



# Sheboygan River Sentinel

*The newsletter of Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers*

Summer 2020

[srpfarmers.com](http://srpfarmers.com)



*Members and partners gathered for a field day at Joe Wagner's farm on June 2.*

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## SRPF demonstrates new approaches to conservation during field day

*By Jamie Fisher for SRPF*

A group of conservation-minded farmers in the Sheboygan River watershed held their third annual field day this month to explore farming strategies.

The farmers, who are part of Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers (SRPF), gathered with other local farmers and supporters June 2 at the Joe Wagner Farm in Glenbeulah, Wis.

Wagner, president of the farmer-led

watershed conservation group, shared his experience with various practices on his farm. Topics included checking corn emergence, evaluating stand count and visiting three plant sites with varied tillage practices. The three plant sites are located on a prior soybean field with plots that include planting green into rye, no-till planting into soybeans and conventional planting.

The least emergence was on conven-

tional tillage with a population of 29,000 to 30,000 emergence. No-till planting and planting green had an increased population of 31,000 emergence.

Wagner plans to continue to use no-till and the practice of planting into green. He uses a traditional planter that he updated and added a single disc opener for fertilizer and furrow cruisers in the past year.

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“I will accept a little less yield if I can do less tillage, and it will get better as I get more years of cover crop behind me,” Wagner said.

Travis Luedke, an SRPF board member, also shared his practices. Luedke does all strip tillage on his farm.

“The mindset of when you first go into it, you are used to a field that is absolutely clean,” Luedke said. “But now we are changing our thought process and it’s really hard to be able to grasp when you take a look at it. But when we got the heavy rains, that really helped slow that water from running down. We did see a little bit of washout where we were going to plant, but it was very minimal.”

Participants at the field day also discussed the savings of implementing conservation practices, including fuel

and tractor hours.

“Between that (natural soil fertility) savings and less fuel versus doing full width and full tillage across the whole field, it is definitely something that I think we are going to continue to push forward and go pretty much all strip-till and no-till and get away from full tillage,” Luedke said.

He emphasized the positive effects on soil health.

“(It is a benefit) to be able to have that root structure always constantly in the ground growing and getting that microbiology to continue that cycle of breaking down the fertility so it becomes available,” Luedke said. “And getting the worms and everything staying active so you are starting to build a lot better of a soil than what we are with just going

through and flipping it all the time.”

As Wagner continues to plant cover crops, he will cut back on days of maturity on soybeans and corn. This will allow him to get the crops harvested earlier in the fall and allow more time to get the fall cover crops in the ground before winter.

SRPF continues to offer a cost-share program to its members. Farmers can apply for funds to support implementation of conservation practices, including soil testing, planting cover crops, planting green, tissue testing, manure testing, no-till and reduced tillage. This year, the group added equipment upgrades as an additional cost-share option.



## SRPF offers cost share for members

SRPF is proud to offer members cost-share payments for implementing various conservation practices. The following programs are available to SRPF members in 2020:

**Cover Crops** – 75% of total costs if left until spring, 50% of total costs if tilled in the fall. \*\*Bin-run-crop without a receipt you get paid market price\*\* Max of \$40/acre, \$1,500/farm

**No-till/Reduced Tillage** – \$20/acre up to 50 acres, increases in second and third year. Max of \$2500/farm

**Planting Green** – Spring planting into a living cover crop. Producers can collect cost share on cover crop in the fall, then collect an extra \$20 for planting green into the cover crop the following spring. Maximum of 50 acres, \$1,000/farm. *Not to be combined with no-till or reduced-till program.*

**Split Nitrogen Application** – For producers not currently applying split nitrogen, eligible to enroll in this program once. \$10/acre, max \$1000/farm.

**Soil Testing** – For producers that have not soil tested within the past five years/farm, not field. Farm is eligible to enroll in this program once. Up to \$4/acre, max \$1,000/farm

**Manure and/or Tissue Testing** – Up to \$200 per farm each  
**Equipment Upgrades** – Add-on or update to existing equipment. Must be signed up for another cost-share program. 20% of total costs or \$1,500/farm.

**Get the form at [srpfarmers.com/cost-share.php](http://srpfarmers.com/cost-share.php).** Forms and receipts must be turned in by Nov. 15.

Questions? Contact Joe Wagner: [srpfarmers17@gmail.com](mailto:srpfarmers17@gmail.com) or (920) 838-1102. 📍

# Moving ahead: Field days, cost share & more

By Joe Wagner, SRPF president



Hello everyone,

After a very fast start this spring (we were done planting a whole month earlier than last year), it has become what seems to

be our normal, trying to get field work done in between rain showers. First crop hay, cultivating and spraying are the challenges this year. But we're used to putting up with the weather — right!

Our field day on June 2 was a success even though we had to postpone once and barely got done before we got hit by a very wild storm with high winds, pelting rain and a lot of lightning. (See the article about that event on Page 1.)

We will have at least one more event this year. Watch for information about a late summer/early fall field day. We would also hold a mid-summer field day if we find a host farm. If you are interested, please contact me.

The SRPF board wishes Paige Frautschy with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) much success with her new job (and baby) in Iowa. She has been extremely influential and helpful. We would not be where we are today without Paige.

We welcome Jamie Fisher and Lauren Brey with the Dairy Strong Sustainability Alliance (DSSA). They will continue to move us forward and keep us on track. (Learn more about the DSSA on Page 5.)

I would also like to thank Steve Richter

from TNC for all his help and guidance. This year, TNC is offering an additional \$10,000 to producer-led groups for innovative cost-share programs. We'll be sharing more information about this soon.

At our early summer meeting, we will finalize our cost-share program, and our new forms should be easier to complete than last year. We will also discuss projects we can fund to qualify for the additional dollars from TNC. Watch your email and our social media for more information on these programs, and contact me if you'd like to learn more.

Thank you,  
Joe 🇺🇸

## Farmers celebrate success, plan for future

By Paige Frautschy for SRPF

Nearly 90 farmers, crop consultants, county conservation staff and agricultural business representatives gathered on Feb. 27 for the Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers (SRPF) second annual conference at Amore Banquet Hall in Plymouth, Wis.

SRPF is a farmer-led effort to explore strategies that lessen environmental impact, improve soil health, sustain farm profitability and improve water quality in the Sheboygan River Basin. Membership has grown to include 41 farms of all sizes and types representing 26,000 acres of farmland across the Sheboygan River watershed.

The conference was SRPF's fourth public-facing event and an opportunity to share the group's progress, as well as hear from farmers and other experts about innovative conservation practices.

SRPF President Joe Wagner reviewed the group's mission and accomplish-

ments in 2019. They included significant growth in membership, up from 26 farms in 2018 to 44; a considerable increase in cost-share program offerings; increased participation in those programs; and \$75,000 in funding to members to offset the cost of conservation practices.

In an effort to track the impact of those practices, SRPF began a survey to document the acreage involving conservation practices. All members completed the survey. Also, despite an extremely challenging growing season, farmers planted 5,500 acres of cover crops, implemented 8,400 acres of no-till and 4,200 acres of reduced tillage.

The group received its third Producer-Led Watershed Protection grant from the state Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) this year and has launched their 2020 cost-share program offerings.



Ross Bishop, a beef and grain farmer from Washington County, gave a presentation about using cover crops in his no-till system and what he's learned during the past 10 years. His presentation sparked an engaging discussion with the audience.

John Gaska, a research specialist in the University of Wisconsin-Madison Agronomy Department, discussed planting soybeans green into a rye cover crop. Gaska described results from a Wisconsin cover crop termination and timing study that will help farmers get a

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# SRPF announces 2020 scholarship recipients

From SRPF

The Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers watershed conservation group has awarded academic scholarships to three local students.

Dallas Kreisa, Morgan Phipps and Kalista Hodorff will each receive a \$500 scholarship to continue their education at college in an agriculture-related or environmental science degree

In order to be considered for the scholarship, a student must have been a past or present 4-H or FFA member and enroll in a four-year college during the 2020-21 academic year.



Kreisa, the daughter of Drew and Tracy Kreisa of Plymouth, Wis., is a 2020 graduate of Plymouth High School and will be attending Marian University in the fall majoring in biotechnology and chemistry.

“Agriculture’s conservation practices are important because it allows for a healthier environment and longevity of farmland,” Kreisa said. “Without these practices, over time fields can become unusable or less efficient. These practices also protect the surrounding communities because it limits the amount of farming effects on the environment.”

Kreisa has been active in Johnsonville Hustlers 4-H Club, Plymouth FFA Chapter and the Junior Holstein Association

while receiving multiple honors both academically and athletically throughout high school.



Phipps, the daughter of Phil and Brenda Phipps of Glenbeulah, Wis., is a 2020 graduate of Plymouth High School and will be attending the University of Wisconsin-Platteville in the fall majoring in agricultural education.

“I hope to have many hands-on opportunities during my college career at UW-Platteville,” Phipps said. “My goal is to understand the agricultural community in greater detail regarding the everyday life of a farmer and to share that with the public.”

Phipps has been active in both the Plymouth FFA chapter and Spring Valley 4-H. Most recently she has held the positions of 4-H president and FFA president while gaining work experience with the Plymouth School District’s day care program and head attendant at the Plymouth Aquatic Center.



Hodorff, the daughter of Corey and Tammy Hodorff of Eden, Wis., is a 2017 graduate of Campbellsport High School and is attending the University of Wisconsin-Madison majoring in

dairy science.

“Agricultural conservation practices are very important in the daily livelihood of farmers,” Hodorff said. “Taking care of the land is one of the many values that a farmer holds dear. Conservation practices have evolved throughout the years and have become ever increasingly important to help maintain the land, water and environment.”

Hodorff has been active in the agricultural community throughout her education, including in the Fond du Lac County Junior Holstein Association, Armstrong 4-H Club and Badger Dairy. During a summer internship with Motiva Consulting, Hodorff developed a passion for wanting to improve communication between management and employee farm teams and provide bilingual services and resources. This is in addition to her interest in growing management and ownership on the family dairy farm.

SRPF offers this scholarship to encourage young people to continue their education in agriculture, Joe Wagner, board president of SRPF, said.

“These students will be the future of the agricultural community as we continue to improve soil health and greater farming efficiency, sustain profitability and lessen the impact on the environment.”

# Farmers celebrate success, plan for future

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better sense of how to manage crops and cover crops when planting green.

Aaron Augustian, a farmer who has been implementing practices like no-till and planting green on his dairy farm in Kewaunee County, shared his experiences with the group.

Chris Clark of Ag Source Labs talked

to the group about the importance of soil health and how companies like Ag Source are helping farmers managing practices and testing for results.

The event concluded with a look ahead to the coming year, including starting a scholarship program for area high school students interested in pur-

suing a career in agriculture, and plans for a spring or summer field day.

The event was sponsored by Country Visions Cooperative, Compeer Financial, Sheboygan County Forage Council, The Nature Conservancy and DATCP. UW-Extension Sheboygan County helped plan the event.

# What is the Dairy Strong Sustainability Alliance?



By Lauren Brey, director of strategic partnerships & sustainability, Dairy Strong Sustainability Alliance

The Dairy Strong Sustainability Alliance (DSSA) is a collaborative, industry supported, effort to promote and support farmer-led solutions to today's environmental challenges, taking into account business viability and community engagement. It was established in 2016 driven primarily by the Dairy Business Association, Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative and The Nature Conservancy.

DSSA provides support for farmer-led conservation groups, including Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers (SRPF) and helps connect individuals, organizations and companies wishing to support their efforts.

Through the partnership of a farmer-led conservation group with the DSSA, mutual goals of both organiza-

tions can be achieved.

With services outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), there is the opportunity for the farmer-led group to achieve increased membership, revenue and community engagement.

Collaborating with the DSSA is intended to make more efficient use of time for both farmers and group collaborators. Additionally, services provided will help the group maintain a professional image and assist the group in realizing goals.

DSSA serves as an incubator and support system for SRPF and other groups. The alliance offers various services that each group can choose from depending on its individual needs. Examples include administra-

tive support, communications, strategic services and connections with experts. DSSA also serves as a conduit between the farmer organizations, experts and other entities that can add value and help in achieving their goals and amplifying their stories.

Additionally, DSSA can help groups secure funds for research projects or other initiatives they may not otherwise have funding for.

Besides SRPF, DSSA supports Calumet County Ag Stewardship Alliance, Lafayette Ag Stewardship Alliance, Peninsula Pride Farms, Western Wisconsin Conservation Council and Yahara Pride Farms.

To learn more, visit [dairystrong.org/sustainability](http://dairystrong.org/sustainability) or contact me at [lbrey@voiceofmilk.com](mailto:lbrey@voiceofmilk.com). 🌱

## Annual conservation practices survey: a look at the numbers

By Steve Richter, agricultural strategies manager, The Nature Conservancy

Members of Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers complete a survey each winter to gauge interest in soil health practices. It's an annual recap of the number of farmers using conservation practices on their fields and a tally of total acres of each practice. In this article, I'll share some highlights from 2019. In your next newsletter, I will talk more specifically about how the practices farmers are using are keeping soil and phosphorus from entering our waters.

I first want to say that it was great to see the progress that member farmers made in 2019 trying new practices and

increasing the acres of other conservation practices, as well as the robust attendance figures seen at field days and winter meetings. Congrats to all of you who hosted or attended an event and/or used conservation practices in 2019! One take-away I had from reviewing the numbers is that more farmers are using conservation practices, and the total number of acres increased.

Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers saw a 2,050-acre increase in no till planting from 2018 to 2019. In total, more than 7,200 acres were planted this way. Add to this, 4,287 acres planted with

strip/conservation tillage. Members of the group planted more than 4,500 acres of cover crops in 2019, a 2,200-acre increase from 2018. A highlight is that all 33 members of the group that filled out the survey used cover crops and all but one member used no till planting. There are 20,363 acres under nutrient management plans.

It's great to see so many farmers completing the annual survey. The numbers demonstrate the effort farmers are making to improve soil health and reduce soil and nutrients leaving fields. 🌱



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*Our goal:  
Improve water quality  
in the Sheboygan River Basin*

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