



# The Alliance News

Dodge County Alliance for Healthy Soil & Healthy Water

Vol. 1 No.2, Winter 2021

**The mission of the Dodge County Alliance for Healthy Soil & Healthy Water is to build a community dedicated to soil and water health**

[Learn more about us!](#)



## Opportunities to Learn and Expand Production Options: Dodge County Farmers Events Continue to Deliver!

By Bill Stangel, Agronomist and Board of Director for the Alliance

The Dodge County Farmers for Healthy Soil & Healthy Water annual winter meeting was held on February 10th, 2021 under the banner 'Rolling into Covers'. Despite the Covid-19 status, we were able to provide space for approximately 80 attendees at the Juneau Community Center and nearly 100 live on-line viewers.

The keynote speaker was Rick Clark who operates an organic grain farm near Williamsport, Indiana. A unique facet of Rick's story is his utilization of no-till strategies in a certified organic farm operation. Combining cover crops and expanded rotations help achieve objectives of minimizing off farm inputs and maximizing soil biology to stimulate nutrient availability.

Dr. Erin Silva, Organic Outreach Specialist with UW-Madison presented a summary of ongoing no-till organic corn and soybean production practices her team has compiled in the past 15 growing seasons.

The meeting closed with a robust Q&A session between both speakers and the audience. The mix of farmer experience combined with applied research led to stimulating questions and discussion. This resulted in inspiration as about half of survey respondents indicated that they are considering planting multi-species cover crop mixes or establishing cover crops in standing corn and soybeans because they attended this event.

On March 26th, we also hosted our annual Pre-Plant Workshop at the Wyse's farm in Neosho. There was a great turnout and featured local farmers Brad Wyse and Ryan Nell, and Mike Kehl from Wauplan Equipment who all shared tips for successful planter set up.

These annual events continue the tradition of providing our guests a great opportunity to learn and expand our production options. Thanks to the many efforts our key partners to make this event a success!

### Join us!

Next Alliance

meeting: **Monday**

**April 12th at 10am**

Sign up [here](#) for more details!

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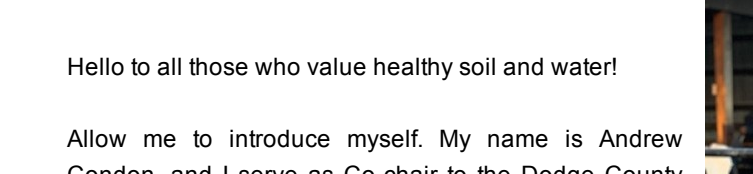
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February 10, 2021  
**5th Annual Soil Health Expo**  
DODGE COUNTY FARMERS HEALTHY SOIL & HEALTHY WATER

**Rick Clark**



## From Our Co-Chair:

Hello to all those who value healthy soil and water!

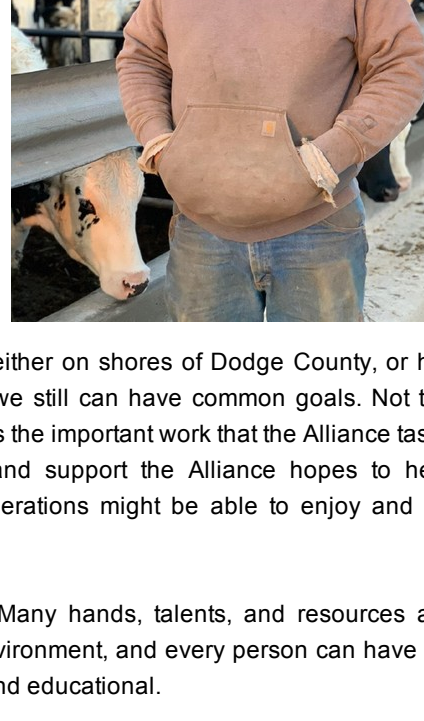
Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Andrew Condon, and I serve as Co-chair to the Dodge County Alliance for just over a year so far. I dairy farm with both of my uncles and their families in Horicon, and in Watertown, I raise cash crops in a partnership.

Joining the Alliance was about becoming involved in the important issues that surround our landscape here in Dodge County. Just as our county is bountiful with productive agricultural land, it is also blessed with rivers and lakes. This is what caused my family to settle on the banks of the Rock River in the mid-1800s. While living either on shores of Dodge County, or her fruitful farms, causes us to have differing perspectives, we still can have common goals. Not the least of which is to keep nutrients in place. This outcome is the important work that the Alliance tasks itself with. By providing education, encouragement, and support the Alliance hopes to help preserve Dodge County's resources, so that future generations might be able to enjoy and be sustained by them.

While this work is noble, it is certainly no small task. Many hands, talents, and resources are required to achieve the goals of having a sustainable environment, and every person can have an impact. I hope that you find these newsletters enjoyable and educational.

Till next time,

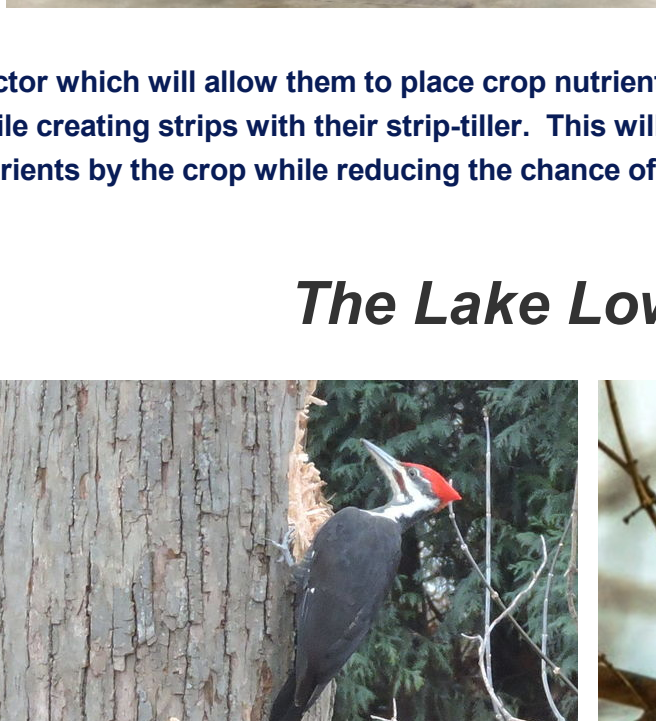
Andrew J R Condon



## Farmers HSHW and Alliance Featured on Fishers & Farmers Webinar Series!

Dodge County Farmers and Alliance for Healthy Soil & Healthy Water and Land Conservation were featured as part of the 'Boots on the Ground' webinar series hosted by Fishers & Farmers on March 18th. Missed it? Check out the recording [here](#)

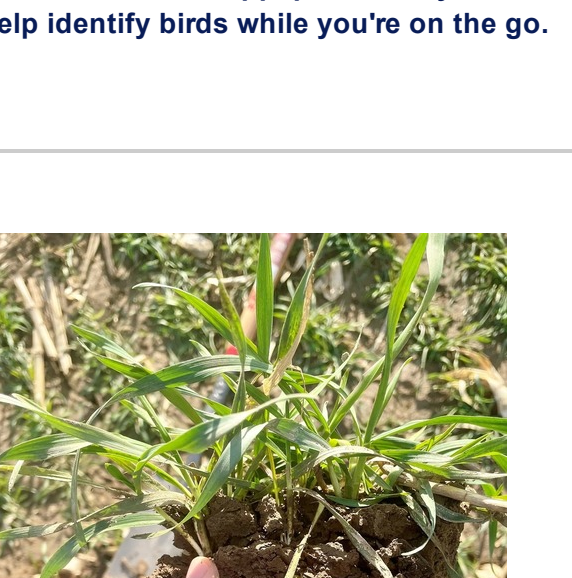
## What's Going on in the Field?



**Jerry Kreuziger farms around 1,800 acres with his Dad and brother near Clyman, WI. They use strip-till and no-till to plant corn, soybeans, and winter wheat. Cover crops include using cereal rye on corn and soybean ground and a multi-species mix after winter wheat.**

**This winters' project is adding fertilizer tanks to their strip-till tractor which will allow them to place crop nutrients in the soil just below the seed bed while creating strips with their strip-tiller. This will allow greater utilization of the nutrients by the crop while reducing the chance of nutrient runoff.**

## The Lake Low-down



**With the snow melt and warming temperatures, we are seeing sure signs of spring. One of those being the many appearances of wildlife! Check out these excellent photos from Gae & Bob Bergmann of Fox Lake.**

**Pictured on the left is a *Pileated Woodpecker*, a very distinctive bird by it's large size and powerful drum on trees. The picture on the right features a *Wood Duck*. Fun fact: Wood Ducks commonly practice egg-dumping, or intraspecific brood parasitism, where females visit other Wood Duck nests, lay eggs in them, and leave them to be raised by other females.**

**Want to do some bird watching this year? The Merlin Bird ID app, powered by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is great way to help identify birds while you're on the go. [Learn more here](#)**

## DATCP Ecosystem Services Pilot Projects: Layering the Benefits from Conservation Practices

By Dana Christel, Conservation Specialist, DATCP

In 2021, DATCP's Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants Program will be working with Dodge County Farmers for Healthy Soil & Healthy Water to pilot an Ecosystem Services Program. These efforts aim to evaluate a combination of ecosystem benefits that conservation practices and soils health systems provide, including water quality benefits and potential soil carbon storage benefits.

When farmers switch from conventional farming practices to soil health systems, not only can the watershed benefit from reduced nutrient runoff and soil erosion, but these practices can also have a positive effect on soil carbon dynamics. Carbon is an integral component of soil organic matter- the part of soil that helps retain water, cycle plant essential nutrients and foster soil microbial life! There is increasing excitement around the potential for agricultural soils to play an important role in re-locating atmospheric carbon to the soil through sustainable farming practices.

Plants perform photosynthesis by taking carbon dioxide and water to form oxygen and sugars. Microbes in the soil use those sugars to help build organic matter. Organic matter can then act as a sponge for water and other nutrients. These can be complex processes happening in the soil and are impacted by many environmental and management factors. This is why conservationists and soil health farmers get so excited about keeping plants in the ground throughout the year and minimizing soil disturbance as both of these principles generally favor the building of organic matter and, thus, storage of carbon in the soil. The approaches we use on agricultural working lands to improve watershed health have a suite of ecosystem benefits. As a conservation community it is important that we evaluate and recognize the extent of those layered impacts moving forward.

## Improving the Beauty of Shorelines

By Ellen Perkins, Lake Sinissippi

After a long Wisconsin winter, thoughts turn to spring on the lake. Migrating birds return and nature comes alive again. For lake residents, shorelines are so important to the environment as they are the last line of defense for sediment and pollutants entering the water. There are several important steps that you can take to improve sediment runoff and water quality.

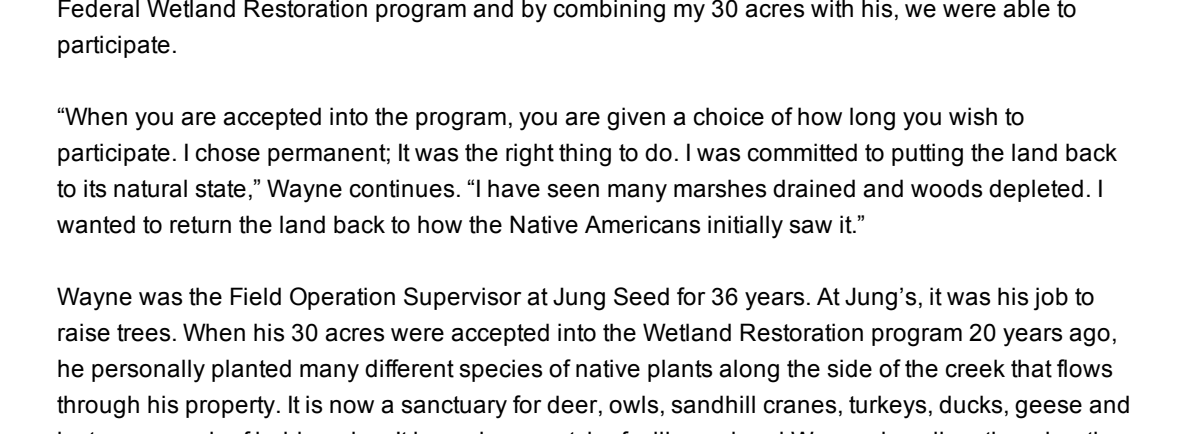
During the spring rains, any fertilizer that is applied to lawns can run off into lakes and streams. This accumulates in waterways and leads to algae blooms when the weather turns warm and can become toxic. The best practice is to avoid fertilizer for lawns. If you feel that you need to fertilize, please use zero-phosphorus fertilizer. The middle number on the bag indicates the amount of phosphorus.

Another option to slow the runoff into waterways is to plant native flowers, shrubs, and/or trees close to the shoreline. Lawns have very shallow roots, so the rainwater runs over the lawn and into lakes and rivers. Native flowers such as Coneflower and Black-Eyed Susan have deep root systems that absorb rainwater while also feeding birds, butterflies, and bees.

A rain garden is designed to slow runoff and consists of plants that can tolerate wet conditions while promoting infiltration. A rain garden will not be permanently wet. It will collect water and the plants in the garden will dry the area.

If you are not into gardening, a rain barrel can save excess rainwater in a container that can be used to water lawns or trees during dry periods. Rain barrels are attached to a gutter and collect rainwater from the roof. A rain barrel will not attract mosquitoes because the container is covered.

Start small and have fun. For more information and other ideas, please see [Protecting Your Waterfront Investment](#)



## Creating a Legacy Through Restoration

By Colleen Crane, Fox Lake and Secretary of the Alliance

Wayne Kok was born and raised on a farm. He & his wife often admired a farm located in the Town of Fox Lake.

"It was a perfect blend of good farmland and good hunting land. In 1979, I acquired the 154 acres. But I always struggled with 30 acres of the farm. It was frustrating to farm as it was marginal wetland. I soon realized the land needed to go back to being a marsh. My neighbor and I learned of the Federal Wetland Restoration program and by combining my 30 acres with his, we were able to participate.

"When you are accepted into the program, you are given a choice of how long you wish to participate. I chose permanent; It was the right thing to do. I was committed to putting the land back to its natural state," Wayne continues. "I have seen many marshes drained and woods depleted. I wanted to return the land back to how the Native Americans initially saw it."

Wayne was the Field Operation Supervisor at Jung Seed for 36 years. At Jung's, it was his job to raise trees. When his 30 acres were accepted into the Wetland Restoration program 20 years ago, he personally planted many different species of native plants along the side of the creek that flows through his property. It is now a sanctuary for deer, owls, sandhill cranes, turkeys, ducks, geese and last year, a pair of bald eagles. It has a huge patch of milkweed and Wayne describes the migration of the Monarch butterflies as "amazing."

"I get to live here, but I want to leave it better than when I got it," Wayne explains. "If you're able to, we all need to help nature out, become good stewards of the land. All conservation is local. That's what spoke to me about the Alliance. The Alliance is helping stewardship of the land here in Dodge County."

## Updates from Agency Partners

### Dodge County Land and Water Conservation Dept

John Bohnek, County Conservationist

In 2020, we applied for one small scale and two large scale Targeted Runoff Management (TRM) grants. There were more applications than there was money and we did not meet the cutoff. Fortunately, the small scale grants that were funded came in under budget and our grant is now funded at \$225,000. The small scale grant is for an individual project while the large scale are for watershed size projects. I am in the process of applying for the two large scale grants for our two 9-Key Element Plans, Wildcat Creek and Lake Sinissippi-Rock River Watersheds.

### US Dept. of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service of Dodge County

Tony Wild, Acting District Conservationist for Dodge, Jefferson and Outagamie Counties

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Wisconsin announced up to \$500,000 in funding is available for eligible individuals, local and state government, non-governmental organizations and tribes through the NRCS Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program. Project proposals are due May 7, 2021. Read full article [here](#)

### Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources

Susan Graham, Lakes Management Coordinator for Southcentral WI

Congratulations to both Beaver Dam Lake Association (BDLA) and Fox Lake Inland Lake Protection & Rehabilitation District (FLILPRD) for their recent awards of lake planning grants from the Department of Natural Resources' Surface Water Grants program.

BDLIA will be awarded matching funds to identify ways to reduce nutrient pollution from the subwatershed contributing runoff to Rakes Bay on the northwest side of Beaver Dam Lake. A feasibility analysis of a Rakes Bay drawdown will follow.

Two coordinating grants for FLILPRD will develop a comprehensive watershed plan by modeling water quality information, prioritizing restoration and protection strategies, and creating the plan.

Projects on both lakes rely on a strong suite of active partners, and will provide numerous opportunities for public participation. The projects will begin in April.

### University of WI-Madison, Division of Extension--Dodge County:

Michelle Probst, Natural Resource Educator

I'm still trying to catch my breath after the marathon of virtual conferences! As the weather begins to warm-up, I am excited to see what this summer has in store for us. I've recently started working with the Jefferson County Soil Builders, a new farmer-led group, and they will be having their first field day this April. Check them out on [facebook](#)

The Extension Dodge County [website](#) has information about local upcoming programs.

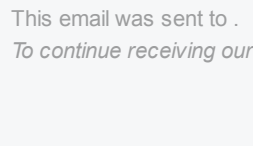
[Tell us how we are doing!](#)

Thank you for reading the Alliance News! We want to make this a useful resource for everyone, so please, give us your feedback.

Dodge County Alliance for Healthy Soil & Healthy Water

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