

Calumet County

Land and Water Conservation

Ag Education Newsletter #4

It could just be me, but I'm pretty sure this September went by faster than the other 11 months of the year; it seems like just yesterday I was chatting with you all about county fair, and suddenly there are bare fields left, right, and center, and silage trailers running by my house 24/7. It was a pleasure meeting some of you at the Forage Council Dry-Down-days, and I'm looking forward to chatting with more of you as fall continues!

Have a safe harvest!

Watershed Group Field Day



CCASA COVER CROP PLOT FIELD DAY

Wednesday, October 16

10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Hosted by CCASA member Ken Rach

RSVP BY OCT 10



Save the date for our **Cover Crop Plot Field Day** on **Wednesday, October 16!**

CCASA member Ken Rach will host the event at [5208 Twain Rd., Chilton](#).

The plot walk will start at 10:00 a.m. Join Calumet County Soil Health Specialist/ Agricultural Educator Autumn Gomez-Tagle, Steve Hoffman of InDepth Agronomy, and CCASA members John VandenBoom and Ken Rach to discuss and learn more about the benefits of cover crops.

Thank you to InDepth Agronomy for donating the seed and Compeer Financial for sponsoring the lunch. [RSVP here](#) by October 10.

What's New?



Focus on Farm Safety

This season it's important to remember that safety is paramount; when you're trying to get a lot done quickly and getting less sleep than normal, it's easy to make mistakes that could cost you.

UW Madison Extension has a [great article](#) on preparing for busy seasons to limit risk. If you find yourself already mid-harvest and want to keep safety in mind, check out some checklists from the [Mayo Clinic](#), [Rural Mutual](#), and the [Farm Business Network](#).

Remember: the most important asset on your farm is you!

How to Make Cover Crops Pay

I'll be honest with you; as a soil health specialist, I love a good cover crop. The [benefits to soil structure, nutrient cycling, and soil biology](#) are undeniable. There's even evidence that cover crops can [make your fields more resilient to inclement weather](#). However, as your agricultural educator, I recognize that there's a debate about cover crops and their efficacy. Some farmers swear by continuous cover and no-till as the secret to their success, and others will tell me over and over that it can never work.

The fact of the matter is, for every soil type, every crop rotation, and every operation, there is a way that cover crops can improve your soil. The trick is making sure your management is right so your bottom line doesn't take a hit, and they actually do improve your soil.

I've been working with our farmer watershed group, the [Calumet County Ag Stewardship Alliance \(CCASA\)](#), on a cover crop trial plot out on Twain road (come to our field day if you want to take a look!). Because we had a very narrow planting window with all the rain, and seeded 19 different cover crops at once, we had to work quickly, and there's some variability within the plots. Time pressure is something many of you will face when getting a cover in; what can this trial teach us about how to make the most of your time and seed?



Know your goals: Not every cover crop is right for every situation. Every species has different needs and will lead to different benefits. The CCASA trial plots all look very different right now, and will affect the soil differently. If you're not sure what you want yet, spend some time deciding with [this tool from the Midwest Cover Crop Council](#). If you're curious about how some cover crops are looking this year, come

out to the CCASA Field day on October 16th!

Make sure the planter is set just right: If you're planting no-till, don't skimp on prep work. What worked to plant in the spring might not work in the fall; We all know seed-to-soil contact is crucial, and when seeding a cover crop it can be the difference between a consistent stand and easy spring management, and a nightmare come time to plant your next crop. Take a look at this picture of a row of Vetch:



The inconsistency across this planter run has left open spaces in the center of the plot, which currently crust every time it rains. These crusts, as well as inconsistent biomass upon termination, will make drilling into this area in the spring difficult, and affect the consistency of next year's crop. However, inconsistency when using a drill is NOT a foregone conclusion; it's just about precision. Check out [this guide from No-Till Farmer](#), and never be afraid to ask a neighbor for a second set of eyes.

Test your seed: Using bin run seed or last year's leftovers can be a way to cut down on costs, but it can also cost you the consistency that makes a truly successful cover. You can test germination in a lab, or do it at home using [this method](#).

Know your nutrients: If you plant a cover crop with a high C:N ratio (I'm looking at you Winter Rye) and plan to plant corn or another non-legume, you will most likely [need to increase your N application](#) to make sure there is enough available to the next crop. [Here's a terrific tool from Penn State Extension](#) that helps you estimate how much additional N you might need following a cover crop.

If I can leave you with one thought about cover crops it's this: *don't be on autopilot.* And, don't take my word for it. There are some terrific leaders in the county who have been working with cover crops since long before it was cool, and they've either

seen it all or come pretty close. If you're interested in speaking to a mentor about getting started with cover crops, or are looking for cost-share during your learning period, reach out to me at autumn.gomeztagle@calumetcounty.org.

Conservation and Ag News



[Study shows insecticides linked to Wisconsin Monarch Butterfly Decline](#)

Via WPR : “Both butterfly abundance and species declined by 8 percent between 1998 and 2014. However, monarch butterflies in particular declined over 20 percent,” study co-author Scott Swinton said on WPR’s “[Wisconsin Today](#).” [Read more here](#).

[Preventing future weed infestations by managing drown out areas.](#)

Via UW Extension: The 2024 growing season provided our crops in most of Wisconsin with plenty of water. In spots, too much water accumulated and led to drowned out spots and in some cases [...] troublesome weeds like waterhemp are quickly escaping and will likely produce plenty of seed before a killing frost occurs. Read more [here](#).





[Pollinator Friendly Management in Dairy Farms Producer Survey](#)

Via UW Extension: We want to hear your thoughts on the challenges and opportunities in including pollinator-friendly management practices on dairy farms. We're interested in your current management practices, interests and experiences, and also what barriers exist to incorporate pollinator-friendly management practices or pollinator habitat on your farm. [Take the survey here.](#)

[Remember to test your Deer](#)

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reminds hunters to test their deer for CWD this fall. The DNR is particularly interested in tests from their [priority areas](#), but hunters in any area can and should order tests. Read more [here](#).



[Grassland 2.0 Academy Registration Open](#)

Via UW Extension: The Grassland 2.0 Academy *Four Seasons* registration is OPEN. The Academy leadership team is excited to bring this course to the grazing planners who are ready to take conservation on ag land to the next level. [Register here](#).

USDA NASS Releases

- [WI Crop Production, September 30, 2024](#)
- [WI Small Grains, September 2024](#)
- [WI Grain Stocks, September 2024](#)
- [WI Prices, September 2024](#)
- [WI Milk Price, September 2024](#)
- [WI Potatoes, September 2024](#)
- [WI Crop Progress, September 23 2024](#)
- [WI Chickens, September 2024](#)
- [WI Milk Production, September 2024](#)

If you would like to receive these reports directly to your inbox when they are released, you can sign up [here](#).

Upcoming Dates

- **October 1-4:** [World Dairy Expo in Madison. Online Learning Options Here](#)
- **October 1, 8, 15:** [Organic Pest, Disease, and Weed Management](#)
- **October 2:** [Protecting Our Watershed Together: A Community and Farmer Event](#). Sign up [here](#).
- **October 4:** [Cover Crops: Good, Great, or Ho-Hum?](#)
- **October 16th:** [CCASA Soil Health Field Day](#)

Ag Education Website

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