

Milwaukee River Watershed Conservation Partnership

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2016 - OCTOBER 2017



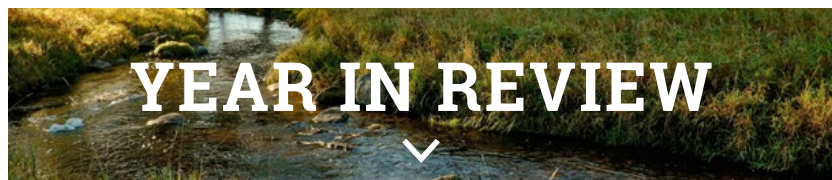
Milwaukee River Watershed Conservation Partnership Producer Kick-off Meeting, December 8, 2016. (Photo courtesy of The Conservation Fund)



Demonstration farm plot: Cover crop interseeded into corn and soybeans, October 4, 2017. (Photo courtesy of MMSD)

Healthy Soils, Clean Water, Smart Business

In 2016, a diverse group of area participants assembled to support soil and water conservation in the Milwaukee River Watershed. The Milwaukee River Watershed Conservation Partners (MRWCP) seek to demonstrate that healthy soils are productive, cost effective, and beneficial to area waterways. The collaborative partnership was initiated through the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District's (MMSD) application to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to address resource concerns in the Milwaukee River Watershed through NRCS' Regional Conservation Partnership Program. The following newsletter highlights 2017 activities we've pursued together, in coordination with the generous support of project funders and volunteers.



YEAR IN REVIEW



From September 2016 through September 2017, over 360 people attended outreach events hosted by MRWCP project partners.

Accomplishments to Date



Conservation practices installed:

- > 856 acres of residue/tillage management
- > 524 acres of cover crop
- > 56 acres Nutrient Management Planning (590)
- > 617 acres nutrient management (DATCP SWRM funded)
- > 185 acres low-disturbance manure application
- > 14 acres of forage and biomass planting



Agricultural Conservation Easements Program (ACEP)

- > 5 properties appraised (433 acres) for ACEP agriculture land easements
- > 5 ACEP grant applications prepared (on 446 acres total)
- > 4 Working Soils® presentations provided to local municipalities
- > 8 Making Allies for Healthier Communities informational workshops were conducted to engage under-represented producers to improve land sovereignty, food security, and water quality



Outreach provided:

- > Estimated 400 people contacted
- > 20 Outreach Events
- > 5 Training Events
- > 13 Presentations



Outreach materials:

- > 10 brochures, fliers, handbooks produced
- > 6 media contacts

PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

The Milwaukee River Watershed Clean Farm Families (CFF) Producer-led Watershed Council in Ozaukee County formed in August of 2016 with grant support from Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), as well as The Fund for Lake Michigan (FFLM). Priority interest of the group is the installation and evaluation of various soil health management practices. The CFF group initiated a 9-acre demonstration plot to test different cover crop scenarios. The group hosts soil health workshops and farm tours to invite neighbors to learn about and experience innovative land management practices that contribute to the entire farm operation.



Members of the Milwaukee River Watershed Clean Farm Families Group Develop Their Watershed Action Plan. Left to right: Bob Roden, Mike Paulus, Joe Roden, Ken Falk, Jim Melichar, Dave Brunnquell. Missing from photo: Neal Maciejewski, Marvin Kolbach (Photo Courtesy of The Conservation Fund)



CFF Members Planting the 9-Acre Cover Crop Test Plot. (Photo courtesy of Andy Holschbach)

OCTOBER 26, 2017

Healthy Soils Field Day - Managing Nutrients with Cover Crops

On October 26, 2016, the Clean Farm Families hosted field day was filled with conversation, soil health demonstrations, implement and machinery presentations, and farmer and partner networking. Farmers asked questions and shared their experiences with the varying soil types along Lake Michigan, crop rotations, cover crop seed mixes, fall planting methods and timing, and treatment in the spring all impact nutrients retained in the soil or coming off the fields. The field day provided the opportunity for over 60 farmers, conservationists, agribusiness partners, and community members to share and learn together.



Clean Farm Families Producer led Watershed Group's first field day.

Dr. Matt Ruark, Associate Professor in the University of Wisconsin-Madison Soil Science Department engages neighbors in on Nutrients Management with Cover Crops.



Milwaukee River Watershed Clean Farm Families Demonstration Site

In 2017, Milwaukee River Watershed Clean Farm Families established a field demonstration site located in the Town of Fredonia east along Hwy 57.

This 9-acre site hosted a cover crop demonstration display where several cover crop species were interseeded into corn and soybean crops. The future is to expand the size of the plot and develop a research protocol for collecting yield, soil temperature, infiltration, and soil health data.

PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

OCTOBER 4, 2017

2017 Wisconsin Cover Crop Conference



Cedar Creek Farmer, Ross Bishop, shares his cover crop experience with site visitors.

Approximately 75 area farmers and industry professionals attended the 2017 Wisconsin Cover Crop Conference on October 4, 2017. This event was sponsored by Michael Fields Institute, the Milwaukee River Watershed producer-led watershed groups: Clean Farm Families, Cedar Creek Farmers, Ozaukee & Washington County Land and Water Conservation Departments, and University of Wisconsin-Extension.

Those attending learned about cover crops and how they impact soil health, corn yield response following clover cover crops, and experiences of several area producers currently implementing these conservation practice. Attendees viewed a soil profile pit, multi-species cover crop plot and low-disturbance manure applications. Attendees also benefited from having the ability to network with producers, conservation professionals and agency staff.

Milwaukee River Watershed Clean Farm Families Producer-Led Watershed Group

Milwaukee River Watershed Clean Farm Families of Ozaukee County will continue their efforts to improve soil health and water quality by:

(1) providing education, outreach, and financial resources to area producers for conservation practices; (2) inviting producers to register for and install cover crops as part of the CFF Cover Crop Incentives Program and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) practices; and (3) developing and implementing a Nutrient Management Plan education program and coupon incentives program. The goal of the council is to promote conservation practices and assist interested producers in registering for the **Milwaukee River Watershed Clean Farm Families'** incentive programs to showcase best soil and water conservation practices in the area.

FEBRUARY 10, 2017

Milwaukee River Watershed Winter Workshop



Featured Speaker; Ray Archuleta.

Ray discussing importance of understanding the psychological, social, cultural, and ecological context of current farming trends and how to shift towards more sustainable practices.

On February 10, 2017, Clean Farm Families hosted the **Milwaukee River Watershed Clean Farm Families' Soil Health Winter Workshop**. The event featured Ray Archuleta, a former NRCS Conservation Agronomist and Soil Expert, who has since retired and now is privately consulting. The workshop was attended by 110 producers from the area. This event was made possible with funding support from Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP), FFLM, and creative wet-weather accommodation from site host Jim Melichar.



Soil Health Demonstrations.

Left to right: Andy Doucette, Ray Archuleta.



Low Disturbance Manure Application.

Ozaukee and Washington County Land and Water Conservation Departments

County Land and Water Conservation Department (LWCD) staff at Washington and Ozaukee Counties (directors, technicians, and planners) provide landowners with technical assistance on agricultural conservation project planning.

Ozaukee County



The Conservation Fund presented to the **Ozaukee County Farm Bureau** at their Annual Banquet. The presentation discussed MRWCP, MMSD's goals and interests in working with agriculture producers, and the

Milwaukee River Watershed Clean Farm Families producer-led watershed group. The Fund coordinated with Ozaukee County Land and Water Management Department (Andy Holschbach) and the Milwaukee River Watershed CFF to plan the event.

Washington County



County staff provide technical assistance to landowners to increase producer enrollment in agricultural conservation practices. Washington County is facilitating formation of a **Producer-Led Watershed Council**. That Council will pursue DATCP grant funding and utilize \$20,000 of FFLM grant match to promote and install pilot conservation practices.

PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

Working Soils® – Agricultural Easements

- Working Soils® is an agricultural easement conservation program (ACEP) that addresses agricultural farmland preservation within the Milwaukee River Watershed. Working Soils® is funded in part through Natural Resources Conservation Service and Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District, and is managed by The Conservation Fund.
- More than 20 landowner and family meetings were conducted to discuss interest in ACEP agricultural land easements (ALE) and conservation plans.
- The Working Soils® Program was introduced to Town of Grafton, Town of Saukville and City of Mequon to explore feasibility of permanent farmland easements in the area.
- The Making Allies for Healthier Communities partners Land Trust Alliance, Fondy Food Center, The Conservation Fund and Ozaukee Washington Land Trust met regularly to discuss land access and affordability for under-served farmers in the area.
- Two workshops for Hmong farmers were held to introduce NRCS EQIP and Farm Service Agency microloan opportunities. An interpreter was provided.

WORKING SOILS® GOALS

- Preserve prime, unique, productive farmland through agricultural conservation easements.
- Protect hydric soils and floodplain from introduction of new impervious cover and structures in flood prone areas.
- Work with landowners to demonstrate and evaluate the performance and benefits of agricultural conservation practices.

Cedar Creek Farmers – Improving Land for Cleaner Waters Producer-Led Watershed Group

Cedar Creek Farmers (CCF) also formed a producer-led watershed group focusing on land and water management opportunities within the Cedar Creek Watershed of Washington and Ozaukee Counties. This group of 6 producers share the primary goal of ensuring farm sustainability with increased farm profits from better yields, improved soil structure, and reduced inputs through proven soil health practices. By implementing sound soil health practices to protect the soil surface from erosive forces, increasing infiltration, and proper nutrient management, water quality should ultimately improve. The CCF realizes the agricultural community has a role in improving water quality. Featured practices include: cover crops, no-till/reduced tillage, concentrated flow channel protection, and nutrient management. CCF received financial support through DATCP and FFLM grant support for 2018 activities.

Milwaukee River Watershed Conservation Partnership Steering Committee

This committee meets quarterly to review and monitor project direction, and to provide guidance to project participants and other stakeholders. The committee also provides recommendations on project approaches and participates in general strategies and opportunities for project planning implementation.

Making Allies for Healthier Communities

Workshops series was made possible by grant assistance from the Mott Foundation, to engage underrepresented producers with information on land ownership, food security, and water resource management. Land Trust Alliance, Ozaukee Washington Land Trust, and The Conservation Fund collectively assisted 45 under-served producers to attend land surveying site visits at potential sites. Fifteen representatives from these groups are working toward land acquisition and easements. Land purchase is on track for 2019 through the Working Soils and NRCS ACEP Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) program.

CONTACT US

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP):

Natural Resources Conservation Service

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Ozaukee County Land & Water Management Department

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Washington County Land & Water Conservation Division

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Milwaukee River Watershed Conservation Partnership:

Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District

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THANK YOU

The Cedar Creek Farmers
Producer-Led Watershed Group
The Conservation Fund
Country Visions, Inc.
Fondy Food Center
Fund for Lake Michigan
Land Trust Alliance
Milwaukee Metropolitan
Sewerage District
Mott Foundation

Natural Resources
Conservation Service
Ozaukee County Land and Water
Management Department
Ozaukee Washington Land Trust
The Milwaukee River Watershed
Clean Farm Families Producer-
Led Watershed Group
UW Extension Cooperative
Washington County Land &
Water Conservation Division
Wisconsin Department of
Agriculture, Trade and
Consumer Protection