

*River Country Resource Conservation & Development Council's mission is to initiate, facilitate and build connections for the wise use of natural, human and economic resources.*

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*Connector*

## 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Midwest Value Added Agriculture Conference

### Farmers Connect at Local Agriculture Conference

Lindsay Raab  
Erica Zerr

The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Midwest Value Added Agriculture Conference (MVAAC) will draw over 300 individuals to Wisconsin's state capitol January 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> 2011. The conference is themed *Cultivating Farm Profitability* and will be held at the Sheraton Hotel in Madison. Joel Salatin of Polyface Farm, featured in the Academy Award nominated film *Food Inc.* and the New York Times Bestselling book *The Omnivore's Dilemma* by Michael Pollan, will give the Thursday keynote address.

The MVAAC is an opportunity for farmers, non-profit staff, cooperative staff, agribusiness reps and agency folks to make connections, as well as learn from each other about how to best address real-life farm matters. Conference tracks include Urban Agriculture, Adding Value through Organics, Food Processing, Value Chain Management, and Marketing for a total of 32 breakout sessions. The conference will also feature networking sessions and a regional tradeshow.

Salatin's presentation is entitled *Ballet in the Pasture*, a theatrical performance which will mix humor with bomb-shell food system analysis. Salatin will also share his story of on-farm processing at Polyface Farm in a breakout session Thursday morning and will host a Q&A session for producers in the afternoon.

On Friday, the conference will welcome Stan Gruszynski of USDA Rural Development as its keynote speaker.

The conference will also serve host to the 2009 documentary film *FRESH*, directed by Ana Sofia Joanes. The film will screen in conjunction with dinner beginning at 5:30 p.m. Thursday.

The conference tradeshow will host 40 booths, with some vendors selling product and others providing educational materials and farm resources. Over 80% of the food that will be served at the conference is being sourced from local producers.

A big thank you to all our conference sponsors and in-kind donors! This event would not exist without you! To view the complete list of sponsors and donors please visit our website: <http://www.rivercountryrcd.org/v/alad.html>

## Upcoming Events

01/15/2011

**Native Prairie Seed Orders Due**  
*For more information call Erica at 715-579-5098*

01/18/2011

**Elk Creek Stakeholders Meeting 1:00 PM**  
*Location to be determined*  
*For more information contact Kirsten at 715-834-9672, ext. 119*

01/27 - 28/2011

**Value Added Ag Conference**  
*Sheraton Hotel*  
*Madison, WI*  
**Agricultural and business information, education, and networking opportunities**  
*For more information call Lindsay at 715-579-522*

02/03/2011

**Board of Directors Meeting**  
*Altoona Office 1:00 PM*  
**Monthly board meeting is open everyone.**  
*For more information call Kristin at 715-834-9672, ext. 118*

02/08/11

**Winter Workshop w/Doug Gunnick - Soil Nutrition & Fertility/Grazing Class I Land Club 10 - Durand, WI**  
*9:30AM - 3:00 PM*  
**Register by 02/01/11- \$25**  
**Register after 02/01/11 \$30**

03/11/2011

**West Central WI Spring Grazing Conference**  
*Metropolis Resort/Action City - Eau Claire, WI*  
*9:00AM - 4:00 PM*  
**Register by 03/02/11- \$30**  
**Register after 03/02/11 \$35**

03/24/11

**Spring Discussion Group**  
*Spring Valley Banquet Hall*  
**Mike Sabel, Grazing & Economic Focus Groups**  
*Spring Valley, WI*  
**6:00 PM to 8:00 PM**

## **Prairie Seed Sale**

*Erica Zerr*

River Country RC&D is gearing up for their bulk prairie seed sale for the 2011 planting season. As a service to local landowners, River Country collects orders, solicits bids from nurseries, orders seed, and weighs out each individual order. The prices are typically less expensive due to the bulk order process. **New this year is CRP native pollinator mixes based on soil type.**

Orders are due January 15<sup>th</sup> and forms are available on the website,  
<http://www.rivercountryrcd.org/Seed.html>

For more information please contact Erica at 715-579-5098 or emzerr@rivercountryrcd.org

## **Welcome To Our New Coordinator**

*Linda Luberda*

Kristin Westad joined NRCS as the new River Country RC&D Coordinator October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010. She previously worked as a biologist for the US Fish & Wildlife Service in Ohio and as project coordinator of the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area at Southwest Badger RC&D in Dodgeville, WI. She has extensive experience as a botanist and field researcher.

The directors and staff extend an enthusiastic welcome to Kristin and look forward to all she has to contribute to River Country RC&D Council!

## **Grow Your Energy Workshop**

*Nancy Bergman*

With \$3.00 gas at the pumps, the December Grow Your Energy Workshop was very timely. The venue was Club 95 in Hixton, WI on December 9. Five speakers gave presentations and practical information on ways to produce energy to run on-farm operations. Steve Bertjens from Southwest Badger RC&D spoke on best management practices for establishing switchgrass in Wisconsin. Brett Hulsey of Better Environmental Solutions addressed the topic of how farmers can lead the way to energy independence. Over the dinner hour Dwight Swenson gave a presentation on the research at Chippewa Valley Technical College on producing biodiesel. Vance Haugen from UW-Extension gave a very interesting and spirited talk on ultra small scale farm biogas production. Last but not least, Scott Robinson from Chippewa Valley Alternative Energy ([www.cvalte.com](http://www.cvalte.com)) brought in a pelletizing machine and an oil press which he demonstrated for the group.



The workshop sent attendees home with new ideas and challenges that can help them to lower their energy costs.

Sponsored by the Driftless Area Initiative and the Department of Energy, the second Grow Your Energy Workshop was a terrific opportunity to discover and discuss new ideas for energy independence.

## Managed Intensive Grazing Education

*Mary C. Anderson*

*Brian Brezinski*

*Haly Schulz*

*Kevin Mahalko*

The Chippewa Valley, Coulee and St. Croix Graziers Networks had active summer and fall 2010 event schedules. Due to a drop in grant funding levels this year, activities had to be streamlined and made even more efficient. We focused heavily on Pasture Walks at the request of our Network Graziers. In order to make the best use of limited resources, we partnered to share responsibilities and limit the amount of prep time needed for events. We cut the amount of time and money spent on mailings and handouts while still promoting the events through word of mouth, fliers at events, newspaper releases, radio announcements and e-mails. We combined education (classroom) events with Pasture Walks.

Partnerships also helped with the large crowds and high interest we experienced. We truly have a need to meet in providing these Pasture Walks.

3D Farms, Inc. Pasture Walk in Menomonie highlighted management & various pictures taken of livestock depredated by the Lambs Creek wolf pack. Jim Miller, USDA – APHIS Wildlife Services representative, focused on livestock depredation by wolves, how to handle it, who to call, & their role in investigating livestock depredations. Jim was the attending assistant to the livestock depredations that occurred last summer on 3D Farm & Bud Mecuskers farm, a neighboring grass based dairy farm.

Pasture walk at RDJ's Farm included an Organic Valley regional representative, veterinarian, and Midwest Bio-Ag representatives.

Presentations at the 2010 Farm Technology Days included showcasing one farm from each of the three grazing networks. MiG in Action posters of each farm included; farm summaries, maps & multiple pictures of MiG in action. Showcased farms were Chuck Flodquist (St. Croix Valley), Jim & Bonnie Jackson (Chippewa Valley) & Wagner Family Farm (Coulee Valley).

Our Network Graziers contributed heavily to the success of the last six months by sharing their knowledge of Managed Grazing. Grazing was promoted at the 2010 Energy Fair in Polk County, and UW Eau Claire Nursing outreach students visited a grazing farm. These were golden opportunities to work with people who are as

passionate about human and environmental health as most graziers are. Additional activities included a planning meeting for Blue Skies, Greener Pastures coordinated by Grassworks & UW Madison – CIAS that was held November 3rd in Eau Claire.

**Thank you to all who opened your farms and hosted pasture walks and events! Thank you to all who attended these events and shared your questions and knowledge with us!**

Please see the Upcoming Events column and the website for grazing event information.

The Grazing Educators did their best to line up quality events efficiently so there will be money available for future Network activities. We will need much continued cooperation and support to keep the Networks successful and funded in the future.

## Good-bye to Some Friends

*Linda Luberda*

Longtime board members LaVerne Crapser and Gene Ruetz recently passed away. Both of these wonderful gentlemen worked tirelessly on behalf of River Country and its mission. We will miss both of them and their active involvement.



*LaVerne*



*Gene*

## **Elk Creek Watershed Stakeholders Group Working On Conservation Program**

*Kirsten Cahow-Scholtes*

Elk Creek has a group of stakeholders that have been meeting to develop a producer led conservation program to help reduce sedimentation and erosion to the Elk Creek Watershed. The group has met three times this fall and plan on meeting regularly to develop a program that will assist landowners with implementing conservation. The goal of the project is to identify barriers that make it difficult to implement conservation on their land, as well as, other issues facing the watershed, such as; stream bank erosion, habitat loss and in-stream sediment transport. We have collected comments from landowners about what the issues and needs are and the barriers encountered. We are working with many producers one-on-one to hear more about their needs. The end result will be a conservation program developed from the ground up to address needs and issues specifically for the Elk Creek Watershed.



With several very large storm events that have impacted the area this year many have witnessed the extreme sediment and erosion potential in this watershed. Once the Stakeholder group develops a conservation plan that works for the watershed, RC&D will seek funding and move forward with solving some of the issues that could degrade Elk Creek and its tributaries if left untreated.

## **Grant Township Farmer Led Pilot Project Looking To Expand**

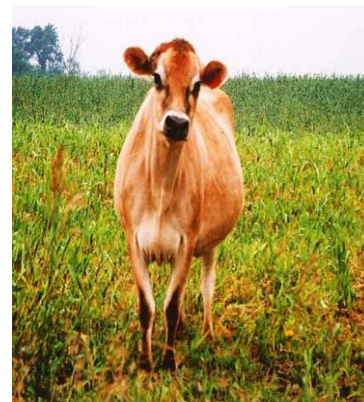
*Kirsten Cahow-Scholtes*

A pilot project located in Grant Township of Dunn County is looking to expand outside the Township lines. The collaborative project was initiated by River Country RC&D and the Dunn County Land Conservation Department, and funded through Xcel Energy and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The Grant Township Pilot Project was designed with the goal of reducing phosphorus and sediment loads to the Red Cedar River. The pilot project provided funds for soil testing and fertility management and provided use of a no-till drill and no-till corn planter to all who participated in the project. In addition, two field days were conducted each year to showcase no-till successes and issues in Grant Township. The 2010 No-till Field Day was held at Brian Johnson's farm, who planted both no-till corn and soy over the past two years as a part of the project.



The 2010 field day was attended by 42 participants, including farmers and local interested community members. To date, the project has provided soil tests for 34 farmers totaling 3,450 acres and assisted 17 farmers in planting 656 acres of no-till corn and 6 farmers planting 710 acres with no-till soybeans. The project also assists farmers in evaluating their yields and overall profitability of individual fields planted to better reduce their bottom lines and ensure economic and environmental sustainability.

With the successes in Grant Township, the Steering Committee who developed the pilot project is looking to expand the project out three miles into the surrounding townships of Sand Creek, Otter Creek and Colfax this year.



**Please make an investment in our community by making a gift to the River Country RC&D Giving Circle!**

\_\_\_\_\_ River and Country Society (\$5000 or more)

\_\_\_\_\_ Silver Circle (\$500-\$999)

\_\_\_\_\_ Diamond Circle (\$2500 - \$4999)

\_\_\_\_\_ Bronze Circle (\$150-\$499)

\_\_\_\_\_ Platinum Circle (\$1500-\$2499)

\_\_\_\_\_ Associate Circle (\$35-\$149)

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\_\_\_\_\_ Credit Card via PayPal (email address required) \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Alt. Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I/We wish to remain anonymous.



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