

# Monroe County Success from the Field

## New Landowners Help Save Dam for Wildlife

### Background

In 2017, Jennifer and her husband purchased some land in Monroe County, Wisconsin. One of the selling points was the dam for wildlife on the property. The existing dam was in need of repair. The previous owner had contacted the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) about the dam, but since he was looking to sell the property, he had decided to hold off on repairs. Technicians from the USDA Service Center assessed the dam and found water was leaking through the corrugated metal pipe that served as the outlet and was causing soil erosion. The site had already lost over 20 tons of soil due to this pipe failure. The dam was originally installed in 1995, but was not built to USDA NRCS standards. To some of us that doesn't sound very old, but it was over 20 years ago!

### Program Successes

The previous owner suggested Jennifer contact the NRCS about the problem with the dam. Jennifer had never worked with USDA staff before, but she made a phone call and NRCS was willing to partner in the repair project. "The application process was easy and Dan Gunderson, NRCS Civil Engineering Technician, was great to work with," explained Jennifer. After soliciting four bids, the landowner chose and hired a contractor to complete the construction. The contractor spent about three and a half weeks on-site for the repairs. One evening during construction, the area received five inches of rain, enough to make the site muddy and slippery. Rain delayed the project a few times because the soils need to be compacted while working. Dams that are built to NRCS standards are expected to last at least 15 years. There will always be maintenance that is up to the landowners, such as inspecting the dam after every storm event, keeping the pipe clear of debris, removing debris and sediment from storms and keeping the berm mowed and free of woody plants.

### Future Plans

Jennifer and her husband intend to expand the wildlife value the dam offers. There may be some plantings for wildlife in the future, but for now, the peace of mind that the dam is repaired meets their immediate goals.



**Above:** The dam in 2017, showing the gully washing out along the berm. The vertical pipe is set below the top of the berm so water would leave through the pipe rather than over the top of the berm if the horizontal pipe plugged or couldn't carry water fast enough.

**Below:** After repairs are done, the embankment and borrow area are seeded and mulched.

