

# Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants

*Impact Report*

FY 16-17



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>About the Grant Program</b> .....	PAGE 1
<b>Funding Map</b> .....	PAGE 2
<b>By the Numbers</b> .....	PAGE 3
<b>Summary of Group Activities</b> .....	PAGE 5
<b>Collaboration</b> .....	PAGE 6
<b>Annual Workshop</b> .....	PAGE 7
<b>Outreach; Challenges &amp; Needs</b> .....	PAGE 8
<b>Get Involved; Looking Ahead</b> .....	PAGE 9
<b>Success Stories</b> .....	PAGES 10-11
<b>Producer-led Group Reports</b> .....	PAGES 13-19



# ABOUT

Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants are awarded by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) to help farmers address the unique soil and water quality challenges of their local landscapes with innovative and collaborative approaches. Groups can now receive up to \$40,000 in grant funding, double the available award from when the program started. Total program funding was \$250,000 in the first two grant cycles. For fiscal years 2017-19, the legislature increased the total program funding to \$750,000 per fiscal year.

The grant program has proven to be an effective tool to increase farmer participation in efforts to improve water quality and soil health. Each group is different, but most focus on implementing conservation practices, increasing outreach and communication opportunities, as well as research and water quality monitoring activities.

## PROGRAM GOALS

- Improve water quality and soil health
- Increase farmer awareness and use of soil and water conservation practices via farmer-led initiatives and peer-to-peer communication
- Encourage and test innovative ideas for conservation
- Foster locally-led decision making by producers

## GRANT REQUIREMENTS

- Groups of five or more farmers may apply for the grants – not individual producers.
- Groups must all farm in the same watershed.
- The group must work with other producers in the watershed to reduce runoff pollution.
- Each group must have a formal agreement with a collaborator – DATCP, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, a county land conservation committee, the University of Wisconsin-Extension, or a nonprofit conservation organization.
- The group must contribute or find matching funds at least equal to its grant request. Matches may include in-kind services.

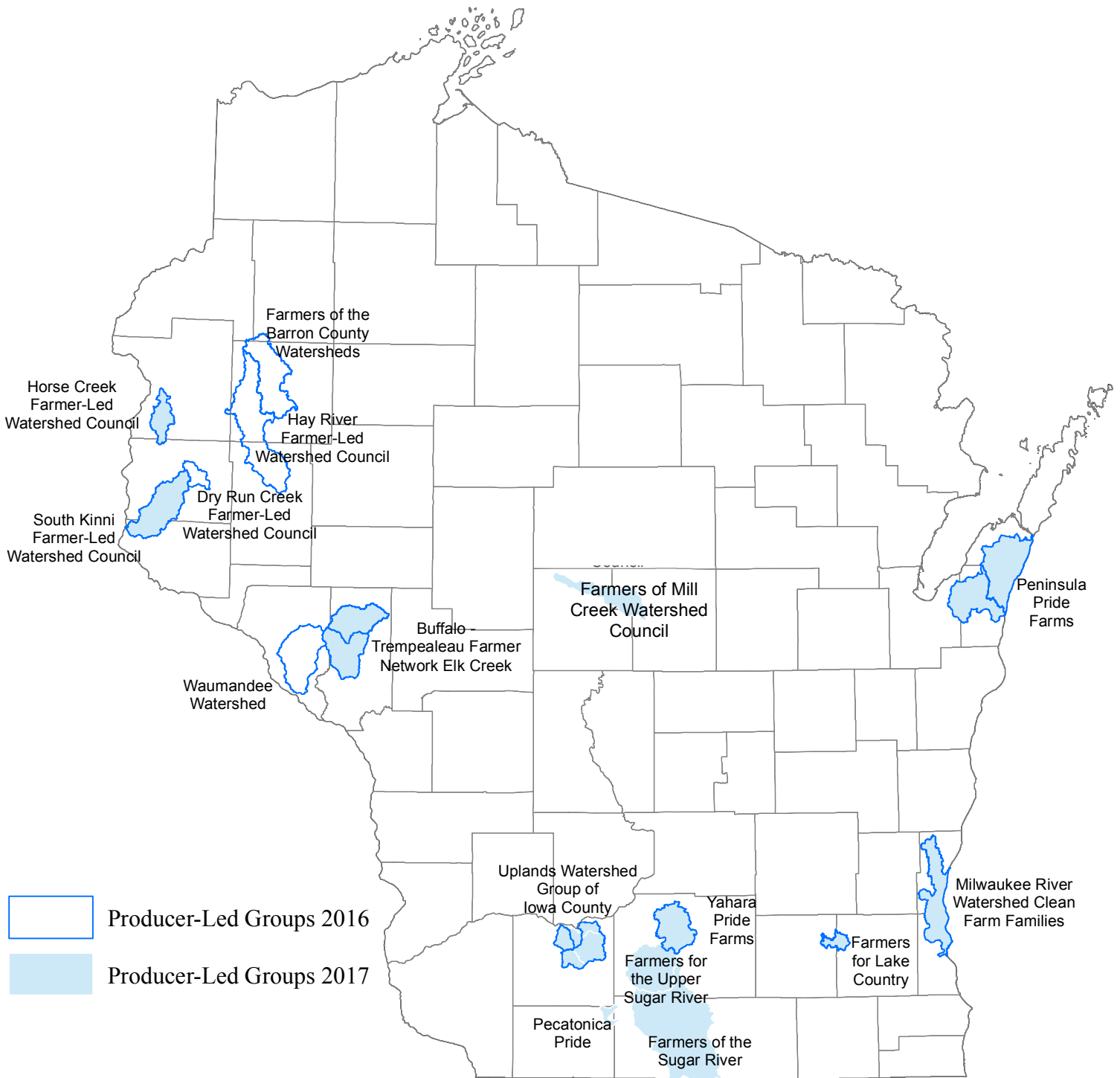
## FUNDING SUMMARY 2016-2017

FY	Total Awards	# of groups awarded
2016	\$242,550	14
2017	\$197,065	11



*"I applaud those farmers who have taken the initiative to participate in the Producer-Led Watershed Protection grant program. Their leadership and commitment to protecting our soils and improving water quality will be a benefit not only to their own farms, but to future generations."*

*DATCP Secretary Sheila Harsdorf*



# 2016-17 GRANT RECIPIENTS



In 2016 and 2017:

**15** producer-led groups

**\$242,550** awarded in 2016

**\$197,065** awarded in 2017

**1,843,162** acres of watershed coverage

**129,893** acres of practices

**16,795** linear feet of grassed waterways installed

**4,691** acres of cover crop demo plots

**15** field days held

**10,276** hours of county staff time

**1,400+** attendees at field days

## BY THE NUMBERS

Producer-led groups have increased participation in several county conservation programs. As a result of their involvement in producer-led groups, more farmers are taking advantage of money available for conservation practices through county cost-share funds.

Many collaborators have noted that the groups have helped increase partnerships in the watershed and increased conservation efforts overall. Cover crops, nutrient management, no-till and soil health improvement are among the most promoted practices.

*Note: all of the numbers included are based on reported information only.*





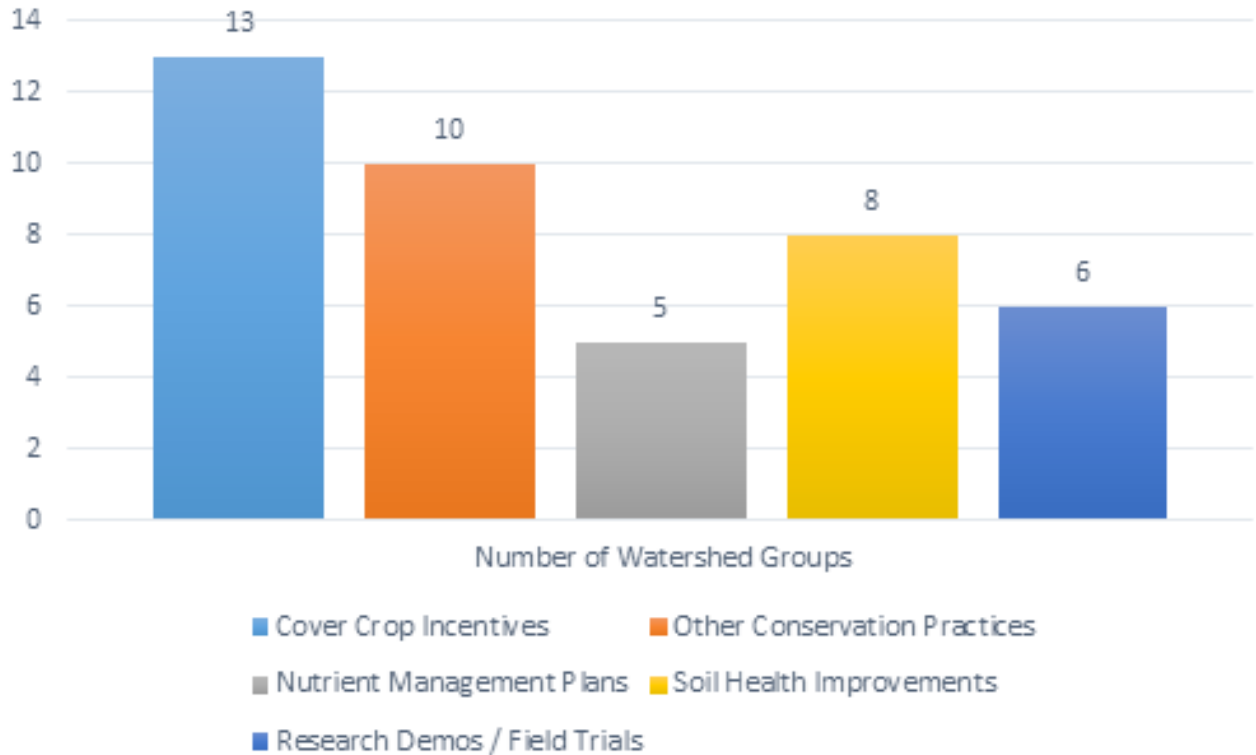
*"I think it's important for agriculture to be the lead on this. Nobody understands their farms better than the farmers. They're working with the land directly. They know what practices are working on their farms."*

*Jeff Endres, Yahara Pride Farms*

# ACTIVITIES

## What do producer-led groups focus on?

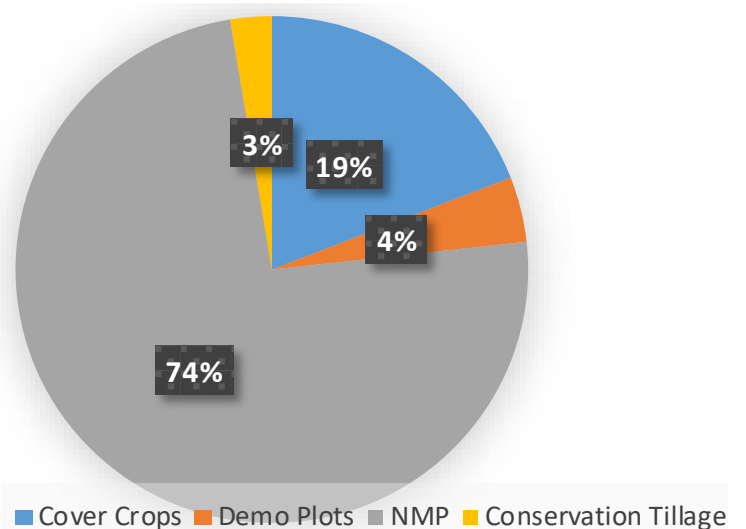
### Producer-Led Group Activities



### Groups can use the grant funds to pay for:

- Start-up costs to get the group off the ground and develop goals and work plans
- Outreach and education events to foster farmer-to-farmer education
- Incentive payments for farmers to try new conservation practices such as cover crops, buffer strips, reduced tillage, low disturbance manure injection, nutrient management, soil testing and farm walkovers
- Research to identify the best conservation strategies for each watershed
- Branding to demonstrate to the farming and non-farming public groups' participation in conservation efforts

### % of Acres Covered by Producer-Led Group Practices





# COLLABORATION

As part of their grants, producer-led groups must partner with either DATCP, DNR, their local land conservation department, UW-Extension or a nonprofit conservation organization. These entities provide resources in the form of staff time, research, and in some cases, financial contributions.

The partnerships formed within these groups are the key to the program's success. With collaboration, groups can leverage additional resources, provide education, participate in research and get the word out about their projects.

If you are interested in learning more about how your organization can get involved in a project in your area, visit the producer-led webpage:

[https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs\\_Services/ProducerLedProjects.aspx](https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/ProducerLedProjects.aspx)

## Some roles of collaborators have included:

- Administrative support
- Fiscal management
- Sending out meeting agendas and helping group follow timelines and work plans
- Project coordination
- Research
- Presentations
- Providing expert information on conservation topics

## COLLABORATION SUMMARY 2016-2017

### 2016 grantees partnered with:

7 - Land Conservation Department

5 - UW-Extension

2 - Nonprofit organization

### 2017 grantees partnered with:

3 - Land Conservation Department

3 - UW-Extension

5 - Nonprofit organization



# ANNUAL WORKSHOP



The Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants annual workshop allows for grant recipients throughout the state to share success stories, and learn from each other on what works and what hasn't in their watershed projects. Experts also discuss how producer-led groups can succeed in research and monitoring, field days, and outreach efforts. At least one member from each group is required to attend the workshop, but all producer-led grant recipients and their collaborators are invited. The main idea behind workshop is an opportunity for participants to learn ways to make their groups more effective.

Since 2016, DATCP has hosted two annual workshops for producer-led group members, collaborators, and other interested partners. There have been presentations on cover crop demonstration plots, low-disturbance manure injection, tips for hosting field days, and monitoring recommendations. These well attended events have also included breakout sessions for farmers and collaborators to share lessons learned and offer each other ideas for improving projects.

More information on this event can be found at: <https://wisconsinlandwater.org/events/producer-led-annual-workshop>

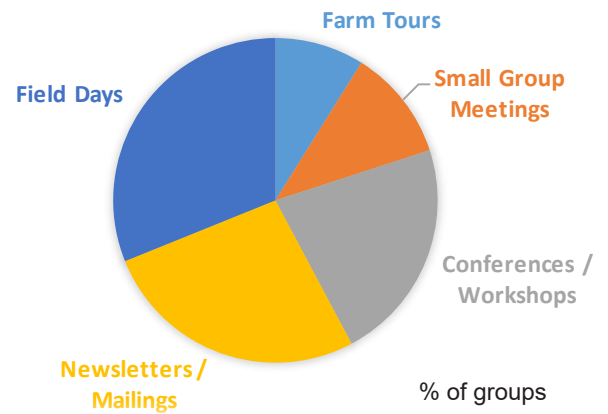
# OUTREACH

Groups provide farmer to farmer outreach and education through various methods including conservation field days and conferences, newsletters about their projects, and presentations to the public about their efforts.

DATCP also provides outreach to producer-led groups and to the general public through the newsletter, annual information-sharing workshops, website and internal group and general listserves.

**Sign up for our general email list** on our producer-led webpage to keep up-to-date with the program and upcoming events: [https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs\\_Services/ProducerLedProjects.aspx](https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/ProducerLedProjects.aspx)

## Producer-Led Watershed Groups Outreach Activities



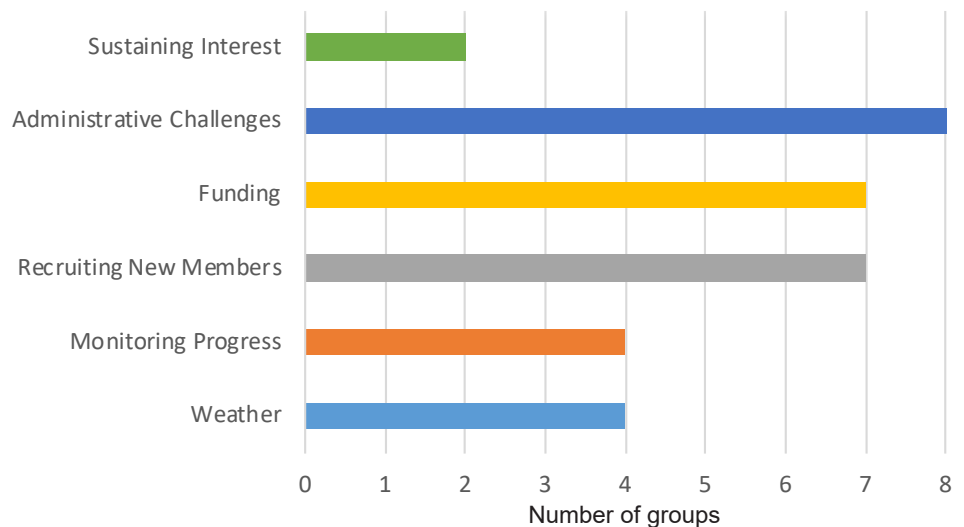
# CHALLENGES & NEEDS

The biggest challenges groups have identified are finding administrative staff support, sustaining funding beyond the producer-led grant program and getting more farmers involved in their group.

DATCP will continue to look for ways to help address these challenges in future years.

As the program grows, the hope is that more farmers and more of the public will be aware of the efforts of these groups and want to step up and get involved.

## Producer-Led Watershed Groups Challenges Reported



# GET INVOLVED

## If you are...

- **A farmer** – participate in a group
- **A community member** – attend an event
- **An agribusiness or business** – sponsor through in-kind or financial support
- **An agency or county** – partner as collaborator or coordinator
- **An ag association** – partner or sponsor
- **A sewerage district** – help accomplish nutrient reductions
- **The UW-Extension, UW** – partner for research and field days
- **Any other interested entity** – attend events and get to know the goals of the group



# LOOKING AHEAD

## In the future, DATCP hopes to strengthen and build the program by:

- Developing a tracking system to measure the outcomes, including nutrient reductions of producer-led efforts
- Increasing program participation by 25 percent each biennium
- Creating a network to share best management practices among all producer-led groups
- Strengthen partnerships and increase collaboration within all of the groups
- Determine a model for producer-led groups to work towards being self-funded
- Foster the adoption of innovative and economically effective practices among producers
- Create a model that can be replicated in other areas of the country



# SUCCESS STORIES

## **Producer-Led Group Develops New Relationships with Local Resources**

*Amber Radatz, UW-Discovery Farms and collaborator with Buffalo Trempealeau Farmer Network*

The Buffalo Trempealeau Farmer Network started in 2016 as a small group of farmers mostly interested in cover crops and nitrogen efficiency. They set a goal of trying different methods of establishing cover crops after corn silage and soybeans.

After a successful fall seeding, the group planned a meeting on the topic of making cover crops work, to talk about their results, and to hear from farmers and technical experts. While setting up the January meeting, they asked local resources for support. The local land conservation departments, NRCS, UW-Extension and Western Technical College were glad to help. This kicked off several successful meetings and collaborations.

These local agencies often worked together on many issues, but the farmers' inviting them to participate in the established farmer-led watershed effort created a different sort of relationship between farmers and agency staff. They have increased their comfort level with each other, and there is plenty of peer exchange at meetings and educational events. The agencies improved their communication about available events or programs to help further the stewardship goals of the local farmers. The farmers also improved their communication to agency personnel on priorities, questions, needs and barriers to getting important work completed.

In its second year, the group formed partnerships with Allied Cooperative and Elk Rod & Gun Club. Allied Cooperative is working to help find new methods to establish cover crops using existing equipment, to facilitate the use of these practices all across its service area. Elk Rod & Gun Club shares information about events and attends them. The club complete many habitat and stream restoration projects throughout the year, so the farmers' work is a natural complement to their efforts.

Even though it was not one of the original explicit goals of the group, the Buffalo Trempealeau Farmer Network has increased trust between local farmers and local resources. The farmer-led watershed group served as a catalyst for enhanced educational events and working relationships between conservation and agriculture resources and farmers in the region. The farmer-led watershed group has allowed all of the farmer members and partners in the area to look at the same conservation questions with a sense of possibility that they can accomplish far more together than any one entity can accomplish alone.



# SUCCESS STORIES

## Farmer-Fisher Connection

*Margaret Krome, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute and collaborator with Uplands Watershed Group*

In the spring of 2016, a group of eight farmers formed near the Dodgeville-Spring Green area, led by a young farmer named Michael Dolan. They were responding to DATCP's newly announced Producer-Led Watershed Protection grant program. Michael Fields Agricultural Institute worked with the farmers to write a successful grant, and Uplands Farmer-Led Watershed Group was born. The group was a mixture of large and small, conventional and organic, grain and livestock, and fresh produce and dairy farmers – a big tent. Uplands farmers wanted to understand how their practices impact water quality and learn how to monitor streams themselves. So when the institute asked them if they'd like to create a relationship with Gulf of Mexico fishermen, they immediately agreed.

Water from Iowa County's streams heads down the Mississippi River. When nitrogen from Midwestern fields enters the Gulf of Mexico, it feeds algae blooms. As the algae die off, microbes break it down and consume oxygen so fast that fish, shrimp and other marine life suffocate. Unfortunately, the Gulf "dead zone" is growing annually and may reach the size of New Jersey in 2018.

In September 2016, Uplands farmers hosted fishermen from the Gulf on their farms. The fishermen prepared a Cajun feast, where we discussed the dead zone and ways that Uplands farmers' conservation practices benefit fishermen's livelihoods. The next day, Uplands farmers held a public farm tour, demonstrating cover crops, no-till drilling, stream crossings, and other practices. Afterward, we enjoyed a lunch of Wisconsin bratwurst, coleslaw -- and delicious Cajun shrimp étouffée and rice. "The people I met with and talked to in Wisconsin, as much as they're concerned about their farming and what's going on here, I see that they really are concerned about what goes on in our area, too," said Louisiana dock owner Roxanne Sevin.

Six months later, 12 Wisconsin farmers, family, friends, and reporters accepted an invitation for a mid-March trip to Louisiana's bayou country. Cajun hospitality included fabulous food, trawling for shrimp in the Gulf, a tour of a shrimp processing plant, discussions with Gulf scientists, and a stay in Sevin's second home next to the Gulf itself. Michael Dolan explained the trip's impact: "The nutrients running off our fields are contributing to the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico. I feel more of a connection to the people down here, and I really don't want to negatively impact their lives."

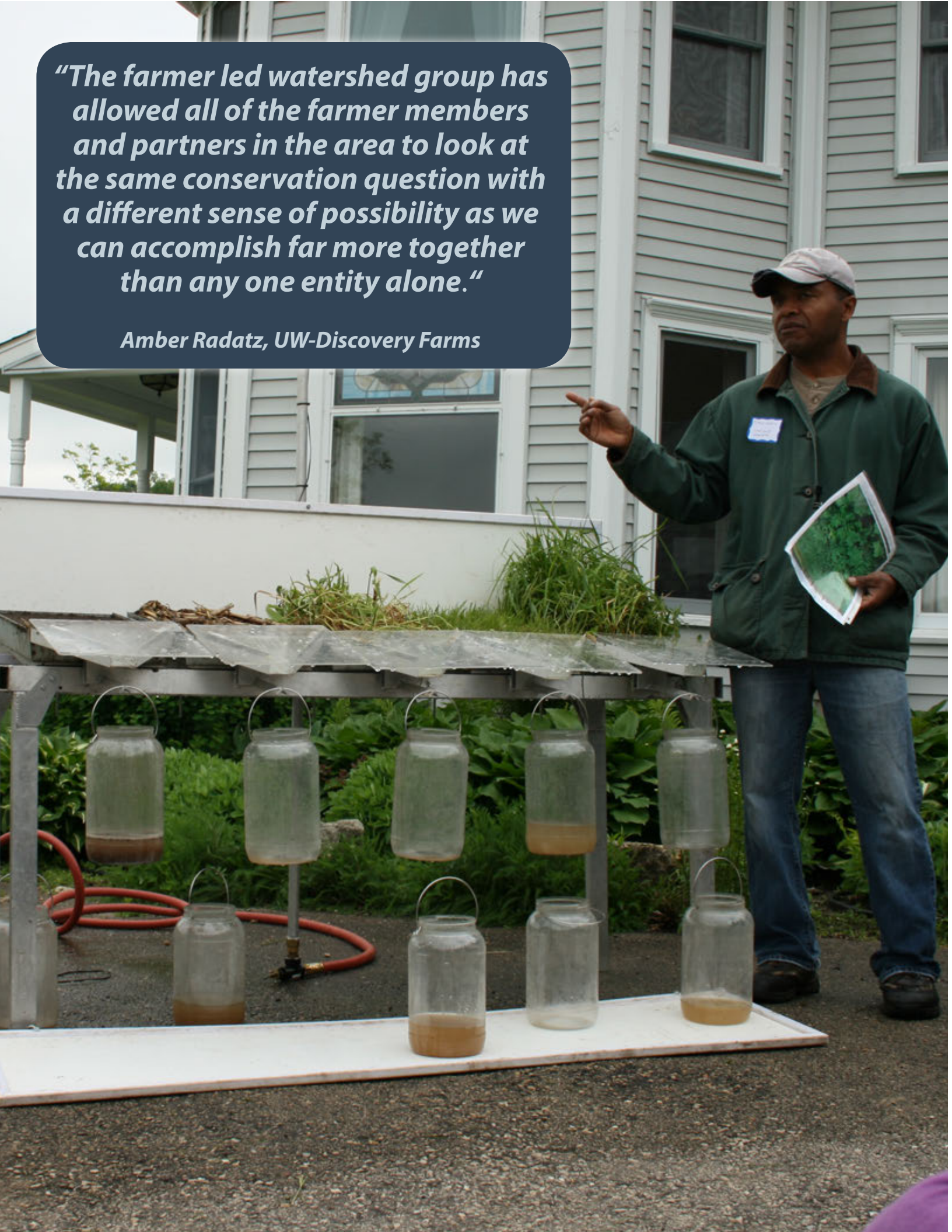
In November 2017, Uplands farmers hosted a second visit from Gulf fishermen, this time from Mississippi and Alabama, as well as Louisiana. Mississippi fisherman Ryan Bradley described the trip: ***"It is important for fishermen, farmers, and resource managers to meet face to face to discuss these issues so that we can humanize the problem and connect it to those whose livelihoods depend on one another. It's very encouraging to see that Wisconsin farmers are enthusiastic about sustainable farming practices."***

The Uplands watershed group serves Gulf shrimp at its public events to prompt conversation about why conservation practices matter. Knowing Gulf fishermen, Uplands farmers have redoubled their efforts to reduce farm runoff, because now there are faces to fishermen whose livelihoods depend on the quality of water these farmers send down the Mississippi River.



*"The farmer led watershed group has allowed all of the farmer members and partners in the area to look at the same conservation question with a different sense of possibility as we can accomplish far more together than any one entity alone."*

*Amber Radatz, UW-Discovery Farms*





## PRODUCER-LED GROUP REPORTS

### **Buffalo-Trempealeau Farmer Network Elk Creek Watershed**

*Understanding and improving nitrogen application in the Elk Creek Watershed*

\$17,700 in 2016; \$13,440 in 2017

#### **Overview**

The group works with Discovery Farms on a nutrient-use efficiency project, hosts field days and winter meetings, and helps producers test new technologies, evaluate management practices to improve nitrogen management, and research nitrogen cycling on farms.

*Contact: Brian Maliszewski, 715-530-1107*

#### **What They Did**

- Hosted two public meetings with over 75 in attendance
- Involved 7 farmers in nitrogen-use efficiency on 21 fields and increased split N application by 600 acres
- Doubled members' cover crop acreage from 925 to 1,920 acres
- Updated or completed a 590-compliant nutrient management plan for each member, covering 6,700 acres
- Completed 10 stream rip rap projects

#### **What They Plan to Do**

- Focus on cover crop incentives, NUE research, and equipment demonstrations
- Experiment with planting into living covers and incorporating more small grains into rotations
- Demonstrate how cover crops work with manure application

### **Farmers for Lake Country**

*Improving water quality in the Oconomowoc Watershed*

\$7,000 in 2016; \$20,000 in 2017

#### **Overview**

The group's main goal is to engage and educate area producers about soil health practices and available cost-sharing. The group partners with the Oconomowoc Watershed Protection Program and Tall Pines Conservancy.

*Contact: Tom Steinbach, 414-531-7006*

#### **What They Did**

- Increased aerial seeding of cover crops
- Developed the Water Friendly Farm program to recognize producers who have exhibited continuous conservation improvement; Registered eight farms as Water Friendly Farms
- Held an ag resource conference, drawing 29 farmers
- Hosted field technology day with 42 farmers attending
- Provided cover crop cost-sharing for 10 farmers, 24 fields and 989 acres

#### **What They Plan to Do**

- Identify staff for the Water Friendly Farm recognition program
- Secure additional funding and partnerships
- Expand aerial seeding and offer cover crop seeding services via no-till drill
- Work in a smaller group educational setting instead of larger conferences

### **Nitrogen Use Efficiency (NUE) Research Trials with UW-Discovery Farms**

The NUE Project offers farmers and consultants the tools necessary to form a roadmap that supports how and why nitrogen is supplied. Project participants work with UW-Discovery Farms to evaluate their current nitrogen management practices in order to fine-tune cropping systems. Groups found that total N rate is important, but more N does not always equal more corn yield. Efficiencies can be gained on livestock farms where several N sources are used, as more sources complicate the N accounting process and can quickly lead to high N rates and inefficient N use. Farmers who accurately decreased their manure and commercial N rates on corn fields rotated from alfalfa or soybeans grew corn that was quite N-efficient.

*“Most farmers agree that the largest benefit of being involved in a group is the interaction and viewpoints from other farmers”*



## PRODUCER-LED GROUP REPORTS

### **Upper Sugar River Producer Coalition**

*Making best management practices more accessible to the Upper Sugar River Producer Coalition*  
\$9,850 in 2016; \$20,000 in 2017

#### **Overview**

Collaborating with the UW-Extension and the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association, the coalition offers incentives for farmers to plant cover crops, and rents equipment for low-disturbance manure injection and vertical tillage. The group uses citizen water quality monitoring to develop baseline phosphorus data.  
*Contact: Wade Moder, 608-437-7707*

#### **What They Did**

- Worked with area crop consultants, ag retailers, county/UW-Extension staff, and local residents to find other farmers who would be interested in participating
- Created a list of all active farmers in the watershed with the help of the county
- Expanded cover crop incentive program
- Conducted private total phosphorus testing at 5 sites

#### **What They Plan to Do**

- Continue water quality and phosphorus testing
- Host farmer education events
- Increase the acreage in their incentive program
- Create more metrics to track progress

---

### **South Kinni Farmer-Led Watershed Council**

*Improving water quality and building soil health in the South Kinni Watershed*  
\$20,000 in 2016; \$10,000 in 2017

#### **Overview**

Working with the Pierce County Land Conservation Committee, this group provides incentives to farmers to plant cover crops, develop filter strips, conduct farm walkovers to identify conservation needs, and install grassed waterways and grade stabilization structures.  
*Contact: Dan Sitz, 608-273-6763*

#### **What They Did**

- 379 acres of cover crops planted under incentive program
- 10,515 feet of grassed waterways installed
- 16 farm walkovers
- 285.2 acres of soil sampling
- 24.75 acres of buffer strips

#### **What They Plan to Do**

- Continue on-farm research into cover crops in a corn-soybean crop rotation
- Continue edge-of-field monitoring of runoff from conventional tillage
- Provide incentive payments for practices
- Engage additional farmers





## PRODUCER-LED GROUP REPORTS

### **Milwaukee River Watershed Clean Farm Families**

*Improving soil health and water quality in the Milwaukee River Watershed*  
\$20,000 in 2016; \$20,000 in 2017

Clean Farm Families promotes conservation practices through their incentive programs to showcase the best soil and water conservation practices in the area.

Contact: Jim Melichar, 262-206-1731

#### **What They Did**

- Conducted a nutrient management education workshop with 24 attendees
- Provided incentive payments for cover crops for 578 acres
- Provided incentive payments for low-disturbance manure application for 22 rental hours
- Provided incentive payments for conservation tillage for 906 acres
- Established a 9-acre demonstration plot for cover crop education
- Conducted a soil health workshop, attended by 164 people
- Contacted 400 people
- Held 20 outreach events

#### **What They Plan to Do**

- Continue promoting soil health and nutrient management planning
- Offer incentive payments to try new conservation practices
- Provide educational workshops and field demonstrations
- Support a long-term field trial site to compare conventional practices to soil health practices such as no-till and cover crops, including soil temperatures, water infiltration rates, cost inputs, yield and profitability

### **Farmers for the Mill Creek Watershed Council**

*Water Quality Improvement and Public Outreach in Mill Creek*

\$20,000 in 2016; \$19,975 in 2017

#### **Overview**

Working to reduce phosphorus loading in Mill Creek, the group researches cover crop effects on soil moisture and temperature, and on agricultural drains to improve water management. The group also offers incentives for practices and hosts educational events.

Contact: John Eron, 715-498-5222

#### **What They Did**

- Cover crop cost-sharing for 300 acres single-species, 120 acres of multi-species, 300 acres of no-till corn and soybeans, and 13 acres of buffer strips
- Hosted a cover crop field day with 65 attending
- Hosted tillage field day with 70 attending

#### **What They Plan to Do**

- Learn more about no-till
- Provide incentive payments for no-till planting
- Take a field trip to meet with farmer-led groups in areas with similar soil types

### **Cover Crop Research Trials**

On-farm cover crop research trials are a popular activity among groups. These are done mostly in partnership with UW-Extension agents. The Farmers of Mill Creek are working with Ken Schroeder, the UW-Extension Agriculture Agent in Portage County at three different locations in the watershed.

The group is evaluating:

- How soil moisture and temperature affect planting time and crop yield
- Conceptions that cover crops slow soil warmup and reduce crop yield



## PRODUCER-LED GROUP REPORTS

### **Horse Creek Farmer-Led Watershed Council**

*Improving water quality and building soil health in the Horse Creek Watershed*

\$20,000 in 2016; \$15,450 in 2017

#### **Overview**

Collaborating with Polk County Land and Water Resources Department, the group conducts soil sampling, phosphorus indexing, cover crop planting, manure spreader calibration, corn stalk nitrate testing and stream sampling, and provides outreach about these practices to other farmers. The group tracks their phosphorus reductions through the spreadsheet tool for estimating pollutant loads (STEPL).

Contact: Eric Wojchik, 715-485-8699

#### **What They Did**

- Planted 1,562 acres cover crops
- Reduced 1,156 pounds of phosphorus
- Planted a 24-acre cover crop demonstration plot
- Sampled 1,425 acres of soil
- Completed 1,388 acres of phosphorus indexing

#### **What They Plan to Do**

- Continue promoting priority conservation practices through incentive programs
  - Host field days to focus on the importance of soil health for the productivity and water quality
  - Examine whether large field days with experts small field days where growers share lessons are better for learning
- 

### **Peninsula Pride Farms, Inc.**

*Implementing practices that reduce nutrient and sediment loads in Kewaunee River Watershed*

\$20,000 in 2016; \$20,000 in 2017

#### **Overview**

Peninsula Pride Farms aims to implement practices that reduce nutrient and sediment loads in Kewaunee River Watershed, using incentive payments for farmers to try new conservation practices, nutrient management assessments, and demonstrations and field days to help farmers see the environmental and economic benefits of conservation practices best suited for the karst topography in their region.

Contact: Rick Paye, 920-304-0300

#### **What They Did**

- Hosted a "Cover Crop Challenge" resulting in 4,400 acres planted
- Updated or developed nutrient management plans that cover over 50,000 acres
- Established four demonstration farms as part of the Door-Kewaunee Demonstration Farm Network
- Participated in Discovery Farms nitrogen-use efficiency project, with 9 herds involved
- Established baseline to evaluate potential phosphorus reductions on 1,953 fields and 48,789 acres

#### **What They Plan to Do**

- Reduce the risk of groundwater contamination in Door and Kewaunee Counties
- Reduce nutrient and sediment loss to surface waters
- Help farmers change nitrogen application rates while protecting crop yields and profitability



## PRODUCER-LED GROUP REPORTS

### **Uplands Watershed Group**

*Reducing nutrient and sediment loss in the Trout Creek-Mill Creek watershed  
\$20,000 in 2016; \$18,200 in 2017*

#### **Overview**

Collaborating with Michael Fields Institute, the Uplands Watershed Group provides incentives for no-till cover crop planting, pasture renovation and other conservation practices. Members must either have or develop nutrient management plans.

*Contact: Michael Dolan, 608-444-9759*

#### **What They Did**

- Installed 2,000 feet of stream fencing
- Added two stream crossings
- Installed 1,500 feet of stream buffers
- Held a 2-day event for Uplands farmers and Gulf of Mexico fishermen
- Formed partnerships with 14 organizations
- One farmer purchased a no-till drill for group members to rent, increasing no-till acres

#### **What They Plan to Do**

- Create a citizen-led water quality monitoring project
- Develop a nine-key element plan
- Study farming practices that encourage high rates of rainfall infiltration and reduce costs for road, bridge, and culvert repairs from heavy rainfall

---

### **Dry Run Creek Farmer-Led Council** **Improving water quality and building soil health** **\$20,000 in 2016**

#### **Overview**

Collaborating with St. Croix county land conservation department Dry Run Creek Farmer-Led Council offers incentives to test conservation practices including cover crops, grassed waterways, reduced tillage and increased crop diversity, and hosts field days and conferences.

*Contact: Kyle Kulow, 715-531-1908*

#### **What They Did**

- Planted 968 acres of cover crops
- Installed 5,800 feet of grassed waterways
- Sampled 390 acres of soil, which led to nutrient management plan development
- Walked over 14 farms, which led to BMP installation





## PRODUCER-LED GROUP REPORTS

### **Waumandee Creek**

*Reducing soil and nutrient loss through the adoption of cover crops*  
\$12,000 in 2016

#### **Overview**

Collaborating with Buffalo County Land Conservation Department, Waumandee Creek farmers host a symposium and field day, run cover crop trials, and install conservation practices on highly erodible lands.  
*Contact: Dustin Ellis, 608-797-0380*

#### **What They Did**

- Held a symposium on cover crops, soil health and nitrogen with 75 farmers and 25 industry professionals
- Planted 4,500 acres of cover crops
- Planted cover crop demonstrations at 3 farms on 15 acres
- Held 2 field days focused on demonstrations
- Experimented with cover crop interseeding options into V5-8 corn

#### **What They Plan to Do**

- Continue exploring broadcast units that could seed cover crops into corn and soybeans
- Continue exploring interseeding options into standing/growing corn/beans

---

### **Yahara Pride Farms**

*Reducing agricultural phosphorus loss to surface waters in the Yahara watershed*  
\$20,000 in 2016; \$20,000 in 2017

#### **Overview**

Yahara Pride Farms conducts an assessment, verification and certification program, which helps farmers identify conservation practices already installed or that could be. The group is a partner in Yahara WINs, an adaptive management project in the Yahara watershed, where all sources of phosphorus work together, and the group works with many partners for on-farm research including headland stacking and composting of manure, nitrogen use efficiency and cover crops. Yahara Pride Farms uses SnapPlus to model any phosphorus reductions. All of the farms participating in their cost-share program submit nutrient management plans.  
*Contact: Jeff Endres, 608-279-8991*

#### **What They Did**

- Promoted vertical manure injection to reduce nitrogen loss to air, surface water and groundwater and as an alternative to more intensive tillage systems
- Encourage cover cropping to reduce soil loss, improve soil health and enhance nutrient holding capacity.
- Evaluated strip tillage to promote reduced tillage while providing some incorporation of crop residue and manure
- Studied headland stacking and composting of solid dairy manure as an alternative to applying manure during times when runoff is a high risk
- Predicted phosphorus reduction of 11,167 pounds in 2016 from practices adopted

#### **What They Plan to Do**

- Work with farmers to fine-tune nitrogen application rates and improve nitrogen application methods.
- Develop the "Paid for Performance Program" to help guarantee long-term commitments to implementing conservation practices
- Expand the assessment, verification and certification program to other watersheds in Wisconsin
- Continue education and outreach activities, research and incentive programs

# PRODUCER-LED GROUP REPORTS

## Hay River Farmer-Led Watershed Council

*Improving water quality and building soil health*  
\$20,000 in 2016

### Overview

Collaborating with Dunn County Land Conservation Department, the council is working to keep soil and nutrients on the land through increased adoption of management practices including grassed waterways, no-till and minimum-till systems, perennials, and cover crops.

Contact: Dan Prestebak, 715-232-1496 Ext 2

### What They Did

- Participated in Ag Solver presentations, a computer program that utilizes crop yield data and soil mapping data to evaluate return on investment for each field
- Installed 5,844.76 feet of grassed waterways
- Planted 1,080.96 acres of cover crops



## Farmers of Barron County Watersheds

*Reducing nutrient and sediment loss in the Yellow River watershed*  
\$16,000 in 2016

### Overview

Working with Barron Land Conservation Department, the group is working in the Yellow River Watershed to establish baseline data for land use and target areas, and use on-farm research and demonstration trials to address nutrient and sediment loss. The group aims to assist in the exchange of technical and scientific information among farmers, citizens and water quality professionals

Contact: Karyn Schauf, 715-537-9376

### What They Did

- Increased cover crop acreage by 3,200 acres
- Went from 6 to 18 participants in cover crop rebate program
- Increased attendance by 70% at winter conference

## Making change

Farmers of Barron County worked with one of the major canning crop companies in their area and encouraged them to start using cover crops in their grower contracts through education and outreach on the practice. Canning crops fields have the longest exposed soil if not covered with a cover crop so it was a big win for the whole watershed.



## PRODUCER-LED GROUP REPORTS

### **Pecatonica Pride**

*Community watershed project  
\$20,000 in 2017*

#### **Overview**

Working with Southwest Wisconsin Regional Planning Council, Lafayette County Land Conservation Department and Southwest Badger Resource Conservation and Development, Pecatonica Pride have created a team of farmers, landowner, and community groups to improve and restore the Pecatonica River.  
*Contact: Kriss Marion, 608-558-0501*

#### **What They Did**

- Had 182 people participate in events
- Trained 26 volunteers to conduct water quality testing as part of the Watershed Action Volunteers (WAV) program
- Produced 50 property signs with Pecatonica Pride logo to distribute to members
- Distributed mini-grants to five farmers to install 12 practices including shoreline work, nutrient management, and installation of prairie buffer strips on 332 acres and 1050 linear feet of shoreline on streams
- Installed one vermi-compost project to examine the benefits of managing pig manure with worms on a Pecatonica Pride farm



### **For more information**

To stay up to date on the progress of the producer-led projects, please visit our webpage: [https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs\\_Services/ProducerLedProjects.aspx](https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/ProducerLedProjects.aspx)



## Keep up-to-date

To join our general listserve and for more information on the producer-led program, visit: [https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs\\_Services/ProducerLedProjects.aspx](https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/ProducerLedProjects.aspx)

To join the producer-led internal listserve contact the program manager below.

## Contact us

Rachel Rushmann, Program Manager  
rachel.rushmann@wi.gov  
608-224-4622

