



PENINSULA FARMER

Farming with pride | The official newsletter of Peninsula Pride Farms

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peninsulapridefarms.org



PPF members gathered to learn about planting cover crops into alfalfa and co-planting soybeans and corn. Read more on page 6.

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Analysis: Peninsula Pride Farms reduces risk to water quality

Innovative farming protects against phosphorus runoff, soil erosion

By **Steve Schauer** for PPF

Nurturing soil health has been an integral part of Peninsula Pride Farms' innovative work to improve water quality in northeastern Wisconsin. A new analysis confirms that those efforts are making a difference.

Field practices adopted by the farmer-led watershed conservation

group's livestock and crop farmers are significantly reducing the chance of harmful runoff into streams and lakes, according to research shared by the state Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and The Nature Conservancy.

Using data about farming practices among members of Peninsula Pride Farms (PPF), the analysis calculated an estimate of the potential impact of various practices compared to corn, soybean and winter wheat, continuous corn and dairy crop rotations in Kewaunee and southern

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Door counties. The findings show, for example, that the farmers using strip-tillage and no-tillage potentially reduce phosphorus runoff from farm fields by 50 percent and soil erosion by 60 percent.

Stopping phosphorus and soil sediment from leaving farm fields improves water quality. For example, every pound of phosphorus that reaches a stream or lake can potentially feed 500 pounds of algae, degrading the waterway.

“Peninsula Pride Farms members are excited to see the impact of their conservation work over the past several years,” Don Niles, a dairy farmer who leads PPF, said. “We are proud that as an organization we have grown to the point where we can tally scientific results. While there is ongoing work to be done, it is gratifying to see how far we have come in our efforts to protect our peninsula’s land and water resources.”

The five-year-old nonprofit group has grown to 43 farmer-members, who represent 63,038 acres and 67,276 dairy animals and beef cattle. The group collaborates with university researchers, environmental groups and community leaders, and they hold field days to demonstrate various practices.

“Since their inception in 2016, the Peninsula Pride farmers have made huge strides in getting cover crops planted and using reduced tillage and low-disturbance manure injection,” said Steve Richter, agricultural strategies director at The Nature Conservancy, which is a key supporter of the farmer group and helped fund the analysis.

“PPF members are very open to making changes to their operations to benefit soil health and reduce environmental impacts, which is why they are one of the biggest drivers of farm conservation in northeastern Wisconsin,” he said.

PPF members are regularly practicing

other conservation techniques as well, such as soil sampling, split nitrogen application, nitrogen stabilization and planting grass waterways. They are also figuring out how to make these practices financially sustainable through increased productivity.

CONSERVATION PRACTICES

PPF farmers have made noticeable changes to their practices. The most recent numbers (2019):

- 18,697 acres of conservation tillage practices (either strip-till or no-till planting)
- 63,038 acres covered by nutrient management plans
- 10,124 acres of cover crops
- 6,089 acres of low-disturbance manure injection

MORE ABOUT THE ANALYSIS

The analysis was completed as part of a conservation benefits tracking project initiated by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to evaluate impacts of the state’s Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants Program. The initiative was developed in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Soil Science and The Nature Conservancy. Wisconsin’s SnapPlus nutrient management planning software was used to calculate the potential annual phosphorus loss and soil erosion on fields when farms include practices such as cover crops and reduced-tillage.

While not every conservation practice provided significant reductions for each scenario, below are examples of the amount of phosphorus loss and soil erosion that can be avoided with the adoption of practices on agricultural landscapes in

southern Door and Kewaunee counties. Acreages of practices are based on the average number of acres implemented on PPF member farms in 2019.

It is important to note that the calculations below are based on comparisons of generalized systems, not actual farms, and do not take into account the other watershed variables that impact how sediment and phosphorus make their way into a stream or lake.

For comparison, a mid-size dump truck can carry 10 tons of sediment, and 1 pound of phosphorus in a lake or stream has the potential to cause the growth of up to 500 pounds of algae.

Dairy farm with a corn silage and alfalfa rotation adopting 362 acres of small grain cover crops following corn silage

- Phosphorus loss reduction: 420 pounds
- Soil erosion reduction: 326 tons

Corn, soybean & winter wheat operation adopting 708 acres of strip-tillage

- Phosphorus loss reduction: 1,083 pounds
- Soil erosion reduction: 885 tons

Continuous corn operation adopting 327 acres of no-tillage

- Phosphorus loss reduction: 1,347 pounds
- Soil erosion reduction: 958 tons

Good weather and progress in 2020

By Don Niles, board president



What a great pleasure to be able to write this after the fall we have just experienced! In my previous column we were in the middle of 2020's harvesting activity and all was well. Energy level was high, members were free to make their plan and work on their plan. At that time all was well and hopes were high, but there was no certainty that conditions would hold.

As it turns out, Mother Nature remained in a good mood and we had the same great conditions through the end of harvest, manure applications (we had not seen the bottom of the pits for quite some time!) and fall work. In addition, conservation practices could play out in good order. What a great confidence builder to be able to make a plan and see it through to the end.

While nobody forgot we were in the middle of a pandemic, we were more than able to get our work done while making sure we kept producing the food the world depends on us to produce. Along those lines, I was very intrigued to see the results of a recent national Gallup Poll. The poll asked people to rank the level of trust they had in a wide variety of occupations. In 2020, for the first time ever, farmers and agriculture ranked highest on the list of all occupations. This was very remarkable, and a great message.

In "normal" times perhaps, society focuses a bit much on things that are not really that important. When the chips are down, however, and people are out of work, afraid for their family and loved ones or worried about leaving home, one thing they did not need to worry about was having enough high quality, affordable, nutritious food for their family. That is our job, and we take great pride in it.

I hope you can take a minute to read this issue of the PPF newsletter. Here you will find updates on our Conservation Conversations, see what Discovery Farms is up to, read about our upcoming annual meeting and more.

Cheers to 2021!

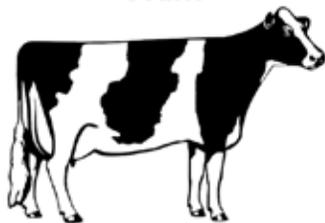
Don



**PENINSULA
PRIDE FARMS**

SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION IMPACT

DAIRY



326 tons

Potential Soil
Erosion Reduction

420 pounds

Potential Phosphorous
Loss Reduction

CORN



958 tons

1,347 pounds

CORN, SOYBEAN, WINTER WHEAT



885 tons

1,083 pounds

Producer-led webinar series: Planting new ideas, growing conservation

By **Erica Gentry**, UW-Madison Division of Extension Discovery Farms Program

Are you interested in learning what other farmer-led watershed groups are doing around the state? The Producer-Led Webinar Series: Planting new ideas, growing conservation, was started in March with the goal to facilitate farmer exchange to problem solve, try new things and innovate. It also provides a space for farmers and partners of their watershed groups to share conservation success stories and answer questions. Since March, there have been 10 webinars, occurring on the second Tuesday of each month. Webinars last about one hour each.

These are the topics we covered so far with plenty more to come:

- Interseeding rye into standing soybeans
- Planting corn into standing rye
- Alternative forages
- Increasing profitability with precision agriculture
- Hosting virtual events and other planning tools

- No-tilling into heavy red clays
- Nitrogen management, N crediting from irrigation and cover crops
- No-till, 60-inch corn, and grazing covers
- Fall and winter grazing techniques
- Soil Health Partnership

The idea for these webinars came about pre-pandemic and it has turned out to be an excellent resource for farmers and watershed groups to share their efforts with a large audience, especially now when in-person gatherings are limited. The webinars are hosted by the DATCP Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants Program, the UW-Madison Division of Extension Natural Resources Institute and the Discovery Farms Program.

“Hearing a farmer perspective helps us know what results are in field conditions in our areas. Large conferences tend to bring speakers

from southern latitudes, where the dates and condition have little correlation for us,” was a comment made by a webinar participant. The webinars have provided honest learning opportunities for Wisconsin farmers and conservation professionals. Practice specifics, planter setup, economics and challenges are addressed. No questions are off limits during these webinars.

All webinars are recorded and posted on the UW Discovery Farms YouTube channel. Watch them at YouTube.com and search UW Discovery Farms.

If you have a topic idea or would like to be involved in the Producer-Led Webinar Series, contact rachel.rushmann@wisconsin.gov.

To participate in the live webinars, register at <https://forms.gle/zZ8mf6ZNYxtPgcnA9>. Webinars are also live streamed on the Discovery Farms Facebook page.



Photos (L-R): Cattle grazing interseeded cover crops on Kelby Lechleitner’s farm in Marathon County; Planting green at Tony Peirick’s in Dodge County; Matt Winker sharing his no-till success on heavy red clays in Belgium, Wis.

Member Profile: **Guillette Farms**

From PPF

Guillette Farms is a third-generation family farm operating in both Door and Kewaunee Counties. The farm consists of Debbie and Allen, their children Nick and wife Jessica (Hunter, Logan, and Trevor), Aaron (Bella), Sarah and husband Ryan (Colton and Dylan). The farm grows corn, soybeans, winter wheat, and cover crops and also does custom combining. Guillette Farms is a proud member of Peninsula Pride Farms.

How has being a member of PPF helped you accomplish your conservation goals?

Being a member of PPF has allowed Guillette Farms to participate in programs like cost share and gain valuable knowledge through events like the Conservation Conversations. By having extra dollars to spend on cover crop seeds and field days to learn more about “out of the box” conservation ideas, we have pushed the envelope farther on our conservation goals.

What new conservation practices did you try in 2020 and why?

We tried no-till planting green some of our corn fields this year. By seeing and hearing about other farms’

experiences through PPF, we gained knowledge and comfort in the practice. We wanted to try this practice to save time, minimize erosion and build soil health.

What improvement in the soil have you seen on your farm since implementing a conservation practice? What practice was it?

We have seen an improvement in the ability to no-till plant corn after winter wheat when we use cover crops to condition the soil after winter wheat harvest.

How long have you been implementing conservation practices on your land and why did you start?

We have been implementing nutrient management planning and conservation tillage since the early 2000’s and likely even before then. Nick became a Certified Crop Adviser (CCA) in 2004 and through continuing education requirements he has been learning more about the importance of soil health.

How has PPF helped you understand conservation practices?

PPF allows farmers and others to come together and learn from

each other through field days and other learning opportunities (relevant meetings and Conservation Conversations). Having agronomy professionals working closely with farmers in the area has been instrumental in the adoption of conservation practices across the landscape.

Why is it important for you to have a sustainable farm?

At Guillette Farms, we want to improve our soil and by doing so we will also have beneficial outcomes for the environment and our farm’s profitability.

If there is anything else you would like to add?

It is encouraging to see the results that PPF and the Door-Kewaunee Demonstration Farms Network are having in promoting conservation practices in Northeastern Wisconsin. Guillette Farms is also proud of Nick’s involvement with PPF and the Door-Kewaunee Demonstration Farms Network and being selected to be the inaugural American Society of Agronomy’s CCA Conservationist of the Year in 2019.





Farmers continue to learn through

By Steve Schauer for PPF

Thinking outside the box to improve our land and water

Peninsula Pride Farms has members who are doing their part to improve the land, water and air in our surrounding communities and these efforts, at times, takes some creative thinking. An intriguing discussion took place regarding planting cover crops into fourth-year alfalfa and co-planting soybeans and corn during the Sept. 29 Conservation Conversation co-hosted by Door-Kewaunee Demonstration Farm Network and Deer Run Dairy.

Derek Ducat, who oversees all crop management at Deer Run Dairy, has been working alongside crop adviser Nick Gillette and U.S. National Resources Conservation Service conservationist Barry Bubolz to try innovative conservation practices he has not used before.

The lifecycle of alfalfa usually lasts four years, but Ducat is working

with several acres that are now in their sixth year and could last longer. The trio collaborated and planted a mixture of rye, purple top turnip, daikon radish and barley into alfalfa with the hope they would not have to spray off the alfalfa for a new crop. It worked because the alfalfa has thrived with the cover crop and is two years beyond the normal lifecycle.

What piqued the interest of other farms who attend the casual dialogue in a Kewaunee field was the health of the soil and the options it gives a farmer the following spring if the alfalfa does not grow well. Ducat also learned that killing off the alfalfa is not the best option, as was the standard practice for many years, because the crop is needed to keep nitrogen in the ground and hold water from running off.

Deer Run Dairy is also in the early testing stages of co-planting soybeans and corn to see if there are any

benefits. While it has been less than two years during their trial-and-error phase of this plan, they have noticed corn maturity can be reduced because of the soybeans being incorporated as a cover crop. It was also stated that the corn appeared to be healthier in areas where the soybeans were co-planted.

They are learning more about these companion crops when co-planted and witnessing the increased protein and digestibility levels.

Derek Ducat on trying different practices and what he is learning:

“We like to try different species in cover crops to see what benefit we can get out of each one. We are learning and looking back at our no-till fields and the cover crops we planted in the spring and it is amazing how some of our acres have changed from 10 years ago when we weren’t no-tilling and didn’t have cover crops planted.”

Conversations go a long way to



Through Conservation Conversations

improve soil health

Casual conversations are making a difference for farmers in southern Door and Kewaunee counties. Peninsula Pride Farms (PPF) started hosting informal events known as Conservation Conversations last year and the benefits have been invaluable.

On Nov. 3, farmers and custom operators gathered at a field farmed by Ebert Enterprises to discuss manure application strategies on winter cereal crops after corn silage. Nearly two dozen agriculture professionals met to look at planting a cover crop after applying manure with minimal soil disturbance in anticipation of next year's planting.

Nick Guillette, conservation coordinator at Ebert Enterprises and Certified Crop Adviser, presented and discussed the effectiveness of applying manure using low-disturbance methods prior to planting a cover crop

because of the numerous benefits. He shared that:

- Saving the soil structure is the goal
- Taking one pass with a terra disc in the spring means less tillage
- Conservation practices increases earthworm activity and improves soil biology
- The hope in spring is that there is an established cover and root structure on the field
- Gives farmers the option to use cover crops as an additional forage
- Spring plan is to plant earlier because of fall conservation practices

PPF has hosted a variety of Conservation Conversations this year covering a variety of topics including: planting into green, grass waterways, cover crops, interseeding and low disturbance manure applications.

“

Farmers learning from each other and spreading the news is an effective way to create change in the agricultural community.”

- Barry Bubolz, NRCS



PENINSULA PRIDE FARMS

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2021 PPF Annual Business Meeting

Mark your calendars for Feb. 18 for a members-only meeting

From PPF

Due to Covid-19, PPF will be hosting the 2021 Annual Business Meeting virtually for members only. The group plans to host a public event when conditions for large gatherings are favorable, hopefully in summer 2021.

When: 1-2:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 18

Where: VIRTUAL via Microsoft Teams

Agenda: Officer reports, 2020 project updates, board elections

Watch your email and check peninsulapridefarms.org > Events for full details.

RSVP at <https://forms.gle/onLSW3h5q7SNzKnZ7> (link also on the PPF website.)

Members will receive the link to join via email. Contact Lauren at lbrey@voiceofmilk.com with questions.



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