

Wetlands Reserve Program



Kristin Westad (L), NRCS Easement Biologist visits the beautiful wetland restoration on the Elsbeth Fuchs farm in Waterloo, WI.

A little bit of paradise

It was 1964 when Elsbeth and Siegfried Fuchs bought a 138-acre farm in Waterloo, Wisconsin and started dairy farming. As an immigrant from Prussia, Elsbeth moved to America looking for a new life, and found a dream. Elsbeth and Siegfried farmed together until he passed in 2008. Siegfried's wish was to return the land back to a natural state. In 2009, Elsbeth saw a special on Wisconsin Public Television highlighting the NRCS Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). She was excited to learn more about WRP and how she might be able to participate in the program, so she contacted her local NRCS office.

The property was a perfect fit for the program. A permanent conservation easement was placed on 85 acres of the farm. The restoration included tree removal and filling of existing ditches, removal of water diversions, wetland scrapes and establishment of micro-topography along with seeding the uplands with native plant species. All these efforts will result in new wildlife habitat, shallow marshes, floodplain forest and upland prairies. Both permanent open water and seasonal pools will draw waterfowl and wildlife.

The 4000-acre Waterloo Wildlife Management Area is within 1.5 miles of this farm. This protected area contains a diverse range of habitat areas including sedge meadow, open water marsh, fens, hardwoods, native prairie-just to name a few. The Fuchs wetland restoration is a great addition to this neighboring wildlife area.

So now Elsbeth can keep the farm in nice condition, keeps a beautiful garden, and has been able to help out her family with their finances. Forty-five acres of the remaining acreage is rented for crops because she feels the "whole world is in turmoil, and people look to America to lead and grow food to feed the world."

Siegfried always wanted to give back to America and told Elsbeth that "everyone needs to have a little bit of paradise." Now there is.

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