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## A message from the board



Ryan Temperly, LASA  
board member

Hello fellow farmers and supporters,

With a new year beginning, it's an excellent time to reflect on our terrific progress and achievements we have made as a group. This past year has brought opportunities for continued progress in our sustainability journey, particularly through our LASA Climate-Smart Project. We continue to empower and motivate each other to advance and

improve for the betterment of the environment.

I am continually impressed by the amount of participation we get in our annual Member Conservation Practice Survey. Thank you to everyone who completed the survey this winter. This survey helps us serve you better. It's extremely important for us to understand what conservation practices members are using and to track our group's progress.

This past summer we had engaging and informative field days. These are possible because of the dedication of hosts, speakers, supporters and attendees of the events. We appreciate everyone who played a part in the success of these events making these events fun, educational and engaging. We had consistently excellent turnouts and a lot of interest from our members. It's always impressive to see the new innovations our neighbors are using on their farms, such as Darlington Ridge Farm's digester. We thank you for sharing and for providing these opportunities to gather and learn together.

Remember to save the date for our Annual Meeting coming up on March 12. We look forward to an inspiring day of learning from exceptional speakers and our fellow farmers. All are welcome to attend!

## A message from the board

*continued from page 1*

We're always looking for more farmers and supporters to participate in our organization as we strive to continue strengthening our community and expanding our positive environmental impact. I encourage anyone interested in getting involved and learning more about LASA to reach out to me or a fellow board member. There are many benefits to being part of our group, including access to our cost-share program, which provides incentives for sustainable farming practices.

Together, our dedication to our community, the environment and our farms is making a sustainable impact. Here's to another year of growth and opportunity ahead! Kind regards,

Ryan Temperly, LASA board member

## Viste joins sustainability team to support farmers in FSF Climate-Smart Program



*Marti Viste, Sustainability project specialist*

Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative added a sustainability project specialist to its sustainability team to support Edge's Climate-Smart project in partnership with Farmers for Sustainable Food.

Farmers for Sustainable Food is expanding farmer support throughout the FSF Climate-Smart Program by adding an

additional sustainability project specialist. Marti Viste will assist farmers with enrollment through data collection and analysis.

Viste has close ties to agriculture and experience working directly with farmers in her previous role as an agronomist at Rio Creek Feed Mill in Algoma, Wis. She is the fifth generation on her family's farm, Vistren Farms, in Door County, Wis.

"I'm deeply passionate about working with farmers and being involved in agriculture," Viste said. "I'm thrilled to join the team and to work closely with farmers every day, supporting them through the FSF Climate-Smart Program."

Viste has a bachelor's degree in agricultural education with a minor in animal science from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

Scan the code for more information on LASA or to see all of our events.



### Important Dates

- February 25  
DATCP Annual Workshop
- March 12  
LASA Annual Meeting





## Enroll in the LASA Climate-Smart Project today!

Sign up is now open for LASA members to enroll in the Climate-Smart Program and have the opportunity to receive financial compensation for participating in the subsequent years – up to \$9,000 per year.

Through the Farmers for Sustainable Food Climate-Smart Program, participants receive data outcomes to inform decision-making regarding conservation practices and potentially adding value to the food produced on the farm.

There are no requirements in the program for you to implement any specific practices. Rather, you determine the critical environmental concerns in your area and then, by using technical tools and resources available through the program, you can evaluate the impact your changes are making to the identified concerns.

In addition to the environmental aspect of the project, LASA members can participate in a complete financial analysis with conservation enterprises. You must complete the environmental portion to be eligible for the financial portion. If you are interested in this additional component, please let the FSF team know when you enroll.

If you were enrolled for year one, you do not need to enroll again. You will be contacted by the FSF team when it is time for the next year of data collection.

We encourage you to participate in this pivotal step in LASA's sustainability journey.

**Spots are limited, enroll today!**

If you are interested in enrolling,  
email [climate-smart@voiceofmilk.com](mailto:climate-smart@voiceofmilk.com).

Scan the code for  
more information on  
Climate-Smart.



## Thank you to our sponsors:

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# An update from The Nature Conservancy: Continuing our commitment to nature and people

Written by Emily Zimmerman, PhD, Director of Agricultural Strategies



Emily Zimmerman,  
TNC Director of  
Agricultural Strategies

The Wisconsin chapter of The For many Wisconsinites, some of life's most memorable experiences are rooted in the state's iconic food and natural beauty. From sharing that perfect ear of summer sweet corn to savoring fresh, squeaky cheese curds to spending time at the lake or in the woods with loved ones, these cherished moments are made possible in large part because of the hard work and dedication of our state's farmers. At The Nature Conservancy (TNC), we recognize the important role that agriculture and farmers play in protecting the land and water we depend on. Farmers are at the heart of sustaining nature for people, and we are proud to support them.

Empowering and supporting farmers to adopt conservation practices that align with their business goals is vital to TNC's mission. We are grateful to support the efforts of the producer-led watershed groups – including LASA, Peninsula Pride Farms, and Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers – in their work to improve soil health and water quality, address climate change and sustain rural communities. In addition to supporting over 16 producer-led watershed groups through TNC programs, TNC in Wisconsin is working to accelerate the adoption of regenerative agriculture using a variety of strategies, including developing corporate partnerships, influencing public policy, and using science-based approaches.

Feed in Focus (FiF): This industry-led effort helps U.S. dairy farms improve feed production and efficiency while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and contributing to improved water quality and soil health. In Wisconsin, TNC has partnered with Foremost Farms to provide dairy farmers with tailored technical support and financial assistance to implement conservation practices such as cover crops, reduced till and no-till, crop rotation, nutrient stewardship, grazing and feed management, and edge-of-field practices. Since 2022, more than a dozen farmers in Wisconsin have enrolled in

FiF, directly impacting over 10,000 acres and influencing more than 42,000 acres across Wisconsin.

The Clean Water Initiative: For the past five years, a coalition of diverse partners, including Clean Wisconsin, The Dairy Business Association, Wisconsin Land + Water, and TNC, has been working together to achieve clean water goals while supporting resilient farms. The coalition has focused on advancing shared policy approaches to ensure clean drinking water, increase the efficiency and efficacy of the confined animal feeding operation (CAFO) program, support current conservation efforts and foster innovation, and improve Wisconsin's nonpoint source program.

The Upper Mississippi River (UMR) Foodscape: The foodscape approach is an innovative, science-based approach to accelerating regenerative agriculture on the landscape. TNC has invested in five foodscapes – geographic areas with similar biophysical characteristics, land and farm management, and socioeconomic attributes – around the world, including in the UMR basin. The UMR Foodscape covers 83 counties in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois. In this region, TNC is investing in developing and expanding agricultural markets, supporting farmer-to-farmer networks, advancing partnerships and policies, and collaborating with farmer advisors – all to expand the adoption of soil health practices and diverse crop rotations, livestock and grazing, agroforestry, and edge of field practices. Adoption of these practices builds resilient food systems that benefit both nature and people.

At The Nature Conservancy, we are proud to partner with farmers in their dedication to improving soil health and water quality, addressing climate change, and sustaining rural communities. We remain committed to working with producer-led watershed groups and other partners to ensure Wisconsin's lands and waters can continue to sustain communities for generations to come.

For more information on TNC's work in Wisconsin and worldwide, visit [www.nature.org/wisconsin](http://www.nature.org/wisconsin).



## LASA Sustainability Farmer-to-Farmer Workshop recap

2024 marked an important milestone for the Lafayette Ag Stewardship Alliance as they wrapped up their five-year sustainability project. This is a significant achievement for the group, demonstrating their unwavering commitment to sustainability. Using data to understand on-farm sustainability and the environmental impact of farming practices has been the driving force for the group's members. Over the past five years, these farmers have collaborated with Farmers for Sustainable Food and Houston Engineering Inc. to complete the project and generate sustainability metrics to inform their management decisions on the farm.



Participants in the LASA Sustainability Project gathered at The General Store in Gratiot in July to review the findings from this past year. Farmers

had the opportunity to examine their own farms' data and compare it to the averages of the whole group as well as state and national averages. The project involves 15 farms managing over 40,000 acres.

Several metrics in the project report show consistent, positive progress throughout the entirety of the project.



The group's water quality scores reflect a high adoption rate of best management practices. On average, throughout the five-year study, 83% of the reported acreage has mitigated the risk of excessive loss of nitrogen to subsurface water.

The LASA Sustainability Project highlights the continuous improvement efforts in soil conservation and water quality among these farmers.

While the initial project is wrapping up this year, many of the members are transitioning to participation in the FSF Climate-Smart Program to continue their efforts. During the meeting, those in the Climate-Smart program also reviewed their first-year results in that program and began setting goals

for the next crop year. Expanding on findings from the LASA Sustainability Project, the FSF Climate-Smart Program gathers more



data and information to help showcase a more holistic understanding of each farm's sustainability progress, and, if the farmer chooses, this program also helps facilitate conversations about sustainability throughout the supply chain, including connections between farmers and processors.

In addition to environmental metrics, a financial analysis of the return on investment of conservation practices was reviewed. This portion of the program had three members participating with support from Southwest Technical College.

Data analysis from both projects provides a wealth of information to LASA farmers. By understanding their farms' current environmental state, LASA farmers can be more strategic and effective in implementing new sustainable farming practices as they work toward protecting their natural resources and improving their surrounding community.

The LASA Climate-Smart project in partnership with Farmers for Sustainable Food is open for enrollment. Farmers interested in learning more should visit [farmersforsustainablefood.com/climate-smart/](https://farmersforsustainablefood.com/climate-smart/).

# Lafayette Ag Stewardship Alliance shares results from five-year, data-driven initiative

## Farmer-led group archives sustainability project milestone

The Lafayette Ag Stewardship Alliance released results from the fifth and final year of its Sustainability Project. This significant milestone demonstrates the group's unwavering commitment to sustainability.

Over the past five years, in collaboration with Farmers for Sustainable Food, this farmer-led watershed conservation group has used sustainability metrics to inform management decisions on their farms.

"We're stewards of the environment and always challenging ourselves to do better," LASA President Jim Winn said. "This project demonstrates that commitment and represents a significant milestone for our group in our ongoing sustainability efforts."

The project, involving 15 farms managing over 40,000 acres, showed consistent, positive progress for several metrics, especially regarding water quality.

Key findings from five years of the LASA Sustainability Project include:

- **Conservation practices:** On average, farms use two or more conservation practices in each of their analyzed fields. The most used sustainable farming practices within the group include grassed waterways, contouring, cover crops, reduced tillage, strip-cropping and no-till.
- **Water quality:** Of the reported acreage, 83% has mitigated the risk of excessive nitrogen loss to the subsurface water.

- **Soil erosion:** The average rate of soil erosion for corn grain over the five-year project period was 1.7 tons per acre per year, significantly lower than the state benchmark of 3.5 tons per acre per year for corn grain.
- **Energy use:** The group's energy use, 145,575 btu per ton for corn silage, measured 53% better than the national indicator.

Data is based on analysis by Houston Engineering Inc. using Field to Market: The Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture's Fieldprint Platform®.

"I am inspired by these farmers for their dedication to improving the environment," Lauren Brey, Farmers for Sustainable Food Managing Director, said. "Their drive to continuously improve is evident through the completion of this project, and they are not stopping there. The group continues to expand on these findings through their new project within the FSF Climate-Smart Program."

Expanding on findings from the LASA Sustainability Project, the FSF Climate-Smart Program gathers more data and information to help showcase a more holistic understanding of each farm's sustainability progress, and, if the farmer chooses, this program also helps facilitate conversations about sustainability throughout the supply chain, including connections between farmers and processors.

Scan the code to learn more about Lafayette Ag Stewardship Alliance and the group's ongoing sustainability efforts.





## CONSERVATION PRACTICES

On average, farms use **two or more conservation practices** in each of their analyzed fields. The most used sustainable farming practices within the group include grassed waterways, contouring, cover crops, reduced tillage, strip-cropping and no-till.



## WATER QUALITY

Of the reported acreage, **83%** has mitigated the risk of excessive nitrogen loss to the subsurface water.



## SOIL EROSION

The average rate of soil erosion for corn grain over the five-year project period was **1.7 tons per acre per year**, significantly lower than the state benchmark of 3.5 tons per acre per year for corn grain.



## ENERGY USE

The group's energy use, 145,575 btu per ton for corn silage, measured **53% better than the national indicator**.



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# SAVE THE DATE

Join us for our Annual Meeting!

**Wednesday, March 12**  
**Darlington Multipurpose building**  
*11974 Ames Rd, Darlington WI*

Discover innovative approaches to weather risk management and predictive analytics with one of the industry's top experts, Eric Snodgrass of Nutrien Ag Solutions.

Mark your calendar and plan to connect with fellow farmers for an inspiring day!