

## SRPF partners with Sand County Foundation for a soil health field day



Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers member, Tom Stemper of Stemper Grain and Hay, hosted a soil health field day in collaboration with the Sand County Foundation in September. Attendees discussed different conservation practices, including utilizing a cover crop mix after wheat, implementing no-tillage with alfalfa and interseeding into corn. Johnsonville, another SRPF conservation project partner, sponsored lunch and a door prize drawing.

Tricia Verville of the Sand County Foundation shared progress on the group's Performance Based Conservation project.

"Nutrient management has proven to be a powerful and effective strategy on all four farms", Verville says.

At Stemper Grain and Hay, Stemper planted a cover crop mix of buckwheat, clover, turnips, sunflower and wheat. The goal of this mix is to control weeds without herbicides, reduce erosion, establish roots in the soil all year-round and increase biomass for the benefit of the farm. In the future, Stemper hopes to be able to capture carbon credits.

However, weather and outside factors slowed the growth of this cover crop throughout the growing season. Next year, corn will be planted in this field, following a late-fall or early-spring termination of the cover crop.

Attendees had the opportunity to discuss other strategies for no-tilling alfalfa that are working on their farms. Farmers shared their experiences determining which interseeding standing corn to add to forage, noting the most diverse mix in this project is corn interseeded with sunflower, corn, kale, brassicas, sun hemp, hairy vetch, beans, sorghum and buckwheat. Each of these species add to the forage to be fermented into feed, while also helping to improve soil health. Cows also seem to enjoy the flavor varieties and tend to be healthier as a result.

For additional educational events like this one and more opportunities next season, visit <https://srpfarmers.com/news.php>.