



THE CURRENT



Update from the Director

Winter is just a season but, did it arrive yet? The Current has arrived so enjoy!

Yes, I have said the “W” word. Some move or fly south, some hunker down and try to outlast the blues, others can’t wait for all the activities to be done in the snow and on the ice. For our farmers it’s a time to reflect, catch up on some projects or just slow down a tad and re-coupe for the fling with spring. Well, we haven’t had much of winter so far but, our first cold snap showed up after a significant flake-fest to tax our backs and remind us how our snow removal equipment could have been better maintained to tackle the storm. By the time you read this you may have forgotten about the snow that was here and the snowmobile trails that were open for a week... bummer for you skiers and avid riders and all the efforts each year to have a trail system in place.

This time of year, the Soil & Water Conservation Department staff are finalizing year end project reports and gearing up for planning 2024 activities and funding. This year will be a busy year for Manitowoc County SWCD with improvements being made to ordinances, the kick-off of redeveloping the Manitowoc County 10-Year Land & Water Resource Management Plan, working with a new producer led group, working on a county wide live hazard map for nutrient management, cooperating on the new Farmland Preservation Program changes and Farmland Preservation Plan being re-written and developed with the Planning & Zoning Department. The Lake Michigan Area Land & Water Conservation Association Summer Tour will be held in Manitowoc County this year as well as many conservation related field day gatherings.

With days gaining light, now is a great time to plan for breaks when soil is exposed from snow cover to conduct frost seedings for rejuvenating pastures, planting prairies, native grasses and backyard pollinator friendly natural areas. For farm related

pasture improvements, the NRCS and Glacierland RC&D are good agencies to start with for grazing ideas. Call us if you need help through this process or if you would like assistance developing a habitat plan for birds, bees, trees or wild game habitat on your land. If you want true functional habitat projects there is much more to it than planting trees in rows, planting square fields in monocultures and installing improperly located food plots and forestry practices. Manitowoc County SWCD has (2) 3-Point hitch operated tree planters for rent that require a 40 hp tractor for larger tree planting projects. These can be used on areas properly cleared of brush and stumps, old fields, pastures and farmland. In rough, uncleared or very hilly terrain hand planting is a better option. If you are still looking for trees to buy please reach out to Camp Tapawingo by March 1st for online orders or call (920-755-2785), search Wisconsin DNR for on-line tree sales or neighboring county Land Conservation Department tree sale programs in Sheboygan, Calumet and Outagamie Counties. Don't wait to order, orders fill fast when the spring itch occurs. Soil & Water staff are always available to field your questions to find solutions, funding opportunities and conduct design work for various erosion control practices on the landscape, as well as point you in the right direction on who to contact regarding animal waste storage permits and for various practices you may want to pursue around wetlands, lakes and streams. So... for now the snow must go on, enjoy what winter we have left and think spring!

Sincerely,

Dave Wetenkamp

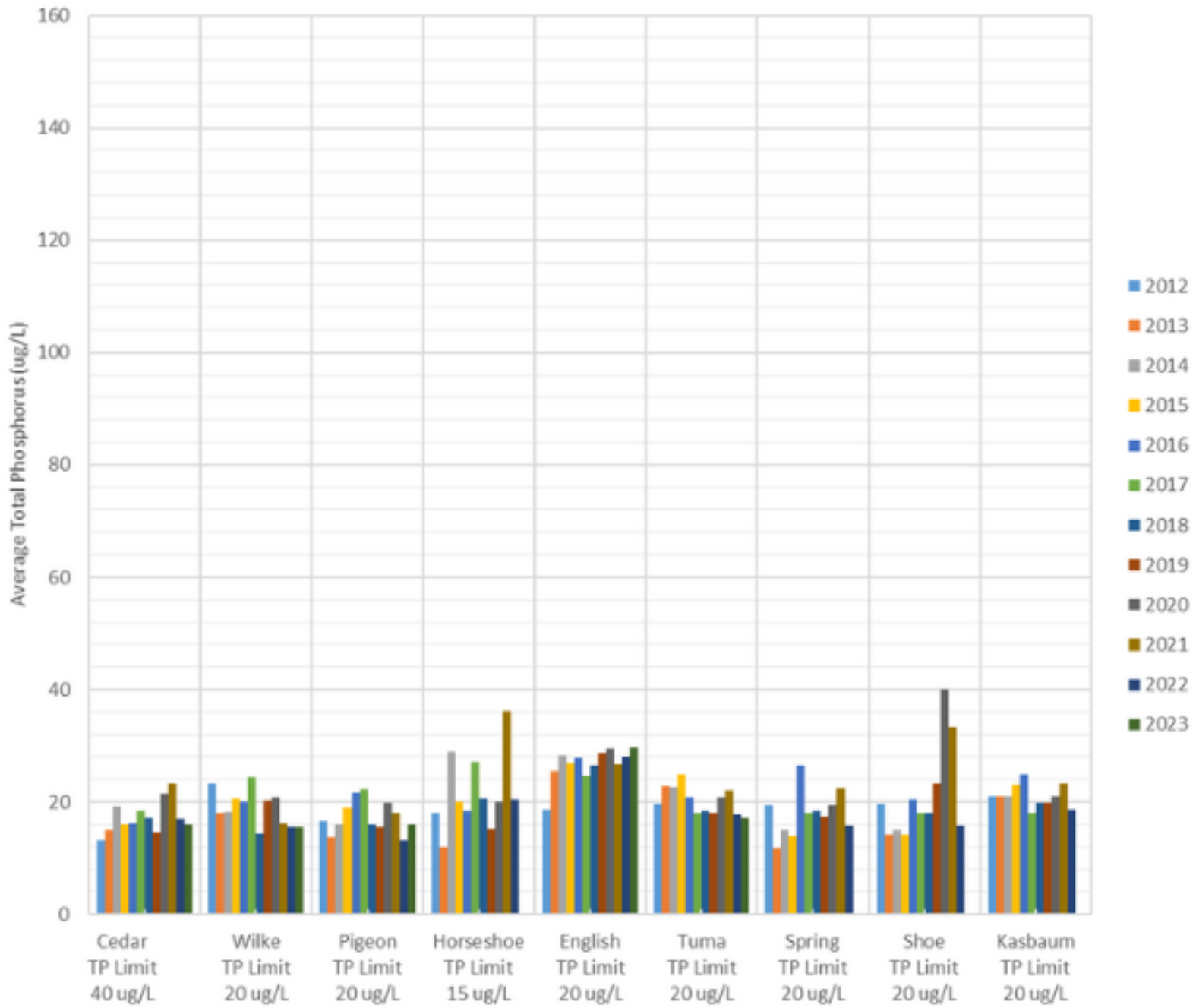
2023 Lake Monitoring Update

The results from the 2023 Citizen Lake Monitoring program are now available, revealing reductions in total phosphorus levels in most lakes. The graph illustrates changes in average phosphorus levels in 17 inland lakes in Manitowoc County over the past 12 years. In 2023, there was a significant drop in average total phosphorus levels in a majority of the monitored lakes. Eric Opperman, Resource Conservationist with SWCD, notes, "It's encouraging to see the current decrease in phosphorus, but we also need to consider weather conditions and long-term trends. We had an abnormally dry summer in 2023, and with less rain it's common to see these one-year reductions." Opperman also acknowledged the positive impacts local conservation efforts have on improving water quality in the County. "We're seeing steady total phosphorus reductions on Gass Lake after a diversion was installed by SWCD in 2021, for example."

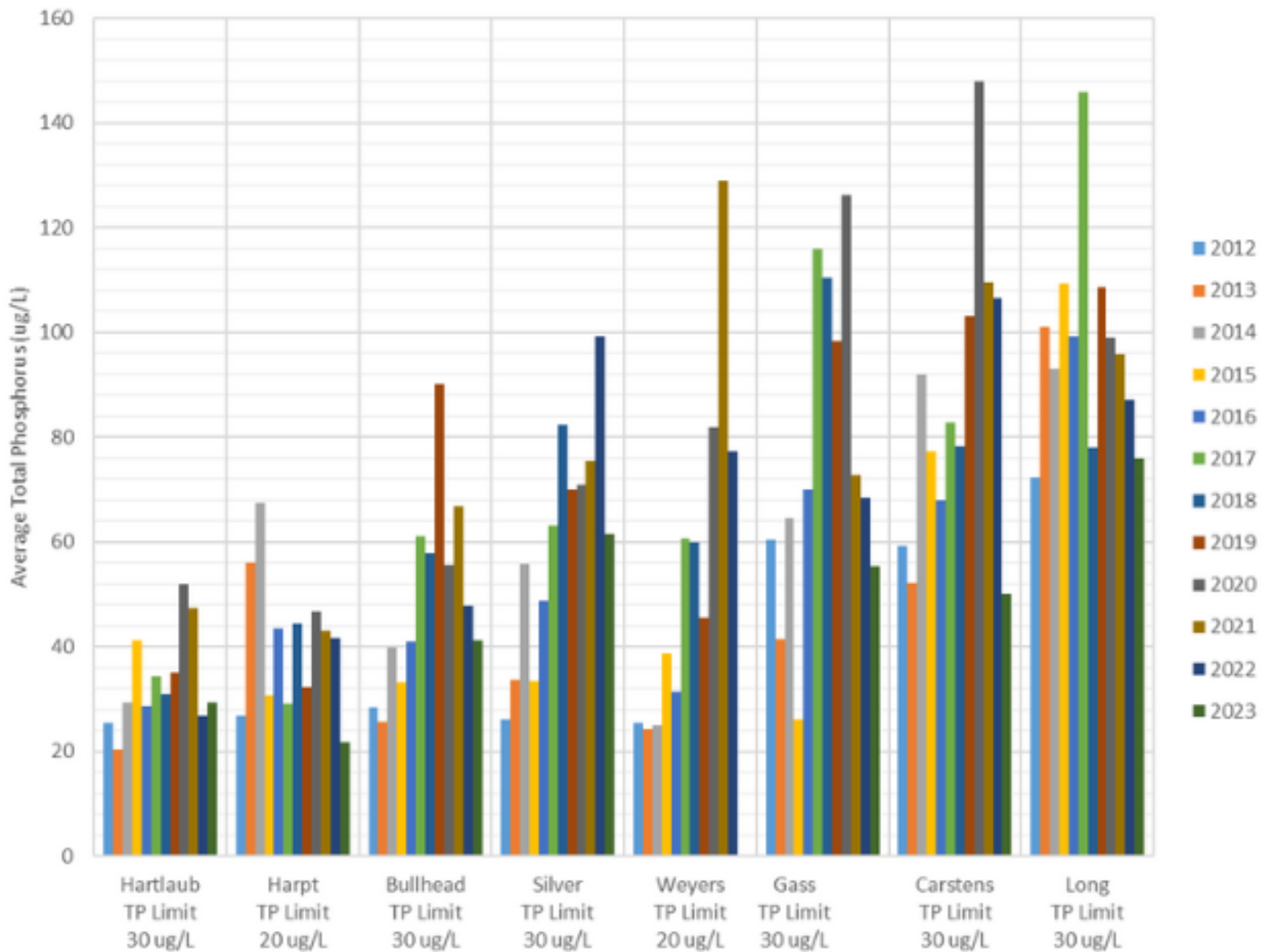
Phosphorus is an essential nutrient for plant growth, but excessive amounts in streams, rivers, and lakes can lead to issues such as overgrowth of aquatic plants, increased harmful algal blooms, reduced light penetration, and decreased levels of dissolved oxygen. These conditions make it challenging for fish to thrive and for people to swim, and they also have negative impacts on property values, recreation, and public health.

The Citizen Lake Monitoring program, managed by the DNR and coordinated with the Manitowoc County Lakes Association, relies on volunteers who collect water samples to monitor various parameters such as chemistry, temperature, dissolved oxygen levels, and water clarity using the Secchi Disk method. Sampling occurs 3-4 times per year, from May to September. The Manitowoc County Lakes Association, in collaboration with the Citizen Lake Monitoring efforts, needs more volunteers in 2024. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the Soil and Water Department at 920-683-4183 and the department will get you connected with lake monitoring coordinators.

Manitowoc County Inland Lakes Average Total Phosphorus 2012-2023



Manitowoc County Inland Lakes Average Total Phosphorus 2012-2023





Are you in the Farmland Preservation Program?

- **REMEMBER TO CLAIM YOUR 2023 FPP TAX CREDIT WHICH IS NOW \$10/ACRE!**
- **IF YOU BOUGHT OR SOLD LAND IN 2023 OR MISPLACED YOUR CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE, CONTACT THE MANITOWOC COUNTY SOIL AND WATER DEPARTMENT FOR AN UPDATED CERTIFICATE AT: 920-683-4183**
- **PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR 2024 NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLAN BY JUNE 1, 2024**
- **CONTACT OUR OFFICE TO SIGN UP FOR 2024 COST-SHARE AND INNOVATIVE GRANT DOLLARS. COVER CROPS, INTERSEEDING, GRASSED WATERWAYS, HARVESTABLE BUFFERS, REDUCED TILLAGE AND OTHER PRACTICES ARE ELIGIBLE FOR COST-SHARE & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE!**

Good News! If you're claiming a 2023 Farmland Preservation Program Tax Credit, rates increased! The credit increased from \$7.50 to \$10.00 per acre for most Manitowoc County landowners eligible for FPP. Before you file, speak with your tax preparer and get more details here:

<https://datcp.wi.gov/.../FarmlandPreservationLegislativeU...> A reminder to also contact our department if you bought or sold land in 2023.

Wisconsin's Farmland Preservation Program is a tool that farmers and local governments can use to preserve farmland, protect soil and water resources, and minimize land use conflicts.

LEARN TO WRITE YOUR OWN NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLAN



MANITOWOC COUNTY

**NUTRIENT
MANAGEMENT
PLANNING CLASS**

FEB. 16, 2024

9:30AM-3:00PM

CALL 920-683-4183 TO REGISTER BY FEB. 6TH

*SELF-WRITERS MUST
COMPLETE A DATCP
APPROVED NMP CLASS
EVERY 4 YEARS TO WRITE
THEIR OWN 590-
QUALIFYING NUTRIENT
MANAGEMENT PLAN.

LEARN TO WRITE YOUR OWN NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

QUALIFYING FARMS MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR A \$700 STIPEND TO ATTEND!

- You'll need soil tests results that are no more than four years old, sampled on a one-sample-per-five-acre basis, and analyzed by a DATCP-approved laboratory.
- **February 16: 9:30am - 3:00pm** Nutrient Management Planning Class & SNAP PLUS training with Chris Clark - Nutrient Management Program UW Outreach Specialist, & Cheyenne Behnke, SWCD Resource Conservationist
- **February 23** Optional Class: Choose morning or afternoon to finish creating your field maps & entering information into SNAP PLUS with a SWCD Resource Conservationist

**CALL TO REGISTER BY
FEBRUARY 6, 2024
920-683-4183**

***IF YOU ATTENDED THIS CLASS IN THE PAST 4 YEARS AND NEED HELP UPDATING YOUR PLAN, CALL TO MAKE AN INDIVIDUAL APPOINTMENT.**

FREE WELL WATER SCREENING FOR NITRATES

March 11th - 15th, 2024

BRING 1/2 CUP OF WATER IN A CLEAN BOTTLE
TO A SCREENING LOCATION NEAR YOU!



ALL WEEK
MARCH 11-15



MANITOWOC CO. SOIL & WATER
4319 EXPO DRIVE, MANITOWOC

8:30 AM—4:30 PM

MONDAY
MARCH 11



MISHICOT COUNTRY STORE
150 E MAIN ST. MISHICOT

1:00—5:00 PM

TUESDAY
MARCH 12



REEDSVILLE C-STORE (CENEX)
525 MAIN ST. REEDSVILLE

1:00—5:00 PM

Contact: 920-683-4183

Nitrates, What Are They, And How Do They Affect Our Health?

Nitrates are naturally occurring compounds in our environment involved in the nitrogen cycle. Our atmosphere is 78% nitrogen and all plants and animals contain high amounts of varying nitrate compounds. Nitrates are soluble in water and can freely move through certain soils, and eventually into groundwater, especially in areas combined with shallow bedrock and karst. This is problematic because if groundwater contains excess nitrates, it can be consumed in low concentrations over long periods of time depending on the amount of water intake without noticing. You cannot taste, smell, or see inorganic nitrates in drinking water. Testing is the most accurate way of tracking nitrate levels. Diets that contain foods, beverages and water high in nitrates have potentially harmful side effects if consumed regularly in elevated concentrations. Other sources of high nitrates include processed foods and meats cured with sodium nitrate. One rare but, possible condition that can be attributed to elevated nitrate consumption is methemoglobinemia.

Methemoglobinemia causes a situation where the blood contains excess methemoglobin. This is problematic when the methemoglobin replaces its counterpart hemoglobin in our blood. The issue is methemoglobin cannot carry oxygen, thus can cause a reduction of oxygen transportation within the circulatory system. Once affected the symptoms can include; headaches, dizziness, shortness of breath, nausea, poor muscle coordination, and blue colored skin. Treatment for this condition often involves oxygen therapy and reduced nitrate consumption. The frequency of this ailment is uncommon and can often be attributed to genetic conditions in addition to elevated nitrate consumption. The two demographics most sensitive to elevated levels of nitrates include infants, and the infirm or elderly. Some other adverse health risks that have been attributed to diets high in nitrates can

include; colorectal cancer, thyroid diseases, and neural tube defects. Excessive nitrates in our natural water systems can result in algal blooms, and when the algae die may lead to depleted oxygen levels creating a problem for aquatic organisms.

If you are concerned or curious about your groundwater, come down to the Manitowoc County Office Complex at 4319 Expo Drive Manitowoc, WI 54220. We have nitrate testing here on site and have a connection with the State Certified UW-Steven's Point groundwater lab for additional testing. While elevated levels of nitrate aren't the most concerning contaminant that can occur in groundwater, there are some adverse health effects attributed to nitrate overconsumption. If high nitrates are found in your well water, additional testing is recommended to further check for other possible contaminants. Groundwater protection is a priority here at the Manitowoc County Soil and Water Department and we look forward to working with you to test your well water and answer questions. We work every day to improve and promote a healthy environment for our county residents, well owners, natural water systems, and wild or domestic critters.



TREE PLANTERS AVAILABLE FOR RENT

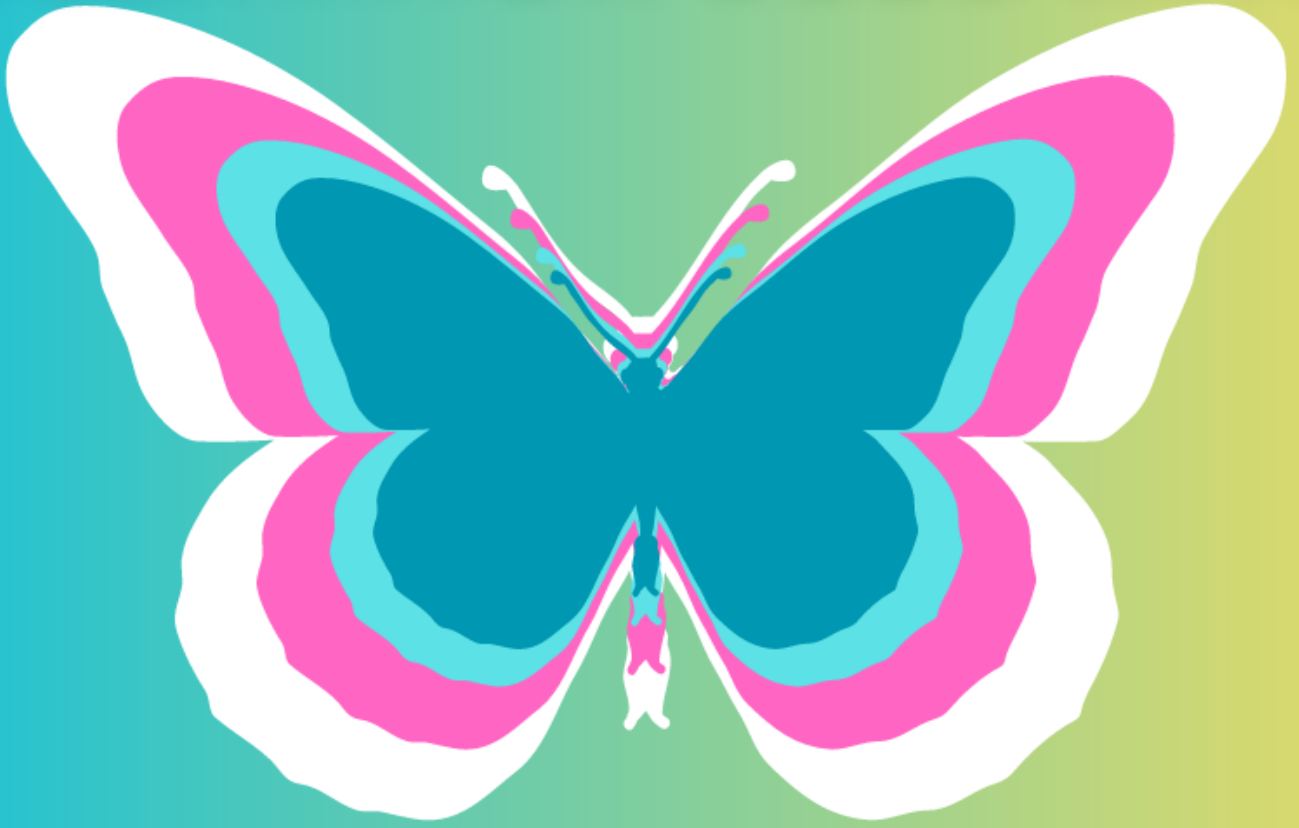


920-683-4183

Reserve Your Tree Planter Rental Now!

The SWCD has two tree planters for rent. Several early-spring weekends are already booked so if you're interested in renting the planter, contact us as soon as possible at 920-683-4183 to reserve the planter and complete a rental contract. Additional information is available online: [Manitowoc County - Forestry & Pollinator Habitat - Manitowoc County.\(manitowocountywi.gov\)](http://Manitowoc County - Forestry & Pollinator Habitat - Manitowoc County.(manitowocountywi.gov))

POLLINATOR SEED KITS



Gauging Interest in Pollinator Seed Kits!

SWCD is gauging interest in pollinator seed kits. Like last year, the kits may be available for \$15.00 plus tax. If you are interested in purchasing a kit, please contact the SWCD at 920-683-4183 by March 8th.

Pollinator seeds kits are perfect for the beginner or experienced gardener. Whether you're looking to attract pollinators into your current landscape, plant a small meadow to cut down on mowing, or want to establish a pollinator corridor in your neighborhood; each Pollinator Seed Kit covers 1,000 square ft. and is ideal for full-sun locations.

Grow an approved NRCS 23-species mix that includes: Asters, Black-eyed Susan, Cone Flower, Milkweed, Wild Bergamont, Coreopsis, and many more.

WINTER LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES



JOIN US FOR A
**WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE
WATER QUALITY
WEBINAR SERIES**

Biweekly webinar from 12PM-1PM with UW-Madison
Extension staff and guest speakers
1 Soil & Water CCA credit per webinar

Register: <http://tinyurl.com/28xk3bn8>
Questions: paletta@wisc.edu

JANUARY 16

**Optimizing Nitrogen Use and
Reducing Nitrate Leaching**
Guolong Liang & Monica Schauer

JANUARY 30

**Wisconsin's Unique Karst
Landscapes and the Impacts
on Water Quality**
*Laura Paletta & Dr. Maureen
Muldoon*

FEBRUARY 13

**Soil Health Practices Impact on
Phosphorus Pools and
Availability**
Chelsea Zegler & Dr. Jamie Patton

FEBRUARY 27

**Grazing & Water Quality:
Lessons Learned From Edge-Of-
Field Research**
Kelsey Hyland & Dr. Eric Young



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
AGRICULTURE WATER QUALITY



2024



MANURE HAULER



UPDATE MEETINGS

MEETING TOPICS TO INCLUDE:

- Spill prevention and response
- Understanding karst and shallow bedrock concerns
- Reading a nutrient management plan
- Pressure safety
- Road safety, flagging, and transfer

LOCATION

Manitowoc

Chilton

Luxemburg

Cecil

DATE/TIME

March 4: 6:00-9:00 PM

March 5: 1:00 PM & 6:00 PM

March 7 & 15: 12:30-3:30 PM

March 18: 1:00-4:00 PM

Register today!

<https://go.wisc.edu/2024manure101>

[Register Here](#)

A group of farmers are gathered in a garage-like setting, sitting around tables. They are looking at various documents, maps, and brochures. The scene is lit with a warm, golden light, possibly from a window or a lamp. The farmers are dressed in casual work clothes, including jackets and hats. The background shows a white van and other equipment.

SAVE THE DATE

MARCH 25, 26, 27

10AM-12PM

FARMER-TO-FARMER MEETINGS HOSTED BY SEVEN RIVERS SOIL COOPERATIVE

Stay Tuned! Farmer-To-Farmer Meetings are Being Planned!

Are you a farmer working on improving your soil health, reducing tillage, growing cover crops, or planting green?

Watch for details about upcoming Farmer-to-Farmer lunch-n-learns hosted by Seven Rivers Soil Cooperative, a newly formed producer-led group in Manitowoc County.

Meetings will take place March 25-27th from 10:00am – 12:00pm at various locations across the county. Get together with other farmers and learn through informal discussions about what they've tried, what's working, what hasn't, and enjoy a FREE hot lunch. Plus, learn more about Seven Rivers Soil Cooperative and how you can get involved. Invites and more information will be available soon.

Manitowoc County Soil and Water Conservation Department

4319 Expo Drive, P.O. Box 935

Manitowoc, WI 54221-0935

P: 920.683.4183



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