



Extension  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

# Engaging Extension's Agriculture Water Quality Program

UW Ag Outlook Forum  
January 25, 2022  
John Exo

# Key Discussion Points

- What is driving demand for Extension WQ outreach?
- What has changed in the farmer engagement landscape?
- How is Extension responding to it?
- What outcomes are we pursuing?
- What examples illustrate this work?



# Questions to Ponder:

What kinds of agricultural water quality education needs do you hear, or perceive?

What is fundamentally driving those questions?

# Our perspective on drivers:

- Increased, broad, societal awareness
- Pressure felt by farmers
- Farmer leadership
- Questions about impact of climate change and increased precipitation/intensity/variability
- Consensus within Ag Coalition organizations

Discovery Farms began 20 years ago in response to needs for farmer leadership in water quality and questions about the role of agriculture in water quality.





# Changes in Farmer Engagement Landscape

- Farmer-led watershed councils
- Emerging leaders in ag sectors
- Soil health as a unifying concept





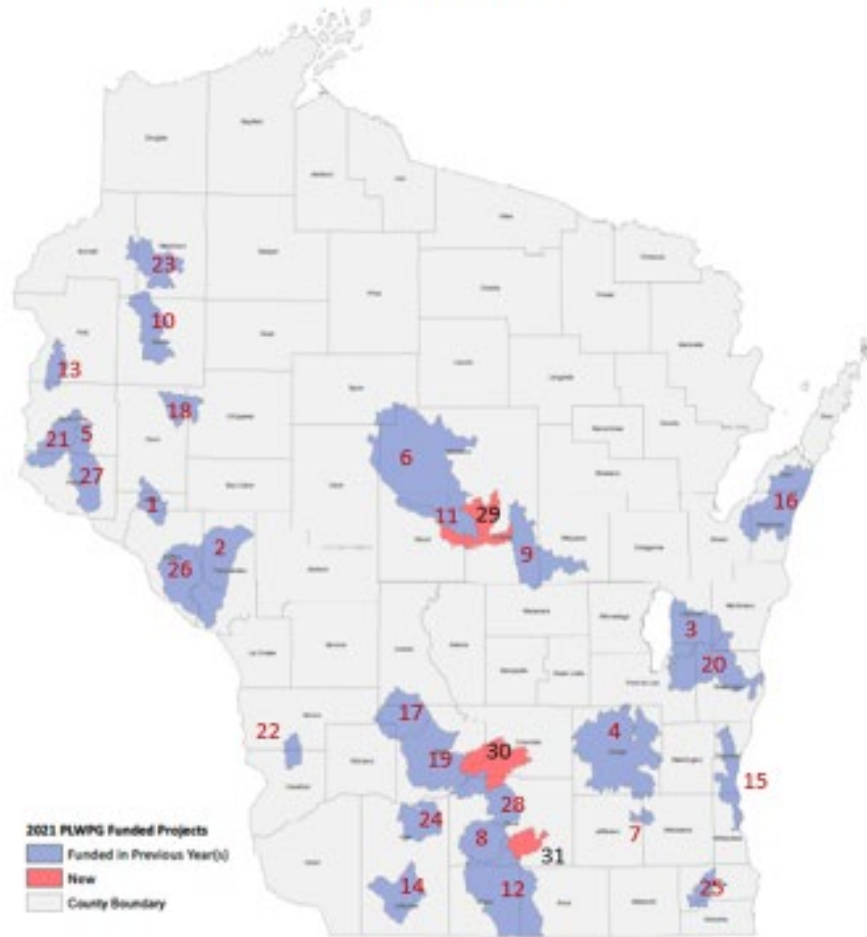
Times have changed when this is no longer considered a weedy corn field, and farmers are hosting field days.





# Producer-Led Watershed Projects

2021 Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant  
Funded Projects



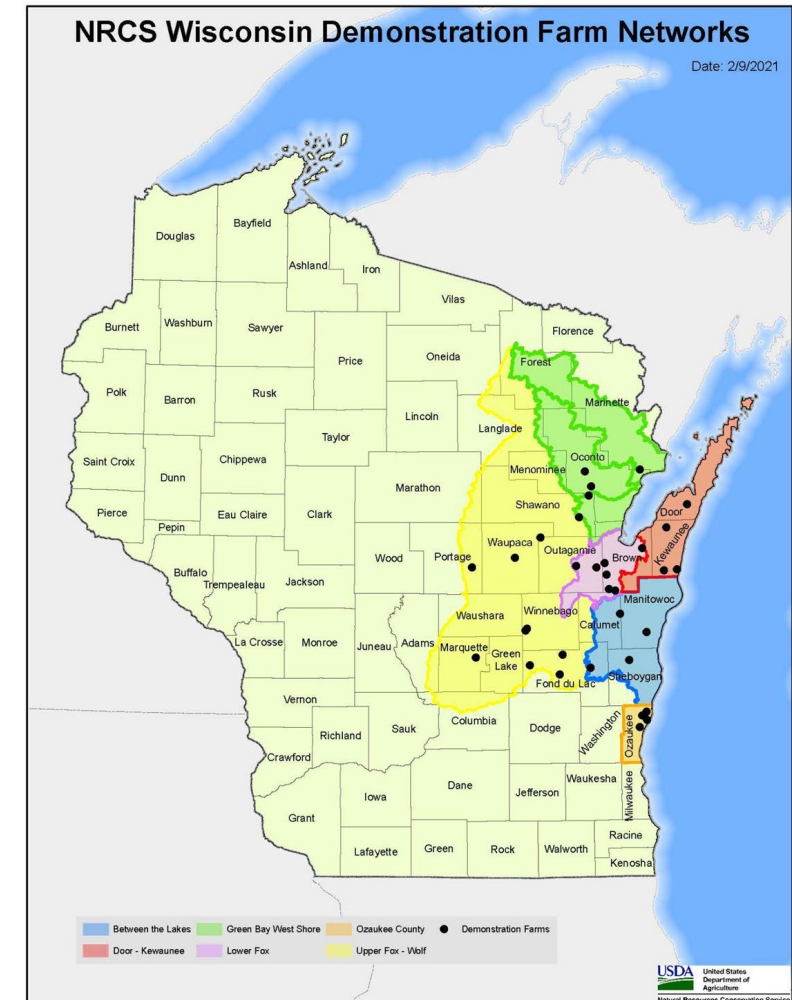
1. Bear Creek Chippewa
2. Buffalo/Trempeleau
3. Pipe Creek-Frontal Lake Winnebago, South Branch Manitowoc River
4. Upper Rock River
5. Dry Run Creek
6. Big Eau Pleine
7. Oconomowoc
8. Upper Sugar River
9. Tomorrow River/Waupaca River
10. Yellow River
11. Mill Creek
12. Sugar River
13. Horse Creek
14. Middle Pecatonica River
15. Milwaukee River
16. Ahnapee River and Stony Creek
17. Lake Redstone
18. Red Cedar River
19. Narrows Creek-Baraboo River, Honey Creek, Otter Creek - Wisconsin River
20. Sheboygan River
21. South Kinnickinnic
22. Tainter Creek
23. Shell Lake - Yellow River
24. Meudt Creek-Mill Creek, Trout Creek, Knight Hollow-Mill Creek, Lowery Creek and Rush Creek
25. Hoosier Creek, Eagle Creek and Goose Lake Branch
26. Waumandee Watershed
27. Rush River
28. Yahara river
29. City of Stevens Point-Wisconsin River
30. Lake Wisconsin
31. Lake Kegonsa- Yahara River; Oregon Branch- Badfish Creek, Lake Waubesa-Yahara River





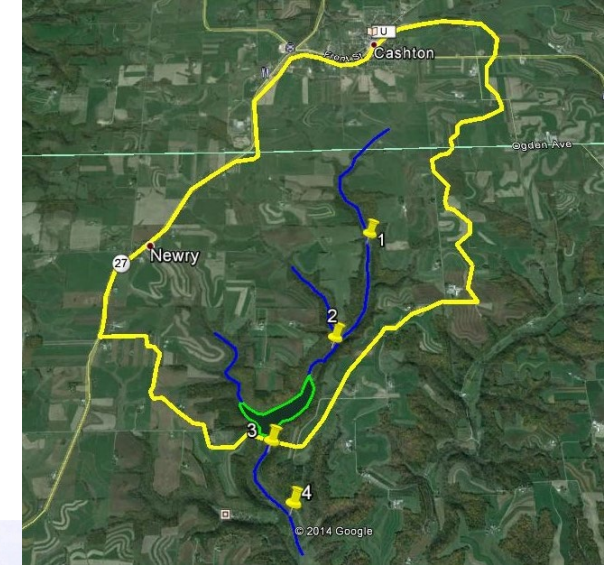
# NRCS Demonstration Networks Foster Leadership

- Farmer-driven initiatives take multiple forms
- NRCS-funded networks have proven a valuable model





# Questions from these & other settings





# Extension Agriculture Water Quality Program role & response

- Build from and integrate Discovery Farms experience
- Respond to demand for information on water quality impacts
- Integrate UW & other expertise into a quality product
- Respond to insights of Ag Coalition, others
- New positions, via FY 22 budget appropriation



# Willing and Able UW Collaborators

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**“We’re not reinventing the wheel.  
We’re reinventing the process of  
inventing the wheel. It’s  
completely different.”**

- Faculty expertise
- Extension educators & specialists
- Nutrient & Pest Mgt Program
- Dairy Innovation Hub
- Other campus expertise



# Focus on Goals & Outcomes

- Help farmers successfully minimize water quality impacts
- Customize information for range of farming systems
- Spark innovation applying current science
- Communicate consistently for quality product



# Initial Focus and Projects

Convey relative impacts of various practices on soil, phosphorus and nitrogen losses.

Communicate phosphorus tradeoffs associated with some soil health practices. How can they be mitigated?

Elevate and expand education associated with Discovery Farms research and demonstration projects.

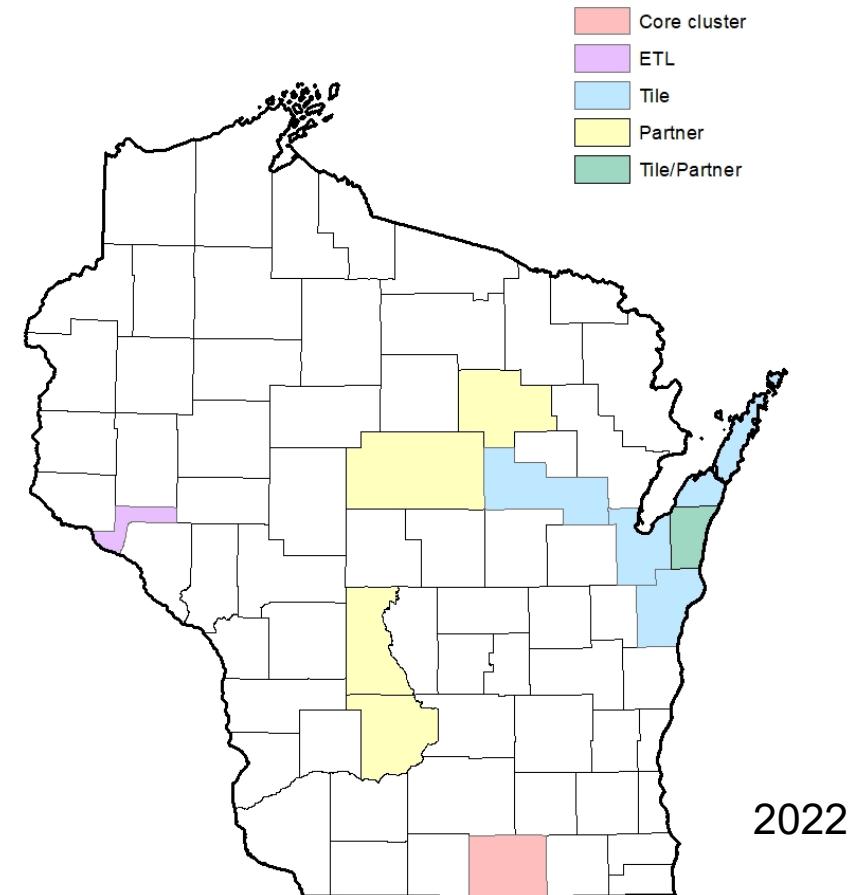
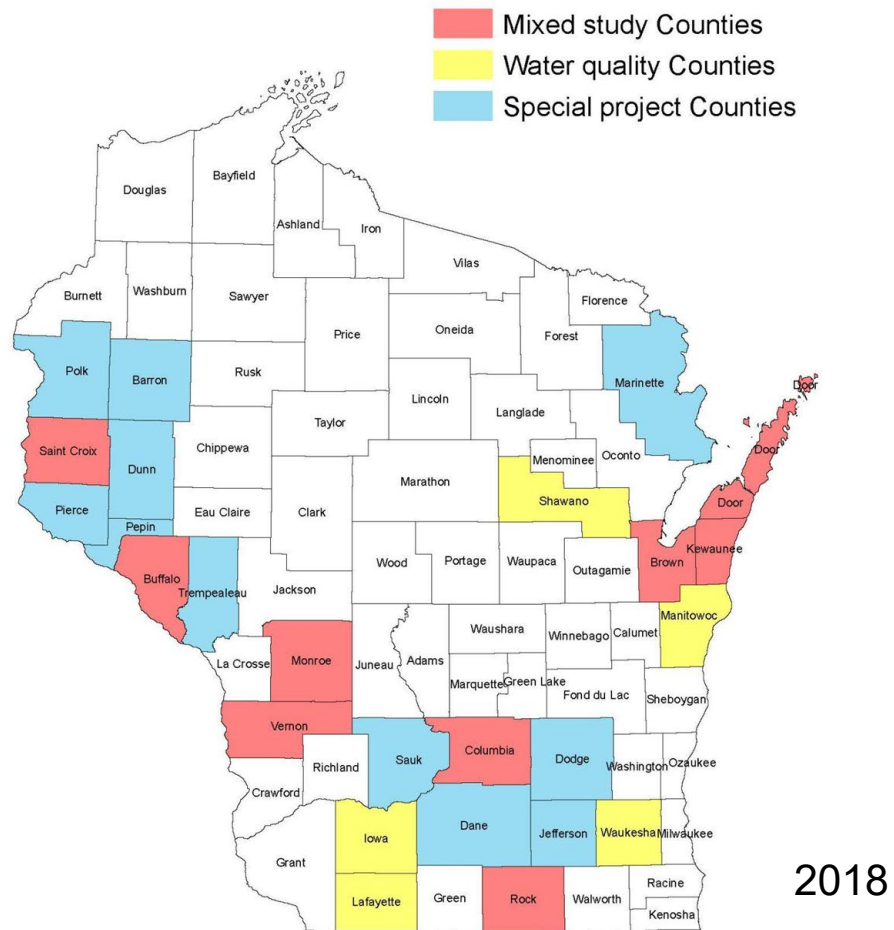
Initiate applied research & demonstration to fill gaps.



Currently four Discovery Farms projects partnering with counties (3 edge of field, 1 leaching)



# Discovery Farms Project Sites



# Summary

Extension Ag Water Quality Program was created to respond to demand for increased quantity and quality of agriculture water quality outreach.

The landscape of water quality and farmer outreach is changing.

We're focused intently on helping farmers be successful maximizing their positive impacts.



# Questions?

Agriculture Water Quality Program managers

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