

DUNN COUNTY LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION DIVISION



THE MISSION OF THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION DIVISION IS TO PROTECT, PRESERVE, AND ENHANCE THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF DUNN COUNTY

Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers declared 2019 “The Year of Clean Drinking Water”. Supervisor Tom Quinn clearly linked the need for safe drinking water to the health and general welfare of the citizens of Dunn County at the Special Legislative Session of the Dunn County Board of Supervisors in February. The Speaker’s Task Force on Water Quality conducted fourteen public hearings across the State of Wisconsin. Listening to hundreds of people across the state, including Supervisor Mike Kneer, KT Gallagher, our Public Health Director, and myself, at the hearing held at UW-Stout on September 4th, the task force heard a resounding theme: “Water quality is crucially important to the health and vitality of our State’s people, industries, and natural resources”. At the same time, Dunn County created an Ad-Hoc Groundwater Committee led by Supervisors Tom Quinn and Mike Kneer that met for seven months and created a list of recommendations that are guiding protection of our groundwater resources.

The Land and Water Conservation Division (LWCD) and our partner agency the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have identified “Healthy Soil” as the way to improve and protect the quality of our surface and ground water. 2019 marked the fifth year of implementing conservation practices on the Red Cedar Demonstration Farm.

We now have demonstration farms owned by the Jeff Lake Family in the Hay River Farmer-Led Watershed and the Bill Beyrer Family in the Red Cedar Conservation Farmers, Farmer-Led Watershed. These demonstration farms, and the farmer-led watersheds, continue to provide leadership and community in soil health and water quality. At the same time, we continue to help farmers in the rest of the county install conservation practices with our cost-share funds and with funding from the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). These projects, and many more, are a success because of the farmers and landowners involved and because of the dedicated staff in the Land and Water Conservation Division.

I have asked each staff member to write an article on a significant project that they were a part of in 2019. This will give you, the reader, an indication of the variety of resources and issues that we address and an opportunity for you to become familiar with the staff of the Land and Water Conservation Division. If you have specific questions on any of our programs or natural resources in general, please contact us at (715)232-1496 or use the link to our Division on Dunn County’s website at <http://co.dunn.wi.us> . I would like to close by sincerely thanking the Dunn County Board of Supervisors for your continued support for conservation.

Respectfully submitted, Dan Prestebak, County Conservationist

2019 LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

THOMAS QUINN.....Chair
GARY BJORK..... Vice Chair
GARY SEIPEL..... County Board Member
MIKE KNEER..... County Board Member
DIANE MOREHOUSE..... County Board Member
JOHN CREASER..... FSA Representative

2019 LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION DIVISION STAFF

DAN PRESTEBAK.....County Conservationist
JANELL NEWCOMB..... Support Specialist
TINA BARONE..... Conservation Planner
TRAVIS DRIER..... Conservation Planner
AMANDA HANSON..... Conservation Planner
Vacant..... Conservation Planner
ROBERT KANER..... Conservation Engineering Technician
JESSICA SCHOEN..... Water Quality Specialist
STEVEN OLSON..... Soil Health Specialist

Tina Barone, Conservation Planner



Protecting Groundwater Quality

Have you seen a sign like this at a local park? It is all over the news in Wisconsin – DRINKING WATER WELLS CONTAMINATED (over the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL)). The MCL was established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to identify a health risk.

In Dunn County, the most common issue well owners face is high nitrate levels. Water found to have more than 10 milligrams per liter can lead to increased chances of blue baby syndrome (also known as methemoglobinemia). High nitrate levels can affect the oxygen-carrying capacity of the blood in small children causing shortness of breath and bluish skin. According to the EPA, sources of nitrate contamination in drinking water are runoff from fertilizer use, leaking from septic tanks, sewage, and erosion of natural deposits. What is being done to reduce the chance of nitrate contamination? The Dunn County Land and Water Conservation Division (LWCD) works with the public on nutrient management plans, waste facility closures, and decommissioning of wells. All of these things help reduce the potential for nitrate contamination.

Nutrient management plans (NMPs) develop a nutrient budget based on crops grown, nutrients applied, and soil type, etc. A NMP optimizes on-farm nutrients, prevents excessive nutrient build-up, reduces fertilizer costs, establishes a conservation crop rotation, and reduces environmental risks. A NMP helps farms increase profitability by applying nutrients on an as-needed basis which, in turn, protects our groundwater. Landowners or operators can take a class at the Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC) to learn how to write their own NMP or they can hire a Certified Crop Advisor to write a plan for them. To learn more, contact the Dunn County LWCD Nutrient Management Specialist, Travis Drier, at (715)231-6542.

Manure facility closures are a priority for the LWCD. Most of the pits in Dunn County are earthen in-ground pits that were constructed by excavating a large hole (sometimes lined with clay) for waste to be stored in. Pits like these can increase the risk of nutrients reaching groundwater because, over time, manure can soak into the ground and contaminate drinking water wells.



Abandoned Manure Pit

According to the Dunn County Manure Storage Ordinance (Ordinance No. 33, 23.10.2), a manure storage structure not actively receiving manure for a period of one year is considered abandoned and must be closed within one year. The first step in closing a manure pit is removal of waste (manure). Once the waste is removed, it is surface-applied following manure application guidelines. Darker stained soil that smells of manure (contaminated soil), is often found underneath the manure. This soil must be excavated out of the pit and surface-applied following manure application guidelines. Once all the waste and contaminated soil have been removed, the pit is backfilled and compacted. The final grade must be sloped to prevent water from ponding on the surface. Closed manure pit sites are repurposed to cropland or lawn.



Windmill with Well Underneath

Old wells and cisterns can be a direct conduit for contaminants to reach groundwater. The LWCD assists landowners with closing these wells. According to the DNR publication, *Answers to Your Questions on Well Filling and Sealing*, “If not properly filled with impermeable material, unused wells can directly channel contaminated surface or soil water into groundwater. Water that gets into unused wells bypasses the purifying action that normally takes place in the upper layer of the



Hand Pump on Top of an Old Well

soil. Because groundwater flows in soil and bedrock formations (aquifers), contamination that enters old wells can move to nearby drinking water wells.”

The DNR estimates thousands of improperly filled and sealed wells threaten groundwater in Wisconsin. Old wells can easily be spotted by old windmills or hand pumps located on top of a well.

Do your part to protect the groundwater in Dunn County. If you have a manure pit or well that is no longer in use, contact Tina Barone at (715)231-6533 to start the closure process. If you do not own or operate farmland, there are still many things you can do to protect the groundwater in Dunn County.

1. **Go Native** – Use native plants in your landscape. They look great and don’t need much water or fertilizer. Also, choose grass varieties for your lawn that are adapted for your region’s climate, reducing the need for extensive water or chemical applications.
2. **Reduce Chemical Use** – Use fewer chemicals around your home and yard, and make sure to dispose of them properly – don’t dump them on the ground!
3. **Manage Waste** – Properly dispose of garbage and potentially toxic substances like unused chemicals, pharmaceuticals, paint, motor oil, electronics, tires, and other substances. Many communities hold household hazardous waste collections or sites – contact Dunn County Solid Waste and Recycling (715-232-4017) or Public Health (715-232-2388).
4. **Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle** – Reduce the amount of “stuff” you use and reuse what you can. Recycle paper, plastic, cardboard, glass, aluminum and other materials.
5. **Natural Alternatives** – Use all natural/nontoxic household cleaners whenever possible. Materials such as lemon juice, baking soda, and vinegar make great cleaning products, are inexpensive, and they’re environmentally-friendly.
6. **Learn and Do More!** – Get involved in water education! Learn more about groundwater and share your knowledge with others.

Adapted from Source:groundwater.org/action/home/top10.html

Travis Drier, Nutrient Management Specialist

Using a Groundwater Model to Raise Water Quality Awareness

What exactly is a groundwater model? A groundwater model is a representation of a hypothetical aquifer used to simulate the flow of groundwater. Demonstrating the underground movement of water is a great benefit when discussing water quality because it helps the audience to visualize what is going on beneath their feet.

The groundwater model uses varying layers of sand, gravel, and clay to represent natural features found within an aquifer. These features include a confining layer, an artesian aquifer, a coarse wedge, and a lake or river. The model also has several man made features such as piezometers, a leaky landfill, injection wells, and a pumping well.

When food coloring is added to the groundwater model, the audience can see how these various features affect the flow of water within the aquifer. The food coloring can also be added to specific areas within the groundwater model to demonstrate how contaminants can enter groundwater and move to other areas.

The artesian well shows how water is forced to the surface when it becomes pressurized within a confining layer such as clay. When this happens, the water becomes pressurized and is forced to the surface where it enters the model's lake or river. This demonstrates how water from deep underground can have an effect on other areas.



Groundwater Model with Food Coloring

The lake or river feature is used to demonstrate how water and contaminants can enter or leave surface water. When combined with the piezometers, the river or lake feature can also be used to show how humans can affect the water level by removing groundwater for various uses.

The leaky landfill shows how contaminants can enter the groundwater and move to other areas such as a local well or nearby waterbody. The leaky landfill also demonstrates how a septic system retains solids and discharges liquids into the ground.

One of the most popular features of the groundwater model is the pumping well because it provides an excellent visual representation of what happens when groundwater is removed from an aquifer by humans. First, when water is pumped from a well a cone of depression forms. After a cone of depression forms, it will start to lower the elevation of the water table or even change the flow of groundwater. The model visually demonstrates how drawing too much water from wells can effect an aquifer.

Presentations with the groundwater model are easily customizable to the needs and knowledge level of the audience. The model can be used to show basic things such as how water enters the ground or for complex scenarios that show how contaminants enter and spread throughout an aquifer. The size of the groundwater model and ease of setup allows it to be used in a variety of locations both indoors and out.

For questions, or to request a demonstration, contact the Dunn County Land and Water Conservation Division at (715)232-1496.

Amanda Hanson, Conservation Planner

2019 Dunn County Chapter 20 Non-Metallic Mining Reclamation Ordinance Summary

Total Permitted Sites: 22

A permitted site is a non-metallic mining site that has obtained a Chapter 20 Non-Metallic Mining Reclamation Permit. Permitted sites have a reclamation plan and financial assurance (unless exempt) on file with Dunn County. An annual fee is required based on the amount of acreage of their site.

Total Active Permits: 18

Operators with active permits submit fees and a report annually. They report how many acres are un-reclaimed and how many additional acres they plan to mine for the year.

Inactive Permits: 4

Operators with inactive permits have a site with un-reclaimed acres, but they don't have plans to open up additional acreage for the year. They also do not plan to use their current un-reclaimed acres for mining activities this year. Instead, the operator has decided not to use the site and is choosing not to reclaim the site yet. In future years, they can choose to permit the site as active or reclaim the site.

Reclaimed Sites: 2

A reclaimed site is an existing permitted non-metallic mine site where the operator has chosen to no longer mine the site and instead close the site by reclaiming it. The reclamation plan is used to guide this process to achieve the post-mining land use. Once the entire site is completely reclaimed and closed according to Chapter 20, the Certificate of Completion is issued and financial assurance on file is released to the operator.

New Permitted Sites: 0

This category includes sites that previously have not been mined (or were exempt from permitting) that now plan to mine and are required to obtain a permit. The process begins with submittal of forms including the reclamation plan, a cost estimate for reclamation, concurrence with the reclamation plan from the landowners and operators, along with annual fees and plan review fees. A public notice will be published stating an opportunity for a public hearing. A permit is issued after the reclamation plan is reviewed and complete in which the operator and landowners are in agreement with, the notice has been published, a possible public hearing has been noticed and held, and all fees and financial assurance has been received and approved.

Bob Kaner, Conservation Engineering Technician

Developing a Residential Subdivision in Dunn County

In 2019, I was involved in the review, approval, and construction of a large residential subdivision. The subdivision involved 80 acres with 54 building lots. The parcel is located within ¼ mile of the city limits on the east side of Menomonie with city sewer and water to that point. Lot sizes ranged from 1 acre to 3.5 acres with wetland complexes as part of 14 different lots.

The 80-acre parcel includes a home and farm buildings, a large wetland complex with a stream, and uplands with slopes over 20 percent. Recent cropping history was grazing of beef cattle and occasional row crops. Drainage area runoff and the stream flows toward the Menomonie Industrial Park area and then to Lake Menomin.



The process actually began in June of 2018 with a rezone request presented to the County Board to rezone the 80-acre parcel of farmland from “General Agriculture” (GA) to “Residential District” (R2). The Dunn County Environmental Services Department-Planning and Zoning and Survey Divisions were also involved in this process. A preview meeting of the concept map was held in October of 2018 with 14 staff members from ten government entities present. Multiple meetings with the developer and agency staff were held during the next year.



Existing Farmstead & Steep Road to Lower Lots

A DNR stormwater discharge permit was issued in April of 2019 approving final plans. The final plat was approved by the Planning, Resources and Development Committee (PR&D) in May of 2019. The construction of roads, utilities and storm-water components for the subdivision began in June and are still ongoing in 2020.

Some of the questions and considerations during the development review process were:

Is the stream navigable? This determination affects setbacks and public access requirements with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Dunn County shoreland zoning laws. The application was submitted during the winter so the DNR could not make a determination until spring. With site information gathered by the Land and Water Conservation Division (LWCD) in April of 2019, the DNR determined the stream was “not navigable”.

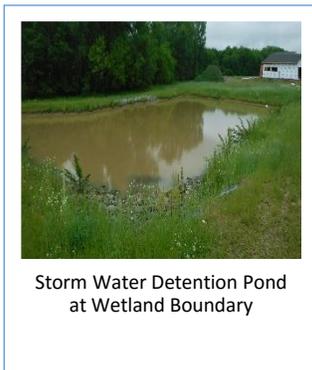
Septic Systems, Wells and Surface Water Protection

Questions Asked by Staff:

1. Was consideration given to creating a “community septic system” instead of 54 individual septic systems? They were concerned with the potential of groundwater contamination from nitrates and other household contaminants that are not removed by standard septic systems. The developer determined it would **not** be financially feasible to do this and future management would be complicated.

2. Can City sewer and water could be extended into this proposed subdivision? After discussions with the City, the developer determined this was not an option.
3. Are all lots large enough to site a home, septic, well and outbuilding given the amount of area in the wetland or the slopes that are greater than 20%? “Yes” - The developer added scale-size icons to each lot depicting possible layouts on lots. Staff learned that septic mounds can be placed on slopes up to 25% (upslope from existing wells and adjacent to wetlands).
4. Are there drainage easements for concentrated runoff coming from the hill? The developer added 10’ drainage easements between all lot boundaries to assist owners in managing storm water flows.

Wetland Delineation: The developer had an official wetland delineation completed for this site and the boundary is shown on the plat map. Staff requested that the boundary be staked on each lot for future homeowners to prevent them from being in violation of DNR or County setback rules. There was also discussion about if there was setting marker elevation with lowest building opening (LBO) for each lot adjacent to the wetland. This is a requirement by some of our neighboring counties to protect building lot owners from having groundwater seepage issues in their homes. This is not required in Dunn County.



DNR Construction Site Storm Water Discharge Permit: The DNR has the regulatory authority over subdivisions in Dunn County concerning storm water management. Dunn County has no authority. The LWCD worked with the DNR in evaluating the sediment control and storm water design plans for this subdivision.

The installation of roads, road ditches, and retention ponds involves exposing very large areas of subsoil to the effects of storm-water runoff. This site consisted of nearly two miles of road ditches and three permanent runoff retention ponds. The designed ponds that were constructed capture the majority of runoff water from roads and some building sites. These are crucial in keeping sediment from entering the wetland complex especially during the road construction phase of the development.

Once the topsoil is stripped and saved, and the area is shaped to a final grade, it is critical that the topsoil be replaced and the area seeded as soon as possible. Due to inclement weather, the

completed ditches, swale, and ponds were not seeded in a timely manner. The developer had to wait several weeks for the utility company to bury their lines. He did not want the contracted restoration company on-site to seed and emat the ditches and other areas until the lines were buried. This caused the entire project to sit idle for 6 weeks.

I worked with the DNR in completing construction site inspections and the follow up on issues that were encountered. The building process usually spans a minimum of 2 years and erosion control practices need to be maintained during that time. Issues included with this project were improper style and use of silt fence. The erosion control company hired was from Minnesota and the silt fence type allowed in that state does not meet Wisconsin specs. The remedy was a second row of fence installed in some of the more critical areas that had a high accumulation of sediment. It was definitely needed on this site.

Sediment Ponds

The three sediment ponds are serving their purpose and capturing most of the sediment. Part of this collection system is that the ponds will need to be cleaned out and restored to their original design dimensions after this site is stabilized. The interesting part is that these ponds and the channels flowing to them are under the ownership of whomever buys the building lots where they are located. That person will be responsible for maintaining the ponds in the future.



In Summary

The DNR is continuing to provide enforcement with the developer to redo incorrectly installed overflow weirs on the ponds and install proper rock ditch checks instead of the failed silt fence. Follow up on stabilizing the road ditches, pond cleanout, and future maintenance will be ongoing for the DNR until they determine the site as stable and release the developer from the DNR permit.

The construction of this subdivision has gone better compared to those constructed ten years ago. The earth moving company did an efficient job in opening and establishing the final grades on such a large area. The farm buildings were removed, the shingles were taken to the landfill, and all of the concrete was hauled to a concrete plant for recycling into base course.

Many homes are currently being built with some efforts being made for erosion control. The construction process of each home has the potential to fill in the road ditches and culverts with sediment. Private home construction erosion control regulations are enforced by the township through their UDC Building Code Inspector and not Dunn County.

Janell Newcomb, Support Specialist

The ENS-Land and Water Conservation Division administers grants each year to assist the citizens of Dunn County with conservation projects. As a Support Specialist for the Division, I assist LWCD staff with applications, administration, coordination, and reimbursement of numerous grants, projects, programs, and budgets. These tasks are very time consuming and can be quite laborious. The majority of the grants we administer are received from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Following are highlights of a few of the 2019 projects.

Soil & Water Resource Management Grant:



Installation of a Grade Stabilization Structure

This is an annual grant from Wisconsin DATCP, providing funding for LWCD staff and cost sharing for implementing our Land and Water Resource Management Plan (LWRM). The staffing grant of \$162,747 supports staff who perform soil and water conservation activities.

We worked with seven landowners on projects and practices such as grade stabilization structures, waterways, closure of manure storage structures, and well decommissioning. Practices were cost-shared at a rate of 70% for a total cost of \$23,745. Two additional landowners/operators worked with staff on nutrient management planning for a total cost-shared amount of \$14,030. Due to extenuating circumstances and unfavorable weather conditions, one nutrient management plan contract (\$10,096) and seven conservation practice contracts (\$44,354) that were slated to be completed in 2019 will be completed in 2020 in addition to the practices that are already planned for 2020.

Wisconsin Lake Protection Grant (Red Cedar Soil Health Education): Dunn County was awarded a Lake Protection Grant (LPG) in the amount of \$200,000 covering the period of time from 4/15/2018-6/30/2021. The funding for the grant comes from a portion of the state tax on gasoline consumed by motor boats. Grant awards from the DNR cover a large portion of the total project cost and applicants must contribute at least 25 percent of project costs through in-kind matching (equipment, labor, mileage, etc.) and qualifying project-related expenses. The scope of the project involves a Soil Health Specialist working with farmers in the Red Cedar Watershed to promote soil health by establishing demonstration farms, holding soil health educational events and working with individual producers.



*Summer Field Day at Jeff Lake Family Farm:
Rainfall simulator demonstration of benefits of
reduced tillage and cover crops*

In August of 2019, the Land and Water Conservation Division, along with many other partners, held a very successful summer field day at the Jeff Lake Family Farm near Boyceville. This is one of the demonstration farms that was established with funding from the Lake Protection Grant. The Lake Family has been recognized as a steward of the land and as a community leader receiving awards such as the *Precision Ag Farmer of the Year* and the *Leopold Conservation Award*. The field day was open to all interested community members and included speakers presenting on a wide range of topics including cover crops, water quality, soil health and more.

Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants: In 2019, Dunn County applied for and was awarded two Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants from DATCP. The general purpose of this program is to fund projects that will improve water quality through farmer-led nonpoint source pollution abatement activities in Wisconsin on a watershed scale.

The Hay River Farmer-Led Watershed Council was awarded \$13,125 with a goal of keeping soil and nutrients on the land through increased adoption of management practices such as grassed waterways, no-till, minimum-till, perennials and cover crops. The Council held meetings, field days, farm tours, and established five practices on four demo plots. Participants received incentive payments for practices including soil testing, waterways, and cover crops. In-kind donations of \$3,750 included staff hours and mileage as well as \$9,375 from the McKnight Foundation for incentive practices including grassed waterways, cover crops, education, and outreach.



No-Till Corn

The Red Cedar Conservation Farmers were awarded \$40,000. The mission of the producers of the Red Cedar Conservation Farmers Group (RCCF) is to collaborate to reduce phosphorous-containing runoff from nonpoint sources and improve soil health. The RCCF held field days and a winter workshop as well as participated in groundwater and surface

water testing. Four demo plots on 256 acres were established with practices such as strip-till, stalk nitrate testing, and variable rate fertilizer applications. They received incentive payments for cover crops, low disturbance manure injection, no-till, and soil testing. Matching/In-Kind contributions were provided by the farmers with practices such as low disturbance manure injection, no-till planting, soil testing, attendance at meetings, and waterway construction.

Snowmobile Trail Aids Program: The money awarded in grants to Wisconsin counties comes from snowmobile registrations, trail pass revenue, and gas tax from some of the gas used in snowmobiles. The grants are used to reimburse snowmobile clubs in Wisconsin for some of their expenses involved in tasks such as brushing and clearing trails, signing trails, grooming, and trail maintenance. Clubs work with the county trail coordinator to administer the grant.



Gilbert Creek Snowmobile Bridge

For the 2018-2019 snowmobile season, the Dunn County Snowmobile Association (DCSA) and the 14 clubs worked to maintain 290 miles of snowmobile trails in Dunn County. All entries for grooming and maintenance of trails are entered in a snowmobile electronic reporting system called SNARS. The Dunn County LWCD Support Specialist reviews each entry for eligibility and to make sure all costs are supported by documentation. There are normally around 700 entries to review, process, and make payment to the DCSA prior to the deadline when SNARS closes out for the season. For the 2018-19 season, claims totaled \$73,499 and were reimbursed by the Wisconsin DNR after preparation and submittal of the reimbursement request.

In 2019, a grant was applied for and received to replace an existing snowmobile bridge across Gilbert Creek that was considered unsafe and was approximately 20 years old. Working with the snowmobile club, Tina Barone, Conservation Planner, gathered information and prepared the grant application by obtaining the required landowner “land use agreement”, preparing location maps, providing photos, obtaining bids, and completing paperwork for any necessary permits for construction of a 60’ x 12’ clear span bridge. The cost of the project was \$38,000 and it was reimbursed 100% by the grant received from the DNR.

County Conservation Aids Program: Through the WDNR, conservation grants provide financial assistance to enhance county fish & wildlife programs. Funds are allocated to each county in proportion to the ratio of the size of each county and the total area of the state. The State’s share may not exceed 50% of the actual cost of the project. The revenue to operate the program comes from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and state sales tax on hunting and fishing equipment.

The 2019 project involved over 1,000 feet of in-stream habitat improvements to Tiffany Creek as it flows through land owned by the Boyceville School District. Streambanks along Tiffany

Creek were sloped back and rock was installed to stabilize the banks. Some trees were removed during construction and fish habitat structures, such as root wads, bank-placed boulders, and random boulders, were installed. The DNR provided \$2,302 for this project with matching funds of \$2,302 provided by Dunn County. Other agencies and funding were involved in this project.

Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program (WDACP): This program is funded 100% by the DNR. The WDACP provides prevention assistance and partial compensation to farmers when wild deer, elk, bear, geese, and turkey damage their agricultural crops. The USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services administers the program for Dunn County.

In the 2019 abatement program nine shooting permits were issued for damage to corn, soybeans, kidney beans, Christmas trees, pumpkins, and a CSA garden by deer and geese and temporary electric fence was installed at 5 locations for damage caused to an apiary by bear and a CSA garden by deer. Six crop damage claims were processed for a total amount of \$20,361.



Wildlife Damage to Corn

In 2019, through the Deer Donation Program, Dunn County hunters donated 24 deer (for a total of 1,371 pounds of ground venison) at three participating processors. The ground venison was distributed through local food pantries.

Steve Olson, Soil Health Specialist

Red Cedar Conservation Farmers is a farmer-led watershed group that works to improve water quality and soil health within our community. The Red Cedar Conservation Farmers group currently consists of about thirty farming community members that meet to discuss conservation, water quality, and the community.

The Red Cedar Conservation Farmers had an outstanding first year. The group was successful in receiving a \$40,000.00 grant from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). Conservation practices such as soil sampling, cover crops, water sampling, no-till planting and grassed waterway establishment are funded by this grant. The grant also funded several field days and supported the 2019 Chippewa Valley Farm-City Day event that was held at Denmark Dairy near Colfax.



Spring Field Day Discussing Cover Crops

In total, six informational meetings were held where agricultural topics were openly discussed.

Conversations ranged from why cover crops are beneficial to how local partners at UW-Stout are researching the watershed to identify areas for installation of conservation practices. The members of the group also hosted three field days to discuss and show spring seeded cover crops, termination timing of cover crops, and planting green into cover crops. These field days allow farmers to welcome their peers onto their farm to evaluate the effectiveness of conservation practices on their land.



Winter Workshop led by Aaron Dietsche, Farmer, and Dr. Mark Mark Borchardt

In addition to the field days, the Red Cedar Conservation Farmers hosted their first ever winter workshop at the White Birch Inn near Bloomer. Herbicide resistant water hemp was one topic that was covered at the workshop. Dr. Mark Borchardt, USDA-Agricultural Research Service, presented on ground water quality across Wisconsin.

The Red Cedar Conservation Farmers Group was successful in securing another grant for 2020. If you have any questions about the group or would like to get involved, please contact me at (715)232-1496.

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Our partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a valuable component of the Land and Water Conservation program in Dunn County. John Sippl (District Conservationist), KaYing Vang (Soil Conservationist), Austin Littmann (Soil Conservation Technician), and Kelsey Kuehnhold (Office Automation Clerk) work every day on the design and installation of conservation practices that increase our ability to implement the goals and action items in our Land and Water Resource Management Plan.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides financial assistance to landowners installing conservation practices to implement conservation plans. There are 90 active EQIP contracts with a total of over \$2.1 million dollars in Dunn County. In 2019, forty-eight new EQIP cost-sharing contracts (totaling \$682,788) were signed funding grazing systems, farmstead improvements, grassed waterways, cover crops and other water and soil conserving practices.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) began in 2010. Currently, Dunn County has 153 active contracts totaling over \$3.5 million in obligation over a period of the five-year contract. In 2019, twenty-one new CSP contracts were signed. This program encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by undertaking additional conservation practices and improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation practices.