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April 10, 2025

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Farmers measure sustainable farming advancements across the Sheboygan River Basin

2024 annual report highlights conservation improvements

SHEBOYGAN, Wis. — For Sheboygan River Progressive Farmer member Derek Sippel, sustainable agriculture is a lifestyle, and he looks forward to passing this way of life down to future generations.



Sippel is a fifth-generation dairy farmer in St. Cloud, Wis., where he farms with his wife Nicole and his parents, Earl and Yvonne. On the family farm, they milk 120 cows, raise 75 Angus cross beef and manage 850 acres of cropland.

“We started our conservation journey with no-till soybeans and cover crops after winter wheat,” Sippel said. “Currently, we’re nearly 100% no-till with cover crops planted on every acre.”

Sippel and his wife also own a small business, Airy Point Farms, which specializes in no-till flowers and pumpkins. They enjoy hosting on-farm events and sharing sustainable agriculture with the local community.

“The practices we’re using, such as cover cropping, no-tillage and strategic crop rotation, help protect our soils, increase nutrient holding, and regulate soil moisture,” he said. “I deeply value sustainable agriculture because it’s a way of life for our family, and I want to be able to pass that down to future generations.”

Through the SRPF, Sippel shares his conservation management experiences with fellow farmers who have similar values.

“Conservation management practices come with challenges, and it’s great to have a group like SRPF to help work through these and come up with new ideas,” Sippel said.

Annual survey results

As part of SRPF membership, Sippel participated in the 2024 Annual Member Conservation Practice Survey. This is the seventh year the group has documented and publicly shared members’ collective efforts.

The group, composed of 38 members, implemented various conservation practices including planting 9,552 acres of cover crops, using no-till on 12,786 acres, and planting into cover crops (otherwise known as “planting green”) on 4,132 acres. They also measured nutrient management impact on 18,792 acres.

The potential environmental benefits of these practices:

- Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 4,273 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents, which is equal to greenhouse gas emissions produced by 1,017 cars driven for a year.
- Prevention of sediment loss from farm fields of 32,368 tons, equivalent to 3,237 dump trucks of soil.
- Reduction of phosphorus runoff by 43,949 pounds, potentially preventing 22 million pounds of algae growth in local water bodies.

Data was analyzed by Houston Engineering, Inc. and Farmers for Sustainable Food.

Farmers interested in joining SRPF can find more information on srpfarmers.com.

By the numbers

Number of acres covered by conservation practices among Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers members:

- 2018 — 20,427
- 2019 — 72,947
- 2020 — 89,080
- 2021 — 86,294
- 2022 — 96,920
- 2023 — 99,496
- 2024 — 89,260

**Multiple conservation practices can be used on a farm field*

Potential impact of conservation practices in 2024:

- Phosphorus runoff reduction — 43,949 pounds
- Sediment erosion reduction — 32,368 tons
- Carbon dioxide emission reduction — 4,273 metric tons

Images:

[2024 survey results graphic](#)

[Derek Sippel family photo](#)

About Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers:

Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers is a nonprofit farmer-led watershed conservation group in the Sheboygan River watershed in Sheboygan and Fond du Lac counties in Wisconsin whose members explore farming strategies that lead to improved soil health, greater farming efficiency, sustained profitability and reduced environmental impact. Members share information gained through field trials with fellow farmers and strive to foster an understanding of the role of agriculture in the community. The group receives support from members and partners, including agricultural and environmental organizations and the state Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. More information: <https://srpfarmers.com>

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