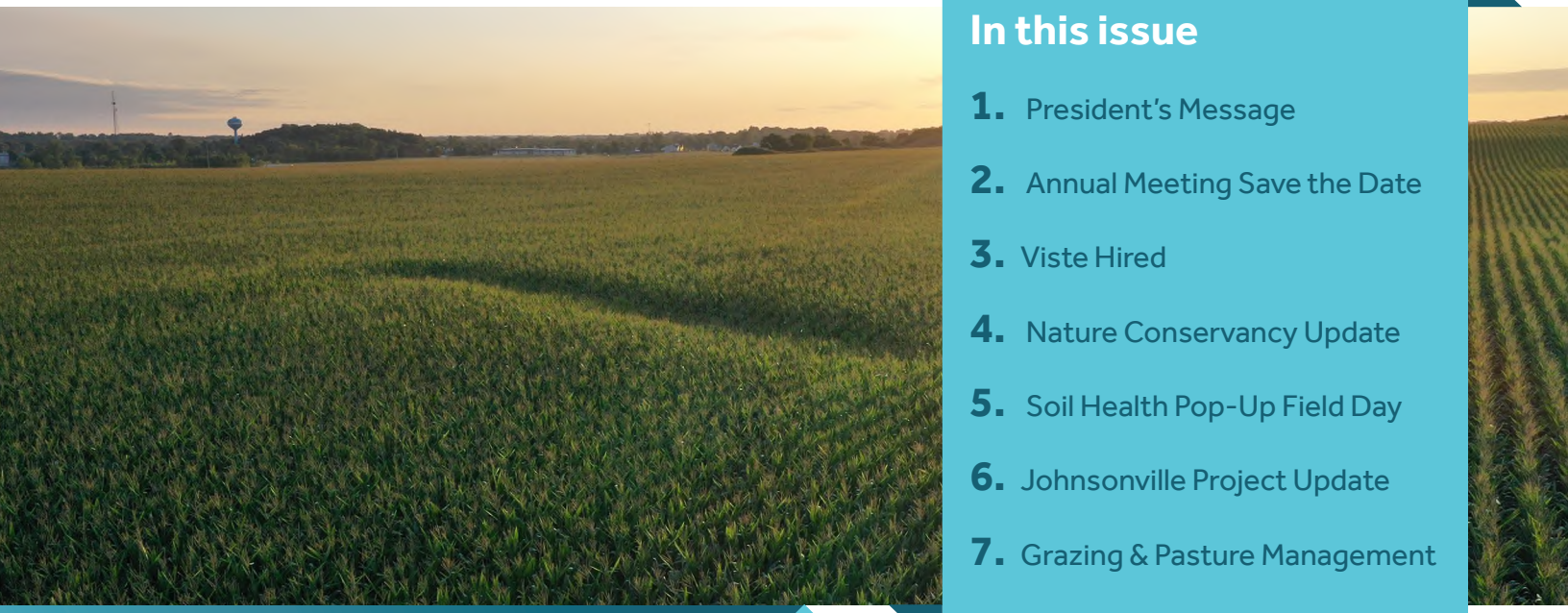
Winter 2025

Sheboygan River Sentinel

the newsletter of Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers

srpfarmers.com



In this issue

A message from the President

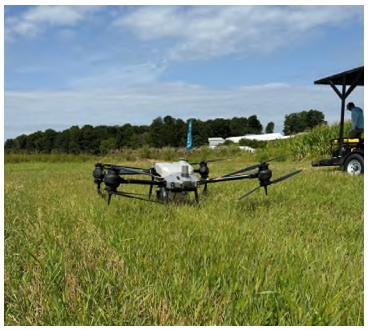
Brody Stapel, SRPF president

Hello fellow farmers and supporters,

I recently had the opportunity to share SRPF's story at Maywood Park in Sheboygan during the November Nature at Noon program. The attendees were enthusiastic and interested in our work, especially regarding the data we have that demonstrates how our conservation practices are positively impacting the environment and benefiting our community as a whole.

It is always encouraging to see interest from groups outside of farming and agriculture who want to learn more about our efforts. We should all take pride in this achievement as a group and be motivated to continue making progress.

This past summer, we hosted several successful field days and events on a variety of topics. Todd and Kara Abraham of A-B Lane Farm hosted a pop-up field day where CAL Drone Applications LLC demonstrated the application of fungicide to standing corn late in the season. Tom Stemper of Stemper Grain and Hay hosted a soil health field day in collaboration with the Sand County Foundation to discuss the group's Performance Based Conservation project. Reichert Land & Cattle hosted a pop-up pasture walk in collaboration with the Sand County Foundation. Additionally, we look forward to the end-of-the-season wrap-up event and Climate-Smart Workshop, which will take place on Jan. 9, 2025.



As a reminder, our annual meeting is coming up on Feb. 14, 2025. Once again, it will be held at the Amore in Plymouth. The event will feature guest speaker Rick Clark, a fifth-generation farmer from Indiana, who will discuss his conservation strategies to transform soil health. I

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A message from the President

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encourage you all to mark your calendars and make plans to attend. Feel free to extend this invitation to other farmers outside of our group who may be interested. All are welcome to join us!

Together, our dedication to our community, the environment and our farms is truly making an impact. Here's to another year of growth ahead!

Kind regards,

Brody Stapel, SRPF board president

Scan the code for more information on Sheboygan River Progessive Farmers or to see any upcoming events.

Scan to register!

SHEBOYGAN RIVER
PROGRESSIVE FARMERS

SAVE THE DATE

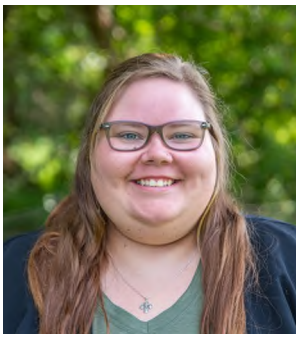
Join us for our Annual Meeting!

Friday, February 14
Amore Banquet Hall
18 W Mill St, Plymouth

Discover how Rick Clark is regenerating soils, reducing pesticides, and boosting profitability with non-GMO seeds, crop diversity, and "farming green" practices.

Mark your calendar and connect with fellow farmers at this engaging event!

Viste joins sustainability team to support farmers in FSF Climate-Smart Program



Marti Viste, Sustainability project specialist

Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative added a sustainability project specialist to its sustainability team to support Edge's Climate-Smart project in partnership with Farmers for Sustainable Food.

Farmers for Sustainable Food is expanding farmer support throughout the FSF Climate-Smart Program by adding an additional sustainability project specialist. Marti Viste will assist farmers with enrollment through data collection and analysis.

Viste has close ties to agriculture and experience working directly with farmers in her previous role as an agronomist at Rio Creek Feed Mill in Algoma, Wis. She is the fifth generation on her family's farm, Vistren Farms, in Door County, Wis.

"I'm deeply passionate about working with farmers and being involved in agriculture," Viste said. "I'm thrilled to join the team and to work closely with farmers every day, supporting them through the FSF Climate-Smart Program."

Viste has a bachelor's degree in agricultural education with a minor in animal science from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

Join us for the SRPF Winter Wrap-Up & Climate-Smart Workshop

Date: Thursday, January 9, 2025

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Location: Chissy's Pub and Grill, 501 N. Mill Street, Waldo

Connect with fellow SRPF members to reflect on the past year and learn about the Farmers for Sustainable Food Climate-Smart Program. This program provides metrics to guide conservation decisions and offers financial compensation—up to $9,000 annually—for participants.

Pizza and refreshments provided. Agenda details will be emailed soon.

All are welcome—we look forward to seeing you there!

Scan to register!

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An update from The Nature Conservancy: Our commitment to nature and people

Written by Emily Zimmerman, PhD, Director of Agricultural Strategies

Emily Zimmerman, TNC Director of Agricultural Strategies

For many Wisconsinites, some of life's most memorable experiences are rooted in the state's iconic food and natural beauty. From sharing that perfect ear of summer sweet corn to savoring fresh, squeaky cheese curds to spending time at the lake or in the woods with loved ones, these cherished moments are made possible in large part because of the hard work and dedication of our state's farmers. At The Nature Conservancy (TNC), we recognize the important role that agriculture and farmers play in protecting the land and water we depend on. Farmers are at the heart of sustaining nature for people, and we are proud to support them.

Empowering and supporting farmers to adopt conservation practices that align with their business goals is vital to TNC's mission. We are grateful to support the efforts of the producer-led watershed groups – including LASA, Peninsula Pride Farms, and Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers – in their work to improve soil health and water quality, address climate change and sustain rural communities. In addition to supporting over 16 producer-led watershed groups through TNC programs, TNC in Wisconsin is working to accelerate the adoption of regenerative agriculture using a variety of strategies, including developing corporate partnerships, influencing public policy, and using science-based approaches.

Feed in Focus (FiF): This industry-led effort helps U.S. dairy farms improve feed production and efficiency while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and contributing to improved water quality and soil health. In Wisconsin, TNC has partnered with Foremost Farms to provide dairy farmers with tailored technical support and financial assistance to implement conservation practices such as cover crops, reduced till and no-till, crop rotation, nutrient stewardship, grazing and feed management, and edge-of-field practices. Since 2022, more than a dozen farmers in Wisconsin have enrolled in FiF, directly impacting over 10,000 acres and influencing more than 42,000 acres across Wisconsin.

The Clean Water Initiative: For the past five years, a coalition of diverse partners, including Clean Wisconsin, The Dairy Business Association, Wisconsin Land + Water, and TNC, has been working together to achieve clean water goals while supporting resilient farms. The coalition has focused on advancing shared policy approaches to ensure clean drinking water, increase the efficiency and efficacy of the confined animal feeding operation (CAFO) program, support current conservation efforts and foster innovation, and improve Wisconsin's nonpoint source program.

The Upper Mississippi River (UMR) Foodscape: The foodscape approach is an innovative, science-based approach to accelerating regenerative agriculture on the landscape. TNC has invested in five foodscapes – geographic areas with similar biophysical characteristics, land and farm management, and socioeconomic attributes – around the world, including in the UMR basin. The UMR Foodscape covers 83 counties in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois. In this region, TNC is investing in developing and expanding agricultural markets, supporting farmer-to-farmer networks, advancing partnerships and policies, and collaborating with farmer advisors – all to expand the adoption of soil health practices and diverse crop rotations, livestock and grazing, agroforestry, and edge of field practices. Adoption of these practices builds resilient food systems that benefit both nature and people.

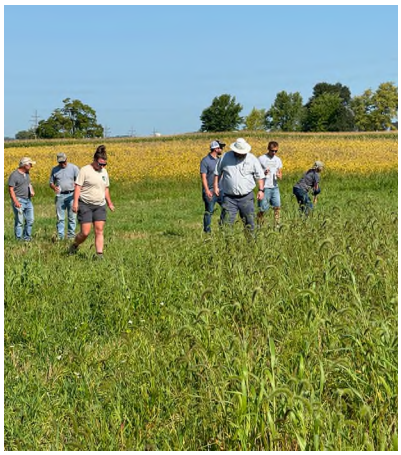
At The Nature Conservancy, we are proud to partner with farmers in their dedication to improving soil health and water quality, addressing climate change, and sustaining rural communities. We remain committed to working with producer-led watershed groups and other partners to ensure Wisconsin's lands and waters can continue to sustain communities for generations to come.

For more information on TNC's work in Wisconsin and worldwide, visit www.nature.org/wisconsin.

SRPF partners with Sand County Foundation for a soil health pop-up field day

Written by Farmers for Sustainable Food

For more than three years, Brian Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers member Tom Stemper of Stemper Grain and Hay hosted a soil health field day in collaboration with the Sand County Foundation in September. Attendees discussed different conservation practices, including utilizing a cover crop mix after wheat, implementing no-tillage with alfalfa and interseeding into corn.

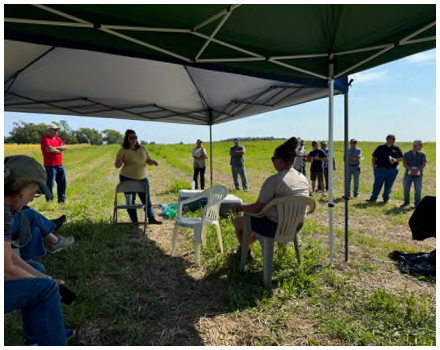


Tricia Verville of the Sand County Foundation shared progress on the group's Performance Based Conservation project.

Nutrient management has proven to be a powerful and effective strategy on all four farms, Verville says.

Testing was done to prevent excess nutrient use and reduce phosphorus runoff by identifying areas of the fields with excess manure and areas of the field lacking nutrients and in need of additional manure. A total of 2,900 acres were analyzed across the four farms in the Johnsonville project.

At Stemper Grain and Hay, Stemper planted a cover crop mix of buckwheat, clover, turnips, sunflower and wheat. The goal of this mix is to control weeds without herbicides, reduce erosion, establish roots in the soil all year-round and increase biomass for the benefit of the farm. In the future, Stemper hopes to be able to capture carbon credits.



However, weather and outside factors slowed the growth of this cover crop throughout the growing season. Next year, corn will be planted in this field, following a late-fall or early-spring termination of the cover crop.

Attendees had the opportunity to discuss other strategies for no-tilling alfalfa that are working for them. Dairy farmers shared their experiences determining which interseeding varieties to add to forage, noting the most diverse mix in this project is corn interseeded with sunflower, corn, kale, brassicas, sun hemp, hairy vetch, beans, sorghum and buckwheat. Each of these species add to the forage to be fermented into feed, while also helping to improve soil health.

Johnsonville, another SRPF conservation project partner, sponsored the lunch and a door prize drawing.

For additional educational events like this one and more opportunities next season, visit https://srpfarmers.com/news.php.

Scan the code for additional educational events like this one and more opportunities next season.

Update on SRPF, Johnsonville and Sand County Foundation project

From the Sand County Foundation

Farmers in the Sheboygan River watershed are playing a leading role in a project aimed at improving regional water quality by partnering with Johnsonville and the Sand County Foundation, a Wisconsin-based national nonprofit organization that champions conservation on farmland. Sand County Foundation works directly with farmers to conduct demonstrations of innovative techniques to remove barriers to conservation adoption.

In 2023, the organization launched a pilot project with farmers in the Sheboygan River watershed to achieve water quality goals through the adoption of conservation practices to reduce phosphorus and sediment runoff.

Partnering with farmers in the watershed holds promise for Johnsonville and its water quality improvement objectives. Johnsonville treats process and sanitary wastewater from its campus in the Town of Sheboygan Falls, as well as sanitary wastewater from the Village of Johnsonville. The final effluent is discharged into the Sheboygan River as a point source permitted by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Johnsonville has been working to reduce phosphorus discharge for over 10 years. Improved wastewater treatment processes over the last decade cut its average phosphorus concentration in the effluent from about 0.5 mg/L to less than 0.25 mg/L and Johnsonville now discharges on average less than 2 pounds of phosphorus per million gallons water treated. But, Johnsonville's total phosphorus discharge still exceeds the 247 pounds per year allocated for Johnsonville under the Northeast Lakeshore Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). (https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/TMDLs/NELakeshore.html)

Two compliance options available to point source dischargers like Johnsonville are adding wastewater treatment equipment that removes more phosphorus from the point-source effluent, and creating water quality trading partnerships to reduce phosphorus loads across a larger portion of the watershed. Johnsonville wanted to learn whether cost-sharing with watershed partners could produce better overall outcomes in terms of phosphorus and sediment loading compared to investment focused on wastewater infrastructure.

Sand County Foundation modeled conservation implementation scenarios for four farms participating in the Johnsonville pilot project, which represent a diverse mix of production including dairy, grain, and livestock. The scenarios include fertilizer and manure management, reduced tillage, buffers, alternative crops, and cover crops. By modeling various options, the team could identify options that provide both agronomic and environmental benefits.

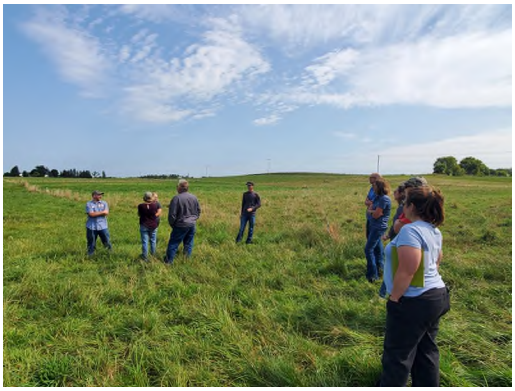
Johnsonville is part of the agricultural sector too, and many Johnsonville employees have family ties to farming. Johnsonville members who operate or help manage the company's wastewater treatment facilities have participated in local field days, gained insight into the challenges of modern farming, and learned there is potential for partnerships that improve soil health and provide phosphorus credits. Johnsonville appreciates the work by Sand County Foundation and the participating farms.

If you are interested in learning more about how the adoption of conservation can reduce sediment and nutrient losses from your land, please contact Tricia Verville at Sand County Foundation tverville@sandcountyfoundation.org or scan the code below.

Maximizing grazing and pasture management with Reichert Land & Cattle

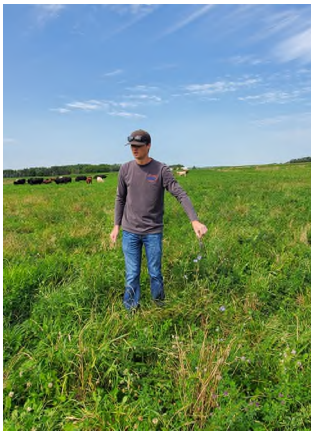
Written by Farmers for Sustainable Food

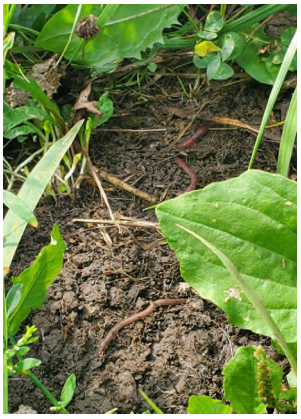
Nearly 15 farmers, ag businesses and community members attended the Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers Grazing and Pasture Management walk in late August. The attendees learned about multi-species pasture mixes and the conservation benefits of grazing. SRPF member Chris and Jennifer Reichert of Reichert Land & Cattle hosted the event.



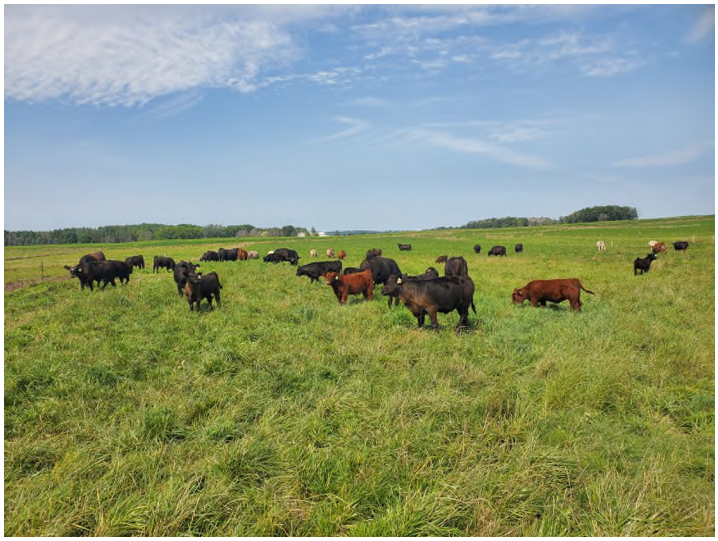
Reichert has 36 cow/calf pairs and manages 40 acres of pasture as well as 350 acres of cropland. The pasture acres consist of five to six acres each and are cross fenced into 1.3 acres of smaller pastures. Cattle are grazed and rotated to a new pasture daily or when the pasture is grazed down 6 to 8 inches. The goal is to allow for regrowth between grazing rotations and have a standing cover crop going into the winter. The cattle graze through the summer until November or December and then receive additional hay to make it through the winter.

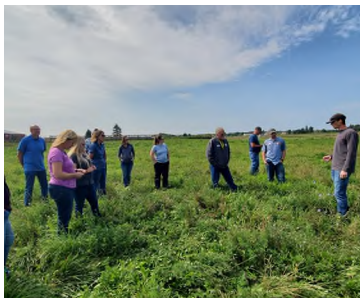
The farm has realized that time is its limiting factor. They eliminated fertilizer applications and haven't noticed a change in nitrogen. The pasture acres are cut once a year, usually after the first time they're grazed in the spring. The farm is 100% no-till and grazing the animals allows constant fertilizer and no manure to haul. Baled corn stalks are used for bedding and feed. The cattle don't require high-quality feed when provided with a high-quality pasture of multispecies, such as grass, alfalfa and clover mix.

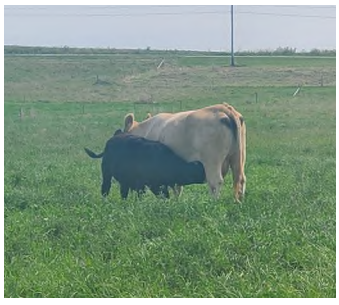




Reichert Land & Cattle's goal is for the angus cattle to be used as beef for direct sales to customers and the short horn cattle to be used for IVF and AI to diversify the genetics in their show cattle. The farm continues to be a resource for other farms interested in maximizing their grazing management and sharing the benefits of soil health and conservation through Reichert's experiences.







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