

Wisconsin Demonstration Farms Spotlight

Rachel Bouressa – Grazing with Purpose in the Upper Fox-Wolf Basin

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Photo credit: Maranda Miller

In north central Wisconsin, Rachel Bouressa is building more than a successful grass-fed beef operation. As part of a multi-generational managed grazing operation, she has been cultivating a model for resilient, regenerative agriculture. Rachel brings a fresh perspective and a deep-rooted commitment to soil health, biodiversity, and community engagement through her participation in the Upper Fox-Wolf Demonstration Farm Network.

Rachel began managing Bouressa Family Farm in 2015, where about 90 head of direct-to-consumer British White Park cattle graze across 120 acres using intensive rotational grazing. She moves fencing daily — sometimes twice a day—to ensure even grazing, minimize soil disturbance, and allow for pasture recovery. Her system includes perimeter fencing and she's exploring virtual collar technology to expand her grazing flexibility. Through this approach, Rachel has seen ecological benefits like improved water quality, healthier soils, and increased wildlife diversity, while also reducing input costs like tractor use and feed costs. By letting cattle interact naturally with the land, she's created a low-input system that recycles nutrients, supports biodiversity, and produces high-quality grass-fed beef.

Beyond her participation in the demonstration farm network, Rachel partners with organizations like Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Pheasants Forever, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Xerces Society, Sand County Foundation, and Grassworks, and has hosted trainings through Grassland 2.0 grazing school, among other things. In 2024, she was appointed to the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board, where she brings a farmer's perspective to statewide conservation efforts. These partnerships and her leadership reflect her ongoing commitment to sustainable agriculture and conservation across Wisconsin.

Her approach to managed grazing is grounded in observation, adaptability, and a belief in letting natural systems and animals do the work. It's a philosophy that aligns perfectly with the soil health principles championed by the Upper Fox-Wolf Demonstration Farm Network: integrating livestock, maintaining continual living roots, maximizing soil cover, and minimizing soil disturbance.



Photo credit: Maranda Miller

Rachel on the way to move her fence.

Farmer-Led Solutions Across the Watershed

The NRCS, in collaboration with the EPA's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), Waupaca County, and numerous partners, supports farmers through the Upper Fox-Wolf Demonstration Farm Network. Spanning the Upper Fox and Wolf River watersheds across central and northeastern Wisconsin, these farmers test and adapt conservation practices to fit their unique operations. Their efforts help improve water quality flowing into the Great Lakes.

By connecting producers, championing their field-tested knowledge, and offering technical support, the Network helps identify and share conservation strategies that address challenges like erosion and non-point source pollution. These issues can otherwise lead to sediment, phosphorus, and nitrogen entering our waterways.

The Network offers farmers multiple ways to connect, learn, and apply new ideas:

- **Field Days on the Fly** – Quick, hands-on events to see practices in action and ask questions.
- **Soil Conversation Social Hours** – Informal evening meetups to share ideas and local concerns.
- **Educational Social Media** – Visual, practical content to spread soil health knowledge.
- **Peer-to-Peer Learning** – Farmer-driven knowledge that highlights real-world experience.
- **Technical Expertise** – Direct support from soil health specialists to guide effective practices.

These resources are designed to meet farmers where they are—whether they're just beginning to explore conservation or looking to refine and expand their current practices.

Follow Along

Want to learn more about Rachel's work and other farm-tested practices in the Upper Fox-Wolf Basin?

Follow Upper Fox-Wolf Demonstration Farms Network

 Facebook - @UFWDemoFarms  YouTube - @FoxWolfDemo

Follow Rachel & Bouressa Family Farm

 Facebook - @BouressaFamilyFarm



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Local students talking with Rachel and meeting her herd during one of her many on-farm events.