

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 9, 2024

Contact: Laura Hensley
Director of communications
(517) 652-4524 | lhensley@voiceofmilk.com



Farmers implement conservation efforts for continuous improvement across the Sheboygan River Basin

2023 annual report highlights sustainable farming progress

SHEBOYGAN, Wis. — For more than three years, Brian Huenink of Huenink’s Seed and Dairy has participated in Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers, empowering him to continuously learn and enhance the sustainability of his farm.



The Huenink family has operated their farm since its establishment in 1912. For the past few years, the original dairy has been transitioning into a beef operation. The Hueninks also operate a certified seed business, serving farmers and cooperatives within a 100-mile radius.

Over time, the farm has continued to implement new conservation practices, such as cover crops and no-till practices, looking for ways to better manage water use.

“I’m motivated to improve and protect my farm for the benefit of future generations,” Huenink said. “I’ve always enjoyed experimenting and trying new things, which goes hand in hand with using sustainable farming techniques and allows us to operate with continuous improvement in mind.”

Being part of the farmer-led watershed conservation group allows Huenink to connect with other like-minded farmers and stay updated with the latest sustainable farming research. Huenink is currently serving his second term on the SRPF board of directors.

“One of the biggest benefits of being involved in this group are the connections I’ve made,” Huenink said. “We share ideas and help each other as we all work toward the same goal: improving the land and water for future generations to come. It’s certainly an exciting mission to be a part of.”

Annual survey results

As part of SRPF membership, Huenink participated in the 2023 Annual Member Conservation Practice Survey. This is the sixth year the group has documented and publicly shared members’ collective efforts.

The group, composed of 35 members, implemented various conservation practices including planting 8,000 acres of cover crops, using no-till and strip-till on 18,313 acres, and planting into cover crops (otherwise known as “planting green”) on 5,576 acres. They also measured nutrient management impact on 20,366 acres.

The potential environmental benefits of these practices:

- Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 4,249 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents, which is equal to greenhouse gas emissions produced by 1,011 cars driven for a year.
- Prevention of sediment loss from farm fields of 35,363 tons, equivalent to 3,536 dump trucks of soil.
- Reduction of phosphorus runoff by 49,080 pounds, potentially preventing 24.5 million pounds of algae growth in local water bodies.

The data is based on an analysis shared by Farmers for Sustainable Food and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

As one of the group's close partners, The Nature Conservancy has witnessed SRPF members become leaders in conservation, implementing new practices and continuing to improve.

"Farmer members of the SRPF producer-led group continue to be real leaders in conservation. We appreciate the opportunity to partner with them and work collaboratively toward more financially and environmentally sound agricultural systems," said Ricardo Costa, TNC's associate director of agriculture strategies in Wisconsin. "One of the most impressive achievements of SRPF is that almost 60% of its membership acres are under no-till. This is indeed such a fantastic achievement. We can't wait to see what our partnership will look like next year!"

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

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

Potential impact of conservation practices in 2023:

- Phosphorus runoff reduction — 49,080 pounds
- Sediment erosion reduction — 35,363 tons
- Carbon dioxide emission reduction — 4,249 metric tons

Images:

[2023 survey results graphic](#)

[Brian Huenink 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>

###