

DODGE COUNTY LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Mission Statement

Working together to provide education, information and technical assistance to residents and units of government in Dodge County to protect, restore and sustain our soil and water resources.

2023 LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Larry Bischoff.....Chair
Dale Macheel.....Vice-Chair
Lisa Derr.....Secretary
Rodger Frievalt.....Committee Member
Andrew Johnson.....Committee Member
Bill Foley.....Lake District Representative
Ken Weninger.....Member representing the Farming Community



L to R: Ken Weninger, Dale Macheel, Larry Bischoff, Bill Foley, Andrew Johnson, and Lisa Derr.
Missing is Rodger Frievalt.

2023 LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT STAFF

John Bohonek.....County Conservationist
Dave Braunschweig.....Conservation Technician
Jon Duckert.....Farmland Preservation Technician
Robert Bird.....Conservation Agronomist
Jared Winter.....Conservation Technician
Becky Justmann.....Administrative Secretary

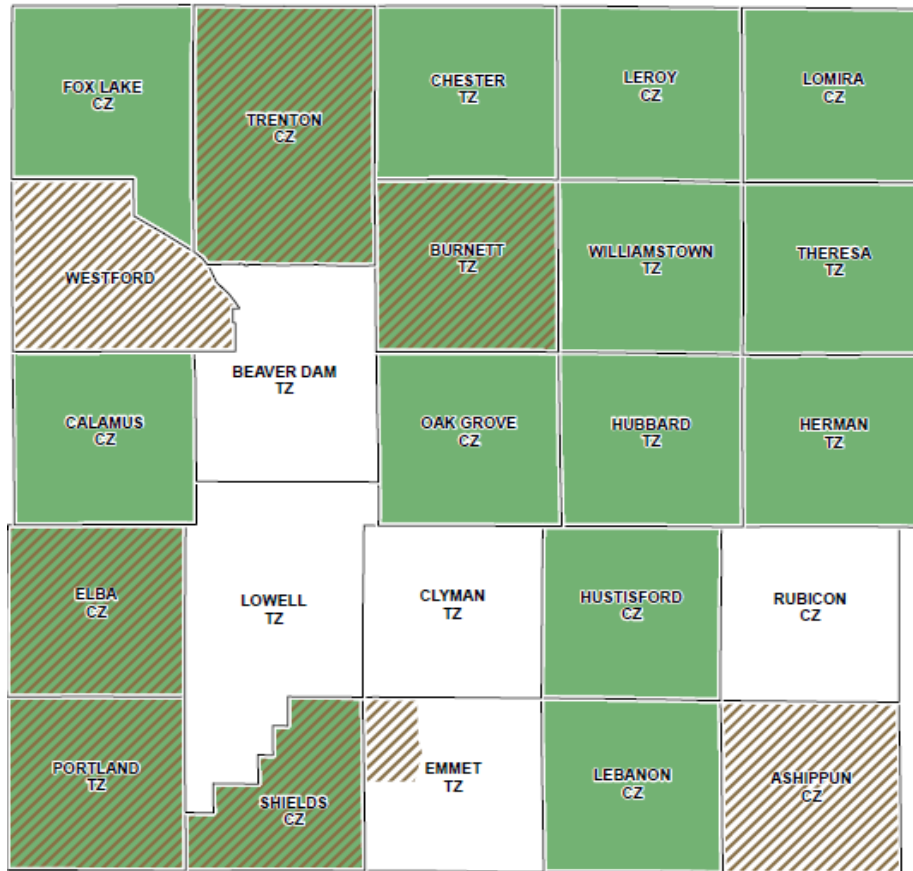


From L to R. Dave Braunschweig, Robert Bird, John Bohonek, Becky Justmann, Jon Duckert, and Jared Winter.

FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM

The Farmland Preservation Program offers property owners a tax credit who have land that is zoned A1 and meets state performance standards. Depending on the type of zoning in their township, they may be eligible for a tax credit of \$10.00/acre, \$12.50/acre. These rates were increased on December 8, 2023 through Act 42 by the Wisconsin Legislature. In 2023 we had a total of 113,760 acres in the Farmland Preservation Program. This is an increase of 1,182 acres from 2022. We completed 146 status reviews monitoring compliance with NR151 performance standards.

We signed 1 new Ag Enterprise Agreement totaling 239 acres into the Farmland Preservation program.



CZ -- County Zoning | TZ -- Town Zoning

Farmland Preservation Zoning
- \$10.00/acre tax credit

Agricultural Enterprise Area
- \$10.00/acre tax credit

Farmland Preservation Zoning and Agricultural Enterprise Area
- \$12.50/acre

LAND AND WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

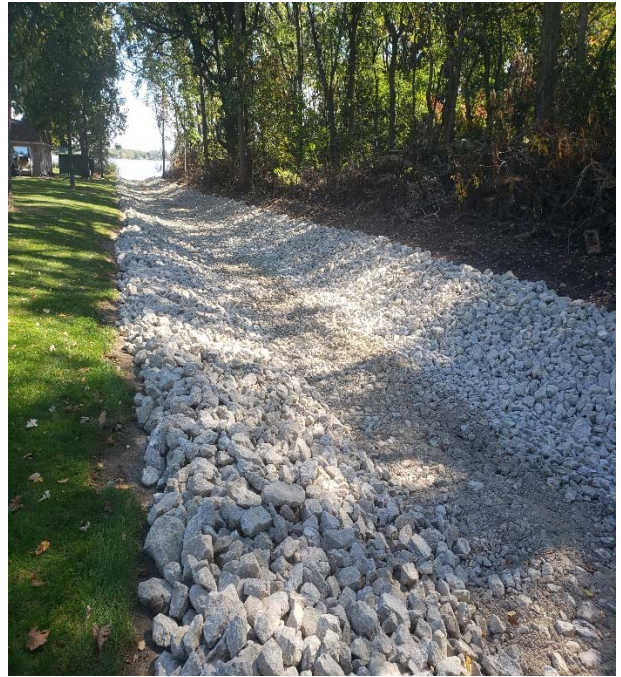
In 2023, \$34,298.50 of cost share money was spent on the following projects to Dodge County residents. \$26,511.02 was committed to projects that could not be completed due to the weather or contractor schedules and will be carried forward into 2024. The projects that were completed resulted in reducing 58 tons of sediment, and 70 pounds of phosphorus running off into our surface waters.

- 28 Wells were abandoned
- 1 Grazing plan implemented covering 9.5 acres
- 1.94 Acres Grassed Waterway
- 0.45 Acres Critical Area Seeding
- 0.27 Acres Rock Lined Waterway

Critical Area Seeding



Rock Lined Waterway



Grassed Waterway



Managed Grazing



ANIMAL WASTE ORDINANCE

Four permits were issued in 2023 under the Dodge County Manure Storage Ordinance. All projects were designed by private engineers. The construction plans were reviewed by our office and DATCP.



WILDLIFE CROP DAMAGE ABATEMENT AND CLAIMS PROGRAM

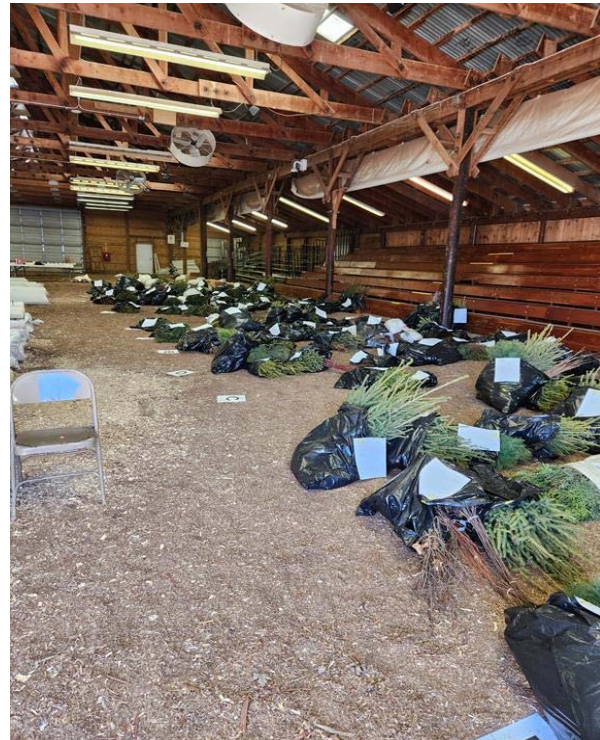
Dodge County had 2 claims for Wildlife damage in 2023. The crop damage was assessed at a value of \$4,138.19. Wildlife crop damage payments were processed to 2 producers for a total of \$3,138.19. 51 deer were donated under the Venison Donation Program, resulting in 1,503 pounds of venison being donated to our local food pantries.

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

We assisted 16 landowners with revising their Nutrient Management Plans and teaching them how to use SnapPlus so they can prepare their own plans. We documented 131,857 acres of cropland covered by Nutrient Management Plans in Dodge County. This is an increase of 13,166 acres from 2022.

TREE PROGRAM

We held our 20th annual tree sales program. Our trees come from Laura's Lane Nursery in Plainfield, WI, Chief River Nursery in Grafton, WI, and Alpha Nurseries Inc. Michigan. We sold 22,425 trees and 2,199 tree tubes in 2022-2023 season to 249 property owners. This is a decrease of 1,435 trees and an increase of 199 tree tubes from 2021-2022 season.



Our tree planter was rented out to five landowners planting 14,600 trees.



Dodge County Groundwater Quality Index

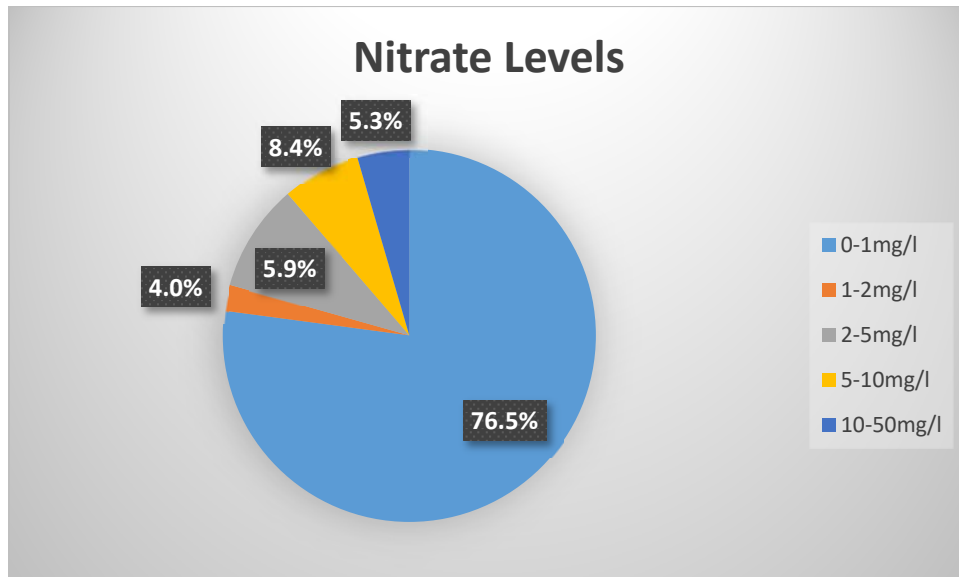
The results from our third year of well testing are shown in the graph below. We had a total of 323 wells tested. 31 property owners opted out of the program from last year.

- 5.3% of the samples exceeded the state and federal standards for nitrate in public drinking water of 10mg/l. No infant or any female who is or may become pregnant should consume any water that exceeds this standard.
- 8.4% tested in the range of 5-10mg/l. It is recommended that wells in this range be tested annually.

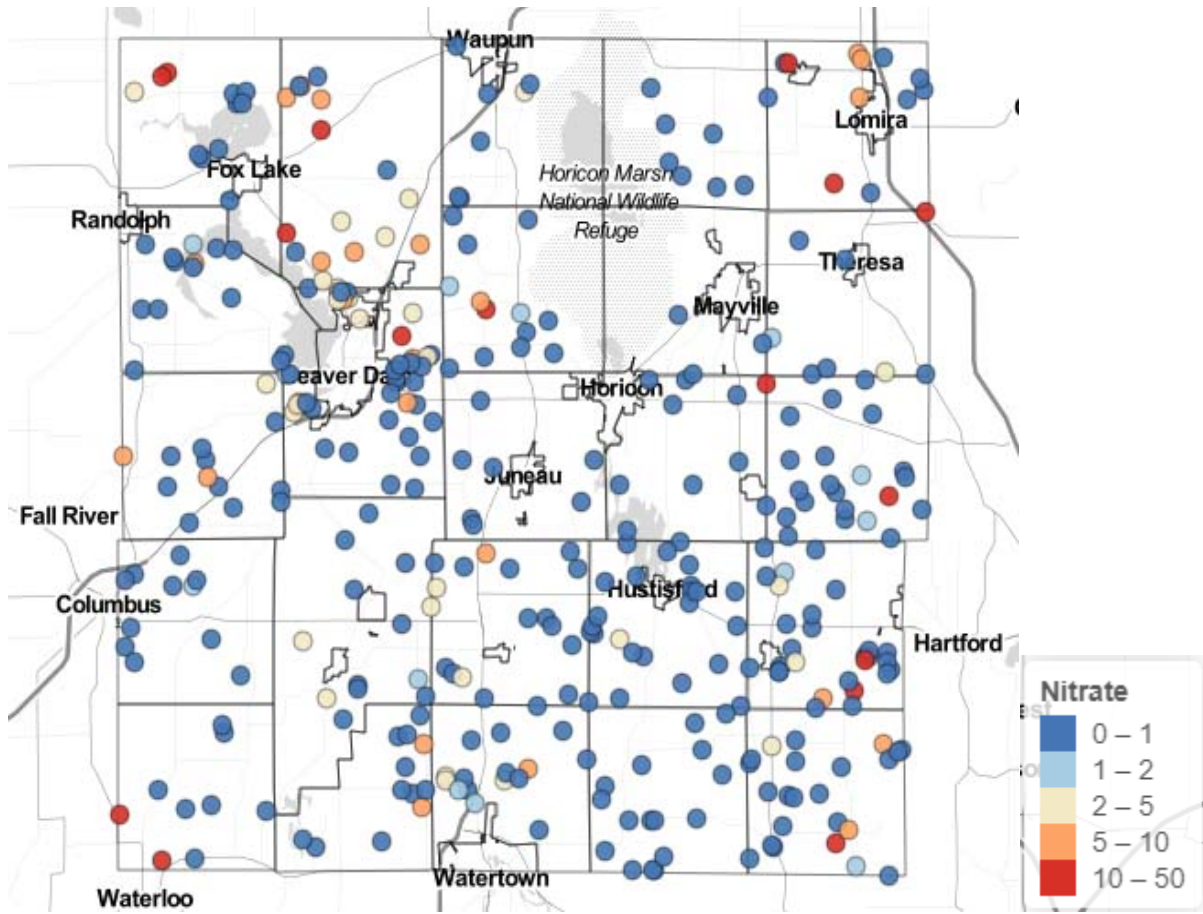
Of the 31 wells that dropped out of the program, their second year test showed that 25 wells tested in the 0-1mg/l range, 2 wells tested in the 1-2mg/l range, 1 well tested in the 2-5mg/l range and 3 wells tested in the 5-10mg/l range.

Overall, the third year of testing showed nitrate levels stayed about the same.

When the results from our fourth year are back, UW-Stevens Point will be able to look at statistical analysis



Percent of Wells testing in Each Range



Approximate Location and Nitrate Levels of Wells

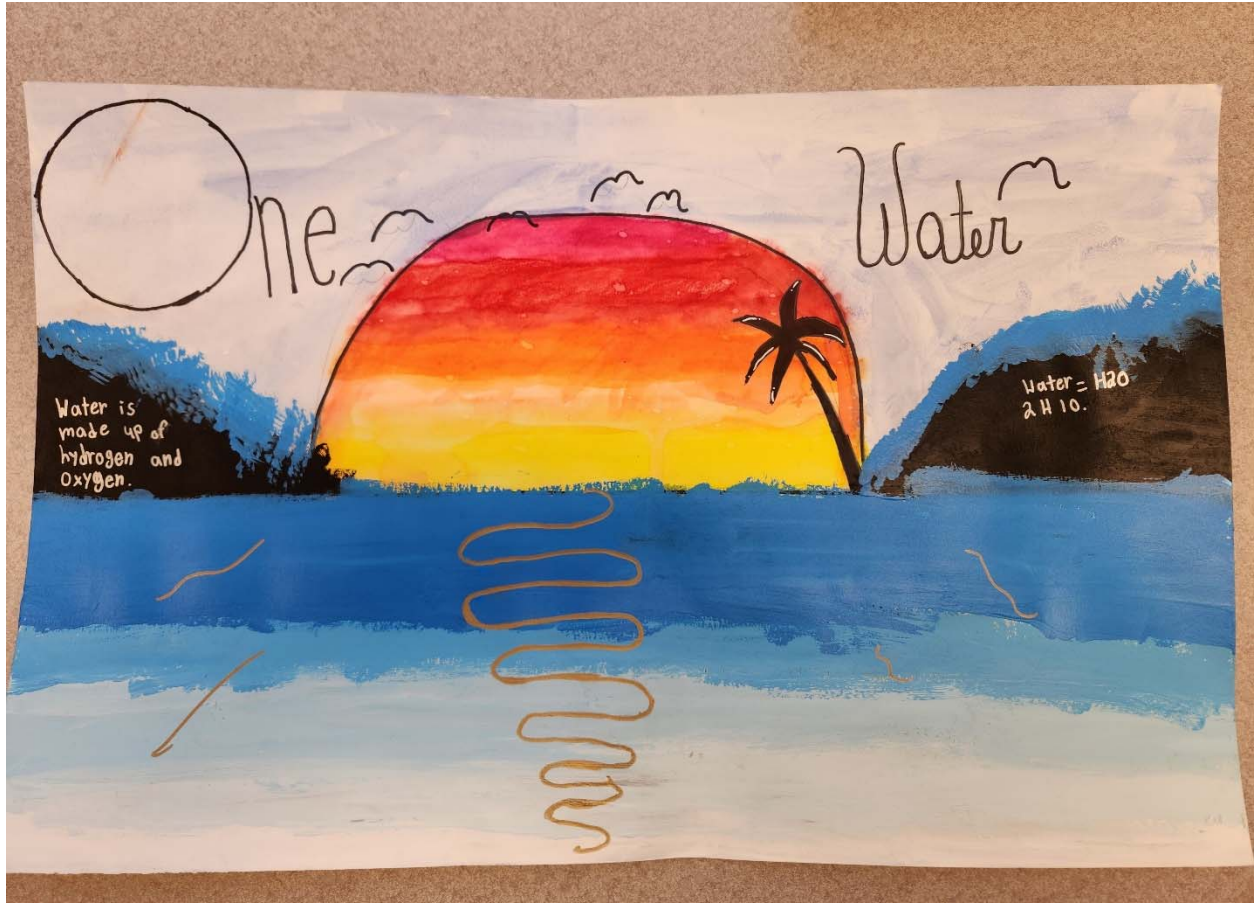
Poster Contest

The Theme this year was **“One Water”**. We received 4 posters this year. The posters submitted were for grades 4-6 and grades 10-12. In grades 4-6, Makenna Casper received 1st place, Samantha Rhodes received 2nd place, and Kilyan Laubenstein received 3rd place. In grades 10-12, Natalie Hargrave received 1st place.

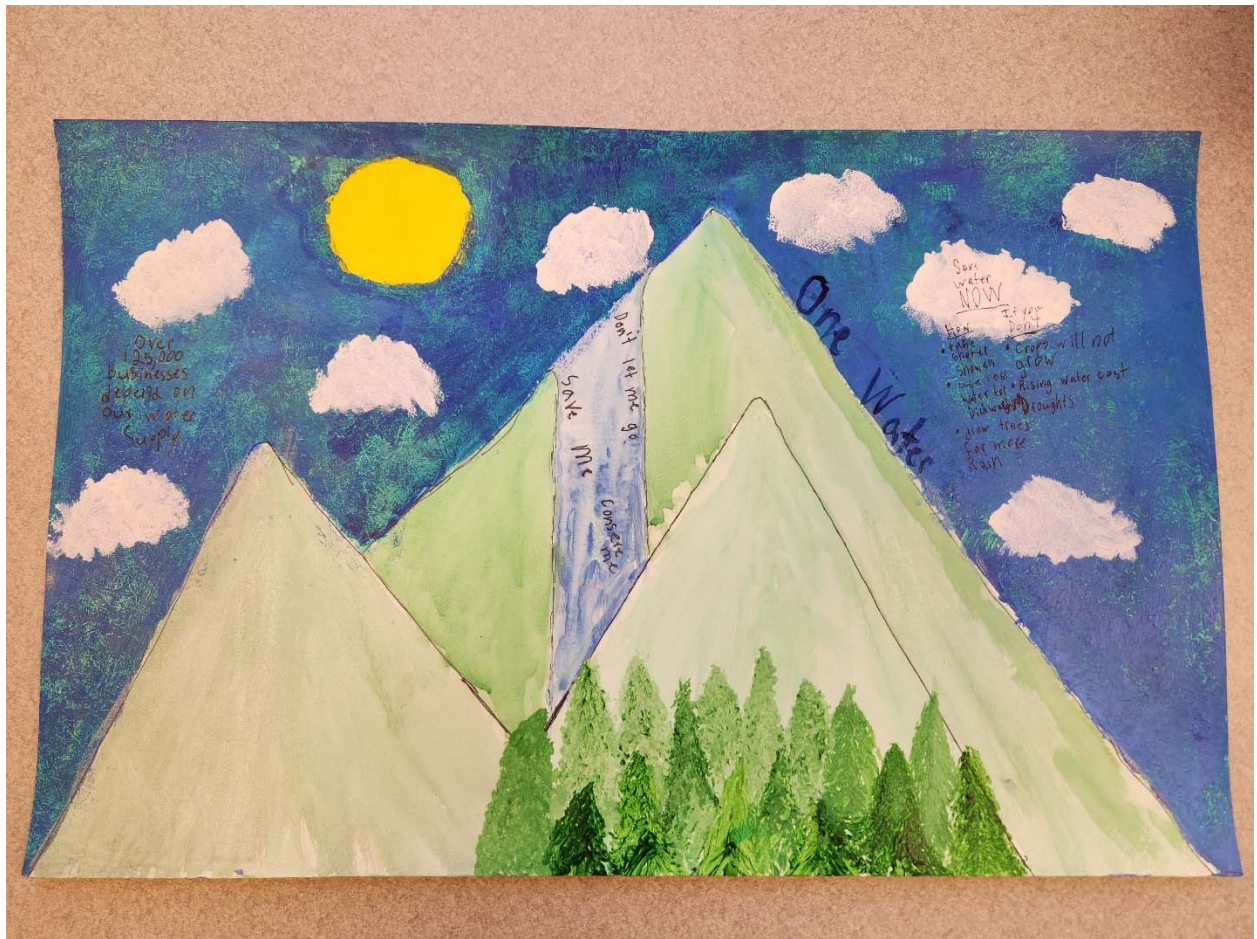
Our two first place winners moved on to the Southern Area Contest. Natalie Hargrave placed 3rd.



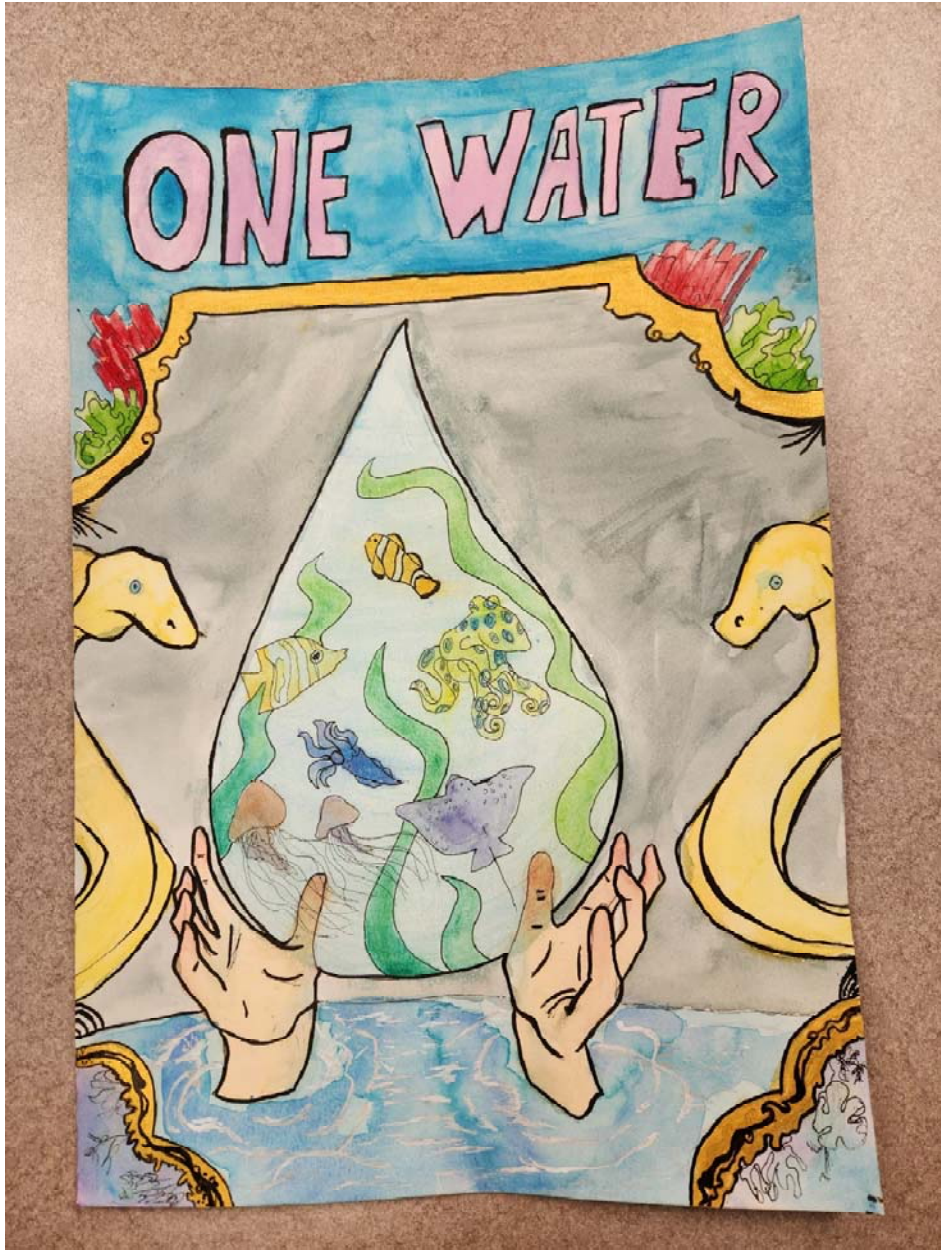
1st place grade 4-6



2nd place grade 4-6



3rd place grade 4-6



1st place grade 10-12

Pasture Walk

In May, 49 people attended a pasture walk looking at soil structure in existing pastures that have been in grass for over 50 years, newly constructed cattle lane, grazing cover crops, and a water infiltration study in a field that uses cover crops.



DODGE COUNTY FARMERS FOR HEALTHY SOIL HEALTHY WATER

The Dodge County Farmers for Healthy Soil – Healthy Water is a farmer led group. Their mission statement reads:

“Improving Our Community’s Soil and Water through Conservation Practices & Education.”

The farmer group’s major efforts have been in their educational events that focus on the benefits of reduced tillage and cover crops. The group is working with UW- Discovery Farms conducting Nitrogen Use Efficiency studies. They are working with the Sand County Foundation on water infiltration monitoring. They received a \$37,960 grant from the Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection that they use to provide the following educational events and offer incentive payments for installing conservation practices including cover crops.

February Conference

This Soil Health Expo was held on February 8th in the Juneau Community Center. The theme for this year’s expo was “Cover crops and reducing inputs to increase profit”. The main speaker was David Brandt. 174 people attended the Expo.

David Brandt is a farmer from Ohio. He farms 950 acres. He began no-till in 1971 and has been using cover crops since 1978. He shared general principles and techniques that any farmer can use to improve soil health.

After lunch, a local farmer panel discussed their personal achievements in applying soil health principles.

Pre-Plant Workshop

On April 4th a pre-plant workshop was held on a farm in the town of Westford to discuss “Spring planter Tune-up”. The landowner had his planter and grain drill on display. An equipment representative discussed how to adjust your planters correctly. 62 people attended this event.

August Field Day

On August 8th an event was held in the Town of Elba. The theme for this event was, "Equipment compaction and soil health". Since farm equipment continues to get larger as farms get bigger, soil compaction is becoming a bigger issue. Different methods were used to measure soil compaction by different pieces of farm equipment. Wheel size and tire pressure were discussed and demonstrated. 91 people attended this event.

Fall Cover Crop Showcase

This event was held on a field near Beaver Dam on September 27th. This event was open to farmers and lake residents. A field that was planted with several different cover crop mixes were looked at. There was discussion on when certain mixes should be used vs. other mixes. 33 people attended this meeting.

Grazing covers interseeded into 60" row corn

On November 7th 22 people came to look at multi-species cover crop mixes interseeded into 60" corn rows. Corn planting populations were discussed to maximize yield. The cover crop biomass was looked at to see how long you could extend the grazing season.

Fall Wrap Up

On December 14th, 32 members met in a more social environment to discuss what worked, what didn't, what challenges they faced, and what changes or new ideas they plan to make next year.

Incentives Programs

The farmer's group incentive program had 19 landowners participate in 4 programs. Cover Crops, Pay for Performance, Planting Green and Grazing. The Cover Crop program had 1,461 acres enrolled, Pay for Performance had 1,405 acres, Planting Green had 2,688 acres, and Grazing had 0 acres. Calculations were made for the Pay for Performance program to determine sediment and phosphorus runoff savings. This program reduced soil runoff by 1,883 tons and Phosphorus runoff by 1,219 pounds.