

# Wisconsin Farmland Protection Partnership



## Newsletter



JUNE 2024 TO JULY 2025



The Wisconsin Farmland Protection Partnership is proud to reflect on a year of growth, collaboration, and milestones that are shaping the future of Wisconsin agriculture. Together with our partners, we've made exciting strides in permanently protecting farmland, engaging communities, and advocating for the agricultural landscapes that sustain us all.



### First Easement Secured: A Historic Moment

2024 marked a major milestone: the successful **closing of our first agricultural conservation easement** through the partnership! **Tall Pines Conservancy** permanently protected **Cozy Nook Farm**, a sixth-generation dairy and vegetable operation in Waukesha County. Thanks to the **Oberhaus family's** dedication, this beloved farm will remain an agricultural asset for generations. Cozy Nook will continue welcoming the public with farm tours and educational events that keep the community connected to their food and farming heritage.

**Groundswell Conservancy** and the **Town of Dunn** have also worked diligently to protect two farms since the beginning of 2025.



▲ *The Oberhaus family and partners from Tall Pines Conservancy and American Farmland Trust celebrate the closing of the first partnership conservation easement at Cozy Nook Farm.*

We look forward to celebrating many more farmland protection wins in the coming year!

### Celebrating Success in Evansville

Last fall, we gathered in **Evansville, WI** for a joyful celebration of farmland protection. Hosted at the **Bjugstad Family Farm**—protected in partnership with the **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WI DNR)** and **Groundswell Conservancy**—the event brought community members together to honor the land's legacy. **Senator Mark Spreitzer** offered inspiring remarks on the importance of safeguarding Wisconsin's farmland for future generations.

▼ *Partners, policymakers, and farmland protection supporters gathered at the Bjugstad Farm, protected in partnership through Groundswell Conservancy, the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund, American Farmland Trust, and the Wisconsin Conservation Farmland Protection Partnership.*





## Telling the Story of the Land

With storytelling at the heart of our mission, we produced the first-ever **Farmland Protection Profile**, chronicling the **Monis Family's** farming journey and vision for the future. Available in both video and print, this moving profile is hosted on the [Farmland Information Center](#)—be sure to check it out!

► *Peder and Scooby Monis sit atop Hickory Hill at the Monis Family Farm. The farm was permanently protected through Tall Pines Conservancy and the Wisconsin Farmland Protection Partnership.*



## Hands-On Learning Across Wisconsin

Our fieldwork blossomed last year! In partnership with **Sauk County**, the **Savanna Institute**, the **Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection**, and the **Natural Resources Conservation Service**, we hosted **two field days** focused on soil

health, agroforestry, and innovative grazing systems. Our popular webinar series, **Protecting Local Farmland by Inch and Acre (Season 2)**, featured three sessions tackling soil health, landowner engagement, and NRCS funding strategies.

▼ *Erik Hagan guides attendees of the Wisconsin Farmland Protection Partnership's Silvopasture Field Day through new silvopasture and tree crop plantings at the Savanna Institute's North Farm.*





**Economic Return on Farmland Protection Investment**

**The State of Our State**

**\$1 invested in agricultural conservation easements generates \$1.90 in economic activity in Wisconsin.**

**Wisconsin's Farming Economy:**  
Agriculture is fundamental to Wisconsin's economy, generating \$10.3 billion in revenue and 353,900 jobs in 2012.

**Leading Our Best Land**  
57% of agricultural revenue will come from sales of the most productive and remote lands in the country.

**The Future of Farmland Loss:**  
Wisconsin is losing farmland faster with a projected loss of more than 85,200 acres or 4,600 jobs by 2050. This loss averages an acre every three to eight minutes out of the City of Milwaukee.

**The Impact**

A \$10-million investment in agricultural conservation generates around:

- Grow Wisconsin's Economy:** Find a total economic impact of \$27.9 million, from economic development to grants to recreation efforts, etc.
- Create Agricultural Jobs:** Create 162 jobs and generate \$7.4 million in labor revenue.
- Keep Farmland Farmland:** Permanently protect 8,400 acres of farmland across 27 farms.
- Improve rural infrastructure:** Invest in rural infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and water systems.
- Improve the environment:** Invest in environmental conservation, such as wetlands, forests, and water quality.
- Improve the quality of life:** Invest in quality of life, such as parks, trails, and recreation.
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In 2024, members of the Partnership contributed significant time, expertise, and financial resources to realizing project goals. Partners contributed \$2.7 million in financial assistance for easement acquisition and land management activities. This monumental contribution was leveraged by \$489,000 in technical assistance towards activities such as supporting outreach and education for farmland protection and soil health.



▲ *Sheep graze in the shade of a silvopasture planting at Savanna Institute's North Farm in Spring Green.*

## Demonstration Farm: Conservation in Practice

The Savanna Institute established a demonstration farm at South Farm in Spring Green, showcasing silvopasture and forage establishment. The site will serve as an educational touchpoint for soil health practices and

implementation. Savanna Institute is also conducting soil health research at the site to explore metrics of soil function before and after implementation. Stay tuned for more!

- To date, partner efforts have:

- Permanently protected **579** acres of Wisconsin farmland forever.
- Created a statewide net economic impact of **\$10,825,681**.
- Engaged **2,625** individuals in farmland protection education and outreach.
- Helped implement **208.5** acres of cover crops and silvopasture practices.



▲ Fall cover crops following corn harvest to maintain continuous living roots.

## Land Management on the Landscape

Kyle Zwieg of Zwieg's Maple Acres in Ixonia, Wisconsin and received RCPP land management cost-share for cover crop implementation. The funding allowed Zwieg to plant 180 acres of cover crops following the wheat, soybean, and corn harvests. Zwieg shared on the significance of implementing cover crops as a part of his land



management strategy, "High quality cover crops benefit the land and our crop production immensely but require a significant amount of money to attempt to establish. RCPP money helps offset risk with weather and other factors to help make it possible for cover cropping to be adopted on a large number of acres."

## What's Underway in 2025

Looking at the progress already underway in 2025, the partnership is excited to build on this year's momentum with more easement closings, outreach, and education. Here's what's on the horizon:

- Two **easements** have already closed in early 2025, with six more under obligation and expected to close by year-end.
- Outreach efforts for **land management cost-share** reached 300 eligible landowners within the partnership geography.
- We're planning another **Farmland Protection Profile**, diving deeper into the values and long-term planning that make conservation easements successful.
- We are hosting two **Dig into Soil Health Field Days** in partnership with Tall Pines Conservancy and Groundswell Conservancy.
- Four new **webinars** will explore farmland protection as a tool for land access, broadening our impact and reach.



## THANK YOU!

We extend heartfelt thanks to our partners, supporters, and the farmers who steward Wisconsin's agricultural legacy. Your work and dedication continue to inspire a future where farmland is protected, communities are engaged, and agriculture thrives. Here's to another impactful year ahead!



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