

# Adams County Success from the Field

## Innovative Adoptions ‘BeeCome’ Pollinator Habitat

### Background

Over the past 50 years, Wallendal Farms has always looked for ways to improve the way they farm. Today, the 3rd generation family farm operates about 3,300 acres of irrigated cropland located in Grand Marsh, Wisconsin. Around 550 acres is organic and another 250 acres is transitioning to organic. Not only do they grow an impressive array of 15 different crop types, ranging from alfalfa to watermelon, they also have a long history of innovation. This is top on their list of the farm’s core values. A few examples of Wallendal Farm’s commitment to forward thinking sustainable agriculture has been their 40-year relationship with on-farm UW-research, their early adoption of strip-till/no-till practices in the mid 80s, their precision agriculture experiments conducted with NASA in 1988 and their 12-acre on-farm research plot.

### Program Successes

Wallendal Farms demonstrates two more of their core values of adaptability and sustainability, working to provide and promote habitat for bee and native pollinators on their farm. In 2018, as part of their elected enhancements through a Conservation Stewardship Program contract, they established about two acres of pollinator habitat. These acres are only a fraction of the pollinator habitat acres they have established on their own. Wallendal’s also have used interseeded blooming cover crops to help attract pollinators out in the fields. Signs are planned to be posted by some of their on-farm pollinator habitats. “We hope that by providing additional habitat for these pollinators and making others aware of their importance, our neighbors will continue to establish pollinator plantings,” said Megan Wallendal from Wallendal Farms. And so far, by the comments and inquires from these plantings, the neighbors and custom applicators are already taking notice of these efforts. As Wisconsin’s largest pumpkin grower, with over 300 combined acres of pumpkins, squash, cucumbers and watermelons, pollinators on Wallendal Farms fit into the category of ‘busy bees’. Caleb Zahn, District Conservationist commented, “Pollinators play an important role in the production of many crops grown in our area including apples, blueberries, cranberries, cucumbers, melons and onions. This is why you may typically see rented hives in the area to aid in the pollination of these crops. Positive



Wallendal Farms promotes pollinator improvements and awareness with signs near their habitat plantings.

improvements for pollinator habitat can result in improvements for pollination and better yields.”

### Future Plans

Along with Wallendal Farms future plans to establish additional acres of pollinator habitat, they continue to work on farm research in cover crop trails, look to improve energy efficiencies in their operation and are fine tuning variable rate and precision agricultural practices with emerging technologies in precision irrigation and unmanned aerial vehicles. They are also working on developing their operation to grow, clean and source organic cover crop seeds to increase seed availability.



Interseeded buckwheat cover crop in an organic cucumber field provides a resting place for a Monarch.

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