

Agriculture



Agriculture plays a significant role in Washington County's economy and landscape. Most farms are family-owned, and the county is known for its strong dairy and livestock production, along with key crops like corn, soybeans, hay, and wheat. Conservation practices such as no-till farming and cover cropping are widely used to promote sustainability and improve water quality. The Extension Agriculture team ensures that feasible, science based practices are accessible to farmers, managers and workers to improve sustainability and profitability of farms.

Liz Gartman, Regional Crops Educator

An article for the Midwest Forage Association's "Clippings" e-Newsletter targeted towards forage growers, agency staff, researchers and agribusiness consultants. The article focused on the Wisconsin Cover Crop Data Network, an opportunity for cover crop growers to quantify their cover crop biomass while also receiving forage quality analysis metrics. The goal of this article was to create more awareness of the program and tools and seek new collaborators for the project moving forward.

- The Midwest Forage Association publishes a monthly e-Newsletter, the "Clippings." They look to Extension specialists, researchers and industry to provide relevant, forage related content for this newsletter.
- The MFA reached out to me to provide an article and this was an excellent opportunity to share the Wisconsin Cover Crop Data Network with a wider audience that can learn from the work being done here in Wisconsin. I reached out to Dan Marzu, our Extension lead on the Wisconsin Cover Crop Data Network to get more information regarding the project. Dan provided key links and information about the project and I pulled together the article, with Dan providing his expertise in reviewing the content and purpose of the project.
- The MFA Clippings are e-mailed to all MFA members, and are accessible to others online. This article was also linked in the Hay & Forage Growers "Hay Pellets" listing which increased our reach to those receiving that e-Newsletter.

A Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program study to determine the nitrogen (N) credit from legume-dominated cover crop mixtures, which also include a small percentage of grass species, to corn for grain when planted following small-grain harvest the preceding year. The results from this statewide study will help growers and researchers make better informed nitrogen management decisions for corn grain planted following legume cover crops, potentially reducing fertilizer costs and excess nitrogen losses.

- The Nitrogen Optimization Pilot program offers growers 2 year grants to study a farmer asked question related to nitrogen management in various field crops. Many growers are planting a legume cover crop following winter wheat but can not quantify the potential nitrogen available to the spring planted corn crop.
- A team of Extension educators across the state coordinated with growers to secure grant funding and are executing an NOPP study that will help discover the opportunity to reduce nitrogen inputs following a legume cover crop. Educators have partnered with the Michael Fields Institute and local county land conservation to collect and measure soil nitrates, cover crop biomass and corn grain to quantify the amount of nitrogen in the system and determine where crop response to nitrogen increases or plateaus.
- Coordinating with ten growers across the state (including one in Washington County) will provide data that will help us better understand this system in a variety of environmental conditions and soil types.

Positive Youth Development



4-H empowers youth to reach their full potential working and learning in partnership with caring adults. 4-H involves youth in project-based education. Through project learning, youth can explore their interests ("sparks") and master new skills. 4-H projects are meant to be hands-on to create a memorable learning experience. Since 4-H started in the early 1900s, youth have learned by doing. This hands-on process allows youth to understand not only how to do something but also why they are doing it. Beyond traditional clubs and projects, Washington County 4-H is expanding opportunities for youth to explore career pathways through immersive career exploration, connections with local industries, and innovative STEM programming. These experiences inspire curiosity, build confidence, and prepare young people for success in school, work, and life.

Kelly Dione, 4-H Program Educator & Ron Jakubisin, 4-H Program Educator

An ongoing after-school STEM program for youth at the Boys and Girls Club, where participants explore learning concepts through STEM activities, including LEGO education challenges. (Kelly Dione)

- Washington County School Districts have robust pathways programming offered for high school students that include Youth Apprenticeship programs and career related clubs and organizations that students can join in after-school. The High School also provides a curriculum that supports career pathways in health care and manufacturing and engineering. Students in elementary and middle school have less opportunities for career exploration in after-school programming that would interest students in STEM careers. West Bend School District had to rescind an offer to partner this fall and Kewaskum School District had staff turnover and has new leadership this fall. Therefore programming needed to pivot to other youth organizations like Boys and Girls Club, who serve mostly elementary and middle school students. Washington County 4-H is partnering with Boys and Girls Club of Washington County to offer after-school programs for youth in K-8th grade. These programs highlight the full scope of 4-H opportunities and offer experiential learning that connects new skills to real-world careers. This effort will provide new opportunities for Boys and Girls Club youth to engage and learn about STEM careers and other 4-H opportunities.

Leadership and teambuilding classroom presentations to fourth grade youth in collaboration with West Bend School Counselors. The purpose of this effort is to improve problem-solving strategies, focusing on team building, consensus building, and experiential team-work while providing an opportunity for youth to learn more about 4-H and build relationships with school personnel. (Kelly Dione, Ron Jakubisin)

- Based on a Needs Assessment conducted in January/February 2025, youth are in need of intentional programming to build communication and collaboration skills. There is also a need to build awareness of opportunities 4-H can offer in Career and College readiness as well as STEM programming in the younger grades of elementary and middle school. Continued partnership with the elementary schools in West Bend to deliver programming to youth to build relationships and promote 4-H and career and college readiness skills through a series of leadership workshops. The school partnership has created a continued trusting relationship in which the school requested 4-H to come to a family fun night and promote our 4-H STEM Day Camps and other 4-H club and project materials.

A Tri County Science Expedition to UW-Madison for 4-H youth in grades 6–13 in collaboration with Washington, Ozaukee, and Fond du Lac Counties. The goal is to engage participants in hands-on exploration of STEM topics including biotechnology, physics, chemistry, agriculture, geology, and college/career preparation, so that youth build confidence in scientific inquiry and discover potential career pathways in STEM fields. (Kelly Dione)

- Youth have limited access to immersive STEM experiences that connect classroom learning to real-world applications. There is a growing need to provide opportunities that spark interest in science and help youth envision future careers in STEM fields. This planning effort responds to requests from educators and families for more collaborative, hands-on STEM programming. We developed a Tri County Science Expedition that will bring together youth from three counties for immersive STEM learning. The planning team is coordinating logistics, designing hands-on activities in biotechnology, physics, chemistry, agriculture, and geology, and engaging UW-Madison faculty and staff to support college and career readiness sessions. The program will include campus visit, lab tours, and interactive workshops to foster scientific curiosity and career exploration. The anticipated outcomes include increased youth confidence in scientific inquiry, greater awareness of STEM career pathways, and stronger connections between youth and higher education institutions. By engaging in hands-on STEM activities and interacting with professionals, youth will gain practical skills and envision future possibilities in science-related fields. This effort supports broader goals of workforce development and educational equity by expanding access to high-quality STEM programming.

A monthly newsletter for all Wash Co 4-H families where information about all club activities, countywide projects, resources and announcements are contributed by and distributed to 4-H families that offer opportunities to increase skills and engage in 4-H activities (Ron Jakubisin)

- With 16 Clubs and 20 Countywide projects the monthly Cloverline Newsletter brings together current 4-H resources, educational events and announcements which they can take advantage of in one newsletter which is emailed and posted on the 4-H county website Monthly Cloverline Newsletter to all 4-H families, volunteers and leaders which includes Upcoming Events & Opportunities; Updates and Reminders; Project News; Attn: Club & Project Leader info; and Submitted News (all clubs/projects invited to submit). Distributed via 4HOnline database and posted on webpage for all to access. Newsletter keeps 4-H members informed of opportunities to learn, grow and engage as a county program. Monthly newsletter is emailed and posted on county 4-H website for easy reference for families and 4-H members

Weekly Club Leader Update email blast. Features 3 (new) priorities, announcements, and/or resources for 4H volunteers serving as Club and Project Leaders to increase the capacity of volunteers to deliver 4-H club and project activities. (Ron Jakubisin)

- The need for this effort was prompted by continual requests for information and resources by the Washington County 4-H Club Leaders, Project leaders, and parents. Additionally, events both local and statewide are shared on a web-based calendar. Weekly Club Leader Update email blast. Features 3 (new) priorities, announcements, and/or resources for 4H volunteers serving as Club and Project Leaders. Volunteers have stated in recent leaders meeting that Weekly Club Leader Updates are valuable and the 4-H Office should continue with this

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