

Resources

Sample written lease agreements can be found on the Ag Lease 101 website:

<https://aglease101.org/>

Fact sheets, templates and other resources related to developing conservation leases can be found on the Land Stewardship Project website:

<https://landstewardshipproject.org/stewardshipfood/conservationleases>

Local resources can be found on the Extension Sauk County website:

<https://sauk.extension.wisc.edu/agriculture/ag-sauk-county/>

About Us


The Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department offers technical assistance to design and implement conservation practices to all county landowners free of charge. Financial assistance may be available through various federal, state and other county programs. Contact us today with any questions or for more information!

Contact Us

Phone: (608) 355-3245

Email: conservation@saukcountywi.gov

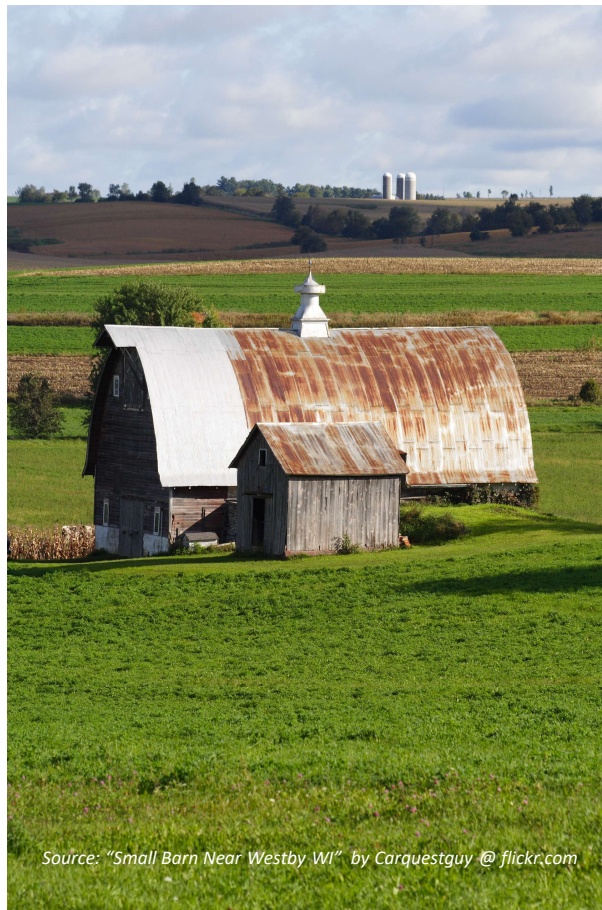
Web: www.co.sauk.wi.us/cpz

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SAUK COUNTY LAND
RESOURCES &
ENVIRONMENT

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Baraboo, WI 53913



Source: "Small Barn Near Westby WI" by Carquestguy @ flickr.com

CONSERVATION PAYS...

In your farm lease

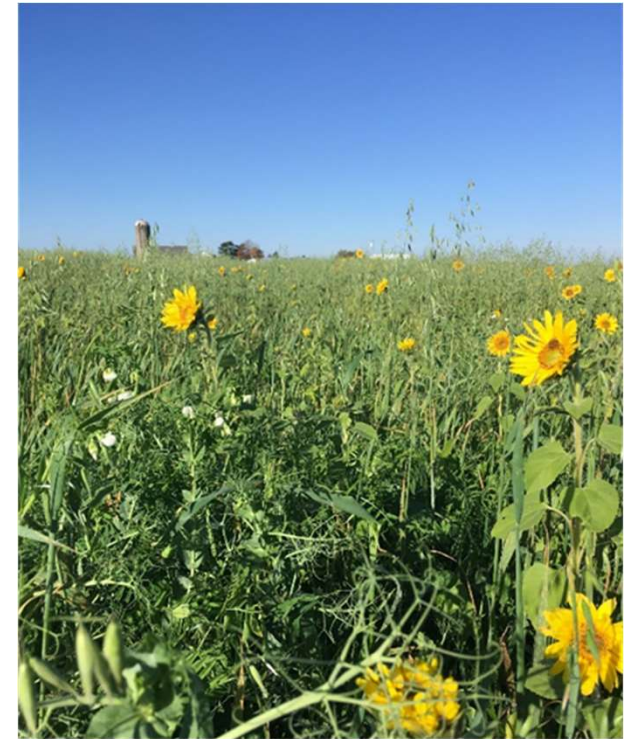
How does conservation pay in a farm lease?

Soil loss has short and long-term effects: The top soil is the most fertile part of the land and it takes up to a thousand years to build one inch of new topsoil. Written lease agreements that include conservation practices help ensure the long-term productivity of your land.

It is your legacy to protect: Fluctuating commodity prices can prompt the removal of conservation practices. Current conservation compliance requirements for state and federal programs often represent the bare minimum of conservation. A written lease agreement encourages open discussion between landowners and tenants about their goals and priorities for the land before issues arise.

What are your goals & priorities?

- Income or tax assessment needs
- Recreation property
- Provides wildlife habitat
- Scenic beauty
- Legacy of stewardship
- Maintain or improve soil health
- Soil Conservation
- Clean water
- Protect water quality
- Certified Organic
- People actively farming the land
- Forestry



"Conservation will ultimately boil down to rewarding the private landowner who conserves the public interest." – Aldo Leopold

How to Include conservation in your Lease

Tillage

Excessive tillage can result in soil erosion and compaction reducing long term productivity of crop land and polluting lakes, rivers and streams. Consider requiring practices such as no till and cover crops that keep soil loss at tolerable levels.

Nutrient Management

Manure/fertilizer applications must be carefully applied to avoid impacts to ground and surface water. Consider requiring your tenant to follow a nutrient management plan that identifies safe amounts and location of nutrient applications.

Sensitive Areas

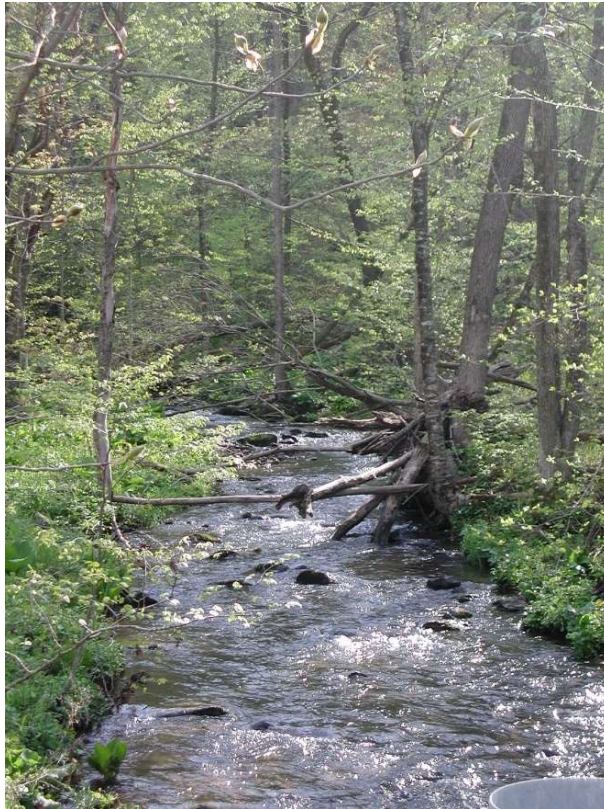
Land near surface water or conduits to ground water (i.e. well, sink hole, wetlands) require extra care and caution when applying manure and fertilizer. Consider requiring setbacks or vegetative buffers to protect these areas.

Farm the best, buffer the rest

Marginal areas on crop fields can produce low yields on a regular basis. Consider enrolling nonproductive areas into the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). This allows the best farmland to be cropped while the marginal lands are planted to perennial vegetation that will prevent soil erosion, protect water resources and provide wildlife habitat.

Additional Considerations

Who pays for long term investments such as lime applications, cover crops, and alfalfa establishment?



In order to protect Sauk County's most valuable natural resources while maintaining productive agriculture, the support of rural landowners is critical. Thank you for your efforts in maintaining a productive farm and healthy environment.

What to ask your tenant about soil health

1. Do you build organic matter in the soil?

Organic matter (carbon) may be the most important indicator of a farm's productivity. Practices such as no till and cover crops help build organic matter. Tillage and crop residue removal deplete organic matter.

2. Do you test the soil at least once every 4 years?

Maintaining fertility and pH levels are important to farm productivity. Regular soil testing can show trends in soil fertility and help reallocate nutrients to fields that need them the most saving time, resources and money.

3. Do you use no-till practices?

A clean tilled field may "look nice" but bare soil is erosive and reduces organic matter. Keeping residue on crop fields help protect it from intense rainfall events and summer heat conserving moisture for the growing crop.

4. Do you use cover crops?

Cover crops are quite versatile and help address a number of issues. Cover crops can:

- Improve water infiltration
- Reduce soil erosion
- Alleviate soil compaction
- Increase water holding capacity of soils
- Improve nutrient cycling
- Reduce pest pressures
- Provide supplemental feed for livestock
- Protect surface and groundwater resources
- Provide habitat for birds, pollinators, and other wildlife species

5. What can we do together to improve soil health on my land?

Landowners and tenants must think long-term when it comes to soil health and it may take several years to realize the full benefits. Consider multiple-year leases that provide tenure security for the tenant. A lease length >3 years encourages investment in the property and provides more opportunities to improve soil health. Year to year lease agreements leave uncertainty and can discourage investments.

