

# GREEN BAY WEST SHORE DEMONSTRATION FARMS NETWORK



# REPORT



GREEN BAY WEST SHORE DEMONSTRATION FARMS NETWORK

Year 3 (2023)  
Annual Report

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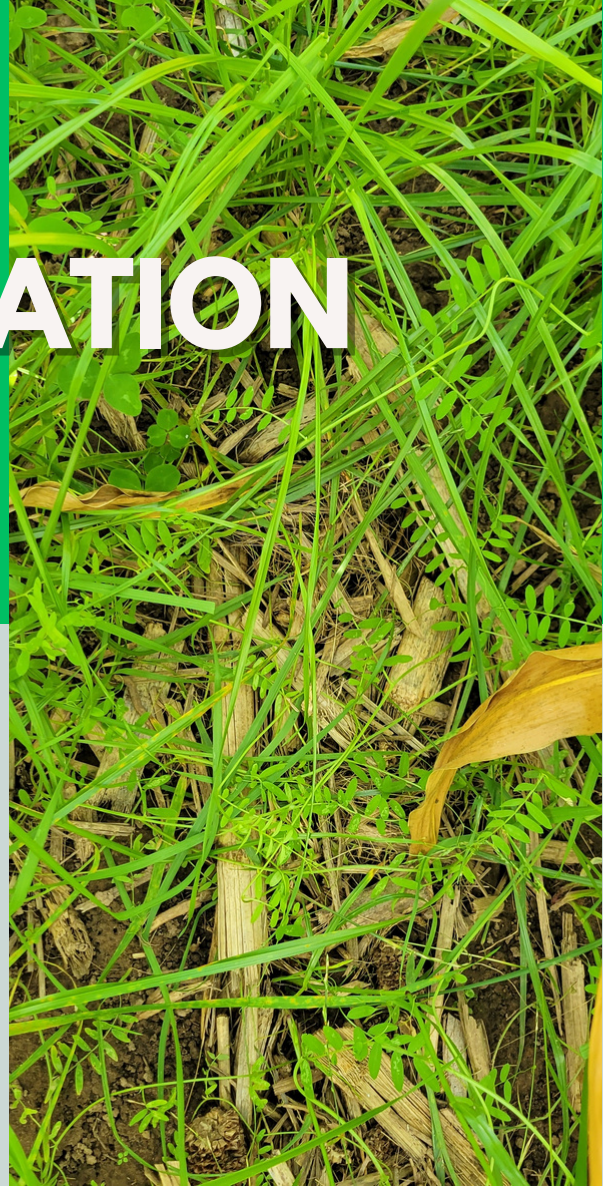
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# ABOUT THE DEMONSTRATION FARMS

The Green Bay West Shore Demonstration Farms Network, a collaboration between U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Oconto County Land & Water Conservation Department, in partnership with Marinette and Shawano Counties, was formed in 2021. The network's goal is to test and demonstrate conservation practices to reduce phosphorus, nitrates, and sediment entering the Great Lakes basin.

The four demonstration farms represent a range of crop and farm types, but all have a common goal – to share the knowledge learned on their farms about innovative techniques to improve soil health. These farmers, with technical support from the project management team, voluntarily implement conservation agricultural



practices in their operations. They also host educational field days and share their soil health journeys with other farmers and the public with the goal of helping others implement soil health practices in their operations. In this way, the Network tests and demonstrates the best conservation practices to reduce non-point source pollution entering the Great Lakes basin.

## CONTACT OUR TEAM

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# FARM SUMMARIES



## BROWN STAR DAIRY

### OCONTO COUNTY

- In 2023 the farm, in cooperation with UW Extension Agent Scott Reuss, again collected data for an on-farm research project looking at N rates on Winter Triticale covers. This work is one of a series of sites that is being used to guide updated N rate/timing recommendations for these crops. The work has shown the importance of moderate fall-applied nitrogen, but also that manure N may be difficult to accurately account for in these crops' recommendations.
- The farm continues to apply manure using two tanker mounted Low Disturbance Manure Injection (LDMI) bars.
- The farm utilizes strip till to plant green into unharvested cover crop fields, leaving an undisturbed row between the corn rows.
- Soil Health tests were taken to start baseline measurement of soils on the farm and will be used to gauge changes in the soil over time.

#### Plans for the Future

- The farm plans to establish rotational heifer grazing and to plant cover crops to graze after crop harvest.



## MAHONEY FARMS

### OCONTO COUNTY

- The farm continues to implement no-till/minimal till practices on a number of acres.
- The farm has experimented with wide row corn for 4 years, utilizing 30" twin rows next to a 60" gap with a cover crop planted in between. Yield results have varied, but for the most part the 60" corn has resulted in lower yields overall.
- In 2023 they used their modified vertical till unit to seed cover crops and plant sorghum for Wagner Farms.

#### Plans for the Future

- The farm plans to continue to implement cover crops and experiment with wide row corn, for 2024 they are looking to change from 30" & 60" rows to 20" & 40" rows. They will also continue to implement soil health practices to hopefully increase corn yields.



# FARM SUMMARIES



## FINGER FAMILY FARMS

MARINETTE COUNTY

- The farm has been adopting no-till and Low Disturbance Manure Injection (LDMI) practices.
- In 2023, Fingers continued using a tanker mounted LDMI toolbar for their farm and used it on some acres in both spring and fall. They have had good luck no tilling into the LDMI ground, even in spring.
- The farm continues to plant peas and triticale for forage, seeing high yields in Fall 2023. They did not interseed any acres in 2023 due to dry weather.

### Plans for the Future

- The farm plans to continue to find ways to utilize LDMI and cover crops to benefit the dairy cattle and improve soil health.



## WAGNER FARMS, INC

SHAWANO COUNTY

- The farm has utilized no-till and cover crops on many of their acres, recognizing the benefits to soil health. After adopting these practices, the farm has continued to see yield increases in crops.
- Wagner Farms in 2023 continued to plant green into their cover crops, seeing no negative impacts on yield.
- The farm has also utilized summer applied manure to spread manure across the growing season and feed a sorghum crop following triticale harvest. The sorghum and triticale provide heifer feed for the farm.

### Plans for the Future

- The farm plans to continue harvesting cover crops for forage, planting green into covers and growing sorghum following forage harvest. They hope to have a 360 Rain unit in place for spring/early summer 2024.

# OUTREACH ACTIVITIES



## In-Person Outreach

Farmers learn best from other farmers and when the information they receive is locally-based and relevant to them. For this reason, one of our main outreach strategies is in-person field days. Farmers, agency personnel, and county conservation professionals attend in-person field days where they are shown local soil health practices our demonstration farmers are using.

Participants can ask questions of demonstration farmers, and can see on-the-ground practices that are working. They may also find practices that aren't working so well, and can explore ways to adapt these practices to work better in their systems.



## In-Person Outreach at a Glance

This year, in conjunction with our partners and with the support of the demonstration farmers, we hosted two field days and a farmer meeting event.

### Farmer Meeting

Joint Meeting With Shawano County Forage Council

- Topics included: Farmer Panel, cover crops with dairy operations, local research updates
- March 7

### Field Days

Field Day at Mahoney Farms

- Topics included: planter attachments and maintenance for no-till planting
- March 22

Silage Drydown Field Day at Wagner Farms

- Topics included: silage moistures
- September 13

Participants at a field day.



# JOINT FARMER MEETING WITH SCFC

March 7, 2023

The Joint Farmer Meeting was held at the Red Maple Country Club in Suring. The meeting was held through a partnership between the Green Bay West Shore Demonstration Farms (GBWS), Shawano County Forage Council (SCFC), NRCS and UW Division of Extension. Just over 60 local farmers, agronomists and other agricultural industry professionals attended.

The first speaker of the day was Jacob Brey of Brey Cycle Farms near Sturgeon Bay, WI. He shared with the group how his farm is utilizing soil health and conservation practices. Jacob also shared how his farm is diversifying by selling beef direct to consumer.

Next, UW Division of Extension Agent Scott Reuss provided research updates regarding local and statewide efforts. He covered a number of topics from weed resistance to biologicals.

A farmer panel made up of the GBWS Demo Farmers discussed projects and practices on their farms. Each shared reasons for their decisions as well as plans for the future.

The meeting closed with some local agronomists sharing their thoughts on field conditions and an update from the Midwest Forage Association. The SCFC then held their annual meeting following the presentations.



Jacob Brey of Brey Cycle Farms talks about conservation practices used on his farm.

Barry Bubolz introduces the Demo Farms.



Scott Reuss discusses research updates.



# FIELD DAY AT MAHONEY FARMS

March 22, 2023

This field day showcased Mahoney Farms corn planter. Brad Rybicki from Seed Concepts discussed the farm's planter setup. He also shared what he considers good maintenance practices for corn planters. The discussion also included the different attachments that could be used, cost considerations, and how the planter could be adjusted.

Brad brought some examples of planter attachments and shared data on the use of some of Precision Plantings planter add-ons. Participants were able to provide feedback as well as get a first hand look at the equipment.

Jim Mahoney also shared his experiences planting in no-till and minimum till scenarios. Jim discussed the equipment on his planter as well as his reasons for having the attachments on his planter. He emphasized his desire to plant consistently and to have confidence in the performance of his planter in a variety of conditions. Participants were able to ask both Jim and Brad for advice on adjusting their own planters for the Spring planting season.

This field day was hosted in partnership with Oconto and Marinette County Departments of Land and Water Conservation as well as Seed Concepts and NRCS.



Brad Rybicki talks planter parts.



Row unit on Jim's Planter.



Jim Mahoney talks about his planter.



# WAGNER FARMS SILAGE DRYDOWN FIELD DAY

September 13, 2023

This field day was hosted by Shawn Wagner of Wagner Farms Inc and was intended to bring growers in to check their silage moistures and discuss cover cropping. The ability to monitor silage moistures in season provides farms with valuable insight into harvest timing. With the 2023 growing season being drier and emergence timings highly variable, this was especially necessary this year.

Attendees got to see their samples chopped on farm, the moisture results were returned within 24-48 hours, allowing farms to communicate with custom harvestors or plan their own on farm harvest.

Corn Silage provides an excellent opportunity to plant covers and still get a fair amount of fall growth. Depending on the harvest window, cover crop species may be limited. 2023 proved to be a year of several harvest windows due to early season moisture limitations.

UW Division of Extension Agent Scott Reuss provided the chipper shredder used to chop the samples. He then took the samples to Dairyland Labs to be processed for moisture. Anyone who brought corn stalks to be processed provided contact information and was able to receive the results as they became available.

Corn silage sample after being processed by chipper.



Photo Credit: Maranda Miller

## GREEN BAY WEST SHORE FALL SILAGE DRY DOWN AND COVER CROP DISCUSSION AT WAGNER FARMS



Advertisement for the field day.

Scott Reuss prepares corn silage samples.



Photo Credit: Maranda Miller



# OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

## (CONTINUED)



WED, MAR 22, 2023

Spring Planter Discussion at Mahoney Farms

## Digital Outreach

This year we continued to utilize and expand our digital outreach. Aside from in-person events, our main outreach tactics have been to create digital materials that are available online for farmers to access at their convenience. This has included utilizing Facebook posts to share material. We also utilized our text service to share not only our events, but other pertinent events for farmers and Ag industry personnel.

In 2023, mother nature threw a number of wrenches into the growing season. Despite weather related issues, the demo farms continued to find ways to innovate.

For the future, we plan to continue hold an annual meeting type event to help reach out to farmers and share the stories of not only our four demo farms, but other conservation minded farms as well.

## Digital Outreach at a Glance

### Educational Materials Created:

- Facebook posts
  - Our materials
    - 9 posts
  - Sharing Others' Materials
    - 2 post

### Event Promotion, Thank You's, and Photos

- 9 posts

### Communication Platforms Utilized

- MoboMix Text
- Facebook
- Twitter

Green Bay West Shore Demo Farms  
& Shawano County Forage Council invite you to...

## Sharing On-Farm Success - Forage, Crop, and Conservation Updates

March 7th - 10 am to 3 pm  
Red Maple Country Club  
501 Golf Course Rd, Suring, WI



**Building Soil Health and Resiliency in Challenging NE Wisconsin Soils**  
Jacob Brey, Brey Cycle Farms

**Agronomic Research Updates - Tar spot, Waterhemp, Biologics, and More...**  
Scott Reuss, UW-Extension Regional Crops Educator

**Making it Work Above Hwy 29: Farmer Experiences from the Demo Farms**  
Brown Star Farm, Finger Family Farms, Mahoney Farms, and Wagner Farms

**What are Agronomists Thinking for 2023?**  
Regional Agronomist Panel

**Midwest Forage Association Updates**  
Chelsea Russell, MFA

Plus,  
Shawano County Forage Council Silent Auction  
...don't forget your checkbooks!

**Shawano Co Forage Council Annual Meeting (after the event)**

Annual meeting invite posted to Facebook.



## Project Partners



## Partner Contacts

| Person         | Role                             | Phone        | Email                                                                                          |
|----------------|----------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sheri Denowski | Marinette County Conservationist | 715-732-7783 | <a href="mailto:Sheri.Denowski@marinettecountywi.gov">Sheri.Denowski@marinettecountywi.gov</a> |
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## Report Credits

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# WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO 2024!

GREEN BAY WEST SHORE DEMONSTRATION FARM NETWORK

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