

# Fond du Lac County Success Story

## Soil Quality Leads to Water Quality

### Background

Josh Hiemstra, of Hiemstra Dairy Farm, has been farming all of his life. He farms in partnership with his wife, 2 children and father near Brandon, Wisconsin. Hiemstra Dairy milks 180 Holsteins and farms 530 acres. Josh has been very conscious of making sure that his operation uses sound conservation practices that help his land, while also being sustainable.

### Highlights

Hiemstra Dairy is located in the Upper Rock River watershed. The Rock River is a direct tributary to the Horicon Marsh (a nationally recognized wildlife marsh). Therefore, water quality is a priority to Josh. There are various ways to improve water quality.

**Install grass waterways and grass buffers to filter surface water runoff.** Hiemstra Dairy has worked with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for technical assistance and has installed these practices on their landscape as participants in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Reserve Program.

**Manage the timing rate and location of manure and fertilizers by following a nutrient management plan.** Hiemstra Dairy worked very closely with the local Fond du Lac Conservation Department in writing, reviewing and effectively following a nutrient management plan. This reduces the chance of over application and manure runoff.

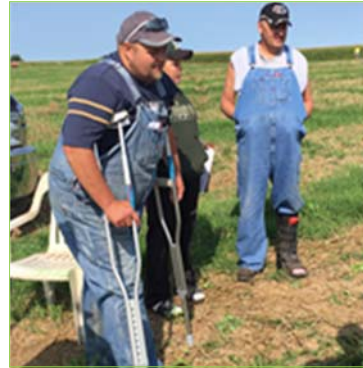
**Improve soil quality through the use of cover crops.** Hiemstra Dairy partnered with the NRCS to try various cover crops on their landscape, through both the EQIP and Conservation Stewardship Program, as well as on their own. Josh believes the benefits are tremendous. From reducing erosion and being used as a green manure, to improving filtration and soil health, cover crops provide great benefits. Josh believes in cover crops as a way to improve water quality.

Josh has become an advocate for cover crops and has done his best to inform others of what he has learned. He had a blog story published in the May 2017 Agri-View Newspaper, which detailed the improvements his land saw after planting cover crops. Hiemstra Dairy also hosted a "Soil Quality Leads to Water Quality" Field Day on August 24, 2017. The farm was split in to various



Pictured above in the banner is an earthworm burrowing back into a hole.

Pictured below is a field planted to a cover crop mix consisting of tillage radish, clover, sorghum and peas.



Pictured above are Joshua Hiemstra, his son, Mason, and father, Robert, speaking to attendees at the Soil Quality Leads to Water Quality Field Day, hosted by the farm.



stations highlighting different conservation practices that were installed. Each station was facilitated by a Fond du Lac LWCD or NRCS staff person to explain the conservation practice, the benefits and also cost share opportunities through programs like CRP, CSP and EQIP. The station most highlighted was cover crops.

When speaking about Hiemstra Dairy, Cory Drummond, Fond du Lac NRCS District Conservationist says, "Josh is a true steward of the land, and the fact that he has been willing to speak to others about things he learned, especially about cover crops and soil health, is a better form of promotion than I could ever provide."

### Future Plans

Josh is starting to tissue test the Dairy's corn to evaluate the uptake of nutrients and diagnose nutrient problems through the CSP program. This may lead to changes in future plans in terms of rotation and/or manure management. He's also performing split Nitrogen applications as well as adjusting the timing of his nutrients to no more than 30 days.

Wisconsin Natural Resources Conservation Service

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