



NEWS FROM EXTENSION

UW-MADISON DIVISION OF EXTENSION WOOD COUNTY



Stockbox Program - *Helping Nourish Seniors and Fill Pantries*

by Hannah Wendels, FoodWise Nutrition Educator

Wood County enters its third year offering the Stockbox program! The Stockbox program is a free supplemental food program for eligible seniors. Once per month, a Stockbox provides seniors with limited income a 30-pound box of shelf-stable goods at no cost. The impact that these boxes have on each individual/family is incredible and we are fortunate to continue this program into its third year and to see it grow every month!

The Milwaukee-based Hunger Task Force introduced this program to us in 2021. Now a collaboration of FoodWise, United Way of South Wood & Adams Counties, ADRC of Central Wisconsin, FOCUS Food Pantry, and the Housing Authority of Wisconsin Rapids, we work together to make this a local offering in our community. In 2023, we provided 917 seniors with a monthly Stockbox which amounts to 22,925 lbs of food!

Distributions are held drive-thru style at FOCUS Food Pantry on the third Tuesday of each month. Registration for a box is required each month. If someone is unable to pick up their box that due to transportation limitations or unable to make it for any reason, the program allows someone else to pick up the box for them which is a key component to ensuring accessibility of the program is equitable for all.

Growing the program is always at the forefront of our mind! Knowing that the latest ALICE data reflects that over half (54%) of all senior households in Wood County are struggling financially, more than any other age group, we want to make sure that this program is widely known about and we can help meet the needs of our community members when it comes to access to healthy foods.

2024 distributions are already underway and we continue to see new participants register for a box each month. While we want to focus on growing the reach of this program and impacting the health of our community, we also want to explore ways to include fresh fruits and vegetables with each box in the future. With a Stockbox, someone is able to fill their pantry and nourish their body with healthy foods. If we can find a way to source fruits and vegetables to accompany those pantry goods, that means more seniors in our community are receiving a variety of foods that impact their overall well-being. Their nutritional, physical, social, and even financial wellness is positively impacted by one box each month.

To learn more, check out this [video](#) on Wood County's local Stockbox program that was made in collaboration with Wisconsin Rapids Community Media!

Preliminary Findings of the Social Indicator Survey

by Anna James, Natural Resources Educator

When recalling the November 2023 Extension Update, one might remember Anna James sharing the importance of using social science practices in conservation management. She also shared how her efforts are focusing on using social science methods to shape education and outreach programs. Since that update Anna and her colleague, Guolong Liang, have analyzed data from a social indicator survey they conducted in the 10- and 14- Mile Watersheds, and are beginning to understand the preliminary findings of this effort.

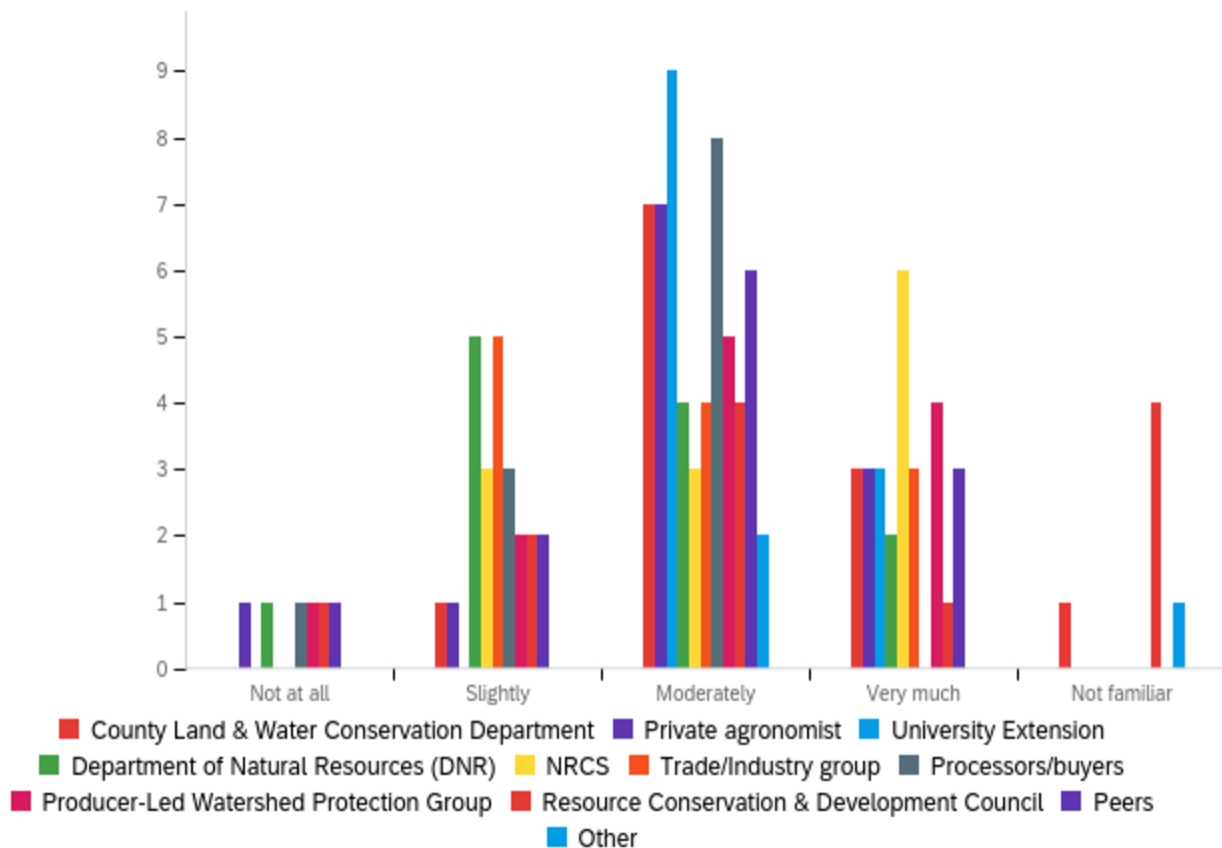
As a result of the social indicator survey, Anna and Guolong have gained a better understanding of the farming systems in the Central Sands, specifically vegetable and potato production systems. They've also created relationships with producers who have not traditionally worked with UW-Madison Division of Extension. Data from the survey are evidence that this effort has, thus far, achieved the initial project goals – 1) Understanding the social indicators (awareness, attitudes, constraints, capacity and behavior) of producers around the topics of water quality and conservation practices to improve water quality, 2) Better understand producer needs in regards to water quality improvement, and how education and outreach programming can be utilized to address those needs. The following data points from the survey are a very small representative of the total data pool, but serve as a good summary of how Anna and Guolong achieved their goals of better understanding the needs of producers and their social indicators focused on the topics of water quality and conservation practices to improve water quality.

- 67% of participants view contaminated drinking water as a problem in their area
- When asked to indicate the level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements, participant responses showed –
 - *100% of participants agree or strongly agree that “it is my personal responsibility to help protect water quality”*
 - *100% of participants agree or strongly agree that “my actions have an impact on surface water and groundwater quality”*

- 92% of participants agree or strongly agree that “using conservation management practices on farms improves water quality.”
- 11 out of 12 participants are currently using conservation tillage methods on all or some of their operation acres
- Trusted sources of information about soil and water (ranked from most trusted to least trusted by participants) – please note that some rankings have two responses due to the average sum equaling the same amount
 - #1) University Extension and NRCS, #2) County Land & Water Conservation, #3) Private agronomists & producer-led watershed groups, #4) Peers, #5) Trade and industry groups, #6) Resources Conservation & Development Council, #7) DNR & processors/buyers
- Comments show that a lack of equipment or concerns about equipment costs are the major barrier to adopting conservation tillage. Comments included –
 - “I would like to strip till on all of our acres, but we don’t have enough equipment.”
 - “A tractor costs more than a house these days.”
 - “You used to be able to buy a truck for \$30,000 and now you’re paying \$50,000. Well the same could be said about farming equipment but the prices are higher.”

Anna and Guolong plan to use the data from this survey to inform future education and outreach programming. That programming has yet to be determined, but is being worked on. As of now, Anna and Guolong will use this project to help inform other stakeholders and agencies in the study area about producer's social indicators in hopes that they will use the information to guide their efforts as well.

The table below shows results of trusted sources for information about soil and water.



Upcoming Extension Programs

- **4-H: Juntos Family Nights** | UWSP-Marshfield | Feb. 29, Mar. 18, Apr. 4, May 30
- **4-H: Volunteer Retreat** | Town of Day Hall | March 2 - 9:30am-3:00pm
- **4-H: Creative Arts Day** | WRAMS | April 6 - 9am
- **4-H: Science Expedition Day** | UW-Madison Campus | April 6
- **Grant Writing Basics** | Virtual | February 26 - 6-8pm, February 28 - 9-11am
- **Planning AHEAD** | Portage County | Tuesdays - March 5-April 16, 6:15-7:45pm
- **Planning AHEAD** | Zoom | Thursdays - March 28 - May 16, 11am-12pm
- **Rent Smart** | Marshfield Public Library | March 14 - 1-4pm
- **Rent Smart** | McMillan Library | March 1 - 9:30am-12:30pm
- **Stockboxes** | Marshfield | March 19 | 1:30-3:30pm
- **Stockboxes** | Wisconsin Rapids | March 19 - 10am-12pm
- **Wood County Clean Sweep** | Marshfield | May 25 - 8am-12pm
- **Wood County Clean Sweep** | Wisconsin Rapids | September 7 - 8am-12pm

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