

Sand County Foundation: Receives grant to accelerate the adoption of regenerative agriculture

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MADISON, Wis. — The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has awarded Sand County Foundation a three-year grant to accelerate the adoption of regenerative agriculture among private landowners in Wisconsin's Lake Michigan watershed.

Sand County Foundation's project will work with farmers to generate whole-farm conservation plans and outcome metrics in order to quantify the benefit 15,000 acres of new regenerative agriculture practices can have on water quality and biodiversity.

The project titled, "Fostering Technical Assistance to Advance Regenerative Agriculture in the Lake Michigan Basin" was awarded \$300,000 through NFWF's [Sustain Our Great Lakes Program](#) (SOGL), with support from General Mills and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This project is supported by a public-private partnership between General Mills, NRCS and NFWF and is designed to sustain, restore and protect fish, wildlife and habitat by leveraging funding, building conservation capacity, and focusing partners and resources toward key ecological issues utilizing the leveraged resources.

The grant to Sand County Foundation, a national agricultural conservation non-profit, is one of 35 funded projects this year. The funds are matched by \$300,000 in contributions raised by Sand County Foundation.

"A performance-based conservation incentive system that is based on measured environmental outcomes and promoted by farmer-led watershed groups, can accelerate adoption of regenerative agriculture while leveraging conservation

funding for farmers,” said Dr. Heidi Peterson, Sand County Foundation’s Vice President of Agricultural Conservation and Research.

“Farmers across the Lake Michigan basin are interested in regenerative agriculture management,” Peterson explained, “but, rightly, they are uncertain of the risks and benefits of integrating new practices.”

Through the SOGL program, the NFWF-General Mills partnership supports the hiring of field conservation professionals who will work directly with landowners to develop and implement planning and stewardship actions that generate economic benefits for farmers alongside positive environmental outcomes. Locally-led programs will offer assistance that is adaptable to each farmer’s unique goals, experience, risk tolerance, and other considerations on their path to a regenerative system.

“Our partnership with General Mills represents an extraordinary opportunity to integrate agricultural production with wildlife conservation at a significant scale,” said Jeff Trandahl, Executive Director and CEO of NFWF. “By accelerating adoption of regenerative agriculture, the partnership will deliver important benefits for habitat, water resources, and farmers’ and ranchers’ bottom lines in two important areas of the Midwest.”

“We’re proud to partner with NFWF to provide grant recipients, like Sand County Foundation, with resourcing to accelerate the regenerative agriculture movement, said Mary Jane Melendez, chief sustainability and global impact officer of General Mills. “The Great Lakes Basin is a key sourcing region for General Mills. Through support from Sand County Foundation, farmers will get technical and coaching support from conservation professionals and receive incentives for generating water quality improvements. By enabling greater local impact, this work has the opportunity to ensure a thriving future for both people and the planet.”