



FOX DEMO FARMS PILOT MENTORSHIP PROGRAM EVALUATION

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Executive Summary

The Fox Demo Farms Pilot Mentorship Program was designed to partner the program's most experienced and knowledgeable farmers with farmers transitioning to cover crops and no-till practices.

Evaluation Goals

1. Understand the impact of the mentorship program in regard to the short-term and medium-term goals.

The Fox Demo Farms Pilot Mentorship Program (mentorship program) demonstrated that the mentorship model can foster relationship building, which can ultimately increase mentee's confidence and help mentees reach their conservation goals. Confidence was described with regard to the mentee's ability to implement practices, their confidence in the practice's effectiveness, and their ability to discuss conservation with both experienced farmers and farmers who have yet to adopt practices. Additionally, mentees cited that their relationship with local agency staff increased over the two-year period. Evaluation results suggest that the mentorship program is an appropriate way to keep experienced farmers engaged in the Demo Farms project.

2. Identify ways to improve the mentorship program.

Overall, participants were very satisfied with the format of the mentorship program. The loose structure and flexible communication were key to keeping farmers engaged. One mentee cited that extending the length of the program may be beneficial and that two-years was not enough time to fully grasp the practices. Financial stipends were appropriate and valued by participants.

3. Identify whether the mentorship concept is a viable next step for Demo Farm Networks.

Evaluation results suggest that a mentorship program is a viable next step for the Demo Farm Network and an effective approach to leverage the knowledge and experienced gained by farmers involved in the Demo Farms project.



Notable Findings

Executive Summary



Building confidence

- Mentees identified increased confidence as one of the most important outcomes over the two-year project. Confidence was described with regard to the mentee's ability to implement conservation practices, their confidence in best management practices working effectively, and their ability to discuss conservation both with experienced farmers and farmers who have yet to adopt practices. One mentee cited they had been nervous to adopt certain practices, but they are **"a lot more confident now...[they] just started asking questions to [their mentor] about it."**



Building relationships

- Both teams acknowledged that their relationships grew over the two-year period. The team that had an existing relationship cited that **visits and conversations around conservation farming increased**. The team that did not have an existing relationship, cited that **the program went beyond business, it's more of a friendship now**.
- Both mentees recognized that their relationship with agency staff increased over the two-year period. However, one mentee acknowledged that while their relationship had grown, **there was little need to consult agency staff because his mentor was his go-to person**.



Program structure

- The mentorship program was designed with minimal guidelines. Project partners did not want to be overly prescriptive in the way the teams worked together. **Participants strongly advocated for continuing the loose structure**. Allowing farmers to organically grow their relationship was a benefit to the program and kept the farmers engaged. **Flexible communication** was identified as a strength of the program and allowed each team to progress.





Factors for success

Executive Summary



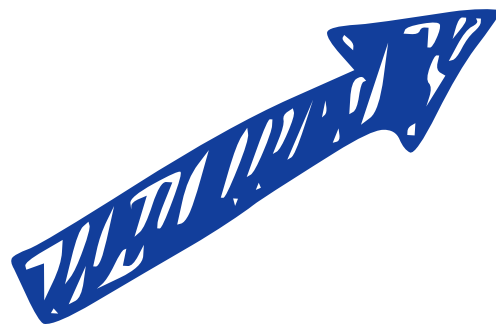
- Willingness to grow is the most important factor in determining a team's success. **Mentees must go into the program with the mindset that they want to change their practices and are willing to learn by asking questions.**
- Mentor and mentees **do not need to have an existing relationship to be successful.** However, finding **farmers with complimentary personalities**, who are **close in age** with similar life experiences helps to grow trust between mentor and mentees.
- Participants acknowledged that the **mentor's experience with conservation practices was extremely important.** Mentees trusted their mentor's advice based on their experience. Mentors cited experience as the most important element that prepared them to be successful in their role.
- The distance between farms provided unique perspectives from the two teams. The team whose farms were in the same neighborhood, cited that **the close proximity allowed the mentee to watch the mentor's fields progress throughout the season and to ask questions based on what he was seeing.** The second team was separated by approximately 30 miles. One member stated that **due to technology, the distance was not a barrier.** FaceTime, videos, and pictures provided their team the detail necessary to be successful. If future teams are separated by large distance, both farmers should be comfortable using various forms of communication.

Key Takeaways

- The mentorship model provides farmers the extra support they need to adopt conservation practices. As one participant stated, "It's hard to convince somebody at one field day [to adopt practices]...The mentorship program allows somebody, even if they only communicate once a month, to get to the goal of doing conservation."
- The mentorship program builds upon the Demo Farms concept and could be a viable next step for conservation throughout the watershed. This model is designed to keep experienced farmers engaged in the Demo Farms program, while leveraging the knowledge they have gained to provide middle adopters with the technical support needed to adopt conservation practices. This alleviates pressure from conservation agencies who may be understaffed.
- Participants cited the importance of minimal guidance and flexible structure. If this program is to expand, it is important to recognize that farmers are busy individuals and the program design must provide teams the autonomy to decide what approach will work best. Providing loose guidance and annual check-ins with project staff are recommended.

Recommendations

SCALING UP



KEEP IT SIMPLE

Provide minimal guidelines and flexibility. Farmers want autonomy to decide how the program can work best for their team. Mentors relied heavily on their experience and did not feel formal training necessary to be successful in this role.

DEMO FARMS' ROLE

Throughout the life of the project, Demo Farms' staff should maintain an open line of communication with program participants. Annual meetings, where Demo Farms' staff and teams discuss goals should continue. Incorporate a program evaluation to monitor impact and identify issues that need to be addressed.

STIPENDS

If funds are available, stipends are recommended for farmers time and commitment to program. Farmers cited, if guidelines became stricter or if travel increased, compensation for time would be necessary. The mentorship program offered mentors \$1,000 per year and mentees \$500 per year.

RELATIONSHIPS

It is not necessary that farmers know each other beforehand, but it is important that they develop a relationship throughout the program. That relationship builds confidence in the advice the mentee receives from the mentor. It is important to recognize that not all farmers are confident discussing conservation with other farmers, so partners should provide check-ins to ensure relationship is growing.

MENTEE SELECTION

Identify farmers that want to ask questions, learn, and change practices. The mentorship program is designed to provide technical support, not convince farmers to change.

MENTOR SELECTION

Identify farmers who have years of experience. Mentees cited larger farms have more experience because they have managed more acres in variable conditions and soils. Farm type should be considered due to manure management.



INTRODUCTION

The Lower Fox Demonstration Farms Network (Fox Demo Farms), established in 2014, is a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) funded project utilizing Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funds. The project is designed to showcase and demonstrate the effectiveness of conservation practices on participating farms located in the Lower Fox River basin. The project aims to reduce erosion and sedimentation, restore soil health, and improve water quality by reducing phosphorus entering the Great Lakes basin. Project partners include producers, crop consultants, Brown and Outagamie County Land and Water Conservation Departments (LWCD), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension (Extension), Green Bay Metropolitan Sewerage District (NEW Water), United States Geological Survey (USGS), and the Great Lakes Commission. Additional funding support comes from Brown County and NEW Water.

The Fox Demo Farms was the first project of its kind in the Great Lakes Basin. Since 2014, there have been six additional networks added in Wisconsin and nine networks throughout the Great Lakes region. As we look to the future of the Fox Demo Farms project, we recognize the importance of expanding upon the original Demo Farm idea.

The Fox Demo Farms Pilot Mentorship Program was designed to partner the program's most experienced and knowledgeable farmers with farmers who are transitioning to cover crops and no-till practices. The teams worked together for two years. After two years, each individual farm sat down with Whitney Prestby, Extension Natural Resources Educator and Outreach Specialist for the Fox Demo Farms and an Extension colleague, to provide feedback on their experience.

¹
From www.foxdemofarms.org.



PROGRAM DESIGN

Two teams were selected to participate in the mentorship program. The two mentors were identified by Fox Demo Farms project partners. Both mentors have been involved with the Fox Demo Farms for several years. They were selected for their leadership skills, as well as their knowledge and demonstrated ability to implement conservation practices.

Mentees were identified as individuals who had expressed interest in conservation practices, but who needed more technical support and guidance to reach implementation. Mentee selection happened in two ways. One mentee was selected based on a recommendation from the project team. They were paired with a mentor they knew of, but did not have an existing relationship with. The second team was formed based on a recommendation from the mentor. This team had an existing relationship.

Program requirements:

- Mentorship team met once per year with Fox Demo Farms staff to discuss mentee's conservation goals and identify steps and practices to meet their goals.
- Mentor and mentee communicated once per month throughout the life of the project. They could use their preferred method of communication (e.g., phone, text, email, in-person, etc.)
- Mentor and mentee participated in a program evaluation conducted by Extension to provide feedback on their experience.

Stipends were provided to participants for their time in the pilot and for providing feedback during the program evaluation. Mentors received \$1,000 per year. Mentees received \$500 per year. Stipends were fully funded by Brown County.



PROGRAM GOALS

The program was broken into short-term and medium-term goals. Meeting these goals will help reach the three long-term impacts identified below,

Short-term goals:

- 1.mentees view mentors as advisors and sources of information
- 2.mentees formulate their conservation goals
- 3.mentees have increased confidence in adopting conservation practices
- 4.mentors stay engaged with the Fox Demo Farms project

Medium-term goals:

- 1.mentees feel a sense of community
- 2.increase trust between mentees and agencies
- 3.mentees serve as a source of information for other farmers

Long-term impacts:

- 1.diverse farms and farmers are engaged with the Fox Demo Farms
- 2.Fox Demo Farms Mentorship Pilot Program serves as a model for other Networks
- 3.increased conservation acreage

The pilot mentorship program evaluation was designed using the short and medium-term goals.



METHODOLOGY

The outreach specialist, with consultation from the Evaluation Unit at Extension's Natural Resources Institute, decided on evaluation priorities, data collection methods, and instrument design. The outreach specialist led recruitment efforts, led data collection, conducted data analysis and reporting, and wrote the final report. Interview support was provided by two Extension Natural Resources Educators.

Evaluation data were collected in four in-person interviews with participating farms.:

(Refer to appendix A and B for the interview instruments)

All the data collected were confidential; therefore, this report will not contain any names. Interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed to support analysis and reporting.

RESULTS FROM FARMER INTERVIEWS

Interview data were analyzed using thematic coding. This section summarizes the themes that emerged with supporting quotes from participants. The n-value indicates the frequency in which that code was discussed during the four interviews.

1. PROGRAM VALUE

In describing the value gained, both mentees cited an increase in confidence in their ability to implement conservation practices. Additionally, both identified practices that they focused on over the two-year project.

Confidence with conservation (n=8):

When discussing the mentee's goals for the program and the progress made over the two-year period, both mentees identified increased confidence with conservation as an outcome. Confidence was described in regards to the mentee's ability to implement practices, their confidence in conservation working, and their ability to discuss conservation with an experienced farmer.

"[I'm] a lot more confident now. I feel even more confident to do some multi-species, where before I probably wouldn't have. But now, it's like it's easy. Even no-tilling into [covers], I was nervous, but I just started asking questions to [my mentor] about it."

"My confidence level, no-tilling, especially into a cover crop really got better."

"Confidence of being able to have that one-on-one with another producer and giving you the push to do it and [knowing] that it would be alright."

Example of when mentee consulted mentor about planting in fall. Having the support and reassurance about what he was seeing in his fields increased mentees confidence in conservation practices.

"It's a confidence thing. Is this what I'm supposed to be doing? Is this what it typically looks like?"

Mentee describing their future plans for using conservation practices on their farm.

"I know I'm going to keep with it."

No-till planting (n=4):

No-till planting was identified as a practice that mentees received support adopting during the two-year period.

"We hardly plowed anything. We actually no-tilled quite a bit of the rye in last fall (2022). We used a speed disk to fix some problem areas in the fields, but that was the extent of it."

"Last spring, I [mentee] was no-till planting corn for a different farm, and he does a bunch of cover crops too, and the ground was so hard. I called [mentor] and asked him what to do. He said try this, try this, try this, and if it doesn't work, be patient. Best advice."

Cover crops (n=3)

Planting cover crops was identified as a practice that mentees received support adopting during the two-year period.

"The goal is to get cover crops established and prevent soil erosion problem. [Last year] we did about 175 acres. Everything that was open [was covered]."

"I used the interseeder to get cover crops established. Was happy with how it turned out. Covers were growing. Now looking to figure out how to include manure into interseeded system."



Manure management (n=7)

Manure management was identified as a practice that mentees received support adopting during the two-year period. Additionally, it was identified as the one of the biggest challenges to address.

"The biggest thing is manure and you can get around that. It's hard to convince people that you can, but you can. I was on the fence at the time, but there were a couple times where I asked [my mentor], 'we're done chopping corn, should we get manure out?' and he said get covers crops out and established, then top-dress manure and we actually did that last fall."

"I would say the biggest thing that he [mentee] was facing was how he applies his manure, but still stay the route of no-till, cover crop. He was so used to doing the manure himself, but the equipment he had required to do tillage."

"The thing I would like to address or learn more about is the manure management. It seems to be the trickiest part. We're trying to haul all of this manure in the fall and trying to get your manure hauler on board and for him to have the equipment to do it. It seems to be the next [issue] I want to take on."

"My next goal in cover cropping is incorporating manure management. [Mentor] hasn't shoved me over the edge on that one yet, but a lot of conversations with him about it."

Agency relationship (n=2)

When discussing the relationship between mentees and agency staff, the participants had differing experiences. While one participant identified their relationship had grown as a result of the program, the other acknowledged that the relationship grew, but there was little need to consult agency staff because his mentor was his go-to person.

"Created some more comfort. Definitely a lot easier [to talk to agency staff]."

"That relationship has grown [with agency staff], but I really don't have to [talk to staff] because I've got [my mentor]. For the most part, [my mentor] has taken over that role. I don't really need to ask too many questions [of agency]. It does work that way."

2. PROGRAM STRUCTURE

In describing their experience with the pilot mentorship program, participants identified key components of the program structure that were successful and those that could be improved.

Length of program (n=1):

One mentee identified extending the length of the program as an area for improvement.

"Two years is too [short]. It's not like school, where every day you build off that lesson. We got one year, one cropping season at a time, so two years really isn't enough time to say I've got a good grasp. I'm definitely more comfortable though."

Number of mentees (n=2):

Ability of mentors to take on additional mentees. One farmer identified mentee personality as a factor when deciding how many mentees they could reasonably work with.

"I would take on another one or two [mentees]. I don't feel like I'm overloaded."

"I think it all depends on the person and the farm."



Loose structure (n=5):

Keeping the program flexible and allowing farms to organically grow their relationship was a benefit to the program. Participants identified flexibility in the way they communicated as a benefit of the program and overall success.

"Minimal guidelines is good, as long as I feel like it's getting done. You don't need to make it feel like a chore...if it's a chore, it's going to be hard to get people to do it."

"It was very informal, which I like. There's always enough other stuff going on throughout the day."

"I think it worked [structure of program] just fine the way it was. More structure would probably be harder. If we had to stay within guidelines where communication was restricted [to single forms]."

"It was a good guideline and if he had questions, he felt free to call or text. It worked well. It was an open-line of communication. It wasn't set [times]. If something came up, call or text."

Stipend (n=6)

Mentorship program participants were paid a stipend for their time during the two-year period and for providing feedback in the program evaluation. Participants were asked if they would participate in the program if there were no stipends.

"As long as as it stayed pretty informal, I wouldn't have a problem with that [no-stipend]."

"If communication with farmer required scheduling appointments and traveling, that would require compensation."

"\$1,000 is a good flat rate for mentor time."

"Stipends don't provide financial gain, they offer a cushion if you have mistakes. Treat the money as a scholarship to learn how to incorporate conservation into your operation."

Communication (n=9):

The way in which mentors and mentees communicated was fundamental to the mentorship program. The teams approach to communicating evolved over the course of the two-year period.

Participants cited that communication increased over the course of the program and that the farmer-to-farmer aspect allowed for honest conversations around the practices. Flexible communication allowed for genuine and timely responses. One participant suggested a creative idea to crowd-source information among program partners, as a way to strengthen the program and provide mentees with multiple perspectives.

"Nothing that was scheduled...It was more or less, call me when you need me. Usually, we talk at my shop or his and we throw around ideas."

"[Mentor] was very easy person to talk to and very open about his practices and letting you come on his farm. He didn't mind stopping by [my farm]. He always answered the phone or got back to you quickly. Farming is weather dependent, so you need an answer sooner rather than later and he understood that."

"Communication [visits and conversations] around conversation farming has increased [between the two farmers]."

"It never felt like, 'well I'm supposed to be talking to you.' It was always friendly conversation. Farmer to farmer, say what you want."

"Maybe a mentee asks me a question and I'm not able to get back to him...if he needs a question answered immediately, is there any other secondary source, like a group chat...I'm not always right, what if I make a bad call and maybe it could have been prevented by [a different approach] that I wasn't thinking of."

"I'll continue talking with mentor even after the program to keep confidence level up, even though I've done it. Just to keep moving forward with [practices] and not let myself get scared back out of it."



3. FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

Participants were asked to reflect on the important elements of the program that were most beneficial to their team. Responses covered a broad spectrum including, but not limited to, farmer's personalities aligning, mentee's willingness to grow, farm type and size, mentor's experience, and distance between farms.

Program goals (n=2)

The mentorship program, unlike other outreach strategies, provides farmers with continual support over a sustained period of time to help mentees reach their conservation goals.

"The field day gets the ball rolling, but I don't think it gets them going on it [the practices]. I think the mentorship program finishes it out. It's hard to convince somebody at one field day [to adopt the practices]...The mentorship program allows somebody, even if they only communicate once a month, to really get to the goal of doing conservation."

Meeting at the beginning of the project to discuss conservation goals and understand which direction mentee wants to go.

"It's important to have a general understanding of what you want to accomplish and then both [mentor and mentee] work towards that goal."

Personalities mesh (n=1):

Mentee and mentor's personalities complimented each other and they were able to bond over shared experiences that went beyond farming. Building a relationship with mentor let to confidence in how mentee perceived advice.

"Conversations were not all business. When you're on the phone with someone for an hour, the conversation is generally going to lead into friendly conversation. It built to be more than business, it's more of a friendship now."

Existing relationship (n=3)

Having an existing relationship showed to be valuable. The team with an existing friendship cited this as a benefit because it made the program feel less formal. The team that had been acquaintances, responded that the program helped build their relationship.

"We [mentor and mentee] were good friends to begin with, so it's like sometimes we get into a conversation and it's 45-minutes later. Or he'll stop in or I'll stop over."

Willingness to grow (n=4)

In order for the mentorship program to succeed, mentees must go into it with the mindset that they want to change their practices and be willing to learn by asking questions and paying attention to detail. Mentor did not have to spend time convincing mentee to change, but rather focused on how to change.

"Willingness to learn is a big thing. Willingness to try new things."

"They have to be willing to change. And that's what makes it easy with [my mentee], he's willing to make the changes."

"He had the willingness. He wanted to do better. So I mean, that's a lot of it. He wanted to do better."

"Don't be afraid to ask about the little things. The little minor details are what make a lot of what we do successful...All those little details really add up to success in the end."

Farm type and size (n=3)

Participants acknowledged the type and size of farm may impact the success of the program, specifically for new farms when considering manure management. One mentor acknowledged that they would find value in learning from a cash grain farmer.

"I think it's probably more important that if you're a dairy that you're mentoring a dairy or a cash crop. Definitely wouldn't lean towards a cash crop mentoring a dairy. I don't think they quite get the concept of manure."

"If I want to try something [a new practice], I'm going to try it on 30 acres. If [mentor] wants to try something, it's going to be on 300 acres. Just our size difference, he's gong to see more good and bad."

"I would like to learn more from the grain side of things. I wouldn't mind learning more on how cash grain guys do this without cow manure. How do they get their fertilizer out there...I'd be open to learning more."



Mentor preparation: Teachers (n=1):

Mentors that have a natural teaching ability will be successful in their role.

"I would say I'm kind of the teaching type...it comes easy to me."

Mentor preparation: Experience (n=6)

All four participants cited that mentors need to have experience with the practices to feel prepared as a mentor and for mentees to feel confident in their advice. Responses ranged from years of experience being necessary to any experience that is passed on to another farmer is better than doing nothing.

"Years of experience. Size is a big deal...I run 300 acres, not 3,000 [acres], so I haven't run across all the hiccups in the system. I think I avoided a lot of hiccups working with [my mentor]. Definitely need years."

Mentor had the same experience on his farm, which helped prepare him to pass that knowledge on to his mentee.

"I had been in that situation before...And if I don't know the answers, I'm not afraid to reach out to other mentors or [Demo Farms staff]."

Size of operation impacts the amount and type of experience a mentor has. The more acres, the wider range of soil types and variable conditions.

"With [mentor] it was good because he's a larger producer. He runs a large amount of acres, so he ran across a lot of scenarios. He runs large amounts of acres, scattered pretty wide...he runs a vast amount of different soil types. I just happened to get aligned with the right guy."

"If a [farmer] has experience, I think they would be alright. Anybody helping somebody who's not doing anything is better than the guy not doing anything."

Age (n=2)

Mentor and mentees who are similar in age are able to bond over shared experiences. Participants identified age difference as being a potential barrier to a successful relationship, especially if the mentor is younger than mentee.

"We're close to the same age. I don't think it's necessarily a needed thing, but it fit well. We're from the same generation. "

"If I was paired with a random farmer and [I'm 20 years younger], is he really going to take my advice or not? Even if I have more experience [on specific practice]."

Distance between farms (n=3)

The distance between mentor and mentee farms provided unique influences on teams. Participants identified benefits to being neighbors and to having distance (approximately 30 minutes) between their farms.

"The distance wasn't too big of a barrier. Just with technology, you can FaceTime or he would send me a picture. It's not as good as being in person, but you can get a real good idea of what you got going on. "

"I'll see something that he's doing and he'll either tell me about it or I'll call him and be like, what did you do here. It really works out that we're in close proximity, so we don't have to be as formal."

4. PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING

Participants identified the value of farmers working together, the shared learning that was experienced between both team members, and the conversations that have sparked between mentees, other farmers, and custom operators.

Learning from team (n=2)

Both mentors and mentees identified opportunities for shared learning within their teams.

"Even though [the mentee] is just starting [conservation practices], [mentors] still learn a lot from some of the things he's doing."

"Sometimes he'll [mentor] will ask, 'what would you do?'...and it's looking at it from a different perspective. A second set of eyes kind of helps."

Educating others within the farming community (n=5)

Mentees described opportunities where they discussed conservation with other farmers and custom operators, specifically custom manure haulers.

"My [manure hauler] picked up a dribble bar and I was like 'hey, you know that's really huge for cover crops...it's a really big thing.'"

"Our NWTC (Northeast Wisconsin Technical College) [Farm Business Management] class, which we're both a part of [mentor and mentee], there are few students in there that are younger farmers...and we actually talk about it in class or after class. We sit around and [talk about it]. It's good. It's informal."

"Talk to farms that are curious, but are not doing or have minimal experience with conservation. Tell them, put in rye and no-till it in the spring. It's easy, you're going to save money and get a good crop. As long as you're patient."



CONCLUSION

The Fox Demo Farms Pilot Mentorship Program demonstrated that this approach can be an effective next phase for the Demo Farms Network. It builds upon the original concept of providing farmers with the technical support needed to adopt conservation practices. Pairing Demo Farm farmers with farmers transitioning to conservation allows the program to leverage the knowledge and experience gained throughout the life of the Fox Demo Farms project, while alleviating pressure from agency staff.

The mentees reported increased confidence when discussing conservation with their mentor, which led to an increased confidence in adopting the practices and ultimately more acres on their farm in cover crops and no-till. Additionally, both mentees reported discussing conservation practices with other farmers and custom operators. Therefore, furthering the reach and impact of the Fox Demo Farms.

The mentorship program was designed with minimal guidelines. Members of the Fox Demo Farms team met with the farmers on an annual basis to discuss the mentee's conservation goals. However, we allowed the team to develop their communication plan. All participants cited the importance of keeping the program informal. Flexible guidelines allowed teams to develop an approach that was sustainable and enjoyable for everyone. Participants identified the loose structure as one of the reasons why they would continue with the program.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Tools used:

- Report designed using a template from [canva.com](https://www.canva.com)
- Images provided by Whitney Prestby

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APPENDIX A: MENTOR QUESTIONS

1. Can you describe what your relationship was like with your mentee over the past two years?

- a. Can you describe a situation from the past two years, where you provided guidance to your mentee on a conservation practice(s)?
- b. What do you think is the most important factor for a successful mentor/mentee relationship? (e.g., existing relationship, proximity between farms, similar farming operations, similar conservation goals, etc.)

2. We designed this pilot program with minimal guidelines. Would more structure have been beneficial or did you appreciate the hands-off approach? Please elaborate.

- a. If there were a training to help prepare mentors for this program or others like it, what do you think would be important to cover in that training?
- b. Over the past two years, was there anything that surprised you as a mentor? If yes, please describe. (e.g., a practice your mentee wanted to try, an issue your mentee had that you had never experienced, etc.)

3. As the Demo Farms model continues to evolve, we are looking for ways to keep farms engaged. As someone that has been involved for many years, do you feel that the mentor program is a good way to stay connected? Please elaborate.

- As the mentor, did you find value in coaching your mentee? If yes, please describe how being mentor added value to your farm.
- From your perspective, are there other ways to stay connected to the Demo Farms?

4. Financial compensation for participating in the pilot program was to cover your time spent with conservation staff and providing feedback in this evaluation. If there was no stipend, would you continue to participate as a mentor?

- a. How many mentees do you think is reasonable for a mentor to have at one time?
- b. If a mentor has more than one mentee, do you think they should be compensated for their time? What do you think is a reasonable stipend?

5. Do you have any other recommendations for how to improve this program?

APPENDIX B: MENTEE QUESTIONS

1. Thinking back to two years ago, can you describe your conservation goal(s)?
 - a. Do you feel that you have made progress towards reaching this goal(s)?
2. Can you describe what your relationship has been like with your mentor over the past two years?
 - a. Can you describe a situation from the past two years, where you received guidance from your mentor on a conservation practice(s)?
 - b. Prior to the program, would you feel comfortable calling or stopping by your mentor's farm to ask questions? Has that changed?
 - c. What do you think is the most important factor for a successful mentor/mentee relationship? (e.g., existing relationship, proximity between farms, similar farming operations, similar conservation goals, etc.)
3. We designed this pilot program with minimal guidelines. Would more structure have been beneficial or did you appreciate the hands-off approach? Please elaborate.
 - a. Do you feel that your mentor was prepared to help you implement conservation practices? If possible, please describe a situation that supports your response.
4. During our initial conversation, you mentioned that you wanted to accomplish [insert conservation goal]. How confident are you with [insert conservation practice] today?
 - o Did you consult your mentor on other conservation practices? Please describe.
5. In the past two years, have you talked about conservation practices with a farmer other than your mentor? If yes, please describe the situation.
 - a. If applicable, can you describe a situation from the past two years, where you discussed conservation practices with a farmer who is not using the practice.
6. Since participating in the mentorship program, have you talked about conservation practices with agency staff (e.g., County Land & Water Conservation Departments, NRCS offices, etc.)?
 - a. If applicable, can you describe a situation from the past two years, where you discussed conservation practices with agency staff (e.g., County Land & Water Conservation Departments, NRCS offices, etc.)?
 - b. Do you feel you have a better understanding of the resources and support available to you through the local conservation agencies?
7. After completing the two-year mentorship program, would you recommend it to a friend?
 - a. Financial compensation for participating in the pilot program was to cover your time spent with Extension staff and providing feedback in this evaluation. If there was no financial compensation, would you recommend it to a friend?
8. Do you have any other recommendations for how to improve this program?