groundwater quality and personal safety, unused and improperly abandoned wells should be filled and sealed with impermeable material such as neat cement grout, concrete grout, or bentonite chips.

Chapter NR 812 of Wisconsin state law requires the owner of unused wells to properly seal and abandon their wells. As of June 1, 2008, however, state law requires a well owner to hire a licensed well driller or pump installer to fill and seal wells. As a result, the cost for properly abandoning a well has increased. For more information contact Deb Lyons-Roehl, WDNR Drinking & Groundwater Program Manager at (608) 267-9350 or go to <http://dnr.wi.gov/aid/wellabandonment.html>

Public Hearing Being Held

Recently, Sauk County received a Letter of Final Determination (LFD) from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) notifying the county that the new Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) and Flood Insurance Study (FIS) would become effective for the Baraboo River within six months. Additionally, the revised county Floodplain Zoning Ordinance and maps must be adopted by the November 20, 2013, state and FEMA deadline. This requires that the county's Floodplain Zoning Ordinance be revised and approved by the DNR and FEMA no later than the November deadline or the county will be suspended from the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

The public hearing for the new maps and ordinance will be held by the Conservation, Planning, and Zoning Committee on Wednesday, September 25, at 10:00 a.m., and presented for adoption to the Sauk County Board of Supervisors on October 15 at 6:00 p.m. Both meetings will be held at the Sauk County West Square Building, Room 326.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the Conservation, Planning, and Zoning Department at 355-3245.

Nutrient Management Plan Cost Share

Sauk County has \$35,000 available for nutrient management cost sharing. Eligible costs include soil sampling and plan development by a qualified consultant. Cost-share agreements may be signed until December 31, 2013, but funds are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, so applicants are encouraged to apply now. Farmland acres that have received nutrient management cost share in the past through the Sauk County Land and Water Resources Management (LWRM) Program or USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) are not eligible for additional cost sharing; however, new acres purchased that have not received cost share are eligible. For additional information on nutrient management cost sharing, please contact Melissa Keenan at mkeenan@co.sauk.wi.us or 355-4838.

Welcome, Melissa!

Melissa Keenan started as the new Resource Conservationist for the Sauk County Conservation, Planning, and Zoning Department at the end of March. She studied biology at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and graduated in 2006. After graduation, she worked various positions for the Iowa DNR, Pheasants Forever, and US Fish & Wildlife Services, assisting landowners with establishing conservation practices on their land. Most recently, she worked for the Wisconsin DNR as the program coordinator for the Voluntary Public Access program. In her spare time, she enjoys fishing, hiking, kayaking, camping, gardening, and spending time with family and friends.

Melissa looks forward to working in Sauk County! She can be reached at mkeenan@co.sauk.wi.us or 355-4838.



Value of Cover Crops During the 2012 Drought

Interest in cover crops has increased in recent years both in Wisconsin and nationally. Cover crops help to protect farmland from soil and wind erosion during the most vulnerable times of winter and spring while promoting biological nitrogen fixation and soil moisture availability. Other benefits of cover crops include pest management (both weed and insect), enhancing soil quality (minimizing and reducing soil compaction and increasing soil organic matter), and reducing nitrate leaching on sandy soils.

The Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC) recently distributed a survey to farmers who have grown cover crops. A total of 759 farmers completed the survey. The farmers who completed the survey used cover crops on about 218,000 acres in 2012 and expected to increase that to over 300,000 acres in 2013.

Survey questions included cover crop adoption, benefits, challenges, and yield impacts. Noteworthy results included the following:

- ◆ During the fall of 2012, corn planted after cover crops had a 9.6% increase in yield compared to side-by-side fields with no cover crops. Likewise, soybean yields were improved 11.6% following cover crops.



- ◆ In the hardest hit drought areas of the Corn Belt, yield differences were even larger, with an 11.0% yield increase for corn and a 14.3% increase for soybeans.

- ◆ Surveyed farmers are rapidly increasing acreage of cover crops used, with an average of 303 acres of cover crops per farm planted in 2012 and farmers intending to plant an average of 421 acres of cover crops in 2013. Total acreage of cover crops among farmers surveyed increased 350% from 2008 to 2012.

- ◆ Farmers identified improved soil health as a key overall benefit from cover crops. Reduction in soil compaction, improved nutrient management, and reduced soil erosion were other key benefits cited for cover crops. As one of the surveyed farmers commented, "Cover crops are just part of a systems approach that builds a healthy soil, higher yields, and cleaner water."

- ◆ Farmers are willing to pay an average (median) amount of \$25 per acre for cover crop seed and an additional \$15 per acre for establishment costs (either for their own cost of planting or to hire a contractor to do the seeding of the cover crop).

Full survey results can be found online at www.northcentralsare.org/ and searching "Cover Crops Survey." Farmers looking to incorporate cover crops into their conservation plan can contact Melissa Keenan for additional information at mkeenan@co.sauk.wi.us or 355-4838.

Flooded Fields Again this Year? Think About CREP

Sauk County farmers whose fields flooded earlier this spring and summer should take a look at the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

CREP pays landowners to install conservation practices along waterways or return continually flooded fields to wetlands, while leaving the rest of the adjacent land in agricultural production. The amount of land put into CREP varies, and there is no minimum acreage. Landowners may enroll land under a 15-year agreement or a perpetual easement.

For farmers who suffered crop damage and financial losses due to this year's flooding, enrolling in CREP can help recoup some of those losses with up-front payments. CREP can also be part of long-term business planning, allowing farmers to manage known risk.

"This year's flooding has shown where farmers could benefit from CREP," said Ben Brancel, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). "Many of these lands flood repeatedly, so producers might want to consider an option that would reduce the risk of flooding and still provide them with some financial return."

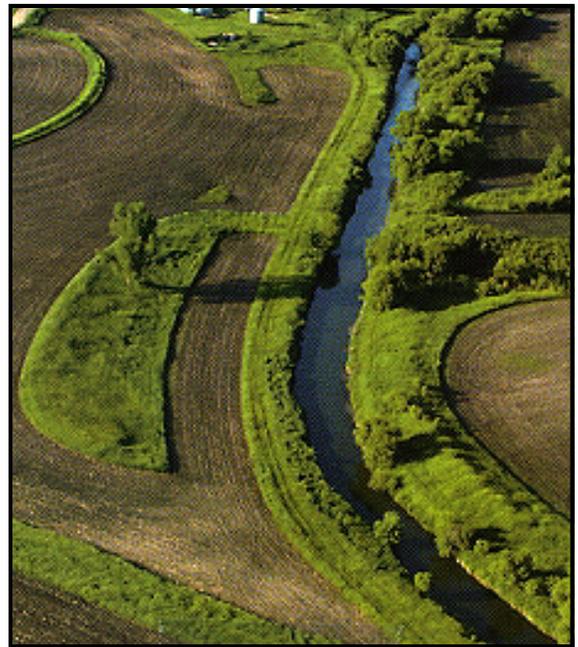
"One needs to keep in mind how often those fields (on a ten-year average) have failed to produce due to excessive soil moisture and flood events. With CREP there is no need to worry about how, when, and if you will be able to plant or harvest a crop. For the next 15 years, one can budget the income from CREP lands. The program may make good business sense for your particular farm," says Serge Koenig, CREP administrator for Sauk County CPZ.

Lands are eligible for CREP enrollment based on their 2002-2007 cropping or pasturing history and distances to ditches, streams, lakes, or wetlands. Signup is on a first-come, first-served basis. To find out if land is eligible, to enroll, or to get more information, contact Serge at skoenig@co.sauk.wi.us or 355-4837.

Payments to program participants have averaged \$2,000 per acre for 15-year contracts and \$2,850 per acre for perpetual easements during the agreement timeframe.

There are four types of payments:

1. **Annual payments** for up to 15 years, typically ranging from \$20 to \$228 per acre based on soil types of the area.
2. **State incentive payments**, made soon after the agreement is signed, based on the annual rental rate and averaging \$150 per acre for 15-year contracts and \$1,000 per acre for perpetual easements.
3. **Federal incentive payments**, also made after signing, of \$100 per acre for lands in riparian buffers, filter strips, or grassed waterway practices.
4. **Practice payments** to share the costs of installing conservation practices, with federal funds paying up to 50 percent of the cost and state funds paying up to 20 percent.



Commonly installed practices include filter strips, riparian buffers, and wetland restoration. Filter strips are grasslands between crops and water. Riparian buffers are planted to trees and shrubs on land between crops and water. Wetland restorations return wetland ecosystems to sites smaller than 40 acres, often by breaking drainage tiles and planting vegetation that tolerates wet soils. All of these practices reduce flooding impact by stopping water and allowing it to seep into the soil and subsoil, filtering water before it enters streams. In turn, habitat improves for fish and other aquatic life.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Soil Sampling Demonstration

A soil sampling demonstration will be held on Wednesday, October 23, from 1-3 p.m. The demonstration will start at the Reedsburg Madison College Campus in Room 114 with a short introduction to the methods used for soil sampling. Then we will travel to the Sauk County farm to take soil samples and answer questions. Participants who plan on taking their own soil samples are encouraged to attend this demonstration. Registration is required so farm maps and soil sample bags can be provided. For additional information or to register, contact Melissa Keenan at mkeenan@co.sauk.wi.us or 355-4838.

Opportunities for Dairy and Beef Producers

A Repro\$ Workshop will be held on Friday, November 15, for dairy producers interested in reproductive topics. More details will be provided in the next two months.

In addition, UW-Extension would like to host a series of meetings on beginning beef production.

For information on either of these opportunities, contact Sauk County Agricultural Agent Katie Pfeiffer at katie.pfeiffer@ces.uwex.edu or 355-3257. As always if you have any questions on various agricultural topics, UW-Extension is here to help.

Nutrient Management Farmer Education Class

A class will be offered for producers who want to become qualified to write their own nutrient management plan. This class is designed to provide farmers with a broad understanding of nutrient management regulations, water quality concerns, and the financial benefits of managing farm nutrients. Classes will be offered from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., December 11 and 18, at the Reedsburg Madison College Campus in Room 147. The classes are free, however, space is limited and participants must register by November 29. Current soil samples from a Department of Agriculture certified lab are required and must be less than four years old. Manure spreader calibrations should be done beforehand as well. To schedule a manure spreader calibration, find a certified soil sampling lab, or to register for the class, contact Melissa Keenan at mkeenan@co.sauk.wi.us or 355-4838.

Snap Plus Refresher Class

A Snap Plus refresher class for producers who have taken the nutrient management farmer education course and want to update their nutrient management plan will be offered on Wednesday, January 29, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Reedsburg Madison College Campus in Room 147. The class is free, however, space is limited and participants must register by January 22. Current soil samples from a Department of Agriculture certified lab are required and must be less than four years old. For more information or to register for the class, contact Melissa Keenan at mkeenan@co.sauk.wi.us or 355-4838.

Emerald Ash Borer Detected in Sauk County

Emerald ash borer (EAB), a brilliant green flat-headed metallic wood boring beetle, was confirmed as the cause of extensive ash mortality in Michigan back in 2002. This was the first confirmation of this invasive pest in the United States. The beetle had been present, and went unconfirmed as the cause of mortality, for many years prior to 2002.

EAB was first detected in Wisconsin in the Newburg area of Ozaukee and Washington counties back in 2008. In April of 2009, EAB was detected in western Wisconsin about 20 miles south of La Crosse in Vernon County. By the fall of 2009 EAB had been detected in seven counties (Brown, Crawford, Kenosha, Milwaukee, Vernon, Ozaukee, and Washington counties).

The past two years were relatively quiet with only a few new confirmations. This year, however, has been a very busy year with many new county and municipal EAB detections. As of August 8 there are now 17 total counties and 63 municipalities where EAB has been confirmed in Wisconsin. These numbers are changing almost daily it seems. To see where EAB is currently confirmed in Wisconsin visit: <http://datcpservices.wisconsin.gov/eab/articleassets/ConfirmedEABFindsInWisconsin.pdf>

The emerald ash borer is an exotic invasive pest from Asia and attacks all of our native species of ash trees. It will attack both apparent healthy as well as stressed ash trees. Note that both mountain ash and prickly ash are not true ash and are not attacked by this beetle. The larval or immature stage of the beetle is what causes the damage to the tree as they feed just under the bark, basically cutting off nutrients and girdling the tree. Depending on the size of the tree, it may take three or more years for populations to build up and feeding damage to kill a tree.

To detect EAB early in an area is very difficult and often when it is detected in a new area it has likely been there for a number of years. The signs and symptoms to look for include bark splits, S-shaped winding feeding galleries below the bark, and very characteristic 1/8" D-shaped exit holes. Other symptoms to look for include canopy thinning and extensive wood pecker activity, the latter being an indicator of some kind of insect under the bark.

Emerald ash borer was detected at Mirror Lake State Park in July of this year. This was the first detection in Sauk County. Although not surprising, it was disappointing. A number of planted ash at the park entrance area were confirmed with extensive galleries and emerging beetles. Eighteen ash trees were removed and chipped on site. Additional park ash trees will be assessed this fall. Overall, the ash resource in this particular area is very limited and mostly planted ash. The impacts at Mirror Lake State Park will be minimal, and park users will not notice much of a difference.



An adult EAB beetle



Peeling just under the bark will reveal an S-shaped winding feeding gallery. Note the D-shaped hole where the larva pupated and emerged.



Characteristic small 1/8th inch D-shaped exit hole. Note the bark split adjacent to the exit hole.

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

Impacts and Management

Impacts from EAB and the damage they cause are many. From an economic standpoint the impacts may be greatest in urban communities and residential areas. The level of impact will vary from community to community based on the ash resource. Communities with a high percent of ash trees will feel greater impacts as such trees will need to be either treated or cut and hopefully replaced. From an ecological standpoint, certain forest areas, including the black ash swamps of northern Wisconsin, will see major damage and ecological impacts. In southern Wisconsin the ash resource varies and is a smaller component of central and north hardwoods as well as lowland hardwood types.

It has only been slightly over a decade since EAB was first recognized as a major forest pest in the U.S. In this short period of time, there have been many advances on tools to manage individual landscape level ash trees. There are now a number of treatment products available to either the homeowner or a licensed arborist that, if used correctly, can fend off damage by EAB. Since we do not know if or when populations of EAB could get back below damaging levels in an infested area, treatments should be used with the understanding that it may be a routine and long-term option. Some communities may choose to treat a portion of their ash as a tool to delay removals from a budgetary standpoint or to preserve high valued and historic trees. These are local decisions and there are resources available to address such decision making.

From a forest management standpoint, there are no real preventative solutions other than slowing introduction of EAB and managing the damage or anticipated damage. Long term, there may be some hope at slowing EAB ash tree mortality with natural controls such as parasitoid wasps. A few small stingless wasp species have been studied and introduced in a number of areas of the U.S. including eastern and western Wisconsin. It will take time to know if they will be helpful at slowing or reducing damage by EAB.

Regulations

With many damaging exotic pests, regulations such as quarantines, are often put in place to slow or prevent establishment of the pest. Emerald ash borer is no exception. Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection is the lead agency

regarding the EAB quarantine. The EAB quarantine prohibits or limits movement of ash products and all hardwood species of firewood. To facilitate utilization of timber, DATCP may establish “compliance agreements” with mills, loggers, and truckers. For more information on quarantine regulations contact DATCP or visit: <http://datcpservices.wisconsin.gov/eab/article.jsp?topicid=20>

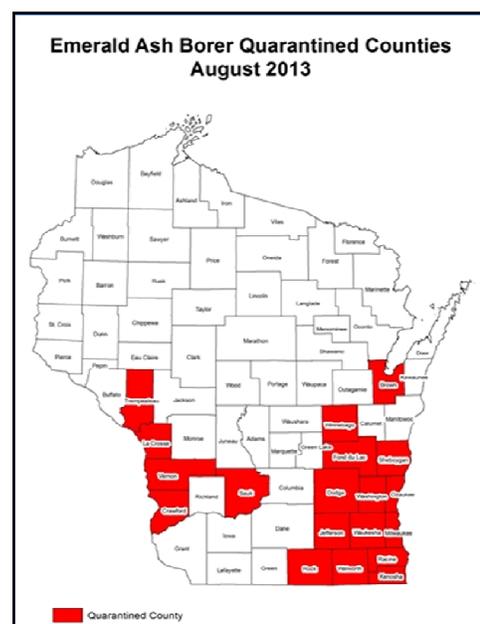
Wisconsin DNR also has the regulatory “invasive species rule” called NR40. Emerald ash borer is a listed species and all quarantine regulations must be adhered to. Within a quarantine, there may be areas not yet infested with EAB. A list of voluntary precautions were developed, for suspected infested wood, that may slow establishment of this pest elsewhere within the quarantined area. For the list of precautions for use within a quarantine visit: <http://datcpservices.wisconsin.gov/eab/articleassets/EAB%20Best%20Management%20Practices-BMP%20recommendations.pdf>

Resources Available

There are a number of great resources available to municipalities, property managers, woodland owners, and community residents. The main source of information is the EAB web portal: <http://emeraldashborer.wi.gov>

Another great resource for municipalities for planning and managing EAB can be found at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/UrbanForests/EABToolBox.html>

If you think you may have EABs, call the EAB hotline at 1-800-462-2803.



Converting CRP to Cropland

Your Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contract is expiring and you are choosing not to renew. What do you need to consider when converting this land back to cropland?

Converting expired CRP acres to cropland is an undertaking that should be planned carefully, especially when land is considered Highly Erodible Land (HEL). Under CRP, a healthier soil has developed beneath the established grass vegetation. For years, soil erosion has been controlled; soil and water quality has been enhanced; organic matter, soil structure, and water infiltration have improved; and the movement of sediment, fertilizer, and pesticides has been reduced. The protective vegetative cover has also provided quality wildlife habitat. Does converting CRP land back into crop production mean losing all of these stewardship benefits? No, it just means using proper planning and good management going forward! There have been several studies that have looked at potential management alternatives to bring expired CRP acres back into crop production. Consider a cropping system that will minimize the impacts to the soil quality while sustaining the benefits. Here are some items to consider:

- Which areas of the fields will be planted and which should remain in grass/legume cover as buffers
- Crops and rotations you want to plant
- The planting system you will use on each crop
- The soil fertility concerns (nutrient management planning)
- Impacts on soil and water quality
- If the field is HEL, management and conservation practices needed for compliance

Soil Erosion Control on Highly Erodible Land

Depending on the planting system, soil erosion rates can increase when fields with steep, sandy, or silty soils that may be HEL are cropped, compared to when the land was maintained in sod under the CRP. Exposing the soil to the erosive forces of wind and water when fields are returned to cropland seriously deteriorates the soil's ability to function properly. Soil loss rates depend on the crop rotation, planting system, tillage, and crop residue left on the soil surface. Soil loss and deterioration can be greatly reduced by the use of conservation measures such as diverse crop rotations that include different crop types, cover crops, and/or forages, and reduced tillage systems. The conservation compliance provisions of the farm bill require USDA program participants who produce annual agricultural commodities on highly erodible fields to apply an approved conservation system on those fields. Required residue levels must be achieved by the beginning (at the time of planting the crop) of the second year after being converted from grass to crop; and for long-term rotations, the most conserving crop must be planted by the beginning of the third year.

Planting System: No-till vs. Tillage

No-till is the preferred method when converting grassland to cropland. Research indicates soil managed under a grass-legume sod results in significant soil quality improvements, namely in organic matter levels, aggregate stability, total pore space, and soil infiltration rates. These improvements result in soil that is in better condition to grow plants. Soils in CRP fields are ideally suited for a no-till system because they have the needed physical, chemical, and biological qualities that will support successful no-till systems. If tillage is used, it should be restricted to the first year, and only involve implements (harrows, blade/roller, aerator, etc.) that lightly disturb the top few inches of soil, leveling rough areas in the field. Conventional tillage requiring several operations can destroy many of the soil quality improvements gained under CRP in one year.

Crops and Rotation Options

Plant residue protects the soil surface and feeds your soil. Some of the best crops are those that produce large amounts of crop residue like corn or small grains. Crops with genetic traits like herbicide tolerance or pest resistance, or crops that form a dense canopy like drilled soybeans, small grains, or alfalfa/clover hay provide the farmer options for pest management. Corn, wheat, and winter cereals are good choices to plant into CRP cover where residue, nutrient, and pest management is adequate. Soybeans may also be a good crop for the first year after the conversion. If they have not been previously grown in the field, the seeds must be inoculated with the proper strain of Rhizobia to maximize nodulation.

Cover Crops

In some farm systems, cover crops are planted as a transition crop from the grass sod to cropland. Cover crops can be used for a cash crop, forage or hay, green manure, or as a pest, nutrient, or residue management strategy. Consult with CPZ or NRCS staff to find a crop rotation that controls soil erosion and maintains the soil quality benefits.

Fertility

It is crucial to know the current soil fertility levels before planting. Soils under long-term perennial vegetation are much different than soils that have been cropped regularly over the last decade. Soil tests to determine fertility should be completed before fields are returned to production, allowing ample time to schedule and apply fertilizer required for planned crops. In areas where soil test nitrogen levels are low, consider applying starter fertilizer at planting. Consider use of annual legumes as a cover crop prior to the cash crop year. These plants have a low C:N ratio and fix atmospheric nitrogen that is readily available to following crops.

Organic Crop Production

Another consideration for some producers is organic farming. Land that has been in CRP may meet some of the requirements of the USDA's National Organic Program. Producers interested in this option should contact a certifying agency for specific requirements of organic production.

Considerations

It is important to consider impacts to the soil and water resources as you decide whether and how to transition CRP acres back into agricultural production. Other programs, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) may be available to help implement some of the conservation practices needed on these acres.

Where is This?



If you recognize where this is located, send us your answer along with your name, address, and phone number by November 15 to: Sauk County CPZ, 505 Broadway, Baraboo, WI 53913. One winner will be drawn from the correct answers and will receive a Farm & Fleet gift certificate.

Congratulations to Jonas Jr. and Leah Troyer of Loganville for correctly identifying the old school house located at S6301 Eli Valley Road, Loganville.



Old school house on
Eli Valley Road

Read Your Newsletter Online!

Would you prefer to receive an electronic copy of future newsletters instead of being mailed one? Please e-mail us at conservation@co.sauk.wi.us if you would. When they are available, we will notify those interested in viewing the newsletter with an e-mail. You will be able to read them online on the county website at www.co.sauk.wi.us This will help us reduce postage costs as well as the amount of paper generated!

Sign Up Now For Conservation Programs

Many farmers do not realize that most of the USDA conservation programs are open for signup at any time, not just for a few weeks each year. Most of the programs offered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are open year-round for applications.

Fall is a great time to visit NRCS. With the crops off the field, NRCS staff can see the land and better assess what is needed. NRCS can also help you determine which program best meets your needs, whether it is the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), or other options. Both EQIP and CSP are open for signup all year. Applications are held until an annual ranking date is announced, then all applications that NRCS has received to date are ranked for funding that year.

NRCS has the following conservation programs available for signup:

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- Conservation Stewardship Program
- Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) - *USDA FSA program*
- CRP variations (i.e. CREP and continuous CRP)
- Conservation Technical Assistance

Call 355-4420 Ext. 3 now for an appointment to talk about any of the conservation options for your farm.

USDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

Deadline to Establish New Agricultural Enterprise Areas is Approaching

An “agricultural enterprise area” (AEA) is an area of contiguous land primarily in agricultural use that is identified by a local community as an area that is valuable for current and future agricultural use. The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection designates AEAs in response to a locally developed petition. The Fairfield AEA in the Town of Fairfield is currently the only AEA in Sauk County.

Petitions for establishing new AEAs are due in late-March 2014. Farm owners and local governments must work together to submit a petition to DATCP. By working together, and by drawing in other local stakeholders including ag-related businesses, economic development experts, and other interested individuals, the community can better ensure adequate support for an AEA selected for designation.

A petition must be signed by at least five eligible farm owners and all political subdivisions

located within the proposed AEA. Additionally, the political subdivisions located in a proposed AEA must pass a resolution in support of the designation of the AEA. Others may sign the petition as cooperators or submit a letter in support of the designation.

Once an AEA has been designated, eligible farm owners can enter into *voluntary* farmland preservation agreements to collect a farmland preservation tax credit of \$5-\$10/acre. Farm owners must agree to keep their land in agricultural use for a minimum of 15 years and meet state agricultural standards.

Individuals interested in petitioning for a new agricultural enterprise area in Sauk County can contact Melissa Keenan at mkeen@co.sauk.wi.us or 355-4838. Additional information on agricultural enterprise areas and the petition process can be found on the DATCP website at: http://datcp.wi.gov/Environment/Working_Lands_Initiative/

The Cropland Transect Survey

Since 1999, Sauk County has been conducting the cropland transect survey as a tool for collecting data on farming practices, crops grown, and as a sheet and rill soil loss measurement for purposes of analyzing program delivery and determining farming trends. Sauk County uses the Transect Survey and Software Program to measure soil erosion and cropping practices as part of a statewide effort to measure Wisconsin's statutory goal of "T by 2000."

The Cropland Transect Survey method was originally developed by Purdue University to collect conservation tillage and crop residue information. It was later expanded to obtain county and watershed data on tillage, crop residue, and soil loss. Survey results have shown that the transect method can produce a high level of reliability combined with a relatively short data collection process. When conducted properly, this cropland survey can provide 90 percent or more confidence in the accuracy of the results.

Data Summary

In 2013, data was collected from 656 points and represents an estimated 186,000 cropland acres in Sauk County.

- The average countywide soil loss for 2013 is 2.6 tons/acre/year. Past soil losses were 3.4 tons in 2007 and 3.0 tons in 2008 and 2009.
- There are 6,500 acres (4%) of cropland in the county eroding at rates of 2 to 3 times tolerable soil loss levels, this means 6 to 15 tons of soil loss/acre/year.
- The majority of cropland (83%) continues to meet state agricultural performance standards by meeting tolerable soil loss levels.
- Only 1% of our cropland is using conventional clean tillage such as moldboard plowing.
- 36% of our cropland is using a mulch tillage system leaving 15-30% residue after planting.
- 23% of our cropland is using a no-till system leaving greater than 30% residue after planting.

Observations

High percentages for corn (43%) and soybean (17%) acres were observed as well as a slight increase of 2% for both small grain and hay acres.

Fallow acres were up 3% due to wet conditions and cooler temperatures this spring. Many fields were planted late, specifically in the LaValle and Reedsburg area where heavy soils remained saturated well into the summer.

Did you know that...

- ◇ Soil makes up the outermost layer of our planet.
- ◇ Topsoil is the most productive soil layer.
- ◇ Soil has varying amounts of organic matter (living and dead organisms), minerals, and nutrients.
- ◇ Five tons of topsoil spread over an acre is only as thick as a dime.
- ◇ Natural processes can take more than 500 years to form one inch of topsoil.
- ◇ Soil scientists have identified over 70,000 kinds of soil in the United States.
- ◇ Soil is formed from rocks and decaying plants and animals.
- ◇ An average soil sample is 45% minerals, 25% water, 25% air, and 5% organic matter.
- ◇ Different-sized mineral particles, such as sand, silt, and clay, give soil its texture.
- ◇ Fungi and bacteria help break down organic matter in the soil.
- ◇ Plant roots and lichens break up rocks which become part of new soil.
- ◇ Roots loosen the soil, allowing oxygen to penetrate. This benefits animals living in the soil.
- ◇ Roots hold soil together and help prevent erosion.
- ◇ Five to 10 tons of animal life can live in an acre of soil.
- ◇ Earthworms digest organic matter, recycle nutrients, and make the surface soil richer.
- ◇ Mice take seeds and other plant materials into underground burrows, where this material eventually decays and becomes part of the soil.
- ◇ Mice, moles, and shrews dig burrows which help aerate the soil.

<http://epa.gov/gmpo/edresources/soil.html>

Sauk County Conservation, Planning, and Zoning Department
 505 Broadway - West Square Building
 Baraboo, WI 53913
 (608) 355-3245
 www.co.sauk.wi.us
 conservation@co.sauk.wi.us

Nonprofit Org
 U.S. Postage Paid
 Baraboo, WI 53913
 Permit No. 105

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

- CPZ..... (608) 355-3245
- CPZ Fax..... (608) 355-3292
- NRCS..... (608) 355-4420
- FSA..... (608) 355-4420
- UWEX..... (608) 355-3250
- DNR Foresters..... (608) 355-4475
 (608) 355-4476
- APHIS (WDS)..... (800) 433-0663

Printed on Recycled Paper 



HAZARDOUS WASTE CLEAN SWEEP

Former Sauk County Landfill, E8795B Evergreen Lane, Baraboo
 (Between Baraboo and Reedsburg off of Hwy. 33 near the junction of Hwy. 23)
 Saturday, October 5, 2013 8:30 a.m.-Noon

For more information:
 (608) 355-4839
 ppohle@co.sauk.wi.us
 www.co.sauk.wi.us

Free disposal of:

- Unused or unwanted pesticides including herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, rodenticides, wood preservatives
- Home products: oven cleaners, spot removers, drain cleaners
- Light bulbs/fluorescent tubes
- Waste motor oil, oil filters
- Batteries (watch, calculator, etc.)
- Latex, lead-based, and oil-based paint
- Other products: solvents, animal health products, teat wash, degreasers, wood finishes, paint additives, hydraulic fluid, pool chemicals, strippers, photographic chemicals

Helping Hands Recycling will accept from households (**not** businesses) at no charge (donations will be accepted for Boys & Girls Club of Sauk County) the following items at the event:

- Electronics
- Appliances
- Scrap metals
- Batteries (automotive, li-on, ni-mh, ni-cad)

Please contact Helping Hands Recycling at helpinghandsrecycling@gmail.com or (608) 213-8629 for more information. Their website is www.helpinghandsrecycling.com

What is not accepted:

- Pharmaceuticals, IVs, needles
- Explosives, detonators, blasting caps
- Radioactive materials including smoke alarms
- Infectious and biological waste
- Compressed gas cylinders
- Recyclables, yard and household waste
- Asbestos
- Demolition materials

Tires will be accepted for fees between \$1-\$25.



Agricultural and VSQGs by appointment ONLY