Basin Buzz

Summer 2015

Participating Farms:

- **Van Wychen Farms, operated by George Van Wychen**
- **Tinedale Cropping, operated by Scott Theunis**
- **Brickstead Dairy, operated by Dan Brick**
- **Nettekoven Farms, operated by Greg Nettekoven**

Demo Farm Field Days June 16

Cutting Edge Agriculture Being Tested Close to Home

Four farms in the watershed are demonstrating leading edge conservation practices through the Lower Fox Demonstration Farms Network!

Producers are working with Brown and Outagamie County Land Conservation departments, NRCS and the Great Lakes Commission to test the effectiveness of current and innovative conservation practices.

Practices being tested on the farms include those that will:

- Increase soil health.
- Reduce phosphorus, nutrients and sediment from leaving the fields.
- Increase yields.

Each farm is tracking the impact of these practices on their system in terms of efficiency and economics. Monitoring is being done on each site to determine the effectiveness of these practices to improve water quality.

Those involved in the program hope to show that a suite of practices will not only be beneficial to the farm but also to local waters.

Join us!

Demonstration Field Days - June 16

How to no-till plant into cover crop: Quit treating your soil like dirt series!

9:30-12:00
Greg & Karen Nettekoven Farm
N4661 County Road PP • Black Creek

1:00-3:30
Wayside Dairy LLC (Dan & Paul Natzke)
7937 Stone Road • Greenleaf

To learn more about the project, contact Brent Petersen, Brown County LWCD (920)391-4643, Petersen_BA@co.brown.wi.us

Sign Up NOW for 2015 Funds & Assistance

Do you have soil or water conservation projects in need of financial or technical help? If so, there are several different opportunities for obtaining cost-share for conservation projects in Brown, Calumet, Outagamie and Winnebago counties.

Funding can assist to install a variety of practices including:

- Cropland practices such as grassed waterways, water and sediment control basins, filter strips, cover crops
- Nutrient management planning with soil testing
- Barnyard work, manure storage and other farmstead practices

The GLRI EQIP sign-up through NRCS for 2015 continues to take applications with an application deadline of July 17th. Apply at your NRCS office in Brown, Outagamie, Calumet, and Winnebago counties

Contact your Land Conservation Department to determine if funding is available for your project.

Brown County LWCD: (920) 391-4635
Calumet County LWCD: (920) 849-1442
Outagamie County LCD: (920) 832-5073
Winnebago County LWCD: (920) 232-1950

Grassed Waterway prevents gully erosion and soil loss

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Success Story

Got Soil? Make it Healthy! Van Wychens Show How It's Done

USDA United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

"A conservation plan is a huge plus, and we've always had one; the soil has to make a living for me and I want to take care of it. A conservation plan helps me think ahead, it provides direction, and documents what we've done." George VanWychen

George Van Wychen has been farming since 1977, and planting cover crops for 15 years.

"I have a passion for healthy soil. I don't want to see brown creeks and runoff from tilled fields in the spring," says George. "I am proud of my farm and want to show what we've done with cover crops, erosion control, and building healthy soils here."

George's son, Nick Van Wychen, is equally committed to building the soil and keeping the water clean. Nick is an outdoorsman and an environmentalist as well as a farmer. That's why the Van Wychens agreed to serve as one of four Great Lakes Demonstration Farms in the Fox River Watershed Phosphorus Reduction Initiative.

These Farms demonstrate the best, leading-edge conservation practices to reduce phosphorus entering Green Bay and Lake Michigan. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) in collaboration with the Brown County Land and Water Conservation Department and Outagamie County Land Conservation Department have organized the Farm network.

Brent Petersen, the project manager for the Lower Fox Demonstration Farms Network, points out that these are innovative farmers, conservation leaders as well as community leaders. That's why they were selected and that's why they are working so hard to show how conservation can improve this watershed.

Great minds have come together here to work on these problems, and there are great ideas being tested, notes Brent.

The momentum is really growing, notes Jim Jolly, Brown County Conservationist. "These farmers are committed; they are really invested in making this work."

The Van Wychens held a Cover Crop Field Day, drawing over 50 area farmers, crop advisors, and ag professionals, to see a variety of cover crops, showcasing conservation benefits and soil health improvements that can be gained from keeping the soil protected and under cover. There was a soil pit tour, soil testing demonstration and manure application equipment on display.

"We want to help get the word out to other farmers, and figure out new and better ways to farm and protect our water and environment," says Nick. "We're trying new things. There is lots of interest; we get questions from other farmers."

The Van Wychens will continue building the health of the soil and sharing what they've learned to help others see the benefits of good conservation.

Radishes are deep-rooted, drawing up nitrogen from the soil. This cover crop is excellent for compaction control, the flowers attract pollinators and are excellent forage for grazing.

George Van Wychen (L) and Jason Firster, Soil Conservation with NRCS, examine the soil profile, investigating the root depth of the radishes during the field day.

The Fox - Wolf River Basin

basin (bā•sin)

noun

1. a topographic region in which all water drains to a common area. In the map below, all rainfall or snowmelt that falls within the purple boundary drains to either the Wolf River or Fox River and then to the Bay of Green Bay. This region is called the Fox-Wolf River Basin.

2. a wide, round open container, especially one used for holding liquid.

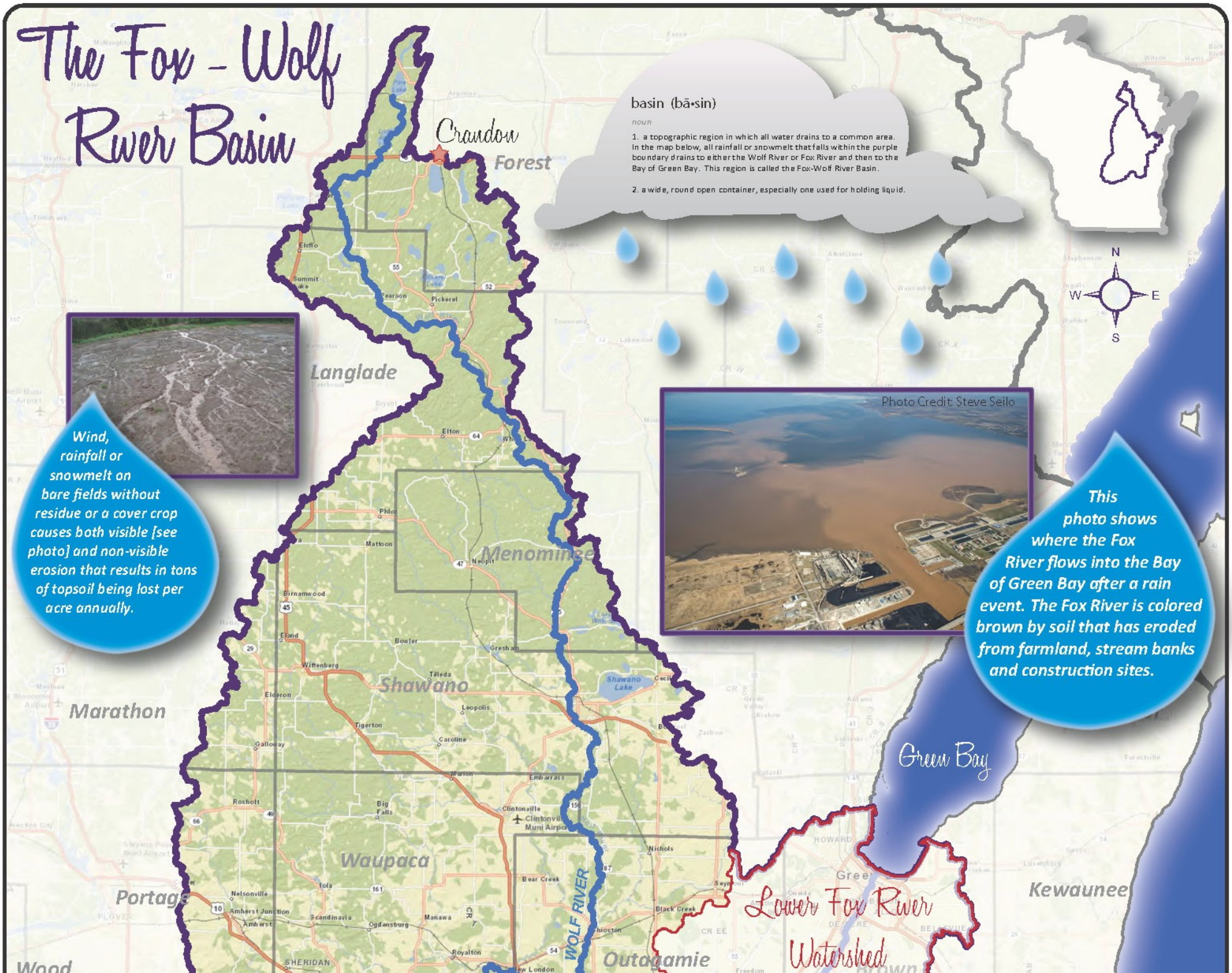
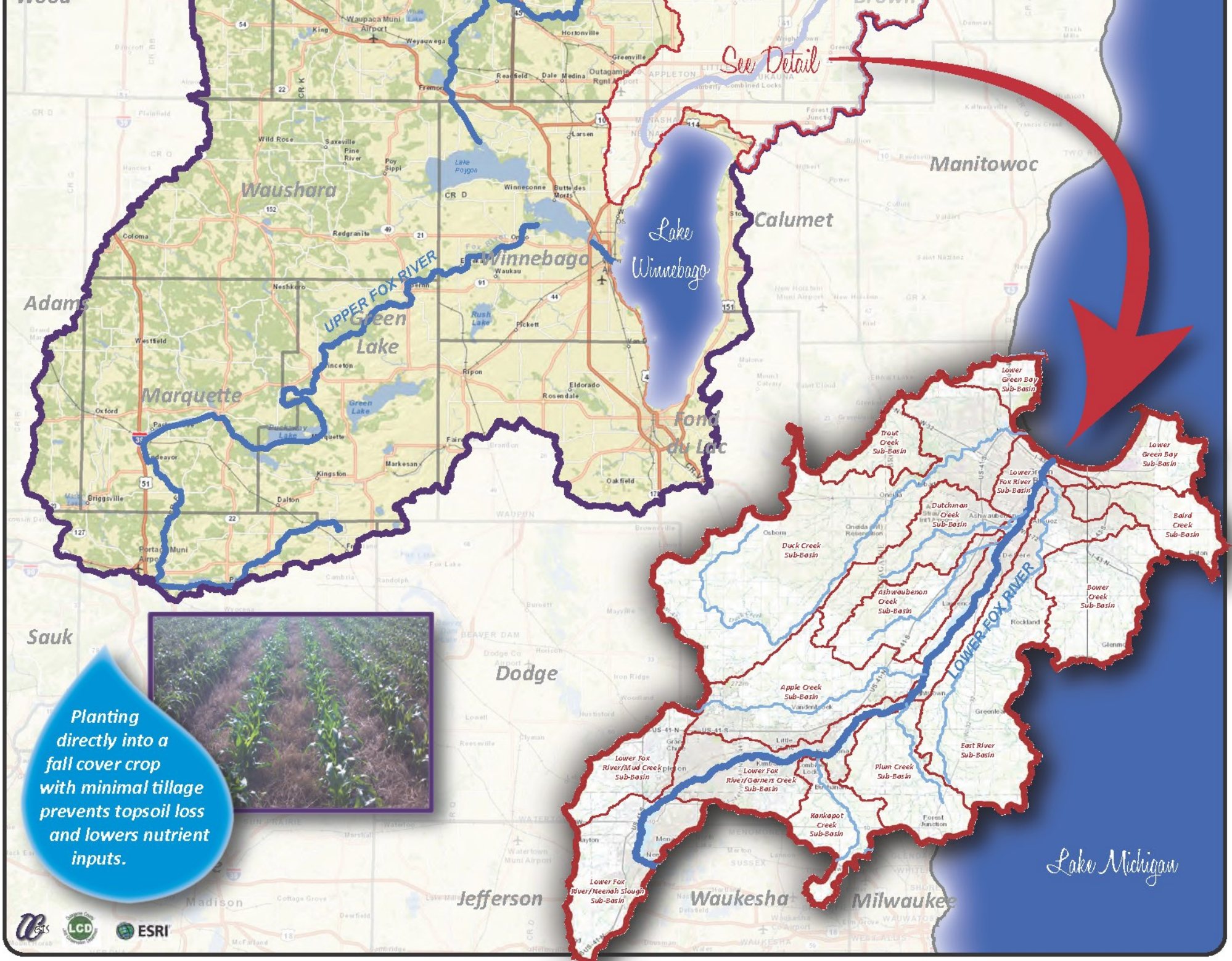


Photo Credit: Steve Seilo

Wind, rainfall or snowmelt on bare fields without residue or a cover crop causes both visible [see photo] and non-visible erosion that results in tons of topsoil being lost per acre annually.

This photo shows where the Fox River flows into the Bay of Green Bay after a rain event. The Fox River is colored brown by soil that has eroded from farmland, stream banks and construction sites.


See Detail
Manitowoc
Calumet
Lake Winnebago
Waushara
Winnebago
Adams
UPPER FOX RIVER
Green Lake
Marquette
Fond du Lac
Sauk
Dodge
Jefferson
Waukesha
Milwaukee
Lake Michigan
LOWER FOX RIVER
Lower Green Bay Sub-Basin
Trout Creek Sub-Basin
Lower Fox River Sub-Basin
Dutchman Creek Sub-Basin
Baird Creek Sub-Basin
Duck Creek Sub-Basin
Ashwaubenon Creek Sub-Basin
Bower Creek Sub-Basin
Apple Creek Sub-Basin
East River Sub-Basin
Lower Fox River/Mud Creek Sub-Basin
Lower Fox River/Garners Creek Sub-Basin
Plum Creek Sub-Basin
Kankapot Creek Sub-Basin
Lower Fox River/Neenah Slough Sub-Basin
Planting directly into a fall cover crop with minimal tillage prevents topsoil loss and lowers nutrient inputs.
ESRI

Survey Results Are In!

Last year, farmers throughout Brown, Calumet, and Outagamie counties were asked to participate in a survey about their views on conservation and its impact on water quality. The survey results will help develop new opportunities for businesses, farmers, agencies and other organizations to work together to solve water quality problems.

Conservation means "using good practices to promote good land decisions for soil and water."

First, 60% of you showed interest in collaborating to improve water quality. This could be sharing information, focus groups, or farmer led initiatives. One example of information sharing is the Farm Network Demonstration project, with 69% of you saying you are interested in learning from it, and many of you provided key insights into what information is useful from the project.

We heard an interest in wanting more information about effective conservation and how to measure performance. Over 60% of you said you would like to see more monitoring of conservation practices to help you understand what works and to help with planning, with nearly 50% of you showing interest in trying monitoring on your land.

Over 80% of you said you care about the downstream impacts of your farm and value water quality for the community. The majority of farmers indicated that conservation efforts should be focused on highly erodible land, and 71% said you would consider working with wastewater treatment plants to reduce runoff issues.

Lastly, you said personal motivation and practicality are your main reasons to engage in conservation on your property. Stewardship of the land is important to everybody we talked to, and almost 70% of you said you would "consider doing conservation even if it costs you extra time and money." As one farmer said, "Yes, [it's] not all about the money, community matters, we have to live here. Incentives do give a boost to promote practices, to try it, then it may become an accepted practice."

Thank you to everyone who participated. Stay tuned for more opportunities to share your thoughts.

The survey was funded by the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management under the Coastal Zone Management Act.

Women's Workshop September 10th

Women land owners in the Fox-Wolf Watershed are invited to join a free day of fellowship, discussion and learning focused on water quality and soil health! This event is taking place on Thursday, September 10th at the Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance offices in Appleton.

The program, facilitated by Women, Food and Agriculture Network, is called *Women Caring for the Land* and is sponsored by: USDA NRCS, FWWA and Pheasants Forever.

For more information call (920)858-3982 or visit: www.fwwa.org/women-caring-for-the-land

Soil Health Field Day September 2nd

The WI NRCS Soil Health Team in partnership with the Winnebago County LWCD, UWEX, and Maple Ridge Farm are hosting a Soil Health Field Day on September 2nd from 9:30 am until noon. Learn about how healthy soil can increase yields, reduce inputs and expenses, and buffer the extremes of weather.

Field Day Address: 7702 County Road D, Omro (West of Winneconne, North of Omro)

For more information, please contact Pat Lake at the NRCS office in Oshkosh at 920-424-0329 ext. 111

Ready to Explore Cover Crops?

Benefits of Cover Crops

- Improve yields by enhancing soil health
- Cut fertilizer costs
- Conserve soil moisture
- Prevent soil loss
- Protect water quality
- Reduce herbicide use

Cover crops improve soil quality by reducing erosion, reducing soil crusting and compaction, reducing weeds, improving infiltration, and increasing soil organic matter.

Common Cover Crop Species:

For Forage

- **Winter Rye**
- **Triticale**

For Soil Health

- **Clover**
- **Barley**
- **Oats**
- **Cereal Rye**
- **Radish**

RED CLOVER
is an annual or multi-year legume that improves topsoil. It is easily overseeded into standing crops or frostseeded into grains in early spring.

Items to Consider When Choosing a Cover Crop Species:

- **Seeding Date:** Select species such as radish and oats have better establishment when planted early. Winter Rye and Triticale can be planted until late in the Fall.
- **Termination**: Some species winter kill, while others will need to be sprayed or tilled in Spring.
- **Manure Management:** Manure can be applied to cover crops by using a vertical tillage injector or by applying manure and planting cover crops after.
- **Seeding Mixes: There is an added benefit to soil health when two or more species** are mixed together. Common mixes are radishes and oats, clover and radish, and barley and oats.

The **Midwest Cover Crop Council** has a free "Cover Crop Selector" tool for producers to select which cover crop species will best meet goals and work with crop rotations. Find it online:
http://www.mccc.msu.edu/selectorINTRO.html

Establishing Cover Crops

Cover crops can be established through many different application methods. The most common are drilling in cover crops or broadcasting seed after harvesting crops in the fall. Aerial applications, no-till drills, and manure slurry applications also work very well. A newer concept to this area is interseeding cover crops into standing crops. This allows for earlier establishment and more cover crop growth in the fall. If extremely dry field conditions exist, incorporating seed for maximum establishment potential is highly recommended.


cornandsoybeandigest.com


midwestgrass.com

mccc.msu.edu/

For help with cover crop planning specific to your farm contact your agronomist, local Land Conservation Department or UW-Extension.

RETURN ADDRESS

Basin Buzz

For more information on topics in this newsletter or to Sign up online to receive the Basin Buzz via email visit: www.fwwa.org/buzz

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Inside the Buzz

Upcoming Events

- Demonstration Farms - June 16
- GLRI EQIP sign-up through NRCS deadline - July 17
- Soil Health Field Day - September 2
- Women Caring for the Land Workshop - September 10

Find more information on upcoming events online www.fwwa.org/Buzz