

TOWN & COUNTRY RC&D NEWS



SEPTEMBER 2007

WILL AND SUE HALSER INVITE CHEFS "BACK TO THE LAND!"

June 12, Palmyra

More than twenty five farmers, chefs, restaurateurs and people interested in eating healthy food attended this workshop on Will and Sue Halser's Prairie Hill Farms. The day began with a guided tour during which participants got to see Murray Grey beef cattle and chickens up-close and personal as they grazed on managed pastures. Under the shade of a huge oak tree, Haly Schultz, Town & Country RC&D Grazing Specialist, demonstrated the benefits of grazing for the soil, water, and wildlife on the farm. Following the tour, participants heard about food safety regulations that need to be followed when selling food directly off the farm from Jill Ball, Food Safety Inspector with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection. The day ended with a special treat when Jack Kaestner, Town & Country RC&D Council member, and Executive Chef at the Oconomowoc Lake Club, demonstrated how to cook grass-fed beef, pork and poultry in a variety of simple, yet delicious dishes. The audience munched on these delights as Chef Jack explained the health benefits of eating grass-fed meat and how we could each cast a vote for keeping family farmers on the land by purchasing our food from local farms.



Will and Sue Halser show participants the layout of their grazing system.

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This workshop was one of a series put on in collaboration with the Southeast Wisconsin Farm and Food Network for the purpose of creating connections between farmers and chefs, and to facilitate the sale of local farm products to restaurants. **"PUTTING YOUR FARM ON THE MENU"** on March 19, at Michael Fields Agricultural Institute gave more than 60 farmers an opportunity to learn from the first-hand experience of farmers and chefs who have already made that one-on-one connection. Several Hmong farmers attended, assisted by the aid of an interpreter. Each participant was given a binder of valuable information on relationship-building, marketing and support resources. Fifty percent of the workshop evaluation respondents said that they would begin marketing their products to restaurants due to the information provided at the workshop!

SPEAKING OF MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PRODUCERS AND BUYERS...



THE WISCONSIN FARMER CHEF CONNECTION

Please join us on Monday, October 22 from 12:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC) Education Center in [Pewaukee](#). During this half-day event, farmers and chefs join forces to cultivate new business partnerships. Participants will have valuable opportunities to network with other farmers and food buyers, hear from notable Wisconsin chefs on how to go the extra “local” mile, and enjoy an amazing showcase of local, seasonal farm products. Chefs: [Leah Caplan](#) from the Washington Hotel, Restaurant and Cooking School on Washington Island (Door County), [Nathan Berg](#) from Native Bay Restaurant in Chippewa Falls and [Jack Kaestner](#) from the Oconomowoc Lake Club. All registration is taking place online; for a direct link click [here](#). For any questions or assistance with registration, please contact Deb Deacon at ddeacon@wi.rr.com or 262-786-3837.

SPEAKER SERIES

February 6, Oconomowoc

No one speaks more passionately about the benefits of eating locally-grown food than Chef Jack Kaestner. So the group Church Women United (CWU) found out when Jack gave a talk for their Tuesday study series. The women were impressed that Jack sources local produce—sometimes working directly with farmers who grow what he requests—for the restaurant at the Oconomowoc Lake Club. They got to sample the delicious results of that practice at a luncheon Jack prepared for them. Jack stressed that eating local food is good for the environment because small farmers tend to use practices that are good to the land and water. Fresh, unprocessed food is good for the body. Plus, it's good for farmers and the economy they support. One of those farmers, David Kozlowski, was on hand to tell the audience that members of his Pinehold Gardens Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm in Oak Creek have a say in what he grows. When you join a CSA, “In a sense, you are hiring your own farmer,” he said. Also on hand was Mac Riemenschneider of R-Farm in Town of Ottawa. He spearheaded the opening of—and sells his produce at—the new Dousman farmers market, which is another way to find good, fresh local food. “Local farmers are not in competition with each other,” he says. “We are more in competition with the large food system out there.”

FARM FRESH ATLAS OF SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN 2007/2008

This is the third year that Town & Country RC&D has partnered with UWEX, Slow Food Wisconsin SE, Kenosha County UWEX and Pinehold Gardens to fund, develop and distribute this annual publication. This year, 80,000 were printed, listing 76 farms which is 11 more farms than last year. A report from the Farm Fresh Atlas website, www.farmfreshatlas.org, shows that the atlas receives an average of 100 hits per weekday and 50 hits per weekend, and that most website visitors are from Milwaukee, Madison and Fond du Lac, and 10 percent are from Illinois.

FEDERAL AND STATE GRANTS FOR FARMERS WORKSHOP

February 6, Waterloo

Twenty-five people at this workshop learned about the grants available to farmers, agriculture-related businesses and cooperatives. There was a great mix of farm families, businesses and state and federal agency people in the audience. It was a very successful workshop: many attendees commented on which grants they will apply for. A snack sourced from local food was a big hit.

"WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE IN THE DAIRY BUSINESS?"

March 21, Watertown

Fifty-two dairy farmers attended a one-day workshop put on by Town & Country RC&D with assistance from Grassworks, Inc., and Badgerland Farm Credit Services. Larry Tranel, Dairy Field Specialist for Iowa State University Extension, spoke on how to keep and analyze farm financial records in order to make better management decisions and he presented his Dairy-Trans® Financial Management Software program as a tool for this purpose. Larry also spoke in depth about installing low-cost parlors (parlors retrofitted into existing buildings) and labor-efficient facilities. The benefits of implementing cross-breeding, management intensive grazing, and modified/complete seasonal calving were also presented. Find information on the software and on each of the topics at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/dubuque/staff/tranel.htm>. Dan Truttmann, dairy farmer from New Glarus, spoke about his family's dairy farm and his experiences with the Dairy Trans® software program. The Truttmann farm consists of 200 acres of pasture and 150 acres of crop and hay land. Dan's family practices seasonal calving, management intensive grazing, and crossbreeding. They milk 175 dairy cows in the summer and 75 cows in the winter. Dan has been a profitable grazer for 13+ years.

A phone survey of business owners listing in the Atlas resulted in the following comments:

"Sprecher Brewery saw our ad in the Atlas and invited us to make a presentation at the State Fair. It was one of the best things we did last year."

"We got new buyers and sellers to come to our auction because they saw us in the Atlas."

"It is a better bargain and attracts more people than our listing in the newspaper"

"Local farmers from across Wisconsin come in and say they saw our restaurant listed in the Atlas."

“AN EVENING ON THE FARM”

June 20, Fountain Prairie Inn & Farm, Fall River



This pasture walk was a new focus for the Town and Country RC&D grazing education project: getting both farmers and consumers together at the same event to network, learn about farming, and learn from one another. Thanks to our hosts John and Dorothy Priske, generous donors and a crew of planners and organizers from other organizations, this event drew in over 200 people with about 75 percent farmers and 25 percent non-farmers. Most attendees were from local towns in Columbia and Dodge Counties but a few came from as far away as the U.K. and Ireland! (Okay, so they were in the States already, but they did take the time to include this event in their travel schedule.) Refreshments of local food were served which included

the Priskes' own grass-fed Highland Beef, radishes from Luna Circle Farms, a new grass-based line of ice-cream from The Chocolate Shoppe, mozzarella cheese from Grande and Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese, gorgonzola cheese from Black River Cheese, and a host of other veggies from farmers at the Dane County Farmers Market.



Attendees were taken on two tours of the farm where they were able to view the farm's established prairie, restored wetlands and grass pastures. An abundance of birdlife, especially bobolinks (grassland song birds) could be seen and heard.

THE NATURAL STEP

Town & Country RC&D's new Sustainability Issue Team is taking steps to educate communities in southeastern Wisconsin about sustainability through The Natural Step (TNS). TNS is a world-wide initiative and is a science-based, systems framework that was developed to help organizations, individuals and communities understand and take steps towards sustainability. The mission is to make the fundamental principles of sustainability easier to understand, and meaningful sustainability initiatives easier to implement. The Sustainability Issue Team is focusing on The Natural Step because of the tremendous potential for acceptance by the forward-thinking communities that make up the RC&D area, and because it will enhance the interest in, and capacity of, Town and Country RC&D. To join the team, or to have a presentation on The Natural Step done for your group or community, contact Greg David at 920-262-9996 or prairiedf@globaldialog.com.

CREATING A FORAGE SUITABILITY DATABASE FOR WISCONSIN

Kathy Eggers, Town and Country RC&D's newest staff member, is developing a comprehensive database that will help grazing specialists and conservation planners better advise farmers throughout Wisconsin who want to begin using the environmentally sustainable practice of managed grazing. The database will show which species of grazing forages (grasses, legumes, corn silage) will grow best on a farm by taking into account the soil type, topography, climate and management intensity on that farm. It will also show what the farmer can expect for yields for each type of forage. In doing so, the database will be a vital tool to help farmers gauge the true potential of their farm for grazing success and profitability. Funding for the project is provided by a research grant from the Grazing Land Conservation Initiative.



Kathy Eggers joins the Town and Country RC&D staff.

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN COOPERATIVE INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT AREA

A new local organization has been formed to help integrate invasive species management, knowledge and resources across jurisdictional boundaries. This new collaboration has participants from and will serve the counties of Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Sheboygan, Walworth, Washington and Waukesha. More than 23 federal and state agencies, county governments, and local organizations are working together under the leadership of the Bureau of Land Management, to promote an integrated invasive species management program. Town & Country RC&D has joined the effort and will serve as the fiscal agent for the new organization.

ELIMINATING UNNECESSARY PHOSPHOROUS FROM LAWN FERTILIZERS

Excess phosphorous in our region's lakes and rivers causes algae blooms, degraded fisheries, beach closings, and public health risks. Town & Country RC&D is working with the Wisconsin Association of Lakes and others to help communities pass ordinances to restrict the use of unnecessary phosphorous in lawn fertilizers. Our region's soils are already naturally high in phosphorous, and adding more is not necessary for a healthy lawn. The Village of Lac La Belle, the Town and City of Oconomowoc, and the Town and City of Delafield have already passed ordinances, and several other municipalities, including the Village of Nashotah, are considering the action. On August 28, the Wisconsin State Senate Committee on Environmental and Natural Resources heard testimony from Town & Country RC&D and others in support of Senate Bill 197 to eliminate unnecessary phosphorous application to lawns and turf grass in Wisconsin.

WATER STAR COMMUNITY PROGRAM

Town & Country RC&D is collaborating with the Rock River Coalition and other partners to develop the Water Star Community Program to reward communities that not only use good storm water management practices, but go above and beyond to improve their water, habitat and human health resources. The aim of the program is to protect and improve urban water resources from polluted storm water runoff. Planning began with a series of focus groups made up of city officials from several municipalities. Based on their input, the program will be piloted in the Rock River Basin with plans to go state-wide in the future. The Rock River Coalition recently received a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources River Planning Grant to begin developing criteria and incentives.

WETLAND DETERMINATIONS PROJECT

Town & Country RC&D is working with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to identify and maintain cropped and non-cropped wetlands that are found in and around farm fields. According to the Farm Bill, farmers who want to participate in federal farm programs cannot drain certain types of wetlands in order to improve them for cropping. Farmers who want to make drainage improvements must first request a field review, after which the wetland is evaluated and a determination is made as to whether or not it can be drained. Due to an ever-increasing number of requests, NRCS is experiencing a backlog of field reviews that need to be done and Town & Country RC&D has stepped in to hire contractors to help with these field reviews in Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Fond du Lac, Green Lake and Jefferson Counties.

CALENDAR

The Wisconsin Farmer Chef Connection 3rd Annual Gathering
October 22, 2007, 12:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., WCTC Education Center, 800 Main Street,
Pewaukee.

The Town & Country RC&D Vision Team will be meeting on the following dates. All are welcome!

- Monday, October 29, 2007, 8:30 a.m., Waukesha County Administration Building
- Tuesday, January 29, 2008, 8:30 a.m., Jefferson County UWEX Building
- Tuesday, March 25, 2008 8:30 a.m., TBA

Contact Mark Weaver, Vision Team Leader, at 414-297-3693 or mark_weaver@nps.gov for more information and directions.

Town & Country RC&D is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization committed to conserving the natural resources and enhancing the economy of southeastern Wisconsin. Town & Country RC&D and USDA are equal opportunity providers and employers. For more information, visit our website at www.townandcountryrcd.org or contact the Town & Country RC&D office at: 333 E. Washington Street, Suite 3500, West Bend, WI 53095, Ph: 262-335-4855.

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