

SAVING MONEY

PRECISION DECISIONS ON CROPLAND AREAS

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COUNTY CONSERVATIONIST



2020 corn yields, taken as a screenshot from Climate FieldView

Efficiently applying expensive fertilizer, soil amendments, seed, and pesticide can be a challenge in our region, where a variety of soils, slopes, moisture levels, and shade levels occur, often within a single field.

When highly variable fields are run the same, not every acre will yield enough to turn a profit. This is where precision decisions come into play. This practice of observing, measuring, and responding to in-field variations (sometimes called “precision agriculture”) will likely benefit anyone farming in the Driftless Area.

Many farmers have an intuition that they have unprofitable cropland acres, but aren't sure what to do on those acres. The first step is to take a closer look at the cost of inputs and the yield variations within each field to find places where the two don't add up. Not farming negative return-on-investment (ROI) acres is a quick way to improve the bottom line, especially when operating costs are high. In other places, a tweak to management systems or adoption of different equipment may be worth a look.

Pheasants Forever, a non-profit wildlife and habitat organization, hires Precision Ag and Conservation Specialists (PACS) to help farmers determine break-even yields and which acres have a negative ROI. PACS also work with the producer to determine causes of and solutions to managing low yielding areas. If the Pheasants Forever precision ag and conservation program is of interest to you, contact Josh Bendorf, the PACS that covers Iowa County, at (608) 574-7558 or jbendorf@pheasantsforever.org.



Average profit from the 4-year period (2017-20).

The Iowa County Land Conservation department recently held a webinar called “Precision Decisions: Refining Farm Profitability on Cropland,” in collaboration with Pheasants Forever, UW-Madison Extension, and County Conservation Departments from Grant, Lafayette, and Green Counties. The webinar is available free on the Iowa County Land Conservation website: <https://www.iowacounty.org/PrecisionDecisions>.

NEW IN 2022: PRECISION AG INCENTIVE PAYMENTS

The Iowa County Land Conservation Department has new funding for a precision ag pilot program. Farmers can earn \$5/acre to work with Pheasants Forever or other conservation staff on yield map and budget analysis to find negative ROI acres. An additional \$25/acre will be paid in any areas converted to perennial vegetation as a result of the analysis. Contact Katie Abbott at Iowa County with questions or to be added to a waiting list.

For more information contact
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