WISCONSIN LAND + WATER
2026 CONSERVATION FARM FAMILY OF THE YEAR AWARD APPLICATION

NOMINEE

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1. Marty Weiss operates a farm of approximately 250 acres located southeast of Beaver Dam in Dodge County WI. On his farm, he focuses his efforts on soil health while still keeping up his yields, proving that conservation can be economical as well as environmental.

   Marty has experimented with numerous practices on his farm over the years and has seen fit to adopt many of them into his operation. For the practices that he doesn't do anymore, it was never for a lack of trying. He is always willing to try new things and figure out how to work them into his system to improve what he was already doing.

   Marty uses **no till** in his operation but also continues to incorporate **strip till** which he has done for quite a bit longer. He uses strip till after wheat to help heat up his soil for corn planting. He does **single species cover cropping** with cereal rye but also dabbles with **multi-species cover crop systems** in his strip till and interseeding efforts. Marty has used a variety of species in his cover crop mixes which has included grasses, legumes and brassicas. Year after year, Marty diligently tweaks his mixes to find what works best for his system. He also utilizes things like **interseeding, frost seeding and planting green** to help facilitate cover cropping on his land.

   Marty has also dabbled in **rotational grazing**, doing so many years ago when he had **dairy animals** and now with **beef animals**, he continues that effort. **Strip cropping** has also been a unique practice utilized for a time on the Weiss farm to allow better sunlight for interseeded cover crops to grow. To help with his interseeding, Marty has used **60" row spacing** for corn with little success at first but as Marty learned, his success grew more frequent. On top of everything, Marty also has a **pollinator planting** area behind his house proving that there's always something a farmer can do for conservation.

   In addition to the great work on his own farm, Marty also has been an invaluable promoter of conservation and soil health across Dodge County and beyond. Marty is one of the founding members of the Dodge County Farmers for Healthy Soil – Healthy Water group. After going to an event put on by the Dodge County Non-Point Source Workgroup, the precursor to the farmers group, in February of 2017. Marty heard fellow conservation farmer Tony Peirick talk about getting a farmer group started in the county and joined up that day. From there, Marty became the Vice President and stayed as such for six years before he stepped down to let someone else take the reins.

His voice at board meetings and during events is always appreciated and respected. That translated to Marty speaking at a variety of events put on by the Dodge County farmers group, for other farmer groups and even speaking at events like the WASH conference. Marty also spoke at one of the last Conservation Observance Days discussing interseeding and 60" corn. He has also been willing to host events on his own farm. That has included a pop-up strip cropping event and an interseeding field day with a soil pit. His farm was also a stop on the 2019 Southern Area Association tour to discuss farmer groups and soil health principles. On top of everything, Marty has also had a story written about him in No-Till magazine in November 2020 discussing his interseeding cover crops and strip tilling work.

2. As alluded to in the previous section, Marty is willing to try new things on his farm. He is willing to experiment and find new ways to be a good land steward and profitable farmer. This has included participating in a number of projects on his farm with a number of partners. He spent years working with UW-Discovery Farms doing Nitrogen Use Efficiency and continues today with the Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program. Additionally, Marty has participated in a three-year project looking at plant populations in interseeding plots. He worked with UW-Extension on this to find the most efficient way to do interseeding on his farm. Marty has also spent time on trying new things on his own from adjusting his management to altering machinery.

   His approach to land management is very analytical and comes from a place of wanting to be a good steward of his land. When he purchased his farm, one of the big things he was looking at was the quality of soil and how well it was taken care of. Marty is a studious and logical person who really tries to understand as much as he can about soil health and conservation topics. When it comes down to it, he is always willing to try new things that help to improve the sustainability of his farm.

3. Marty is a voice of calm and reason in conservation whether he is at an event, board meeting or in one-on-one conversation. His work with the farmers group has been nothing short of exemplary and when he finally did step down from the vice president role, the group had been well established and independent which gave his predecessor a clear path for success in the role. Despite stepping down, he is still very active with the group, helping to plan events, working booths at the dairy breakfast and county fair every year. Regardless of the role he plays, Marty Weiss is always a strong supporter of conservation while practicing what he preaches on his own farm. He uses this dedication and his studious nature to help prove to his peers that good land stewardship and soil health is accessible, profitable and sustainable for everyone.

Low N plot
Low N plot
July 2, 2018 photo

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