

A-OK Farms improves soil health through conservation practices

By Jamie Fisher

Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers (SRPF) hosted a field event on Sept. 14 at Mark Breunig, A-OK Farms, in Sheboygan Falls, Wis. Attendees learned about low-disturbance manure application on multi-species cover crops.

Breunig shared his experience with multi-species cover crops and converting to 100% no-till. He hasn't used a field cultivator in two years. Studies suggest it takes five-to-seven years to see the benefits of no-till. Breunig said he is already seeing the benefits, as well as not taking a yield hit.

"I wish I could get it in more places, but we don't have a long enough season," Breunig said.

The multi-species cover crop was planted on Aug. 5 after wheat. The mix includes winter rye, purple top turnip, winter peas and medium red clover. Most of the species will deteriorate over winter and provide nutrients for the next crop. Breunig also emphasized the cover crop root structure helps hold the water if there is a wet fall.

"If we get a big rain, there is no water standing," said Breunig. "If we have a wet fall, it will carry."

Dan Risch, owner of D.R Ag Services, works with A-OK Farms to apply the farm's manure with low-disturbance manure application equipment. Risch has been doing this for six years and shared several farmers are trying this application. This is the third time Breunig has used low-disturbance manure application.

Low-disturbance manure application has a disk every foot at five to six inches deep. The rate of application is 11,000 gallons per acre.

As Breunig tries more conservation practices at A-OK Farms, he continues to see the benefits of soil health and water quality.