

WISCONSIN
DEMONSTRATION FARM NETWORKS



Influence of Demo Farms on Cover Crop Adoption



UNIVERSITY OF
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Natural Resources
Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



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Demonstration Farm Networks



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FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Demonstration Farm Networks

- Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funding through EPA
 - Provided NRCS and partners an opportunity to think outside of the usual program box
- Modern application of a proven approach to conservation
 - Dedicated technical assistance with opportunities for financial assistance (GLRI EQIP)
 - Work with farmers willing to try new conservation practices/systems and share their experiences
 - Spread the word!



Demonstration Farms Network



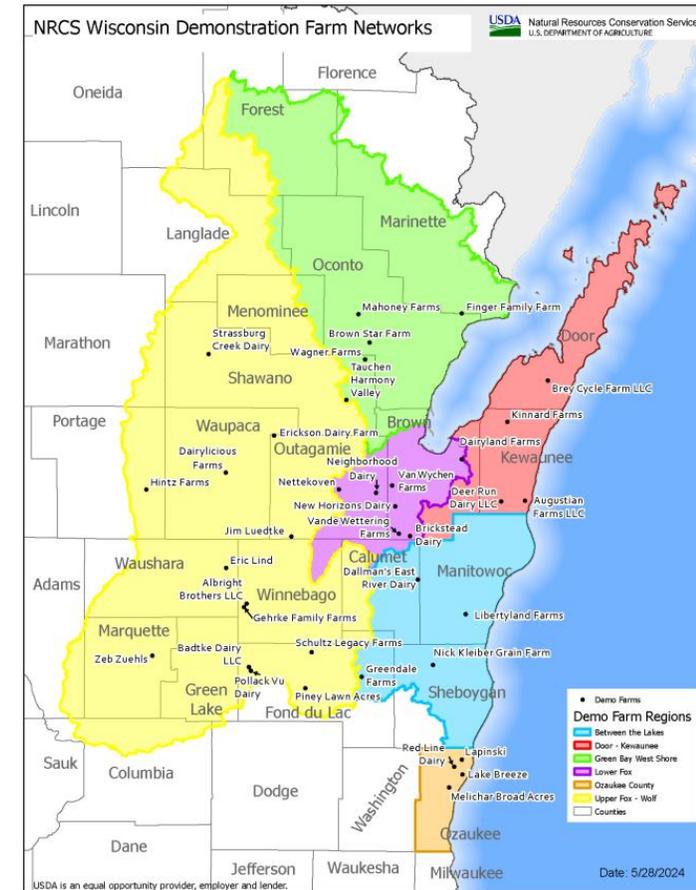
GLRI Demo Farm Networks

- NRCS agreements with partners, starting in FY2014, provide funding for:
 - Project manager (typically an agronomist)
 - Field days, small-group events, signage, farmer meetings, videos, social media, new practices, mentoring programs, etc.
- Accelerates farmer-to-farmer learning to apply conservation that benefits their operations and water quality
- Some networks also utilize:
 - NRCS GLRI field coordinators
 - Extension Natural Resource Educators



Demo Farms Today

- Now a Measure of Progress in GLRI Action Plan IV
- Currently 10 active networks with 64 total farms
 - Indiana, New York, Ohio and Wisconsin
 - One concluded network in Pennsylvania
- Wide range of agreement partners over time
 - Great Lakes Commission, LCDs/SWCDs, Farm Bureau, State Dept. of Ag, AFT, University, RC&D Council
 - Many additional local partners
- Huge thanks to the farmers that make it happen!
- Questions? matt.otto@usda.gov



■ USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.



KEY FINDINGS:

- Shift in social norms: Practices are more common, more socially accepted, & increasingly expected
- Demo Farms expand learning opportunities: Reduce uncertainty for new practices

Innovative Practices Become Common



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Technical Assistance

KEY FINDINGS:

- Program managers: Central nodes of information sharing
- Expand network capacity: Investments in staff (technical & outreach) matter

Peer-to-Peer Learning

KEY FINDINGS:

- Demo Farms cost effective: Technical assistance paired with peer-to-peer learning farm exceeds payment only programs
- Proximity matters: Farmers closer to demo farms have higher adoption rates

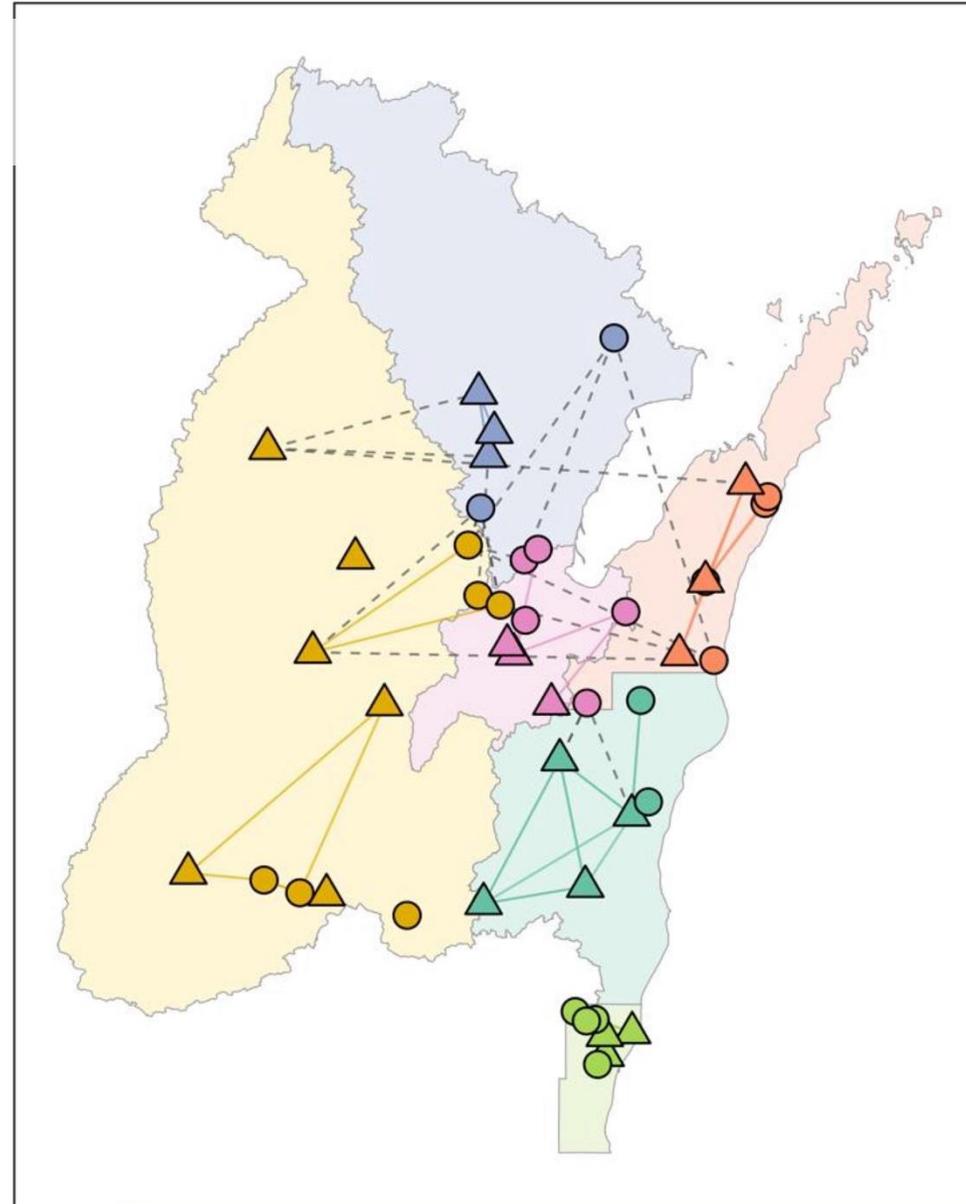
Network Size

KEY FINDINGS:

Social connectedness & geographic proximity: More socially connected farmers adopt more practices. Fewer connections among farmers in large networks

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strategically recruit farmers
- Create smaller networks.
- Consider social boundaries.



Network

- Between the Lakes
- Door-Kewaunee
- Green Bay Westshore
- Lower Fox
- Ozaukee
- Upper Fox-Wolf

Connection type

- Between watersheds
- Within watershed

Watershed

- Between the Lakes
- Door-Kewaunee
- Green Bay Westshore
- Lower Fox
- Ozaukee
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Demo leader

- Farmer
- △ Demo leader

Partnerships

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support (and grow) program staff
- Increase staff for outreach & technical assistance (both NRCS and local agronomists)



Questions?

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