

# Manitowoc County Success from the Field

## Hidden Valley Farm Preserves Land for Wildlife



### Background

Tucked back in the rolling terrain of Manitowoc county is Hidden Valley Farm & Woolen Mill ran by Paul and Carol Wagner. They raise sheep for both quality wool production as well as meat sales. The operation consists of around 400 sheep grazed on pasture land, several forested acres and a farmstead where they sell their products. The forested acres have an extensive nature hiking trail that is enjoyed by the couple as well as their extended family. As a passionate environmentalist, Paul makes every effort to improve and maintain the land to preserve it's natural beauty for the future generations.

### Highlights

Paul has created a welcoming environment for a variety of wildlife through the utilization of the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Through EQIP, Paul was able to replace his existing fence with a more reliable one that restricts the animals access to the woodlands. This allowed the vegetation to regrow and wildlife to return to these areas. Wagner noted the ease that the new fence has given him; as he increases in age, it is helping him manage the work load of shepherding his flock and he is excited to continue for many more years. The EQIP program has allowed him to succeed both financially and in managing his animals.

With over 70 acres in pasture, Paul has partnered with a local beef producer to rotationally graze both the sheep and cattle in the same system. This has cut down on parasite and disease pressures to the herds, as well as dramatically improved his pastures' productivity. Not only has the forage doubled in on some fields, there is also virtually no runoff or erosion from his properties, thus improving the water quality. The pasture grasses also serve as a home to many native grassland birds as well as turkeys, deer, and a variety of other critters.

### Future Plans

Wagner continues to develop and enhance the property, with the hopes of providing inspiration for others to do the same. "Never think an idea isn't doable," Wagner advises. He continues to be an innovator in how he runs his operation and has ideas to develop a wetland to further promote wildlife habitat and grassland birds while maintaining a productive grazing operation.



Paul Wagner (left) and NRCS District Conservationist Matt Rataczak (right) in front of a paddock of lambs grazing. On the Hidden Valley Farm.



The Hidden Valley Farm and Woolen Mill sign welcoming visitors to the homestead.



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