

Columbia County Ag Reporter

March/April 2021



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
COLUMBIA COUNTY

WHAT'S INSIDE...

Agricultural newsletter for Columbia
County landowners and residents

This issue's highlighted articles:

- ◆ Calendar of Events (pg. 2)
- ◆ Manure Applicator Training & Nutrient Mgmt. Planning (pg. 3)
- ◆ Private Pesticide Applicator Certifications (pg. 4)
- ◆ Virtual Nutrient Management Planning (pg. 5)
- ◆ Land & Water Conservation (pgs. 15-16)
- ◆ NRCS News (pgs. 17-18)
- ◆ USDA News (pgs. 19-20)



COLUMBIA
COUNTY

General Information:

Ag Reporter Calendar.....	2
Manure Applicator Training.....	3
Nutrient Mgmt Planning.....	3
Private Pesticide Applicators Cert.....	4
On-Farm Soybean Trials Report.....	4
Badger Crop Connect Returns.....	5
Tri-State Corn Rootworm Update.....	6
Columbia County Corn Growers.....	6
Dairy Situation Outlook.....	7-8
Lake WI Farmer Led Watershed.....	9
Buy Local, Buy WI Grant.....	10
Produce Safety Plan Workshop.....	11
Tile Drainage School.....	11
WI Ag Budget.....	12-13
WI Cover Crop & Conservation Conversations	14
WI Field Crops Fungicide Test Summary.....	16

ARC/PLC Enrollment Deadline.....	21
Soil Compaction: Causes, concerns, and cures.....	22
Land & Water Conservation: Land & Water Conservation Updates.....	15-16
NRCS: Application Deadline Cons. Stewardship Program.....	17-18
FSA & NRCS Newsletter Sign-up.....	22
USDA: Signup/Conservation Res. Program & CRP Grasslands Deadline Extended.....	19-20
Extension Office Hours.....	23
Staff Directory.....	23
Web Site: https://columbia.extension.wisc.edu/	

Ag Reporter Calendar of Events

March

- 04 Manure Applicator Training, 9am - Noon
- 10 Badger Crop Connect – Winter Wheat Mgt Zoom
- 11 Manure Applicator Training, 6-9 PM
- 14 Daylight Savings Time Begins
- 15 FSA signup for ARC/PLC ends
- 17 St. Patrick's Day
- 20 First Day of Spring
- 20 MGVS – "Let's Get Green and Growing" Virtual Program
- 23 Manure Applicator Training, 9am - noon
- 24 Badger Crop Connect – Early Season Weed Control Zoom
- 29 Manure Applicator Training, 12:30 - 3:30



April

- 6 Election Day
- 14 Badger Crop Connect—Field Conditions & Planter Set-up
- 21 Administrative Professionals Day
- 22 Earth Day
- 25 Begin Planting Corn

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

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

COLUMBIA COUNTY EXTENSION'S NEW ADDITION

PLEASE WELCOME LORI SWANSON TO THE COLUMBIA COUNTY EXTENSION. SHE IS THE NEWEST PART-TIME ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT. YOU MAY HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED AG REPORTER SNAPSHOT EMAILS FROM HER. SHE WILL BE IN THE OFFICE FROM 11:30 AM–4:30 MONDAY THRU FRIDAY.

MANURE APPLICATOR TRAINING

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension is hosting four virtual Manure Applicator Training sessions - Level 1 / Manure 101.

Designed for employees of both for-hire manure applicators and farmers applying their own manure, this 3-hour training covers the basics of manure spill response, setbacks and regulations, neighbor relations and equipment/manure gas safety.

The same training will be offered four times:

- March 4th, 9 AM - 12 PM
- March 11th, 6 PM - 9 PM
- March 23rd, 9 AM - 12 PM
- March 29th, 12:30 PM - 3:30 PM

An internet-capable device and internet connection is required, and the cost is \$10/person.

<https://go.wisc.edu/4lm34e>

Nutrient Management Planning for 2021

Need help getting your 2021 Nutrient management Plan updated?

Contact George at: 608-742-9682 or george.koepp@wisc.edu to make an appointment. You may also contact Sam Peterson in the Columbia County Land & Water Conservation Department for assistance. Sam replaced Harold McElroy after he retired and is now managing the Nutrient Management Plan records and Farmland Preservation Tax Credit records. Contact Sam at: 608-742-9676 or Samuel.peterson@co.columbia.wi.us.

George & Sam are available to assist you over the phone, via ZOOM or in person—one client at a time in our conference rooms. Masks are required for us to meet with you in person. We will sanitize the room and equipment before you arrive & after you leave.

Call or email George or Sam for an in person appointment.

Private Pesticide Applicators Certifications 2021

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.

If you wish to get a jump on the 2022 season to renew your certification, you may take the self-study exam option. Obtain a current manual from the Columbia County Extension Office, study the materials, then schedule an open book exam time with George at our Office. After passing the exam with a 70% or better score, your certification will be extended for another five years.



2020 WI On-Farm Soybean Trials Report

BOOTS ON THE GROUND: VALIDATION OF BENCHMARKING PROCESS THROUGH AN INTEGRATED ON-FARM PARTNERSHIP

Analysis of producer survey data performed during our previous 3-year NCSRP-funded bench marking project revealed:

- (1) an average yield gap of 20-30% between current farmer yield and potential yield as determined by climate, soil, and genetics, and
- (2) a number of agronomic practices that, for a given soil-climate context, can be fine-tuned to close the gap and improve soybean producer profit.

IN A BEAN POD:

- In the 2020 crop season, the improved management treatment netted soybean producers an average of 3.2 bu/ac yield increase and \$31/ac additional profit.
- Growers should consider improving their soybean management by fine tuning planting date, maturity group, seeding rate, and foliar fungicide and insecticide application.

[Download or view PDF report, click this link.](#)

Badger Crop Connect Returns for 2021

Webinars are being offered March thru September on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday's at 12:30 PM. The upcoming webinars will be:

March 10 – Winter Wheat Management: Shawn Conley, Extension Soybean and Small Grains Specialist & Carrie Laboski, Extension Soil Specialist

March 24 – Early Season Weed Control: Rodrigo Werle, Extension Weed Scientist & Mark Renz, Extension Weed Scientist

April 14 – Field Conditions & Planter Set-up: Francisco Arriaga, Extension Soil Specialist & Brian Luck, Extension Biological Systems Engineering Specialist

Register for the Spring 2021 Sessions at:

https://uwmadison.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUkf-2opjsGdMGLxekR_cOrTfKWbQHETJV

Typically, we meet online twice per month on Wednesdays from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm. Registration and connection information is sent out in the Friday Ag Reporter Snapshot, the weekly Ag Newsletter from Columbia County Extension. If you are not receiving the electronic newsletter, contact: Sarah (sarah.millard@wisc.edu) or George (george.koepp@wisc.edu) to have your name added to the email list.



TRI-STATE CORN ROOTWORM MANAGEMENT UPDATE MARCH 26

Friday, March 26, 10-11:30 am

University of Illinois, Iowa State University, and University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension Programs are offering a virtual 1.5 hour program featuring current research and outreach efforts focusing on corn rootworm scouting, resistance, and management.

This program is designed for farmers, agronomists, and conservation professionals, interested in learning about research and outreach projects occurring in the tri-state region. There is no charge to attend this meeting.

To register go to: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSddA60iK8RpHSBtZcB4EpKT-QQwbJcahXbrho7dwX3bp4vy1w/viewform>



Columbia County Corn Growers

The normal March meeting of the Columbia County Corn Growers has been cancelled due to Covid 19. The Board of Directors are meeting in early March to discuss some on farm meetings for this summer. Hopefully we can safely meet in small groups, outdoors, to discuss challenges in the management of weeds, insects, and diseases common to corn and soybeans for this growing season. Sign-up to receive the Friday Ag-Reporter Snapshots each Friday to stay on top of changes in the ag world and to learn of our summer meetings sooner. Contact George or Sarah in the Columbia County Extension Office to be sure you get the Friday AR Snapshots each week.

Dairy Situation and Outlook, February 23, 2021

Bob Cropp, Professor Emeritus, UW-Madison

February milk prices will end a little weaker than January. Class III will drop below \$16 to around \$15.60 compared to \$16.04 in January. Class IV will be around \$13.30 compared to \$13.75 in January. Cheese prices have been moving up and down all month and will average lower for the month than the January average of \$1.5141 per pound for cheddar barrels and \$1,7470 for 40-pound cheddar blocks. Currently barrels are \$1.3825 per pound and blocks \$1.57. Dry whey continued to show strength since October when the price was in the high 30's per pound. Currently dry whey is \$0.5475 per pound. This strength has added about \$0.90 to the Class III price but not enough to offset lower cheese prices. Butter averaged \$1.3496 per pound in January. Butter reached a low of \$1.21 per pound the start of February and increased to \$1.55 on February 19th but has now fallen to \$1.4875. While butter will average a little higher in February the nonfat dry milk price weakened some from an average of \$1.1808 per pound in January to the current price of \$1.090 which explains a weaker Class IV price in February.

Where milk prices head for the remainder of the year remain uncertain and cannot be forecasted with a high degree of probability because milk prices can change a lot and quickly with any change in supply or demand. Crucial will be the level of milk production, and how soon the COVID-19 virus comes under control and things start to return more to normal. The level of dairy exports will also be important.

Milk production is likely to slow as we move through the year. Lower milk prices and higher feed costs will tighten margins over feed cost which could slow the increase in milk per cow.



Dairy Situation and Outlook, February 23, 2021 (cont)

It looks somewhat encouraging that new cases of the COVID-19 virus are slowing and more will be vaccinated by summer. If so, restaurants should become more fully open, and with the possibility of in person learning in schools and sports returning coming this fall food service will strengthen improving butter and cheese sales. But the return to normal maybe slow as consumers are reluctant to return fully to pre-virus consumption patterns. The level of government purchase of dairy products is not likely to be at the level of last year. The Farms to Families Food Box Program runs through April. It is uncertain if the program will be extended. There remain other government programs where dairy products will be purchased for school lunch and food banks. Anyway, the sale of milk and dairy products should strengthen as we move through the year.



Lake Wisconsin Farmer Led Watershed Council

The newly formed Lake Wisconsin Farmer Watershed Council has been awarded a grant from the WI Department of Ag in the amount of \$15,000 for 2021. The group is now looking to grow in size, please contact one of the Council Board Members: Todd Rietmann or Sam Peterson from Columbia County Land & Water Conservation (608-742-9670) or George Koepp from Columbia County Extension (608-742-9680) for more details.

They are planning several events for this summer:

1. Low disturbance manure injection demonstration
2. No-till seeding demonstration
3. Gathering and speaker event in mid-June
4. Cover crop seeding program for the fall of 2021 – details on this program will be revealed soon.

Board members of the Lake Wisconsin Farmer Watershed Council include: Joe Benish, Crag Carncross, Pat Lochner, Tyler Miller, Ron Schoepp, Noah Pfeil, and Tim Enge.

Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin 2021 Grant Application Now Available

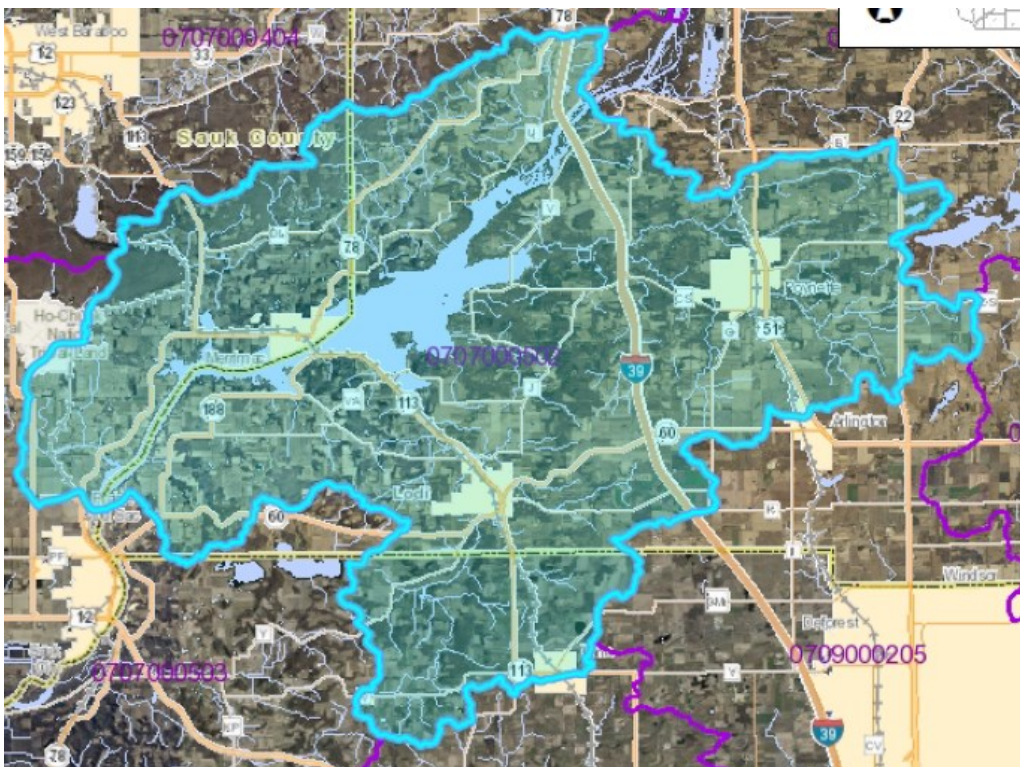
Wisconsin farmers and businesses seeking to grow their presence in local markets are encouraged to apply for Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin producer and processor grants by March 26. The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) will award a total of up to \$300,000 in grant funding; requests must be between \$5,000 and \$50,000.

Proposals must be received by DATCP before 12:00 PM on March 26, 2021. Each proposal must include a cover page, a completed budget template, and a project description. Applications are available online at <https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/BuyLocalBuyWisconsinGrants.aspx>.

Grant applications must show a one-to-one match of cash or in-kind support accounting for at least 50 percent of the total project budget. Grants may not be used to fund feasibility studies or startups. Grants will be awarded following a competitive review process. Recipients will be notified of their awards on June 1, 2021.

Qualified applicants include individuals, groups, or businesses involved in Wisconsin production agriculture, food processing, food distribution, food warehousing, retail food establishments, or agricultural tourism operations. Proposals may include collaborations or partnerships.

Applicants with questions can contact DATCP Grants Specialist Ryan Dunn at ryand.dunn@wisconsin.gov or (608) 590-7239.



Produce Safety Plan Workshop

This is for growers who already participated in the Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training.

During the workshop we focus on writing a produce safety plan for your farm. This plan will help you to create standard operating procedures (SOP's) and record keeping strategies that will help you to fulfill the reporting requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule. This training is not the training required by the FSMA Produce Safety Rule and will not result in certification. This program is conducted via Zoom. You'll need access to either MS Word or Google Docs.

March 16, 2021, from 10am to 12 pm

<https://fsmaproducesafety.wisc.edu/on-farm-food-safety-plan-workshop/>

TILE DRAINAGE SCHOOL

March 8th, 9th, 11th & 16th

Wetter weather patterns and fieldwork challenges have led many producers to consider purchasing their own tile plow or adding to their existing drainage system. Knowing how to properly design, lay out and install a system prevents costly mistakes. Extension in Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa are partnering to host a 4-day virtual Tile Drainage School, 8 AM – 12 PM on March 8, 9, 11 and 16 for producers and tile contractors

Drainage experts will walk participants through assessing the field prior to installation, choosing the best lateral spacing, slope and outfall considerations, finding old tile systems and outlets/lift stations. Agency experts will discuss the steps to avoid regulatory pitfalls, and participants will be able to lay out a system and receive feedback on their approach. The cost is \$50 for the first person from a farm/tile installation business, and \$25 for each additional person.

<https://go.wisc.edu/39v013>

EVERS PROPOSES TO INVEST \$43 MILLION IN WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE

Governor Evers is announcing his intention to invest \$43 million in Wisconsin's agriculture as part of his 2021-23 biennial budget proposal. His budget is "aimed at expanding market opportunities, supporting new and innovative farming practices, strengthening the agricultural workforce, and connecting local producers to foodbanks and pantries, and supporting farmer mental health and wellbeing."

The Governor's budget includes funding and initiatives to help farmers and buyers of all types connect. Whether those buyers are national markets, international markets, or local entities looking to provide food for families, schools or food service entities.

Local and International Market

- Creating and funding the Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports. (\$2 million)
- Increasing funding for the Dairy Processor Grant Program by \$1.2 million over the biennium.
- Investing \$20 million to help connect Wisconsin food banks and pantries with Wisconsin producers.
- Funding the Farm-to-School Grant Program. (\$400,000 over biennium)
- Creating and Funding the Farm-to-Fork to build connections between farmers and non-school entities looking to purchase local food for their cafeterias. (\$552,000 over biennium)
- Increasing the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin program. (\$350,000 over biennium)
- Providing additional funding for Something Special *from* Wisconsin marketing program. (\$400,000 over biennium)
- Creating and funding a Small Farm Diversity Grant program (support producers adding new products, increasing production of an ag product where market opportunities exist, or starting a new farming operation.) (\$250,000 over the biennium).

Over the past 10-20 years Wisconsin has lost a significant number of local butchers and meat processors. While the loss has been noted over the years, the impact was most significantly felt when COVID hit and shut down several of the large national meat processing plants. The pork industry is a "just-in-time" inventory system, meaning that hogs can only be kept for a few days after they are ready before they have to go to processing. The result of the national meat processing closures was that pork farmers everywhere had no where to go with their hogs. National stories from areas like Iowa talked about pork producers having to euthanize 100s if not 1000s of hogs. A huge financial loss to the

EVERS PROPOSES TO INVEST \$43 MILLION IN WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE (cont)

farmer. In Wisconsin, the combined efforts of DATCP and trade organizations working with local smaller processors helped save or at least reduce the financial loss Wisconsin pork producers had. In his budget proposal, Governor Evers is taking steps to address the need for more processors and development of the meat processing workforce.

Bolster Local Meat Processing

- Creating a Meat Processor Grant Program. (\$2 million over biennium)
- Creating and funding a Meat Talent Development Program (target meat industry workforce development and support growth in Wisconsin's meat processing industry). (\$2.6 million over biennium).
- Additional food Inspector Positions at DATCP. (\$787,000 over biennium)

Agricultural Innovation & Farmer-Led Conservation

- Creating and funding a Value-Added Agricultural Grant Program (Provide educational and technical assistance related to producing value-added agricultural products). (\$958,000 over biennium)
- Increasing funding for the Producer-Led Watershed Grant Program. (Additional \$500,000 over biennium)
- Creating and funding Water Stewardship Grants. (\$250,000 over biennium)
- Creating and funding a Conservation Grant Program (supporting farmers looking to transition to more environmentally sustainable agricultural practices). (\$640,000 over biennium)
- Providing funding to support additional UW-Extension specialists and county agents. (Additional \$2 million over biennium)
- Providing additional funding to counties in order to support three conservation staff per county. (Additional \$7.3 million over biennium).

Farmer Mental Health & Wellbeing

- Creating a new Regional Farmer Mental Health Program to increase access to mental health support services, coordinate local and regional peer support programs, and provide counseling and assistance. (\$1.1 million)
- Providing ongoing funding to the Farmer Mental Health Assistance Program which provide 24/7 counseling, tele-counseling session, counseling vouchers, and building farmer peer-support networks. (\$200,000 over biennium).

Contact: April Yancer, WDATCP Division of Agricultural Development, Farm to School & Institution and WI Foods Program Specialist April.yancer@wi.gov
608-512-2950 April.yancer@wi.gov
(As reported via <http://www.thewheelerreport.com>)

Wisconsin Cover Crop & Conservation Conversations Spring 2021

March 19
12 p.m. to 1 p.m.

Session I: Highlights from Farmer-led Projects Across Wisconsin

- Results of CCROP's citizen science project on cover crop residue cover and persistence
- Innovative farmer-initiated cover crop and conservation practices across the state

March 26
12 p.m. to 1 p.m.

Session II: Engaging Diverse Audiences in Cover Crops, Soil Health, and Conservation Education

- Opportunities for farmers and agencies to engage in CCROP citizen science projects
- Unique education and outreach strategies to promote cover crops, soil health, and conservation

April 2
12 p.m. to 1 p.m.

Session III: Research Highlights on Cover Crops and Conservation from Across the State

- Overview of current Wisconsin research on cover crops and soil health

Webinars will follow a lightning talk format – several presenters giving short presentations – to keep the hour exciting, informative and engaging!

Webinars are free. Registration: <https://go.wisc.edu/zpuyc2>

Connection information for each webinar will be emailed to registrants the day before the event.

Brought to you by



Land & Water Conservation Department Updates**Spring 2021**

2020-2021 Tree Sales Program – Reserve ASAP: We are still taking/processing orders for our annual tree sale. There is minimal availability left for this year currently. We are only taking orders by March 15, 2021. There will not be extra for purchase again this year due to COVID-19. We will implement the drive-through process we used last year for pickup day. The pickup will be held on Thursday, April 22, 2021, at the Columbia County Fairgrounds, Building #6, entering from Superior and McPherson Streets. This program began in 1981 and has continued to be a great tool to help promote tree planting throughout our area. This year there has been an increase in earlier sales and some shortage of tree species early, but we will have a lot of trees left for sale, along with tree planting supplies (tubes, stakes, mats, pest spray). We appreciate the support of the individuals who participate in our program. If you have not purchased from us in the past, this is a great program with great prices, please contact us immediately to provide your information to be on our mailing list. People who have ordered in the last 5 years will automatically be on our mailing list.

You can find the tree information online at: <https://www.co.columbia.wi.us/ColumbiaCounty/lwcd/TreeProgram/tabid/746/Default.aspx>; or you can contact our office to place your order.

2020 Farmland Preservation Update

Our process continues through 2021 as such for FPP participants to maintain their eligibility:

- ◆ Annually submit a FPP Self Certification Postcard (July)
- ◆ Annually submit a 590 NMP Checklist and SNAP-Plus Plan
- ◆ Receive an onsite NR 151 compliance status review once every 4 years (determined by LWCD)

The self-certification postcards will be mailed to the Farmland Preservation Members about the first week of June.

Participants will have the option to complete the postcard through an online log-in process or return the postcard to the Columbia County Land and Water Conservation Department. All postcards must be postmarked before July 15, 2021, or they will be charged a \$10.00 late fee.

FPP Participants who do **Not** maintain their eligibility by submitting the annual self-certification postcard, annually providing a 590 Nutrient Management Checklist and maintaining NR 151 Compliance can have their Certificate of Compliance ID # voided with the Department of Revenue, thus removing their ability to claim the Farmland preservation Tax Credit for the applicable tax season. NR 151 conservation compliance reviews will begin for a fourth of the FPP participants in 2021. For questions, please contact the LWCD office at 608-742-9670.

Land & Water Conservation Department Updates**(Con't)****Reminder Nutrient Management Plan (590 NMP) Checklist Submission:**

A reminder that every spring, your updated Nutrient Management Plan AND Checklist documenting completion and updates to your 2021 growing season plan should be submitted to the Land & Water Conservation Department annually. We require landowners to work with their agronomist to get that information to us by **June 1st** of each year. The submission of these documents are important to maintain eligibility for several cross-compliance conservation programs. Overall, we continue to do an excellent job of increasing compliant acres covered by plans. This is great news for our agricultural producers and important to document increased commitment towards strong agricultural agronomic planning. Also, please contact us by December of each year if you wish to be on the mailing list for our annual Nutrient Management Plan trainings. There is a stipend paid for this training and lunch provided. Whether you are a new participant or looking to construct a plan using the SNAP-Plus system or need to review your plan, we have openings available yet. If you have question about your status, feel free to contact our office.

2020 Wisconsin Field Crops Fungicide Test Summary

Each year the Wisconsin Field Crops Pathology Program conducts a wide array of fungicide tests on alfalfa, corn, soybeans, and wheat. These tests help inform researchers, practitioners, & farmers about the efficacy of certain fungicide products on specific diseases. This year we were a bit delayed in publishing the report, due to the challenges of COVID-19. However, we do appreciate your patience and hope you find the report useful in making decisions for the 2021 field season.

The 2020 Wisconsin Field Crops Fungicide Test Summary is available by clicking here.

USDA Announces March 26, 2021, Application Deadline for Conservation Stewardship Program

The next deadline for Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) applications to be considered for funding this year is March 26, 2021. Through CSP, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helps farmers, ranchers and forest landowners earn payments for expanding conservation activities while maintaining agricultural production on their land. CSP also encourages adoption of new technologies and management techniques.

Changes in the 2018 Farm Bill authorize NRCS to accept new CSP enrollments from 2020–2023 and makes additional improvements to the program. Some highlights include the following.

- 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.
- NRCS now provides specific support for organic and for transitioning to organic production activities through CSP.

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



**Conservation
Stewardship Program**
Natural Resources Conservation Service



USDA Announces March 26, 2021, Application Deadline for Conservation Stewardship Program (cont)

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.

Conservation Connections Video Series

Welcome to the Conservation Connections video series. We're connecting you to local farmers and landowners who partner with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to reach their unique conservation goals. These agriculture leaders are sharing their personal stories to help you learn and grow as land stewards in your community, so we can all create a more regenerative future together.

Anton Ptak, a Grazier and Organic Orchard Grower in Dunn County, Wisconsin, partnered with NRCS through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program to develop a grazing plan and install fencing and water lines to fully utilize his pasture and help meet his farm needs. Watch the video to hear his journey.

<https://youtu.be/6a8PI3Vms08>

Helping People Help the Land

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.



**Conservation
Stewardship Program**
Natural Resources Conservation Service



USDA Extends General Signup for Conservation Reserve Program

Biden Administration Considers Changes to Bolster Effectiveness of Program and Recommits to Making CRP a Cornerstone of Conservation Programming

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is extending the [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP) General Signup period, which had previously been announced as ending on Feb. 12, 2021. USDA will continue to accept offers as it takes this opportunity for the incoming Administration to evaluate ways to increase enrollment. Under the previous Administration, incentives and rental payment rates were reduced resulting in an enrollment shortfall of over 4 million acres. The program, administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), provides annual rental payments for 10 to 15 years for land devoted to conservation purposes, as well as other types of payments.

Before the General CRP signup period ends, producers will have the opportunity to adjust or resubmit their offers to take advantage of planned improvements to the program.

"The Conservation Reserve Program provides a tremendous opportunity to address climate change both by retiring marginal cropland and by restoring grasslands, wetlands, and forests," said Robert Bonnie, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Secretary. "CRP has a 35-year track record of success beyond just climate benefits, by providing income to producers, improving water quality, reducing erosion, and supporting wildlife habitat and the hunting and fishing opportunities that go along with it. By extending this signup period, we'll have time to evaluate and implement changes to get this neglected program back on track."

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.



Lexie Meyer, County Executive Director,
USDA - Farm Service Agency,
2912 Red Fox Run, Portage, WI 53901
608.742.5361 Ext. 7350

United States Department of Agriculture

USDA Extends General Signup for Conservation Reserve Program (cont)

As one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the United States, CRP provides both economic and conservation benefits by taking land out of agricultural production. Program successes include:

- Sequestering in soils and plants over 12 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e), or about the same amount that the entire state of Delaware emits annually.
- Preventing more than 2 billion tons of soil from being blown away by wind erosion over the life of currently enrolled acres.
- Reducing phosphorous reaching streams by almost 85 million pounds, nitrogen by nearly 450 million pounds, and sediment by over 160 million tons in 2020 alone.
- Creating more than 2.3 million acres of restored wetlands while protecting more than 177,000 stream miles with riparian forest and grass buffers, enough to go around the world seven times.
- Establishing over a half million acres of dedicated pollinator habitat and nearly 15 million more acres of diverse plantings that provide forage for pollinators.
- Increasing populations of ducks and other game birds, prairie chickens, and such grassland songbirds as Baird's Sparrow. CRP in the Northern Great Plains supports an estimated 8.6% of the grassland bird population.
- Increasing habitat that supports economic opportunities, such as job creation, related to hunting and fishing activities.

This signup for CRP gives producers an opportunity to enroll land for the first time or re-enroll land under existing contracts that will be expiring Sept. 30, 2021. Contact the Columbia County USDA Service Center for more information.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.



Lexie Meyer, County Executive Director,
USDA - Farm Service Agency,
2912 Red Fox Run, Portage, WI 53901
608.742.5361 Ext. 7350

United States Department of Agriculture

March 15 Last Day to Complete Enrollment for 2021 Agriculture Risk Coverage, Price Loss Coverage Programs

Agricultural producers who have not yet enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for 2021 must do so by March 15. Producers who have not yet signed a 2021 enrollment contract or who want to make an election change should contact their local USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) office to make an appointment. Program enrollment for 2021 is required in order to participate in the programs, but elections for the 2021 crop year are optional and otherwise remain the same as elections made for 2020.

ARC and PLC provide income support to farmers from substantial drops in crop prices or revenues and are vital economic safety nets for most American farms.

Although 1,033,310 contracts have been completed to date, this represents less than 59% of the more than 1.7 million contracts anticipated by the Agency. By enrolling soon, producers can beat the rush as the deadline nears.

Producers who do not complete enrollment by close of business local time on Monday, March 15 will not be enrolled in ARC or PLC for the 2021 crop year and will be ineligible to receive a payment should one trigger for an eligible crop.

ARC and PLC contracts can be emailed, faxed or physically signed and mailed back to FSA. Producers with level 2 authentication access can electronically sign contracts. Service Center staff can also work with producers to sign and securely transmit contracts electronically through two commercially available tools: Box and OneSpan. You can learn more about these solutions at farmers.gov/mydocs. Producers may also make arrangements to drop off signed contracts at the FSA county office. Please call ahead for local mailing or drop off information and options for submitting signed contracts electronically.

Producers are eligible to enroll farms with base acres for the following commodities: barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium- and short-grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

Crop Insurance Considerations

Producers are reminded that enrolling in ARC or PLC programs can impact eligibility for some crop insurance products. Producers who elect and enroll in PLC also have the option of purchasing Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) through their Approved Insurance Provider. Producers of covered commodities who elect ARC are ineligible for SCO on their planted acres.

Unlike SCO, RMA's Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) is unaffected by participating in ARC for the same crop, on the same acres. You may elect ECO regardless of your farm program election.

Want to stay informed about all FSA and NRCS related programs, updates, and deadlines?

Contact the Columbia County FSA office right away to make sure that you are signed up to receive GovDelivery bulletins.

Call 608-742-5361

Sign up for text message alerts by sending WiColumbia to FSANOW (372669).

Soil Compaction: Causes, concerns, and cures

Compacted soil can cut crop yields by as much as 50% due to reduced aeration, increased resistance to root penetration, poor internal drainage, and limited availability of plant nutrients. Soil compaction is the physical consolidation of the soil by an applied force that destroys structure, reduces porosity, limits water and air infiltration, increases resistance to root penetration and often results in reduced crop yield. Most farmers are aware of compaction problems, but the significance is often underestimated. Compaction effects on crop yield can be a significant factor in today's farm economy..

To obtain an entire copy of Document A3367 from the Learning Store for free, follow this link: <https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0145/8808/4272/files/A3367.pdf> or contact George at the Extension Office for a printed copy.

This eight page document helps you to:

1. Identify the causes of compaction
2. Tips for minimizing and avoiding soil compaction
3. Compaction effects
4. Diagnosing soil compaction
5. Ways of minimizing compaction
6. Controlled traffic farming
7. Managing compacted soil

The Columbia County Extension has a soil penetrometer that can be used to measure compaction in field areas of concern. Call George to schedule a farm visit to see how this tool works.

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

Sarah Millard, Administrative Assistant, and Lori Swanson, Extension's **newest** Administrative Assistant are in the office Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. 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 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

Office Hours: 8:00 a.m.— 4:30 p.m. Monday—Friday

Office: (608) 742-9680; Fax: (608) 742-9862; <https://columbia.extension.wisc.edu/agriculture/>

Columbia County Extension Office Staff

Kathleen Haas, Community Resource Educator(608) 742-9683
Pat Wagner, Positive Youth Development Educator(608) 742-9685
Caitlin Richardson, WI FoodWise Coordinator(608) 742-9693
Sarah Millard, Administrative Assistant(608) 742-9688
Lori Swanson, Administrative Assistant(608) 742-9687
Vacant, Human Development & Relationships Educator.....(608) 742-9686
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

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
PORTAGE WI 53901
PERMIT NO 355

Columbia County Extension
Columbia County Ag Reporter
112 E. Edgewater Street, Room 212
Portage, WI 53901
608-742-9680

Or Current Resident