

Columbia County Ag Reporter

January/February 2021



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
COLUMBIA COUNTY

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Agricultural newsletter for Columbia
County landowners and residents

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COLUMBIA
COUNTY

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Ag Reporter Calendar of Events

January

- 1 New Year's Day, Columbia County Offices Closed
- 5 Grain Marketing Meeting—7:30 am
- 7 UW Agronomy Update Meeting
- 11-14 WI Agribusiness Virtual Classic meetings
- 14 Dairy & Livestock marketing Meeting—1 pm
- 18 Martin Luther King Day
- 19 Grain marketing Meeting—7:30 am
- 25 Nutrient Management Plan Assistance
- 27 Nutrient Management Plan Assistance
- 28 Dairy & Livestock Marketing Meeting—1 pm



February

- 2 Grain Marketing Meeting – 7:30 am
- 4 Beginning Nutrient Management Class Assistance
- 11 Beginning Nutrient Management Class Assistance
- 11 Cover Crop Conference
- 11 Dairy and Livestock Marketing Meeting – 1:00 pm
- 16 Grain Marketing Meeting – 7:30 am
- 25 Dairy & Livestock Marketing Meeting – 1:00 pm

The Columbia County **Ag Calendar and Deadlines** webpage is
located at

<http://columbia.uwex.edu/ag-calendar-and-deadlines/>.

Pesticide Applicator Testing 2021

And the changes from DATCP keep coming. As of this printing, farmers whose Private Certifications expire after January 30, 2020 will have their certifications extended until December 31, 2021. You need to do nothing. You will need to recertify in 2022, by passing a Private Applicators Exam.

For those farmers wishing to become Private Applicators in 2021, they have several options.

1. Purchase a manual, take the on-line training, take the on-line test, pass with 50% correct, and get a 1-year temporary certification. They will need to recertify in 2022 by taking an in-person test, to get the 5-year certification.
2. Purchase a manual, take the on-line training, schedule an in-person test at a County Extension office, pass with 50% correct, and receive a 5-year certification.
3. Purchase a manual, do self-study, schedule an in-person test at a County Extension office, pass with 70% correct, and receive a 5-year certification.

For on-line training, go to the PAT Store:

<https://www.patstore.wisc.edu/>, in the left hand column choose "General Farming 100/101 and follow the directions.

Contact George, at the Columbia County Extension office with your questions. 608-742-9682 or george.koepp@wisc.edu.

UW Extension 2021 Hops Conference

The 2021 UW-Extension Hops Conference will be held virtually on Saturday, February 27. Contact George to get on the list to receive registration information if you have not previously attended one of our gatherings. Details are being worked out at this time and will be shared as soon as they are available.

Typically, we focus on hops varieties, nutrient requirements, diseases, insects, harvesting and other important topics to hop growers. We hope to share data from our last three years of Nitrogen Rate studies that have been collected from three locations across Wisconsin.

2021 Wisconsin Agribusiness Virtual Classic

Registration for the 2021 Wisconsin Agribusiness Virtual Classic (January 11-14, 2021) is officially open. There are over 25 CCA credits available, and with only one session running at a time, attendees can earn all of them! Features this year include:

- * An interactive trade show that is accessible 24/7 all four days of the Classic.
- * Forty-five educational breakout session topics covering areas of interest for everyone.
- * An outstanding opening general session with great keynote presentations.
- * The same great silent auction attendees have come to love, with all proceeds going to the WABA Scholarship Program.
- * Sponsor videos, awards program, scholarship recipient recognition, WABA Annual Membership Meeting and so much more!

You won't want to miss the action! Go to agclassic.org for full event details and to register for the event.

ARC/PLC Recommendations from UW-Extension

You have until March 15 to sign up for the ARC/PLC choices for the 2021 crop year, but that doesn't mean that you have to wait that long to make your selections. FSA would appreciate that you take care of this sooner rather than later.

It appears that the recommendations from UW-Madison are pretty similar over the entire state of Wisconsin for the 2021 crop year. Our recommendations are as follows:

Corn – PLC
Soybeans – County ARC (ARC-CO)
Wheat – PLC
Oats – County ARC (ARC-CO)
Sorghum – PLC
Barley – PLC
Sunflower Seeds – PLC

For more details you can check out this website and watch the video presentation from Paul Mitchell.

<https://aae.wisc.edu/pdmitchell/extension/arc-plc-signup/>

2021 Virtual Nutrient Management Training for Farmers

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Nutrient and Pest Management Program (University of Wisconsin-Madison) is offering a virtual training for farmers interested in writing their own nutrient management plans. This training will provide both the basics of nutrient management and an introduction to SnapPlus.

The same training will be offered from 10:00 am to 2:30 pm on five different dates:

January 5	February 3
January 7	February 16
	March 1

Attending one of these trainings will count in Columbia County to meet your four year update training requirement, so that you may continue to write your own Nutrient Management Plan.

The topics include:

Why nutrient management?	Soil sampling
Soil test interpretation	Soil pH and liming
Manure and legume crediting	Nitrogen management
Phosphorus management	Potassium management
Manure application precautions	Soil conservation (T,PI, SCI)

They are also offering assistance during On-line Q & A dates:

January 19	February 17
January 21	March 2

To register for one of the training dates follow this link:
<https://go.wisc.edu/9ozj41>

For individual assistance with your Columbia County Nutrient Management plan, contact Sam Peterson, in the Land and Water Conservation office, 608-742-9676, samuel.peterson@co.columbia.wi.us or George Koepp in the Extension Office, 608-742-9682, george.koepp@wisc.edu. We have set aside time on January 25th and 27th to assist farmers with their Nutrient Management Plan Updates. We can schedule time to help you over the phone, via Zoom, or a one-one one consultation in our conference rooms. Contact Sam or George to make an appointment. We may have some other individual times available as well.

Farmers with poor internet connections or lack computer connections should contact Sam Peterson to discuss alternative options. If possible, be sure to bring your laptop or last SnapPlus update on a flashdrive along with you to the meeting.

Farmers who wish to learn how to write their own Nutrient Management Plans should also contact Sam or George to make an appointment to download SnapPlus on their computers. They can then assist you with learning the SnapPlus program and help you achieve success. Again, farmers with poor internet connections or lack computer connections should contact Sam Peterson to discuss alternative options.

Heart of the Farm – Online Coffee Chats

Fall 2020/Winter 2021

Register at: <https://tinyurl.com/yym8Lmq4>

Previous Coffee Chats and recordings listed below.

Upcoming Coffee Chats:

- January 11th, 2021

Tax Preparation Issues and Concerns

Speaker: Gary Sipiorski, Owner
Gary Sipiorski Consulting, LLC

During this session, Gary Sipiorski, will be speaking on Tax Preparation Issues and Concerns. As we all know, the month of January often brings thoughts of taxes and tax preparation. Gary will focus on issues specific to farm tax returns so those listening may gain a better understanding of what to think about regarding farm tax preparation and be able to ask better questions with their tax advisor.



Sign up to receive the electronic newsletters

Keep up to date by signing up for the Columbia County Extension Ag Reporter via email. George sends out an electronic Ag Reporter Snapshot update every Friday. By subscribing to that you will get the most current Ag updates and information as soon as it becomes available. You can be added to this list by contacting Sarah Millard in the Extension Office and asking her to add your email address to the electronic mailing list. Call or email Sarah at 608-742-9688 or sarah.millard@wisc.edu.



2021 Agronomy Update Meetings

The 2021 Agronomy Update Meetings will be virtual this year due to COVID-19. The meetings will present the latest information on hybrid/variety performance, an analysis and discussion of last year's growing season, and updated recommendations for field crop production. CEUs will be offered in Crop Management for Certified Crop Advisers. There is no charge for this event, but registration is required. There are two sessions to choose from, both sessions will present the same information. Please choose the one that best fits your schedule.

Presentations:

Joe Lauer, UW-Madison Corn Agronomist

- 2020 weather impact on corn performance
- What has 20-yr's of strip-tillage research shown us for corn production?
- The impact of environment on corn silage yield and quality

Shawn Conley, UW-Madison Soybean and Small Grain Agronomist

- Agronomically optimal soybean seeding rates and associated risk across North America
- Does precision planting matter in soybean?
- Wheat grain and straw yield, grain quality, and disease benefits associated with increased management intensity

Matt Akins, UW Assistant Scientist & Dairy Extension Specialist and Kevin Jarek, UW Crops and Soils Agent

- Wisconsin's Forage Landscape - What Do the Trends Tell Us and What Does This Mean to Farmers?"

Meetings will be held on:

- **Tuesday, January 5 9:00 am to 11:50 am**
Moderator: Bill Halfman, Monroe County, UW Agriculture Agent
- **Thursday, January 7 1:00 pm to 3:50 pm**
Moderator: Josh Kamps, Lafayette County, UW Agriculture Agent

Register by January 3, 2021.

Register at <https://go.wisc.edu/f44ix5>



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Dairy Situation and Outlook

Bob Cropp, Professor Emeritus, UW-Madison

Milk prices fell at the end of the year and we can expect lower prices going into next year. In November, the Class III price set a record high for the month at \$23.34. The Class III price for December will fall by more than \$7 to below \$16. But still the Class III price will average about \$18.25 this year compared to \$16.96 last year. Relatively strong milk production, the end of the Farm to Family Food Box cheese purchases and some further restrictions on restaurant and bars have brought down cheese prices. Cheese prices normally do decline after purchases for the holiday season comes to an end. But prices this year fell much more than normal. On the CME 40-pound cheddar blocks were \$2.7825 per pound the end of October. Prices started falling early November then rather sharply by the middle of November reaching just \$1.66 the end of November. Prices have moved up and down a little in December and have averaged \$1.62 per pound thus far for the month. The story is similar for cheddar barrels. Barrels were \$2.53 per pound the end of October but just \$1.415 the end of November and have averaged \$1.43 thus far for December. The Class III price has received some strength from higher dry whey prices but not nearly enough to offset lower cheese prices. Dry whey averaged \$0.4257 per pound in November and \$0.46 thus far for the month of December.

There are a lot of unknowns that can impact milk prices next year. Will there be government purchases of cheese and other dairy products like the Farm to Families Food Box program we saw this year that pushed cheese prices and the Class III price much higher? The vaccine for COVID-19 is now coming available. It will take some time before all who want the vaccine will get the vaccine. But by the second half of next year the virus should be under much better control allowing for restaurants and bars to more fully open, schools and colleges to return to in-classroom instruction, sporting events, conferences etc. returning to more normal all of which should improve sales of dairy product for the second half of the year. The level of milk production and dairy exports will be important factors determining the level of milk prices. There will be increased cheese production capability next year with the nation's largest cheese plant in Michigan just starting up. Increased cheese production will put downward pressure on milk prices.

Milk production continues to run well above year ago levels. November milk production was 3.0% higher than a year ago. This follows the previous two months with increases of 2.3% each. This is far too much milk for the market to handle



Dairy Situation and Outlook (con't)

without lower milk prices. Dairy herd expansion which started in July continues with another 12,000 cows added October to November. There were 62,000 more cows in November than a year ago, an increase of 0.7%. On top of this increases in milk per cow is extraordinarily strong with November up 2.3%. November increases in milk production for the top 5 producing states was: California 2.6%, Wisconsin 2.7%, Idaho 2.0%, New York 2.1%, and Texas 9.8%. Other leading increase in November milk production were South Dakota 13.4%, Indiana 10.9%, Colorado 7.1%, Kansas 6.0%, Ohio 4.8%, Minnesota 3.9%, Michigan 3.6%, and New Mexico 2.5%. Major declines in milk production were Florida 4.3%, Vermont 3.3%, and Arizona 2.1%.

Dairy exports have been a very positive factor this year. The volume of October exports was up 14% from a year ago, a record for the month of October and the 14th straight month of year-over-year gains. The increase was led by whey product exports to China up 328% from a year ago and a 20% increase in nonfat dry milk/skim milk powder exports to Southeast Asia. October compared to a year ago showed nonfat dry milk/skim milk powder exports up 8.6%, whey products up 64%, and cheese down 12.8%. If the pace of exports holds, 2020 will be a record year in exports. Exports for next year could still be favorable. U.S. price of cheese, nonfat dry milk/skim milk powder, butter and dry whey are all price competitive with Western Europe and Oceania. However not only is milk production increasing in the U.S. it is increasing in other major exporters.

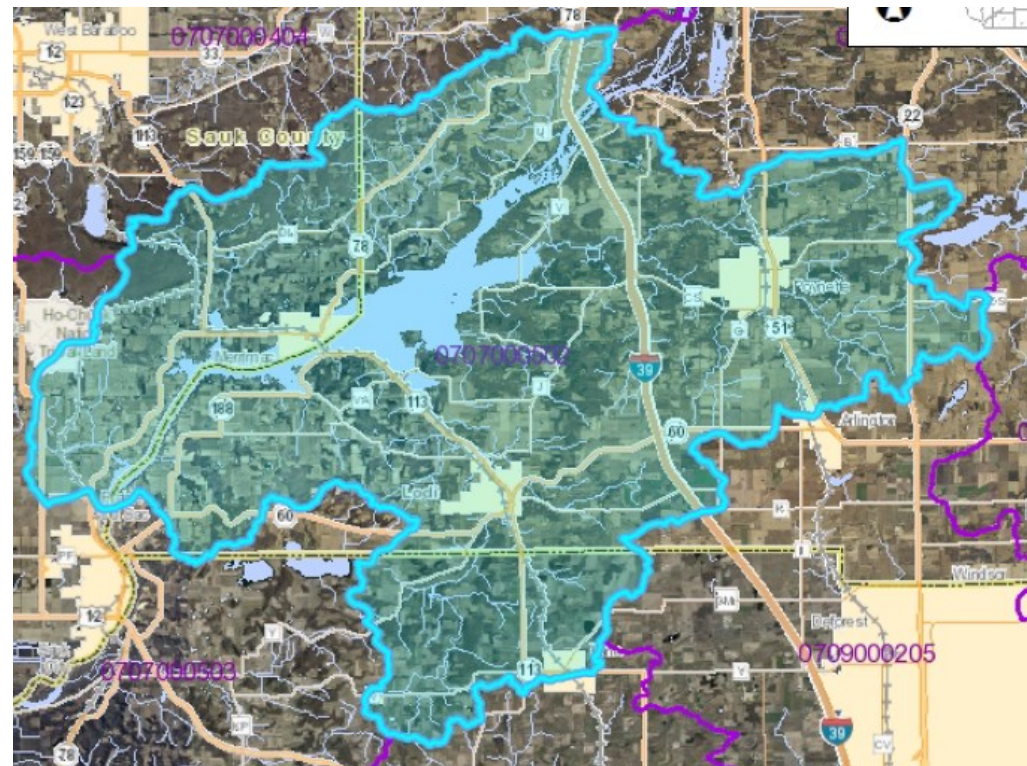
Milk prices could be much less volatile next year. But without some continuation of a Farm to Families Food Box program for the first half of next year and/or some base type program implement by dairy cooperatives to slow milk production we could see the Class III price below \$16 for the first quarter of next year. Class III prices could move into the \$16's by second quarter and the \$17's for the last half of the year as things return more to normal. Class III futures currently show a pricing pattern like this. But, unless the current rate of increases in milk production slows down these prices could be on the high side. And it will take time for things to return to normal. A lot of restaurants went out of business. Consumers may be slow in returning to restaurants. There is no certainty that milk prices will turn out as just described. The bottom line is much uncertainty exists for milk prices next year. USDA's latest price forecast has Class III averaging just \$15.60 next year and Class IV averaging \$13.60.



Lake Wisconsin Farmer Led Watershed Council

Watch for more details coming out early in 2021. A group of farmers from the Lodi area have organized a Farmer Led Watershed Council. This group will be receiving some matching funds from DATCP to assist livestock farmers explore opportunities to use manure more efficiently, to incorporate cover crops on their farms, and to share success stories of surface and groundwater quality improvement efforts with residents around Lake Wisconsin.

To become involved with this group contact Todd Rietmann or Sam Peterson from the Land and Water Conservation Department or George Koepp at UW-Extension to have your name added to the list of farmers interested in participating in these efforts. The Watershed Council is looking forward to holding several field day manure application demonstrations along with a Cover Crop Plot review on the Ron Schoepp Farm. As we get Covid 19 under control, they will be organizing these events in late Spring and early Summer 2021.





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• UW-Madison Division of Extension •
Adams, Columbia, Dodge,
Green Lake, Juneau, and Sauk Counties
present

Marketing with Confidence

Join via
phone or
computer

Farming today is challenging in many ways. Most of us expect the typical challenges a season can bring, pest pressure, wild weather, and machinery breakdowns. But today more than ever a farmer needs to be able to tackle the challenge of the marketplace. Starting in January, the UW-Madison Division of Extension will be putting on one half an hour webinar a week taking you through the basics of finding your cost of production, understanding your cash flow, and then using this foundational information to make the important decisions about how and when to sell your grains and livestock.

This program series will be a bi-weekly half hour teaching sessions via Zoom with time for questions afterwards. We will have two tracks one focused on grain and the other on livestock. The two tracks will be on opposite weeks. The schedule will be as follows:


Grain	Dairy & Livestock
<p>Tuesdays from 7:30 to 8:00 am With time for questions following. January 5th & 19th February 2nd & 16th March 2nd & 16th To register go to: https://go.wisc.edu/9mclkr</p>	<p>Thursdays from 1:00 to 1:30 pm With time for questions following. January 14th & 28th February 11th & 25th March 11th & 25th To register go to : https://go.wisc.edu/64a5js</p>

For any questions on this upcoming program series please reach out to Alana Voss, Extension Juneau & Sauk County Educator at alana.voss@wisc.edu or 608-477-3945.

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Winter Grazing Meeting

Due to COVID-19 we will not be holding an in-person winter grazing meeting. There are several opportunities to participate in on-line grazing webinars. Some of these are held during the day & several are held during the evening. Be sure to contact Sarah Millard, sarah.millard@wisc.edu to add your email address to the Friday “Ag Reporter Snapshot”. Links are added to this electronic newsletter that will help you to join grazing meetings and conferences from the comfort of your home or office.



Conservation Professional
Training Program

LEARN THE FUNDAMENTALS OF SOIL HEALTH



Learn to improve your soil and water management, implement cover crops and build soil health through four self-paced online soil health courses for farmers and agricultural professionals:

- Introduction to Soil Health
- Cover Crops and Soil Health
- Soil Water Management
- Soil Health Management Systems

These self-paced, online courses are available at no charge, and can be taken stand-alone or in conjunction with the in-field soil health training in Wisconsin's 9 Key Element watersheds.

To register or for more information, contact Kevin Erb at kevin.erb@wisc.edu or 920-391-4652.

CCA CEUs may be self reported for the courses. Participants farming in or adjacent to participating 9-key element watersheds are eligible to participate in field training and receive a free soil health testing kit.



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Photo by NRCS/SWCS photo by Lynn Betts



LEARN THE FUNDAMENTALS OF SOIL HEALTH (Con't)

ONLINE SOIL HEALTH COURSES:

INTRODUCTION TO SOIL HEALTH

The online Introduction to Soil Health course provides an overview of the importance of soil health to crop production and dives into the three primary characteristics of soil - physical, chemical and biological. Healthy soils not only improve resistance to drought and excess moisture, they can also reduce nutrient and soil losses. This course also demonstrates easy-to-use field tests to identify current soil conditions and highlights the common practices that a farmer may choose to implement in order to improve soil health.

COVER CROPS AND SOIL HEALTH

The Cover Crops and Soil Health course discusses cover crops, the benefits of using cover crops to improve soil health, common barriers to utilizing cover crops and potential alternatives. The course explains proper selection, establishment, management and termination of cover crops in diverse production systems and recommends site specific cover crops conducive with producer goals and farming systems.

SOIL WATER MANAGEMENT

Building on the basics from the Introduction to Soil Health course, Soil Water Management delves deeper into the topics of soil-water and soil moisture management. Learners gain an understanding of soil-water properties related to water quality and quantity, benefits of improving water infiltration and soil moisture holding capacity, common challenges to adoption of practices that improve soil-water balance and how to overcome those challenges. Real-farm examples are used to reinforce course concepts.

SOIL HEALTH MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Soil Health Management Systems focuses on the challenge of implementing soil health practices in a farming system. The course guides participants through the process of selecting appropriate soil health management practices to meet farm-specific management requirements and goals. Course materials explore the key agronomic management principles to improve soil health, including: reduced tillage, cover crops, crop rotations and mulching, with an emphasis on understanding the benefits and challenges of implementing various soil health management practices within diverse agricultural production systems.

To register or for more information, contact Kevin Erb at kevin.erb@wisc.edu or 920-391-4652.

This project is funded in part by a grant from the WI DNR to improve water quality in 9-Key Element Watersheds. University of Wisconsin, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin counties cooperating. An EEO/AA employer, University of Wisconsin Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title VI, Title IX, and American with Disabilities (ADA) requirements. Contact Kevin Erb at 920-391-4652 for more information on this program.



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COLUMBIA COUNTY



COLUMBIA
COUNTY

By Kurt Calkins, Director of Columbia County
Land & Water Conservation

Land & Water Conservation Department Updates

Land & Water Conservation Department Updates & Program Information

Tree Sales Program 2020-2021-Reserve ASAP! Just a reminder we are processing orders for the 2020-2021 year. We have sold out of a couple species already, so act fast! We added Jack Pine, Butternut, Shagbark Hickory trees to the form this year, as well as Dolgo Crabapple, Elderberry and Red Bud for shrubs/small trees. We are also offering 4 AND 5 foot tree tubes. If you wish to receive an order form or place an order, please contact us or go online at: <http://www.co.columbia.wi.us/columbiacounty/lwcd/TreeProgram>. If you are NOT on the annual mailing list, feel free to contact us to be added. Reminder all trees are sold in bundles of 25 of the same species. Tree pick-up day is scheduled for Thursday, April 22, 2021. Thank you for your continued support in this program. If you have questions, please call 608-742-9670.

Cost-Share & Technical Assistance Available: As usual the LWCD has several different sources of cost-share funds to assist landowners in addressing a wide range of resource needs on their land. We have cost-share assistance available through both DATCP and DNR. We have several sources of money that are specific to geographical locations in the County. Available funds can be used for both hard practices and soft practices such as Nutrient Management Planning. Please contact the LWCD if you have questions we would be glad to meet on site and discuss a potential project.

Poster & Speaking Contests 2021: The Youth Poster & Speaking Contests are coming up for 2021 – January 18, 2021 and January 25, 2021. The poster theme this year is Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities. The winners at the local contest then advance to the Regional contest and then to the State Contest March 2021. Speeches can be done on any conservation-related subject. This is open to any students in the Columbia County area. This year all contests will be done virtually. Posters submitted via photos and speaking done virtually. If anyone is interested in participating in these contests, please contact our office for forms and deadlines to participate. There are 3 age divisions for speakers, starting at 5th grade through 12th.

Reminder For 2020 Farmland Preservation Tax Credits To Be

Claimed: To file your 2020 Farmland Preservation Tax Credit you only need your unique Certificate number when filing your taxes. If you received this number last year on your Certificate of Compliance, it would still be applicable to your land, unless you have removed or added any land which

Land & Water Conservation Department Updates

Land & Water Conservation Department Updates & Program Information (Con't)

would change the description on your previous Certificate of Compliance. That would require you to obtain a new certificate, obtainable with a new certificate fee of \$25.00. If you continue to meet eligibility requirements including meeting all applicable conservation standards

each year and submitting your postcard due to our office every July 15th, that certificate number will continue to allow you to use for filling. The date on the bottom of the certificates refers to the date your certification started, you do **NOT** need a new Certificate of Compliance each year. If you have any questions, please contact our office. Certificate of Compliance Updates - please remember when parcels are sold, purchased, merged, split or re-titled the Farmland Preservation Certificate of Compliance must be updated in order to claim the credit for the tax season of the same year.

Registering for the Farmland Preservation Program:

1. You must be the landowner. You do not need to be the farm operator and can rent out your land to a producer.
2. You must be a Wisconsin resident.
3. Your land must have produced \$6,000 in gross farm revenue in the past year, or \$18,000 in the past 3 years. Rent is not included.
4. Your farm must meet state soil and water conservation standards. Obtain a certificate of compliance from the Columbia County Land and Water Conservation Department.

Tax Credits:

-\$5/acre if your land is covered by a farmland preservation agreement and is in an Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA).

-\$7.50/acre if you own land in a certified farmland preservation zoning district.

-\$10/acre if your land is covered by a farmland preservation agreement and is in an AEA and a farmland preservation zoning district.

Rules may be different for agreements signed prior to July 1, 2009.

If you have any questions regarding current Farmland Preservation Certificate of Compliances or wish to inquiry about the possibility of registering for the Farmland Preservation Program please contact Sam Peterson or Chris Arnold at the Columbia County Land and Water Conservation Department at 608-742-9670.

USDA Seeks Public Input on Guidance Defining Nonindustrial Private Forest Land Eligibility

As of December 15, 2020, The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is seeking public input on Nonindustrial Private Forest Land (NIPF) related to technical and financial assistance available through conservation programs of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

"We want to ensure we continue program consistency across USDA agencies with how we are defining nonindustrial private forest lands," said Angela Biggs, NRCS State Conservationist in Wisconsin. "It's important that our conservation assistance reach all eligible lands in accordance with proper criteria to ensure we enroll eligible lands that hold meaningful opportunities."

NRCS welcomes input from stakeholders across the nation, including those in Wisconsin, to assist with the development of guidance about how to identify NIPF for program enrollment purposes. NRCS must ensure that such guidance is consistent with how other USDA agencies identify NIPF under identical or similar programmatic frameworks. This request for input is to improve transparency about how NRCS makes land eligibility determinations with respect to forest lands.

Nonindustrial private forest land criteria will be adopted after the close of the 30-day period and after consideration of all comments.

Submitting Comments

NRCS invites input on this technical guidance through January 19, 2021. Electronic comments must be submitted through [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) under Docket ID NRCS-2020-0009. All written comments received will be publicly available on [http://www.regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov).

Conservation Stewardship Program

It's anticipated that the next deadline for [Conservation Stewardship Program](#) (CSP) applications to be considered for funding in fiscal year (FY) 2021 will be announced soon. The 2018 Farm Bill made several changes to this critical conservation program, which helps agricultural producers take the conservation activities on their farm or ranch to the next level.

**Conservation
Stewardship Program**
Natural Resources Conservation Service



Conservation Stewardship Program (Con't)

"CSP continues to be a very effective tool for private landowners working to achieve their conservation and management goals," said Angela Biggs, NRCS state conservationist in Wisconsin. "It is the largest conservation program in the United States with more than 70 million acres of productive agricultural and forest land enrolled."

Changes in the 2018 Farm Bill authorize NRCS to accept new CSP enrollments from now until 2023 and makes some improvements to the program. These updates include:

- * NRCS now enrolls eligible, high-ranking applications based on dollars rather than acres.
- * Higher payment rates are now available under the 2018 Farm Bill for certain conservation activities, including cover crops and resource conserving crop rotations.
- * Provides specific support for organic and for transitioning to organic production activities.

While applications are accepted throughout the year, interested producers should submit applications to their local NRCS office by the upcoming deadline to ensure their applications are considered for 2021 funding.

About the Program

CSP is offered in Wisconsin through continuous signups. The program provides many benefits including increased crop yields, decreased inputs, wildlife habitat improvements and increased resilience to weather extremes. CSP is for working lands including cropland, pastureland, rangeland, nonindustrial private forest land and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of a tribe.

For additional information about CSP, contact your local service center. USDA Service Centers are open for business by phone appointment only and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone, and using online tools whenever possible.

Online services are available to customers with an eAuth account, which provides access to the farmers.gov portal where producers can view USDA farm loan information and payments and view and track certain USDA program applications and payments.



Conservation Stewardship Program (Con't)

An eAuthentication account is a way for you to interact with USDA websites online. It gives you the ability to identify yourself to the USDA via your User ID and password. It permits you to access a wide range of USDA applications across the many USDA agencies and their services. Customers who do not already have an eAuth account can enroll at farmers.gov/sign-in.

All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with NRCS, Farm Service Agency, or any other Service Center agency are required to [call their Service Center](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus) to schedule a phone appointment. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

USDA Offers Assistance to Protect Agricultural Lands and Grasslands

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) encourages people and groups wanting to protect agricultural lands and grasslands to consider enrolling their property into conservation easements. The 2018 Farm Bill has provided USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) with technical and financial assistance to help private landowners, tribes, land trusts, and other groups protect these valuable lands.

The [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/acep) (ACEP) umbrella focuses on restoring and protecting wetlands as well as conserving productive agricultural lands and grasslands. Specifically, the Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) component provides landowners compensation for enrolling their land in a permanent easement. "Working with our conservation partners is essential to protecting agricultural land across Wisconsin," said Angela Biggs, NRCS State Conservationist in Wisconsin. "The purpose of ACEP-ALE is to protect the agricultural use and future viability and related conservation values by preventing the conversion of these lands to other non-ag related uses." To date, Wisconsin NRCS with our partners, have protected over 14,000 acres on over 100 parcels of privately-owned land.

Applications for ACEP are taken on a continuous basis, and they are ranked and considered for funding one time a year. The deadline for the Agricultural Land Easements is anticipated to be announced soon for 2021 funding consideration.



USDA Offers Assistance to Protect Agricultural Lands and Grasslands (Con't)

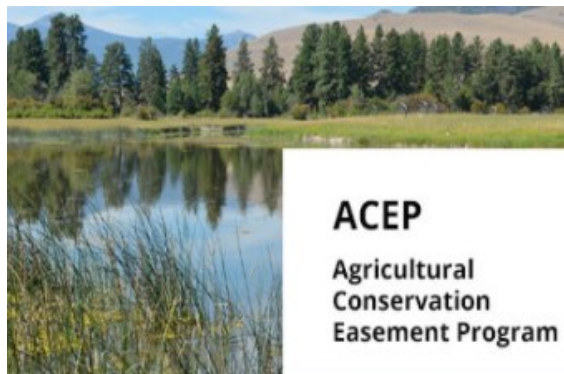
Agricultural Land Easements

Through ACEP-ALE, NRCS provides funds to conservation partners to purchase conservation easements on private working lands. This program helps keep working lands working, especially in areas experiencing development pressure.

Partners include state or local agencies and non-profit entities. Landowners continue to own their property but voluntarily enter into a legal agreement with a cooperating entity to purchase an easement. The cooperating entity applies for matching funds from NRCS for the purchase of an easement from the landowner, permanently protecting its agricultural use and conservation values. Landowners do not apply directly to NRCS for funding under this program.

All ALE easements are permanent. Eligible lands include privately owned cropland, rangeland, grassland, pastureland, and forestlands.

More information on [ACEP-ALE](#) can be found on the Wisconsin NRCS homepage under the Programs tab under the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program highlight: www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov



Helping People Help the Land

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**Conservation
Stewardship Program**
Natural Resources Conservation Service



News Release

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Washington, DC 20250

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USDA to Open Signup for the Conservation Reserve Program and CRP Grasslands in Early 2021

Madison, Wisconsin, Nov. 12, 2020 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced the 2021 signup periods for general Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and CRP Grasslands offers. General signup for CRP will be open from January 4, 2021 to February 12, 2021; signup for CRP Grasslands runs from March 15, 2021 to April 23, 2021. Both programs are competitive and provide annual rental payments for land devoted to conservation purposes.

“The Conservation Reserve Program and the many focused programs that come under it, like CRP Grasslands, are some of our most critical tools we have to help producers better manage their operations while conserving natural resources,” said State Executive Director, Sandy Chalmers. “As one of our nation’s largest conservation endeavors, CRP has proven to protect our Nation’s valuable resources; and next year’s signup gives our farmers and ranchers an opportunity to enroll in CRP for the first time or continue their participation for another term.

Enrollment Options

CRP—General Signup

Through [CRP](#), farmers and ranchers establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland. Farmers and ranchers who participate in CRP help provide numerous benefits to the nation’s environment and economy. CRP general signup is held annually. The competitive general signup includes increased opportunities for enrollment of wildlife habitat through the [State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement \(SAFE\)](#) initiative.

Grasslands Signup

[CRP Grasslands](#) helps landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland, and pastureland and certain other lands while maintaining the areas as grazing lands. Protecting grasslands contributes positively to the economy of many regions, provides biodiversity of plant and animal populations and improves environmental quality. A separate CRP Grasslands signup is offered each year following general signup.

USDA to Open Signup for the Conservation Reserve Program and CRP Grasslands in Early 2021 (Con't)

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the United States. It was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing many conservation and economic benefits. The program marks its 35-year anniversary this December. Program successes include:

- ◆ Preventing more than 9 billion tons of soil from eroding, which is enough soil to fill 600 million dump trucks;
- ◆ Reducing nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to annually tilled cropland by 95 and 85 percent, respectively;
- ◆ Sequestering an annual average of 49 million tons of greenhouse gases, equal to taking 9 million cars off the road;
- ◆ Creating more than 3 million acres of restored wetlands while protecting more than 175,000 stream miles with riparian forest and grass buffers, which is enough to go around the world seven times; and
- ◆ Benefiting bees and other pollinators and increasing populations of ducks, pheasants, turkey, bobwhite quail, prairie chickens, grasshopper sparrows, and many other birds.

The successes of CRP contribute to USDA's [Agriculture Innovation Agenda](#) and its goal of reducing the environmental footprint of U.S. agriculture by half by 2050. Earlier this year, Secretary Perdue announced the department-wide initiative to align resources, programs, and research to position American agriculture to better meet future global demands.

For more information on CRP, visit fsa.usda.gov or contact your [local FSA county office](#).

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United States Department of Agriculture

2021 Corn/Soy Expo Postponed

The year 2020 has seen professionals in all industries adapt to changing circumstances and that rings true for farmers across the Midwest. As Wisconsin farmers continue to pivot and hurdle unexpected challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Wisconsin Soybean Association (WSA), Wisconsin Corn Growers Association (WCGA), and Wisconsin Pork Association (WPA) have come together to offer continued education opportunities in 2021 in lieu of the postponement of the annual Corn-Soy Expo.

In the coming months, more information will become available outlining a number of virtual learning sessions to benefit farmers. These online workshops will be led by industry experts and top researchers to provide insight into new practices and advancements made in the field. Many of these workshops will offer CCA credit opportunities for participants. Registration for these virtual sessions will be free of charge but require online registration in order to hold a spot. Additional information regarding the RSVP process will become available in the coming months.

The 2022 Corn-Soy Expo will take place as planned and will come back with excellent opportunities for farmers across the Midwest.

2021 WI Cover Crop Conference

February 10-11, 2021 – Zoom Virtual Format

Event Registration is at: <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/covercrop/>

This year's Wisconsin Cover Crop Conference may look a little different, but we promise to still bring you the valuable content you have come to expect from this conference.

Topics include moving forward through adversity, cover crops for weed management, growing small grains, and the economic and environmental benefits of rotational grazing.

Last year's conference was a huge success with 400 attendees – while we can't get together in-person, we hope to reach as many people with this year's content.

Want more soil health? Join us for a Meet & Greet with

Barry Fisher, Blake Vince & Rick Clark on Wednesday Night!

Columbia County Extension
Office Hours - 8:00 am to 4:30 pm

Sarah Millard, Administrative Assistant, is in the office Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm, her normal working hours. Guidance from UW-Madison is allowing Extension Educators to slowly return to the office on a limited basis. We must continue social distancing, wear facemasks when meeting the public and may not have more than two Educators in the office at a time. Columbia County Extension Educators are taking turns coming to the office to keep the office open until 4:30 pm to serve our county residents. At other times we continue to work remotely using appropriate technology.

George is able to make farm visits. He needs to complete a programming request form and obtain permission from the Area Extension Director. This takes a couple of days to complete so please understand and be patient. We are doing our best to keep our clients, the public, and our Educators safe from Covid 19. It will take awhile to get back to normal, or to whatever the new normal might be.

Columbia County Extension is still only a phone call or email away. That has not changed. We are still able to provide up to date, University research based answers and advice in a timely manner.

STAFF DIRECTORY

UW-Extension Columbia County Agriculture Staff

George Koepp, Agriculture Agent.....(608) 742-9682
george.koepp@wisc.edu

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Web Site: <https://columbia.extension.wisc.edu/>

An EEO/AA employer, University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title VI, Title IX, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act requirements.

If you have a change of email, address or would like to be removed, please call the Columbia County Extension office at (608) 742-9680 or email your request to:
sarah.millard@wisc.edu

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