

Sauk County

RCPP Reduces Erosion in the Baraboo River Watershed



Background

Joe and Jon Meyer are brothers who farm 1,200 acres and milk 400 Holstein cows together in the Baraboo River Watershed. The brothers are fourth generation farmers who produce a variety of crops including corn grain, corn silage, soybeans, alfalfa, red clover, wheat, oats, and cover crops. Joe and Jon started no-till on portions of their operation in 2000 and have been increasing no-till acres since then. With the implementation of new manure handling equipment, their farm will be 100% no-till in 2016.

Program Successes

In 2015, the Sauk County Conservation, Planning, and Zoning (CPZ) Department was the recipient of a NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) grant to work with farmers in the Baraboo River Watershed to reduce sediment and nutrients delivered to the Baraboo River. Due to the grant program, CPZ has seen a large increase in implementation of cover crops.

The Meyer brothers started experimenting with cover crops on their already no-till operation two years ago. After talking to staff from the Sauk CPZ about the new cost share program through the RCPP, they decided to commit to planting 120 acres of winter rye following corn silage. Joe and Jon also utilized the program to fix a large waterway on their operation.

The Meyers have seen multiple benefits from cover crops. The biggest improvement noticed is greatly reduced erosion. In comparing ground with a rye cover crop to ground with no cover, Joe noted the bare ground was prone to erosion and the covered ground was erosion free.

In addition to reduced erosion, the Meyer brothers also noticed reduced weed pressure and better field conditions in the spring. These important benefits convinced the pair they will continue to plant cover crops on their operation, even without cost share assistance.



Amanda Schultz, Sauk CPZ, talks with Joe and Jon Meyer about improvements they have seen with the addition of cover crops.

They plan on working with the Sauk CPZ on newly acquired ground to experiment with different cover crop mixes to add variety to their cropping system and to repair damaged grassed waterways.

“Joe & Jon are great guys you want to work with. They keep an open mind and are willing to try new practices,” explains Chris Miller, Sauk County NRCS District Conservationist. “The RCPP program has really helped us encourage farmers in the watershed to try cover crops. Once they see the benefits, they continue planting covers on their own,” said Serge Koenig, Sauk County CPZ.



Cereal rye cover crops growing on a corn silage field at the Meyer's property. The redone waterway meanders through the field.