

## Cover Letter

Sauk County LRE Dept,

Please find the Sauk County Farm Plots Proposal being submitted by the Sauk Soil and Water Improvement Group (SSWIG) enclosed with this letter. SSWIG has titled this proposal, "Regenerating Sauk County Soils" in reference to this project's intent to impact the local farm community to engage in an exploration and eventual adoption of more regenerative practices on the Sauk County landscape. Ron Bula is serving as a point of contact for this project and may be reached by the following channels:

Mailing Address: S4515 Scenic Road, Baraboo WI 53914

Phone: 608-477-0054

Email: [rlbula57@gmail.com](mailto:rlbula57@gmail.com)

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ron Bula". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ron" and last name "Bula" clearly distinguishable.

Ron Bula

**PROPOSAL CONTENTS**

Notice is hereby given that the County will receive Proposals per specifications until 4:30 PM, October 14, 2022 (CST) ("Closing"), to provide proposals for conducting agricultural demonstration and research at the Sauk County Farm. No Proposals will be received or considered after that time.

Submittals should be limited to 8.5 x 11 sheet size and should be submitted in sealed envelopes to Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department, 505 Broadway, Ste. 248, Baraboo, WI 53913 Each submittal should follow the provided template. Addenda to submittals will not be considered. The sealed envelope should be marked "Sauk County Farm – Demo Plot Proposal."

**Cover Letter** The cover letter should include the project title, applicant/organization name, address, phone number, email address, and original signature of an individual with authority to negotiate on behalf of and to contractually bind the group, and who may be contacted during the period of proposal evaluation.

Project Title: Regenerating Sauk County Soils

Applicant Name/Organization: Sauk Soil and Water Improvement Group (SSWIG)

Applicant Signature: 

Address: S4515 Scenic Road

City: Baraboo State: WI Zip: 53913

Phone Number: 608-477-0054

Email Address: rlbula57@gmail.com

**Group Qualifications.** Demonstrate the group's experience implementing regenerative and conservation-friendly farming best practices. Include a description of the group and a statement of the group's qualifications for implementing the project. Indicate any specialized expertise relevant to the project and discuss the group's in-house abilities and commitment to delivering the project in a timely manner. Indicate if the group has access to their own equipment and data/yield collection technology to install the practices outlined in the proposal and maintain accurate planting and harvest records.

SSWIG is a local watershed protection group dedicated to improving soil health and water quality through regenerative agricultural practices and education to build resilient family farms and thriving rural communities. This group is composed of farmers from around Sauk County and the surrounding area who advocate for a local shift towards more regenerative agricultural systems. To help facilitate this shift SSWIG members have utilized their own operations to demonstrate how regenerative practices (e.g. no-till planting, cover crops, managed grazing) can be best applied within our local context.

SSWIG has partnered with organizations like the Sand County Foundation, UW Extension, and Discovery Farms to collect data on the impacts of regenerative practices on member operations. Members have also hosted numerous events, welcoming other farmers and the wider community onto their operations to share their findings. A central demonstration site, such as the Sauk County Farm Demonstration Plots, would help to expand upon the work already being conducted by the group.

SSWIG has already applied for grant funding through the DATCP Producer-Led Watershed Protection Program to afford the operation of the demonstration plot (i.e. seed, fertilizer, chemical inputs, custom rate field operations). The group has members operating in the area and will partner with one of these members or the Sauk County Farm cropland lessee to perform all necessary field operations. SSWIG will collaborate with their partners (those listed above and others interested) to plan and implement the proposed demonstration plots, and to collect and present usable data.

**Project Understanding and Approach.** Describe the plans for accomplishing the required work. Include a work plan and a proposed schedule showing tasks and time frames necessary to complete the scope of services by the preferred completion date.

SSWIG proposes utilizing the Sauk County demonstration plot fields to build the capacity of local farmers to integrate cover crops in their rotations and implement regenerative management systems. To accomplish this two existing fields will be divided into approximately six side-by-side plots. Each plot will showcase a different management approach with one "control" field in a no-till corn - soybean rotation (with no cover crop). Remaining plots will integrate a progression of greater rotational (e.g. winter wheat) and cover cropping diversity (e.g. soybeans to winter rye, frost seeding red clover into winter wheat, winter wheat to diverse cover crop mix, interseeding diverse cover crop mix into corn grain).

SSWIG will determine how fields will be split and assign cropping plans to specific plots during the upcoming winter season. At this point seed orders (cash and cover crop), fertilizer, and chemical inputs will be placed for plots. Additionally, SSWIG will create and sign an agreement with either the Sauk County Farm lessee or a local member to complete field operations.

A nutrient management plan meeting the NRCS 590 standard will be developed, followed, and updated on an annual basis. Additionally plots will receive baseline soil health (Haney), infiltrometer, and any other relevant tests during the spring season, prior to planting. Soil health tests will be completed every four years to track the impact of management practices. Additionally, plant tissue tests will be taken throughout the year on plots to track differences in nutrient uptake between management systems. Likewise cover crop biomass analysis will be conducted on all relevant plots, following established SSWIG data collection protocol. Plot crop yields, expenses, and profitability will be tracked annually. Field days will be hosted at the demo plot site on an annual basis so that local farmers and other community members can tour the site and hear about what has worked and what hasn't. This will create opportunities to engage in a discussion about how best to implement a system on their own operations that improves soil health, water quality, and farm profitability. This kind of discussion will help local farmers to learn from each others and overcome barriers to adopting new practices.

**Group Information and Project Team.** Describe the qualifications and experience of each team member who will participate in the project. Identify any collaborating partners associated with the proposal. Describe your group's familiarity with the Department and past experience with any rental agreement, contract or program participation.

SSWIG will be the primary project managers. The group advisory board is largely composed of local farmers experienced in the use of regenerative practices on their own operations. The collective expertise of this group encompasses a wide array of topics, including no-till planting, planting green, cover cropping, management intensive grazing, nutrient management planning, and more. However, the group also hopes to engage additional partners, such as Sauk County LRE, UW Extension, FFA organizations of the surrounding school districts, and others to plan and implement the demo plots and make this project a success.

SSWIG is familiar with Sauk County LRE and currently holds an MOU with the department to provide administrative assistance to the group. They have worked closely with LRE staff to apply for funding through the DATCP Producer-Led Watershed Protection Program and roll out conservation programs since the groups formation in 2019. The group has hosted numerous field days and other educational events each year and has developed and implemented their own cost-share programs to promote the implementation of conservation practices on local farms.

**Anticipated Project Schedule.** All proposers will define the anticipated deadline for completion and presentation of the project and all related supporting activities. The project schedule will be incorporated into the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department and the successful respondent. Please identify the outreach and educational activities that will be provided during and at the conclusion of the project period.

#### Projected Annual Schedule

##### Winter 202X:

- plan demo plot layout
- finalize cropping plans for each demo plot
- complete NMP with available soil samples
- order seed, fertilizer, and chemical inputs
- create and finalize agreement with either cropland lessee or SSWIG member

##### Spring/Summer 202X

- complete soil health, infiltrometer, and crop tissue tests (if during scheduled year)
- spring field operations (e.g. burndown herbicide, pre-plant fertilization, planting)
- follow-up field operations (e.g. pre/post-emerge herbicide, side dress)
- track field operation time/custom rate costs
- host spring planting field day to showcase and discuss relevant topic (e.g. no-till planting, herbicide program, fertilizer program, etc.)

##### Fall 202X

- crop harvest
- record yield data
- conduct cover crop biomass analysis
- annual cover crop field day (showcase what the different cover crop trials look like approaching the end of the season; discuss which cover crop varieties are most successful in the Sauk County area and how to incorporate them in a rotation;

##### Winter 202Y

- compile seasonal crop data (e.g. expenses, crop yield, revenue, weather)
- present findings at SSWIG annual event and encourage farmers to check out plots during the growing season.

Upon completing this project SSWIG will compile all collected data. The group will work with partners to analyze this data, summarize their findings, and publicize a report that other local farmers can use as a reference when adopting regenerative management systems.

**Supporting Information.** Submit any additional information or recommendations supporting the proposal as an appendix or separate attachment.

please see attached letters of support from SSWIG partner organizations.



Extension  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Dear Review Committee,

I am writing to convey full support of the Sauk Soil and Water Improvement Group's (SSWIG) bid to manage the Sauk County Farm Demo Plots.

SSWIG has a history of strong educational events centered on peer to peer learning that draw in farmers from their own county and surrounding counties. Their excitement and innovation has drawn in a unique set of partners and has made them a vital ally and mentor to many of the other groups in the area. The commitment of their farmer leaders is unmatched, as they are typically the only group with a farmer representative at every Southwest WI Producer-Led Regional Meeting.

The group has expressed interest in building a long term demonstration plot, this would have a large impact on the surrounding area and would help to convince middle to late adopters of the benefits and potential of conservation practices. Long term demonstration plots are a rarity across Wisconsin and I consider it a unique opportunity to have such enthusiastic and innovative producers invested in such a project. Their strong relationships with partners like UW-Madison Extension and the USDA- ARS Dairy Forage Research Station, paired with their own skilled outreach capabilities, gives me confidence that their demonstration plots would be impactful and provide meaningful data to the agricultural community in Sauk County.

If funded, the Extension Agriculture and Water Quality Program will assist SSWIG in education on how different agricultural management practices impact water quality, designing research and demonstration projects centered on water quality, any relevant data collection, and will connect them to useful resources and partners.

We encourage the committee to approve the proposal being submitted by SSWIG. The opportunity will help to strengthen existing partnerships and provide new opportunities for producers in Sauk County. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [zegler@wisc.edu](mailto:zegler@wisc.edu) or 608-224-3716

Sincerely,

Chelsea Zegler

Agriculture and Water Quality Outreach Specialist  
UW-Madison Division of Extension

**Division of Extension**  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
432 N Lake Street Madison, WI 53706  
[info@extension.wisc.edu](mailto:info@extension.wisc.edu) | [extension.wisc.edu](http://extension.wisc.edu)





United States Department of Agriculture

Research, Education, and Economics  
Agricultural Research Service

10/6/2022

Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department  
505 Broadway, Ste. 248  
Baraboo, WI 53913

Dear Review Committee:

I write to acknowledge synergisms between the work of the Sauk Soil and Water Improvement Group (SSWIG) and the mission and objectives of our research and outreach plans at the U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center (DFRC). Previous research has shown that their plans to provide cost-share funding for farmers who convert acres to no-till and cover crops, and additional cost-share for planting green and grazing of cover crops will address soil health and water quality targets and are likely to increase farm resilience. Further, SSWIG is committed to increasing educational programs for farmers and the general public alike to increase awareness and adoption of these practices through their proposal to manage the Sauk County Farm Demo plots and other complementary efforts. Their plans to showcase side-by-side demonstrations of different conservation management systems aligns well with DFRC's efforts and will create opportunities for farmers in Sauk County and the region to exchange ideas and access research and extension resources to inform their decision-making.

The U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center shares a commitment to providing agricultural producers, and the dairy industry specifically, with information and tools that will advance the economic and environmental sustainability of farms. We welcome opportunities to collaborate with the SSWIG, and other producer-led watershed groups, as they take on these challenges.

Sincerely,

DENNIS W. HANCOCK  
Center Director

Digitally signed by  
DENNIS HANCOCK  
Date: 2022.10.06  
15:47:57 -05'00'

U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center  
1925 Linden Dr.  
Madison, WI 53706  
608-890-0050

USDA is an Equal Opportunity Employer



October 4, 2022

Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department  
West Square Building, Rm 248  
505 Broadway Baraboo, WI 53913

Re: Letter of Support for Sauk Soil and Water Improvement Group

Dear Sauk County LRE Department,

Sand County Foundation (SCF) is pleased to provide this letter of support for the Sauk Soil and Water Improvement Group (SSWIG) proposal to manage the county's new Farm Demonstration Plots. SCF's mission is to inspire and enable a growing number of private landowners to ethically manage the natural resources in their care, so future generations have clean and abundant water, healthy soil to support growing food demands, plentiful habitat for wildlife and opportunities for outdoor recreation. We are advocates for groups like SSWIG, whose members are leaders across Wisconsin's farming community and key communicators to reaching middle to late conservation adaptors.

SCF has been actively collaborating with SSWIG graziers on a three-year, North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Research and Education Grant to demonstrate the value of rotational grazing with cover crops. The goal is to share the agronomic, environmental, and soil health data collected from SSWIG graziers through testimonials and publications in order to expand cover crop acreage with rotational grazing across the Midwest for a more resilient agricultural system. We appreciate working with the SSWIG graziers because they are innovative and willing to try new management:

SSWIG's outreach complements SCF's demonstration efforts. They encourage others to ease into conservation and do so with realistic expectations; although the first attempt may not result in the ideal outcome, you learn something and adapt. SCF values their willingness to partner on events as a way to amplify the reach. Their members are true agricultural leaders; therefore, they will have no shortage of ideas for showcasing side-by-side demonstration of innovative conservation management systems.

SSWIG has been a reliable partner for conservation demonstration; we encourage the review committee to support their proposal to manage the new demonstration plots so that they can continue to share their land ethic to others within and beyond watershed boundaries. SCF commits to support SSWIG's interest in conservation demonstration by helping to identify plot comparisons, quantify outcomes, and communicate results. This opportunity will strengthen SSWIG's existing partnerships and gain additional members to increase the adoption of regenerative practices such as reduced-tillage, cover crops, planting green, and grazing cover. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Heidi M. Peterson', is positioned above the typed name.

Dr. Heidi M. Peterson  
Vice-President, Agricultural Research and Conservation  
Sand County Foundation  
[hpeterson@sandcountyfoundation.org](mailto:hpeterson@sandcountyfoundation.org)  
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