

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

GREEN COUNTY LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION

1627 4th Avenue West
Monroe, Wisconsin 53566
(608) 325-4195



THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT has three full time staff members: Todd Jenson, Tonya Gratz, and Mason Jarosinski.

Our mission: Help others to keep the soil on the fields, and the nutrients out of the streams and groundwater.

Our methods: Education, technical assistance, and administering government programs that wisely encourage conservation.

The county staff in conjunction with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) federal staff of Jason Thomas, Chelsea Starr, and Kristin Day are located within the same office space. Each agency has some programs they strictly handle; however, most of the programs are shared between each to some degree.

THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMITTEE is the policy making body of the Green County Board of Supervisors responsible for oversight of the Land and Water Conservation Department. The Committee consists of Kristi Leonard, Nick Hartwig, Peg Sheaffer, Paul Roemer, Erica Roth, Sam Wilke, and citizen member, Dudley Timm.

PROGRAM NARRATIVES

Land and Water Resource Management

Green County received money for the installation of conservation practices through this program. \$36,117 was received in bonding revenue for structural practices. The majority of the practices installed were well abandonment, grassed waterways, stream crossings, and streambank improvement. We are carrying over \$29,613 to next year that we did not get spent. We utilized \$20,000 from DATCP for the use of writing nutrient management plans on 500 acres.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

This program has a \$200 million budget of federal money and \$40 million of state money. CREP is designed to improve water quality and wildlife habitat. Riparian buffers and filter strips are the two main practices installed. Targeted areas are cropland or pasture within 150 feet on either side of streams. For every \$1 of state money, the federal government pays out \$5. In 2025, 6 landowners enrolled in the program with 42 acres. Department staff stake out the buffers and filter strips, GPS them, if necessary, write the fifteen year or perpetual contract with the landowner and do status reviews on the fields after the practice is implemented. Staff wrote 47 CRP contracts and did field verifications on 78 contracts for current cover. The department also has a contribution agreement with NRCS for work done on CRP and CREP contracts. This contract lasts for two years and pays up to \$75,000 for the life of the contract.



Sand County Foundation

We pursued a grant from the Sand County Foundation to help cost share planting more cover crops in the Sugar River watershed. We received \$100,000 to support financial assistance to farmers and to pay our staff for technical assistance. We were able to pay farmers far more per acre with these extra funds than we could with DATCP funds and covered more acres. Gaining this grant spurred us into holding a field day to talk more extensively about cover crops with a planter showcase to show the many machines that can plant cover crops. There were 36 attendees at the field day. We used the same mix in all the drills and planters to show a multispecies mix can be used and planted. Initially the strips with more disturbance at planting had quicker emergence, but after a couple of weeks no difference in the cover crop was noticed. Five landowners were given a \$100 stipend for bringing in their equipment to seed.



Invasive Species Control

We have been working with the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association to have phragmites eradicated. We have eradicated twelve patches in the last few years. This year no work was done; however, we found another patch of phragmites. We currently have 13 known patches of it. We will be in contact with them again to get those spots under control. The area on Cty. S, just north of Juda, has had purple loosestrife that we thought we had under control, reemerge. There will be a focused effort to reduce and to eradicate it. We also need to work with USRWA on controlling Japanese knotweed, as there are several know spots of it.



Farmland Preservation/Working Lands Initiative

This program is administered by Green County for DATCP. Landowners collect income tax credits for agreeing not to develop their land, limit soil erosion, meet manure handling standards, and to develop a nutrient management plan. In 2025, there were 18 landowners in Green County that participated in the program. Approximately 3300 acres are enrolled. Two landowners have modified their contract to get a base tax credit of \$5 per acre per year. The Working Lands Initiative replaced the Farmland Preservation Program on July 1, 2009. Landowners who have an existing contract would continue to get tax credits until the contract's expiration date. If new landowners wish to participate in this program, they will need to be in an Ag Enterprise Area or the township to be exclusive ag zoned. We did have one area show interest in applying for an Ag Enterprise Area. Decatur township, along with some outlying land, began the process of becoming an AEA. They will officially petition DATCP in 2026.

Youth Poster Contest

We host an annual poster contest for youth to participate in, ages K – 12. There were 91 posters were submitted in four of the five age categories. The top poster in each category was sent to the Southern Area Association for judging in the area event. One poster received third, one got second at the area contest and another placed first. At the state contest, our entry in grades 7 – 9 received second. The theme was Home is Where the Habitat is.



Youth Conservation Days

Two youth conservation days were held at Honey Creek Park in Monroe. Approximately 200 fifth grade students took part in the events held in May and October. Participating schools were Monroe Northside, Abe Lincoln, Juda, Monroe Parkside, St. Victors, and Monticello. Students learned about soil, forestry, water invertebrates, fish management, prairies, watersheds, soil and water conservation, aquatic invasives, wildlife calls, groundwater, homing pigeons, wildlife management, drones, and recycling.



Tree Planter, Sprayer Rental, and Tree Sales

The LWCD owns two tree planters that landowners may rent for a nominal fee. The LWCD also owns a dozen tree spuds that are loaned out for the hand planting of trees and shrubs. A tank sprayer and a backpack sprayer are available for grass and weed control when establishing tree and wildlife plantings. We held our annual tree sale. Trees that were sold include: bur oak, red oak, swamp white oak, white oak, sugar maple, white pine, Norway spruce, apple, aspen, paper birch, redosier dogwood, American hazelnut, common ninebark, and black walnut. Trees ranged from 1 – 4 feet in height. 7275 trees were sold plus root gel and fertilizer packs.



Wildlife Damage Abatement



This program is funded by the DNR's \$12 bonus deer permit system, as well as, \$2 from every hunting license sold and is administered by USDA-WS (Wildlife Services). Landowners can file for crop damages from deer, turkey, geese, and bear. Fencing and/or pyrotechnics are available through this program to keep the identified species away from crops. If that does not work, hunting of the species may be recommended. Two landowners were

issued a total of 15 tags for deer hunting based on excessive damage.

Clean Sweep

In 2024 our department took over administering the Clean Sweep Program. The event was held at the Monticello Recycling Center in August. We had 166 participants that brought in 7502 pounds of household waste and 3266 pounds of agricultural waste. We also had a prescription drop-off at the event. The Green County Health Department, Sheriffs Department, and Monticello Public Works helped with the event.



Private Water Systems Ordinance

This ordinance requires the owner of a private water well that has not been used in three years to properly abandon it. 19 wells were properly abandoned in 2025. The Land and Water Conservation office has developed a tracking system and has records of 1429 wells that have been properly abandoned to date. Every fall, landowners who have old, unused wells that are discovered, are sent a letter offering cost-sharing to fill in the well. After three years and three letters, if the landowner has still not done anything to remedy the situation, the matter is then turned over to Corporation Counsel for legal action. We also have an ordinance to ensure the proper placement of new wells. Permits were issued for 94 new wells in 2025. These wells are located by GPS and inspected by staff.



Drainage Board

The Land and Water Conservation Department has been working with the Green County Drainage Board. The Drainage Board oversees four districts within the county: District #1 (Juda Branch) developed in 1914, District #2 (Little Sugar River) developed in 1951, Broughton District (Norwegian Creek) developed in 1914, and the Decatur District (Sylvester Creek) developed in 1914. The purpose of creating these districts was to straighten the streams to improve drainage, improve agricultural cropland, and to disperse water as quickly as possible. Currently the Drainage Board is working to have each landowner clear and maintain trees that are on or in the stream corridor. By rule, there is to be a 20-foot-wide grass buffer along the top of the streambank, with no trees growing. This is for access to the drainage district if work needs to be done.



Each year our office staff does an annual inspection of the four drains. In the past we would drive to areas of each district with easy access for viewing. This year, we flew and filmed the entire length of each district with our drone. With this more detailed and accurate information we contacted each landowner along the districts that had tree issues to try and resolve it.

Land Judging Contest

Green County hosted the annual contest at the Matt and Emily Larse farm just northwest of Monroe on September 10. Participating schools were Argyle, Beaver Dam, Black Hawk, Cassville, Cuba City, Dodgeville, Fennimore, Juda, Lancaster, Milton, Monticello, Mt. Horeb, Potosi, Prairie du Chien, River Ridge, Seneca, and Shullsburg. A total of 144 students participated in the contest from 17 schools. The students reviewed four soil pits and evaluated soil properties, estimated slope, ranked land classes, and recommended conservation practices in the contest. This contest is co-sponsored by Rufer and Son Excavating, who dig the soil pits for free.

We also co-hosted the Southwest Wisconsin contest with Grant and Lafayette County Land and Water Conservation departments on September 24. This year's event was held at the John Abey farm in Brooklyn township. Schools participating were from: Argyle, Black Hawk, Cassville, Cuba City, Dodgeville, Fennimore, Juda, Lancaster, Milton, Monroe, Monticello, Mt. Horeb, Pecos, Platteville, Potosi, Prairie du Chien, River Ridge, Seneca, and Shullsburg. A total of 170 students participated in this contest from 19 schools.



Green County Water Testing Program

Our department took this program over for UW-Extension this year. Each year a different quadrant of Green County is focused on. This year was the northwest quadrant. Of the four towns, York, Adams, and New Glarus agreed to participate. Approximately 102 samples were collected and driven to UW-Stevens Point for testing. Participants received their results back and we hosted an informational event at the New Glarus school on how to interpret the results.

Farmers of the Sugar River

The annual meeting was held at the Albany Lions Club. There were 75 in attendance. Topics discussed were neonics, seed treatments, planting green composting manure, farmer testimonial, and results of nitrogen test plots.

There were two roundtables held with 22 attendees. Discussion focused on waterhemp control, kura clover how the crop year went, and planning for the year.

There were two biological meetings with 18 attendees. Topics covered were composting tea, plant extracts, plant families, rhizophagy, soil aggregation depth, and microbiometer tests.

Our office hosted a rainfall trailer demonstration near the courthouse before the County Board meeting in August. All of the county board were invited. Two farmer members of the Farmers of the Sugar River came and added comments and observations to the presentation to help observers understand what they were seeing and to represent what farmers in the watershed are doing to improve water infiltration, surface water quality and soil health. Attendees seemed quite impressed as to the stark differences our land management can have on how water is or isn't received by the soil.



25 members did a group tour of Kuhn Manufacturing.

The group participated in a neighboring watershed (Farmers for the Upper Sugar River) float/paddling event in the summer. They organized it and invited neighboring groups to attend. They had speakers from the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey talk before starting the trip to give a background of the Sugar River.



There was a shop talk event held at Wenger's farm on how to effectively clean your combine for weed control. 17 people attended the event.

Green County Clean Waters

Green County Clean Waters was in its 3rd year of funding in 2025. They received a grant from DATCP in the amount of \$14,850 which was down \$4,538 from the previous year. This year saw the group struggle to find participation, but nonetheless had one field day and several board meetings to plan events and discuss the group's future. In 2025, 15 members received cost sharing for cover crops and no-till and received \$12,750. These 15 producers reported 1,584 acres that were both no-tilled and seeded with cover crops. Green County Clean Waters did not apply for DATCP funding for 2026, but did apply for funding through the Sand County Foundation.

February 25th: The group's collaborator and one producer went to the 2025 Producer-Led Annual workshop at the Food+Farm Exploration Center in Plover, WI. The workshop is an opportunity to network with other producer-led groups, learn the different ways other groups are run, and their strategies to improve water quality and soil health in their watersheds.

March 27th was our group's first board meeting of the year and took place at Baumgartners. The group collaborator and 5 board members were present. The goal of the meeting was to discuss plans for the rest of the year.

April 14th was our group's first and only field day of the year. It was intended to be a demonstration of seeding beans into rye using a drone. 12 people were present.

August 5th: The collaborator and 3 producers went to the Farm Tech days in Bear Creek. The Farm Tech Days is an annual event that showcases the latest advancements in farming technology and practices. It is a good place to network with other producers and get hands-on experience, educational opportunities, and access to cutting-edge equipment and solutions in the farming industry.

September 23rd was our second board meeting of the year, held at one of our producer's shops. We discussed the state of our group, what to do moving forward, getting a new lead farmer and if we should apply for funding other than through DATCP. We also looked to restructure rules and payments for the group and learn of more options we could use our grant funds for. The collaborator and 4 board members were present.

December 10th was our third and final board meeting of the year. The goal of the meeting was to discuss future intent of the group as well as funding for the following year. 4 board members and a collaborator group were present. The meeting took place at Swiss Haus.

HISTORY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

	2025	2024	2023	2022
Feet of Grassed Waterways	1447	10,852	9985	5215
Feet of Streambank Improvement	150	835	12,635	3217
Rock Crossings	4	2	2	2
Roof Runoff Systems	0	1	1	2
Feet of Fence	18,149	11,089	10,411	23,214
Feet of Animal Trails	3280	2010	3907	120
Well Decommissioning	19	27	13	39
Well Permits	94	83	76	92
Manure Storage Structures	1	3	0	1
Shallow Wildlife Ponds	3	0	7	0
Wetland Restorations	0	0	3	3
Acres of Filter Strips	42	36	87	28
Acres of Cover Crops cost-shared	3859	4161	2723	1299
Acres of Trees and Shrubs	37	22	24	28
Trees Sold	7275	7800	7050	8390
Acres of Nutrient Management Plans	38,032	38,695	37,449	34,247
Radio Programs	58	57	52	52

If you have any questions or comments regarding this report, feel free to contact me.

Todd Jenson
Green County Conservationist