



U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service



WISCONSIN REPORT  
2012



Pat Leavenworth  
Wisconsin State Conservationist 1994-2012

We wish Pat the best of luck in her  
retirement and extend our thanks to her for  
18 years of service to Wisconsin.



Greetings Wisconsin Conservationists!!

Fiscal Year 2012 has been another challenging year for delivering conservation to landowners in the State of Wisconsin. In addition to the very late arrival of program allowances, we faced challenging weather throughout the state. Drought and excessive heat plagued the southern third of the state during the critical growing period; severe storms battered parts of the north and northwest. To meet these challenges, NRCS employees, landowners and partners rose in a united front to once again achieve a record year for private lands conservation in Wisconsin. Federal, state and county governments devised a suite of program alternatives for drought relief, especially emergency feed and forage, to sustain our dairy and livestock operations during this difficult time.

Another historic action unfolded this year with our county Land Conservation Committees and Land Conservation Departments. By agreeing to combine their statewide organizations into a reinvigorated new Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association, they have meshed local conservation policy with conservation action. This will be a force for the future in our continued partnership with WLWCA to assure the sustainability of agriculture in Wisconsin - which has always been a national leader in conservation.

On another front, we can be very proud of the conservation accomplishments of our 11 federally-recognized American Indian Tribes. In 2001 they formed the Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WTCAC) as a venue for Tribes to advise NRCS on conservation programs for more tribal participation. WTCAC has grown to be the forum for Tribal conservation issues with NRCS as well as many other federal and state agencies and private conservation organizations. We are also seeing greater access to Farm Bill conservation programs by small and beginning farmers, other historically underserved producers, and organic, grazing and specialty crop farmers who serve to supplement and enhance the diversity, health and consequent resiliency of the agricultural industry in Wisconsin.

As I look to future, I see NRCS in the good hands of a new generation of employees who have the professional, technical, and social skills to build upon the foundation which our Soil Conservation Service/Natural Resources Conservation Service elders established. I thank our folks who support our field staff on a daily basis - our Administrative, Public Affairs, Resources, Soils and Engineering specialists. I will also be forever grateful to have been a part of this private land conservation movement, started by our first Chief, Hugh Hammond Bennett, the soil evangelist who rose up to open our eyes to the "Menace of Soil Erosion" in the Dust Bowl days and help us learn to heal the land, our continuing challenge.

Yours in Conservation,

Pat Leavenworth

## CONSERVATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

### Putting Conservation on the Ground

Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) provides landowners with proven conservation choices and technology needed for a healthy and productive landscape.

The primary purposes of the CTA Program:

- Reduce soil loss from erosion
- Solve soil, water quality, water conservation, air quality, and agricultural waste management problems
- Reduce potential damage caused by excess water and sedimentation or drought
- Enhance the quality of fish and wildlife habitat
- Improve the long term sustainability of all lands, including cropland, forestland and grazing lands
- Assist others in facilitating changes in land use as needed for natural resource protection and sustainability



Technical assistance is the help provided by NRCS to address opportunities, concerns, and problems related to the use of natural resources.

## NRCS Mission:

### Helping People Help the Land

The Natural Resources Conservation Service has assisted Wisconsin landowners in conserving natural resources on private lands for over 75 years. Resource stewardship is a vital part of conservation and is the primary mission of NRCS.



## Highlights for 2012

- 1,507 conservation system plans applied to lands covering 444,921 acres
- Cropland with conservation applied to improve soil quality = 362,810 acres
- Land with conservation applied to improve water quality = 400,828 acres
- Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans written = 88 applied = 24
- Grazing land with conservation applied to improve the resource base = 20,625 acres
- Wetlands created, restored or enhanced = 3,492 acres
- Forest land with conservation applied to protect and improve vegetative condition = 21,705 acres
- Watershed or area-wide conservation plans developed = 10
- Non-federal land with conservation applied to improve fish and wildlife habitat quality = 43,018 acres

# ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM

The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program that promotes agricultural production, forest management and environmental quality. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist landowners install or implement conservation practices on their land that protect soil and water quality.

Farmers develop a conservation plan, if they don't already have one, for the acreage affected by the EQIP practices. Conservation practices must meet NRCS technical standards. NRCS evaluates and ranks each application, with higher priorities given to the practices that address local resource concerns, and provide the most environmental benefit.

In 2012, nearly \$26 million was provided to Wisconsin farmers for conservation practices. Contracts numbered 1,523 that put 154,502 acres into voluntary conservation practices.

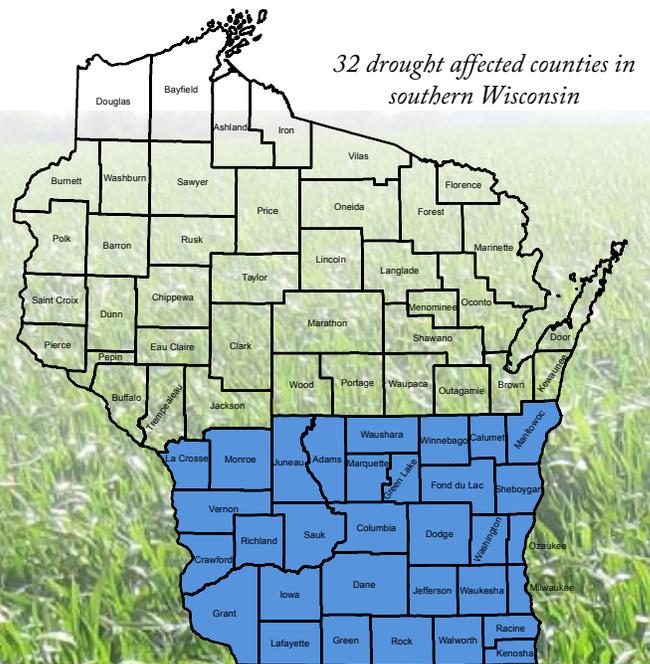
## Drought Assistance

The long, hot summer took its toll on farms in southern Wisconsin. NRCS was able to assist farmers with funding and technical assistance in drought-afflicted counties.

Through EQIP, NRCS provided financial assistance to establish cover crops. Cover crops reduce soil erosion on highly erodible lands, reduce weeds and pathogens and help improve soil quality and health.

The focus area was in the 32 severely affected drought counties in southern Wisconsin. Over \$380,000 was available to assist farmers with rye, oats, millet, or other NRCS-approved cover crops. Over 20,000 acres were established this fall as a result of this special sign-up.

*This cover crop reduces erosion, protecting vulnerable soil resources.*



# SUMMARY OF PRACTICES APPLIED IN 2012

## Practices Applied

Access Control	926 ac..
Access Road	51,427 ft.
Ag Energy Mgmt Plan Written	7
Animal Trails and Walkways	41,129 ft.
Brush Management	1,668 ac.
Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans	17
Conservation Cover	19,368 ac.
Conservation Crop Rotation	207,182 ac.
Conservation Plan - Organic Transition Plans Written	2
Contour Buffer Strips	2,112 ac.
Contour Farming	15,985 ac.
Cover Crop	12,570 ac.
Critical Area Planting	88 ac.
Diversion	16,356 ft.
Feed Management	718 Animal Units
Fence	703,229 ft.
Field Border	6,301 ac.
Filter Strip	578 ac.
Firebreak	95,548 ft.
Forage and Biomass Planting	3,540 ac.
Forage Harvest Management Plan	2,269 ac.
Forest Management Plan Written	52
Forest Stand Improvement	3,058 ac.
Forest Trails and Landings	66,753 ft.
Grade Stabilization Structures	140
Grassed Waterway	4,738 ac.
Heavy Use Protection	1,690 ac.
Integrated Pest Management.	11,672 ac.
Irrigation System, Sprinkler	46 ac.
Irrigation Water Management	1,388 ac.
Lined Waterway	1,330 ft.
Livestock Pipeline	169,459 ft.
Mulching	65 ac.
Nutrient Management	121,327 ac.
Obstruction Removal	212 ac.
Prescribed Burning	1,054 ac.
Prescribed Grazing	12,001 ac.

## Practices Applied

Residue and Tillage Management/Mulch-Till	60,450 ac.
Residue and Tillage Management/No-Till	44,750 ac.
Residue Management/Mulch Till	824 ac.
Residue Management No-Till/Strip Till	7,305 ac.
Residue Management, Seasonal	2,092 ac.
Restoration and Management of Rare and Declining Habitats	930 ac.
Riparian Forest Buffer	64 ac.
Roof Runoff Structure	970
Seasonal High Tunnel	151,787 sq.ft.
Sediment Basin	20
Shallow Water Development and Mgmt	188 ac.
Solid/Liquid Separation Facility	5
Spring Development	10
Stream Crossing	1,676 ft.
Stream Habitat Improvement and Mgmt	524 ac.
Streambank/Shoreline Protection	49,427 ft.
Stripcropping	2,436 ac.
Subsurface Drain	101,984 ft.
Terrace	2,860 ft.
Tree/Shrub Establishment	3,453 ac.
Tree/Shrub Pruning	19 ac.
Tree/Shrub Site Preparation	19 ac.
Underground Outlet	35,542 ft.
Upland Wildlife Habitat Mgmt	16,778 ac.
Vegetated Treatment Area	12,536 ac.
Waste Facility Closure	27
Waste Storage Facility	60
Waste Transfer	805
Water and Sediment Control Basin	16
Water Well	39
Watering Facility	177
Water Well Decommissioning	39
Wetland Creation	13
Wetland Restoration	3,479 ac.
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Mgmt	1,893 ac.
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment	74,301 ft.
Woody Residue Treatment	55 ac.

Source: USDA-NRCS Integrated Data for Enterprise Analysis - Performance Results System 11/19/2012

~ SPECIAL INITIATIVES ~  
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM

## Conservation Beyond Boundaries

Clean water, abundant wildlife, and productive agriculture are all interconnected. Conservation doesn't have man-made boundaries. That's why NRCS is addressing natural resource priorities on a landscape scale. Our conservation solutions are to benefit both landowners and the environment, provide wildlife habitat and improve agricultural production. These special initiatives are funded through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

## Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative

The Sixmile Creek Watershed joined two adjacent watersheds, the Pheasant Branch and the Waunakee Marsh, as the focus of intense conservation efforts in Dane County through the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI). These three highly agricultural watersheds are located northwest of Lake Mendota. Through a cooperative agreement between NRCS and Dane County, financial and technical assistance was available to farmers to install conservation practices that result in the reduction of nutrients and sediment flowing into Lake Mendota.

This Healthy Watershed Initiative helps farmers voluntarily implement conservation and management practices that avoid, control, and trap nutrient runoff from farm land. Reducing nutrients and sediment is the key to improving water quality in Lake Mendota, and ultimately the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico.

Up to \$1.86 million available to continue adding conservation practices in the Sixmile Creek watershed over the next three years.

## Highlights for 2012

### Pheasant Branch and Waunakee Marsh - Dane County

Financial Assistance = \$315,779 in 17 contracts covering 3,636 acres

### Sixmile Creek - Dane County

Financial Assistance = \$103,416 in 9 contracts covering 2,759 acres

### Kettle Moraine Land Trust

Financial Assistance = \$39,038 in 3 contracts covering 141 acres

# Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)

In 2012, Wisconsin NRCS concentrated its effort in the Lower Fox River watershed. Two watersheds lie within this basin that were given additional funding. They are the Upper Duck Creek in Outagamie County and the Upper East River in Brown, Manitowoc and Calumet Counties. This focus resulted from a combination of resource concerns, potential for improvement and landowner participation. Working with our local and other federal partners, the overall strategy of GLRI is to achieve maximum conservation practices in the focus area, so that water quality improves downstream.

The GLRI plan calls for aggressive efforts to address five urgent priorities:

1. Clean up the most polluted areas in the lakes
2. Combat invasive species
3. Protect watersheds and shoreline from runoff
4. Restore wetlands and other habitats
5. Work with strategic partners on education, evaluation and outreach

## Highlights for 2012

### Milwaukee River -Special sign-up Summer of 2012

Financial Assistance = \$390,402 in 21 contracts covering 3,346 acres

### General signup in the Lower Fox, Manitowoc/Sheboygan and Milwaukee River Watersheds

Financial Assistance = \$1,097,295 in 14 contracts covering 3,009 acres

### Special Phosphorus Reduction Project conducted in five sub-watersheds in the Lower Fox River Watershed

Financial Assistance = \$3,120,674 in 48 contracts covering 19,959 acres

GLRI numbers for this report provided by Wisconsin NRCS.

## ~ Success Story ~

### *Improving Water Quality along the Lake Michigan Shore*

NRCS in Wisconsin is working to reduce nutrient runoff entering Lake Michigan. In October 2011, a manure transfer system was completed for a dairy operation near the city of West Bend, as a final component in a manure management plan done in partnership with Washington County Land and Water Conservation Division. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funded \$15,500 through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program for the project which also included cover crops and buffer strips. The now completed project will greatly improve manure management on the 250 acre family farm, improving water quality.



*Bare ground near barnyard allows runoff. Lack of manure storage limits farmer's options, requiring daily spreading on snow, frozen ground, or when severe weather poses high risk for runoff.*



*A waste storage facility allows the farmer to spread manure safely during optimum weather, thereby reducing risk of runoff, and at the best time and place for the crop to utilize the nutrients in the manure.*

# WISCONSIN 2012 REPORT

Natural Resources Conservation Service

## CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary program that offers payments to producers who exercise good land stewardship and agree to further improve their conservation performance. CSP is available to all producers regardless of operation type, crops produced, or geographic location.

Nearly 500 Wisconsin farmers and forest landowners enrolled in the Conservation Stewardship Program in 2012. This is the third year that this program has been open throughout Wisconsin.

In 2012, 476 farmers and forestland owners enrolled in CSP, with an average payment of \$6,416 per contract. Over \$3 million in payments made to those farm families this year, and over \$15 million over the course of the five-year contracts.

For many farmers, CSP offers reward and recognition for the conservation they are already doing, plus a little extra incentive to try a few more or new practices.

Total crop and pasture land acres enrolled in Wisconsin to date is 668,683, plus 94,383 acres of woodland (non-industrial private forestland) in 1,978 contracts.

For this signup, average payments in Wisconsin were \$20 per acre for cropland, \$14 per acre for pasture, and \$3.70 per acre for woodland. Payments are made annually for each of the five years of the contract. CSP is open to small and large operations, with farms already enrolled ranging from just a couple of acres to over 3,000 acres of cropland.



## ~ Success Story ~

### *Good Stewardship Takes Good Planning*

Throughout the years, Four Star Dairy in Clark County has implemented a long list of conservation and water quality practices. Starting in 2003, Roger Erickson adopted Nutrient and Feed Management along with a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan.

“NRCS gives us quite a few ideas and guidance, helping us make good decisions on the use of our land,” says Roger. “We have constructed and maintained many acres of grassed waterways on our 3000 plus acres. We constructed lot runoff and filter strips along with abandoning several wells and an old manure storage structure.”

Clean water is one of the biggest concerns for Four Star Dairy. Roger wants to protect the water quality and is active in making sure that the water supply is not impaired for the surrounding farms and the wells they depend on every day to sustain their operation. Jane Reigel, NRCS District Conservationist in Clark County tells us, “Roger is a very proud, forward thinking, dedicated farmer. He is always planning ahead looking to make the right improvements on his farm.”

Their choices in CSP show their willingness to adopt new things. They chose five enhancements, which is fairly rare, according to Reigel. Their priorities shone through, as the enhancements target air, water and animals. To address air concerns, they will be updating and enhancing their spraying system and using a nitrification inhibitor on some of their land. To address animals they will be haying in a wildlife friendly manner along with extending some grass filters which provide nesting cover and further protect water quality.

One of the most impressive enhancements they are implementing is reducing the concentration of nutrients imported on the farm. This enhancement requires that manure must provide at least 50 percent of the N, and 90 percent of the P and K and that at least 75 percent of the feed for livestock must be grown on the farm. The is enhancement is key, according to Reigel, because the balance of livestock and land is critical for a sustainable operation.

Talking about the program Roger says, “CSP has allowed me to tailor conservation improvements to my farm that meet my resource needs.”



*Jane Reigel, NRCS District Conservationist works with Roger Erickson planning the CSP enhancements for his Dairy located in Clark County, WI.*

## SOILS

### NRCS understands the importance of healthy soils.

The Wisconsin Soils Team consists of 12 field Soil Scientists in three Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) Soil Survey Offices. The Team collects data and conducts studies on various Soil Survey Projects in the State. Technical data and Geographic Information System (GIS) Support is provided by the soils data and technology team. Four Area Resource Soil Scientists assist NRCS conservationists and many non-NRCS soil data users to understand and use soils data to make informed land use decisions.

### Unlock the Secrets in the Soil

NRCS knows that soil is the foundation of sustainable agriculture. A new educational initiative called “Unlock the Secrets in the Soil” is underway. This is a renewed emphasis on enhancing this important soil resource. Healthy soils are important for several reasons. These soils are more productive and farmers optimize production, improving their bottom line. Environmentally, keeping the soil healthy keeps nutrients on the farm - not in the local waterways. It also holds water for living plants and reduces the chance of flooding by allowing the water to infiltrate into the soil.

The four key messages for healthy soil are:

- Disturb the soil as little as possible
- Grow as many different species of plants as practical
- Keep living plants in the soil as often as possible
- Keep cover crops on the soil at all times

NRCS is the premier soil conservation agency in the world - founded on soil science. No organization or agency can match NRCS when it comes to soil expertise and technical science delivery.



# Soil Survey Restructuring

In April 2012, NRCS began a national reorganization of its Soil Science Division. Previously the Soil Survey Program had been organized with State, Area, and Field Office operations under State leadership. In the new structure, soil survey operations are managed by Major Land Resource Area offices.

## Impact in Wisconsin

The restructuring plan closed the Marquette MI Soils office and assigned much of the upper peninsula of MI to the Rhinelander Soil Survey Office. Once fully implemented, the Onalaska and Rhinelander offices will be managed directly by the St. Paul, MN office and the Juneau office will be supervised by the Indianapolis, IN office.



Major Land Resource Areas (MLRAs) are geographically associated land resource units that share a common land use, elevation and topography, climate, water, soils, and vegetation. Identification of these large areas is important in statewide agricultural planning and has value in interstate, regional, and national planning.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 89 Wisconsin Central Sands                                       | 94D Northern Highland Sandy Drift                        |
| 90A Wisconsin and Minnesota Thin Loess and Till, Northern Part   | 95A Northern Wisconsin Drift Plain                       |
| 90B Wisconsin and Minnesota Thin Loess and Till, Southern Part   | 95B Southern Wisconsin and Northern Illinois Drift Plain |
| 91B Central Minnesota Sandy Outwash                              | 104 Eastern Iowa and Minnesota Till Prairies             |
| 92 Superior Lake Plain   | 105 Northern Mississippi Valley Loess Plains             |
| 93B Superior Stony and Rocky Loamy Plains and Hills Eastern Part | 110 Northern Illinois and Indiana Heavy Till Plain       |
| 94B Michigan Eastern Upper Peninsula Sandy Drift                 | ★ MLRA Project Office                                    |

## Soil Services Highlights for 2012

The three MLRA Soil Survey Offices are working on seven projects affecting about 885,000 acres in Wisconsin and Iowa. These projects are:

- MLRA 105 - NuF Map Unit Recorrelation
- MLRA 105 - Channeled Phase Upgrade (IA)
- MLRA 89 - Lacustrine Soils Correlation in Glacial Lake Wisconsin area
- MLRA 94B and 95B - Onaway-Emmet Benchmark Soils Maintenance Project
- MLRA 95B - Allentown Drumlin Line Rectification
- MLRA 95B - Dunbarton Analysis

In addition, two Ecological Site Projects have been established to describe inter-relationships between soils, landforms, and vegetation for major soils in Wisconsin.

1. Ecological Site Inventory of the Mineral Point Prairie Savannah Ecological Subsection of MLRA 105
2. MLRA 94D - Ecological Site Descriptions and Inventory of the Northern Highlands Sandy Drift

## WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM

### Wetlands Reserve Program

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) restores, protects and enhances wetlands on private property. It is an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives to restore wetlands that have been drained for agriculture production or have been altered by multiple flood events.

Landowners may sell a conservation easement or enter into a costshare restoration agreement with USDA to restore and protect wetlands. The landowner voluntarily limits future use of the land, yet retains private ownership. The landowner and NRCS develop a plan for the restoration and maintenance of the wetland.



### Highlights for 2012

Easement Acquisitions \$5.3M

Easement Restoration \$1.7M

Number of New Easements = 24

Number of Acres Enrolled in New Easements = 1950

## ~ Success Story ~

### *A Family Dream Comes True*

A passion for conservation started back in 1933 when brothers Leo and Sylvester Price purchased a small hunting property in Juneau County. Over the years adjoining parcels of land were purchased making this large tract of land a haven for wildlife and wetland species. The family spent many hours taking special care to keep the property in its natural, pristine state. This new easement is the largest single-family owned wetland restoration in Wisconsin.

These vast wetlands are dominated by native, diverse vegetation. Threatened and endangered species of flora and fauna are found and protected here. Some of the noteworthy species include the Karner blue butterfly, Blandings turtle, cerulean warbler, red-headed woodpecker, bald eagle, trumpeter swan and whooping crane.

This 2008-acre WRP conservation easement is located next to the Necedah Wildlife Area and the Meadow Valley Wildlife Area, making this area a wonderland for wildlife. Lowland floodplain, shallow marsh, shrub carr, upland deciduous forest, sedge meadow and open water comprise this easement. The property was very well maintained thanks to the Price family and land manager, Herb Meltesen, who was caretaker of this property for 67 years.

The NRCS restoration included an upgrade to existing embankments and the strategic placement of five earthen ditch plugs. All construction activities were completed taking special care to minimize disturbance for all rare species.

WRP is a perfect fit for the Price family. They know that by enrolling this land in Wetlands Reserve Program, it will be protected forever - carrying on the family's strong conservation ethic.

### Some of the Benefits

- Restore, protect and enhance wetland ecosystems
- Protect the land from soil erosion
- Reduce flooding
- Improved wildlife habitat including threatened and endangered species habitat
- Improve water quality and recharge groundwater
- Increase biological diversity



## GRAZING LANDS

### Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

The Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) in Wisconsin is comprised of individuals and organizations working together to maintain and improve the management, productivity, and health of privately owned grazing lands. Grazing lands include permanent pasture, pasture rotated with cropland, prairie, and oak savanna. Owners and managers of these grazing lands address natural resource concerns while contributing to the economic viability of their rural communities. GLCI emphasizes high quality, voluntary technical assistance and expanded research and education for farmers and managers of grazing lands.

NRCS has the primary responsibility to carry out the GLCI. NRCS Grazing Land Specialists and Soil Conservationists have the expertise and experience to provide technical assistance to landowners and managers regarding the long-term productivity and ecological health of their grazing land. Through GLCI efforts, WI NRCS has developed a training program for certification as a "Prescribed/Managed Grazing Planner" which enables NRCS and partnership employees to assist land owners and managers in developing a Managed Grazing Plan. This plan establishes a proper stocking rate, forage type, as well as facilities design for the type of livestock and intensity of grazing management desired. Wisconsin now has 55 Prescribed Grazing Planners to assist landowners, which includes 32 NRCS employees and 23 from county or non-profit organizations.

### Highlights for 2012

- 300 farmers provided with technical assistance
- 200 grazing plans implemented covering 12,000 acres
- 5 training workshops conducted for Prescribed Grazing Planners
- Approximately 16,000 tons of soil saved from sheet and rill erosion by converting cropland to pasture
- Reduction in phosphorus and nitrogen runoff by 80 percent compared to cropland

## GLCI Vision for Wisconsin Grazing

Wisconsin agriculture contributes \$59 billion to the state's economy. Our 36,000+ livestock farms represent a major agricultural sector. We believe that well-managed pasture is key to the long term sustainability of Wisconsin's agricultural economy, environment and livestock farming community.

### Grazing Practices Installed ~ 2012

- Wisconsin Brush Management - 1,668 acres
- Fence - 703,229 ft.
- Firebreak - 95,548 ft.
- Forage Harvest Management - 2,269 acres
- Heavy Use Area Protection - 1,690 acres
- Forage and Biomass Planting - 3,540 acres
- Prescribed Grazing - 12,001 acres
- Access Control - 926 acres
- Prescribed Burning - 1,054 acres



## OUTREACH

### Outreach in Wisconsin

Outreach is an important part of the overall delivery of NRCS programs and services. NRCS ensures that all programs and services are made available to all customers and are an integral part of how we conduct business.

NRCS has a diverse clientele and reaching out to these customers is an important part of our mission. Providing information and education about our programs and services to targeted groups develops stronger working relationships with the agency. By providing guidance and good communication, more underserved groups find out how NRCS can help them with their agricultural enterprise.

### NRCS in the Field

NRCS uses every avenue to reach out to our historically underserved audiences. Some of these activities include:

- Women Caring for the Land Learning Circles and Conservation Workshops
- Hmong Outreach Conferences and Farmers Market Outreach
- Extensive collaboration with the Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WTCAC) to ensure NRCS programs meet tribal resource needs
- International Urban Ag Conference targeting urban and minority audiences
- Hispanic cultural awareness program and training
- County sponsored fairs, farm tours, local radio and newspapers
- Conservation Technical Assistance and outreach to Amish Community
- Assistance and advice for New and Beginning Farmers

## *~ Success Story ~*

### *Extending the Harvest with a High Tunnel*

Cheu and Chia Vang moved to America in April 1976 from Laos. Cheu had been in the Laotian Army and worked for USA Aid during the war. They moved to Jefferson, Wisconsin, in 2005 and started growing vegetables for local Farmer's Markets.

Cheu contacted NRCS about the seasonal high tunnel pilot project. High tunnels, or hoophouses, are unheated greenhouses that can help market gardeners extend their growing season so that they can improve the profitability of their farms. Compared to open field conditions, plastic covered high tunnels result in a warmer production environment in the late fall and early spring. Financial assistance for High Tunnels is made available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Now, after working with NRCS staff, he is eager to begin addressing erosion and other soil and water issues on his land.



*Cheu Vang produces many kinds of vegetables in his seasonal high tunnel, including exotic varieties that flourish with the longer growing season.*

## VOLUNTEERS

### Earth Team Volunteer Program

The Earth Team /NRCS partnership works. It is a great example of cooperative conservation that results in environmental benefits everyone can enjoy. NRCS applauds their hard work, dedication, and commitment to improving our nation's land, air and water.

Earth Team volunteers choose us. They believe in us, our mission and the benefits we offer the environment. They choose to work alongside us on our conservation projects. They do this for the experience, the self-satisfaction, to help the environment and for a hundred other reasons. Last year, Earth Team volunteers in Wisconsin collectively donated \$82,300\* worth of assistance to us, our mission and to our customers. Ninety-five volunteers invested 3,835 hours of their time with us.

\*Value of a volunteer hour is \$21.49



*Patti Jackson-Kelly (L), Assistant State Conservationist  
and Earth Team Volunteer Jill Ewers*

Jill Ewers volunteered in the Richland Center Area Office while completing an internship requirement for her degree at Southwest Wisconsin Technical College. *"I thoroughly enjoyed my experience at the NRCS and I would love to become a permanent employee of the USDA." Jill Ewers*

## SPECIAL RECOGNITION

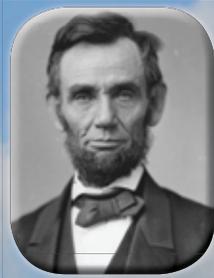
### National NRCS Engineer of the Year

John R. Ramsden, Wisconsin State Conservation Engineer was named the national NRCS Engineer of the Year for 2012.

As State Conservation Engineer in Wisconsin since 1994, Ramsden leads federal engineering efforts for water quality, watershed and flood protection, dam safety, and wetland and floodplain restoration. He oversees the agency engineering staff and works with State and local agencies to implement conservation programs. In this post, Ramsden works with competing and frequently controversial stakeholder interests to produce sound technical standards that are cited in Wisconsin state laws, and support productive agriculture and a healthy environment.



USDA celebrates 150 years of service  
to the American people ~ 2012



**U.S. Department of Agriculture**  
Celebrating 150 years as the  
People's Department

True to his roots as a frontier farmboy, on May 15, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed legislation to create the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He called it the "People's Department"

Right now, USDA employees are hard at work supporting American agriculture and rural communities, conserving our natural resources, conducting groundbreaking research, and ensuring that we all have access to safe, nutritious food. USDA touches the lives of people every day and this year is celebrating its proud heritage of being the "People's Department" for 150 years.



Natural Resources Conservation Service is the leader for conservation on private lands and is committed to "Helping People Help the Land."

The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

*“Everything we do, all we share, even whatever we amount to as a great and enduring people, begins with and rests on the sustained productivity of our agricultural land.”*

*Hugh Hammond Bennett*

*from a series of 1959 lectures at North Carolina State University.*





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**Wisconsin**

**January 2013**