

# Fond du Lac County Success from the Field

## Goats Suppress Weeds and Invasive Brush

### Background

Wayne Hass, of Eden, Wisconsin, has three loves in his life: (1) his family, including his lovely wife, Kathy, (2) producing healthy vegetables while finding ways to make them available locally in the area and (3) wildlife, wildlife, wildlife!

### Highlights

Wayne is a shining example that you do not have to own a large plot of land to make a positive impact. Wayne and Kathy own three acres of tillable land. Wayne grows popcorn, peas and incorporates hay in his rotation to reduce erosion. Wayne began working with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in 2012. "I made the decision to grow vegetables so that I could sell them at Farmers Markets and also become a member of a CSA," explained Hass. "I was having a tough time with the varying Wisconsin spring and fall weather, which was really cutting into my growing season. Luckily, I found out about the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and qualified for assistance to build a seasonal high tunnel." The seasonal high tunnel has allowed Wayne to grow produce roughly 8-9 months out of the year. After the positive experience building the high tunnel, Wayne gave Cory Drummond, NRCS District Conservationist in Fond du Lac, a tour of his 12-acre woodlands, which the Milwaukee River runs through. Wayne explains, "I love my woods and wildlife land; the land is something I enjoy with my family. To watch nature and the animals that inhabit that land with my children and my grandchildren brings me joy. There are tons of oaks, and pines, as well as prairie grasses on my wildlife land. One thing we also have a lot of is buckthorn, which is so invasive!" Drummond explains further, "When Wayne showed me his non-industrial private forest land (NIPF), you could see the great wildlife value of his existing stands and cover. I thought that the land would be perfect for the NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)." Wayne agreed, enrolled in the program and now manages the buckthorn with biological measures: goats!

"I began the CSP program in 2015. The first year that I did biological suppression of buckthorn, I rented two goats. I was amazed at how much buckthorn they were able to graze. Every year since, I've increased the amount of head I use. Now I actually own six goats in addition to renting six. Those 12 goats have really help me make gains on reducing buckthorn, without the need of applying chemicals. I am not certified organic, but I do not use chemicals on my cropland or forest land, especially with the land being located right along the river."

In addition to the work Wayne has done to address buckthorn on his land, he's putting his seasonal high tunnel to a great



**Wayne Hass uses three of his 12 goats as biological suppressors of herbaceous weeds and brush.**

new use! Wayne works with Mahala's Hope, a transitional recovery residence imparting coping and life skills for people to return to their communities and live independently. Clients are able to participate and help Wayne with organic gardening. They learn skills about gardening and healthy eating, working with him throughout the season to plant, maintain and harvest produce, along with other tasks he needs. Wayne is happy to help others and Mahala's Hope is thankful for community partners, like Wayne, who help further their mission.

### Future Plans

Wayne has one more year left on his CSP contract, but says he would definitely sign-up again if given the opportunity. Wayne is also working with Drummond to develop a seeding plan for wildlife pollinator habitat. "Whether you are a 1,000-acre farm or a 20-acre farm, we all leave a footprint. Wayne is definitely doing his part to conserve and protect the resources on his farm," says Drummond.

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