

# Women caring for the Land



## Taking Over Family Land

### Patti's Story:



### Patti Schevers Green Bay, Wisconsin

Patti is the 4th generation on Schevers Farm, a 113-acre property that has been in her family since her great-grandparents purchased it after emigrating from Holland in 1914. Patti plans to work on a variety of conservation initiatives on the land. She also runs a 3-site “glamping” campground on her family’s land.

“Our land has been transitioning to me as its manager for the past year. The original farm deed was in my great-grandmother’s name after my great-grandfather passed in 1922, then transitioned to her son, and then to my father until 1997, when it returned to women management with my mother. I am proud to be the next generation of women to steer this property into a completely different future. My goal, with support and agreement from my mother, sister, and aunt is to transition the entire property into native grasses, pollinator habitat, wildlife corridors, and pond scrapes for waterfowl. The reasoning is to utilize our little ‘block’ of land to be a place for our family to enjoy and nature to flourish for generations to come.

Until 1997, when my father passed, this was a diversified farm first with a dairy, rotational crops (hay, oats, wheat, corn, soy, veggie crops), and then converted to beef and some cash crops along with vegetables crops to supplement farm income. After my dad passed, my mom, who had a career of her own, decided to rent the land to a

local farmer who has had it in corn and soybeans for the past 21 years.

My grandparents were also wonderful stewards of the land and had massive food gardens for the family of 10, white pine tree plantings for windbreaks and lumber, an orchard, and cows grazing on the entire acreage rotationally.

The land is primarily farmland with a 5-acre parcel along the highway that is still wooded. The land has historical tiling and also newer tile lines as it is a bit lower than the neighboring land to the west so water naturally drains through our land right in the middle.

I have been working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) since early 2019 to transition our property into a conservation farm. I started with a small EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) project in 2019 for a windbreak in around our house. I recently was approved for a second project: Conservation Reserve Program on 30 of the acres in our northeast part of the land and have several other program applications in the works.”

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# Patti's Conservation Conversation

with Julie Peterson, Farm Bill Biologist

Northeast Wisconsin Pheasants Forever, Inc. and Quail Forever



**Patti:** Taking control of this property and doing something completely different does send some waves through our family, as it is not the norm nor is it conventional and “safe.” How would you suggest I connect with people who can help with my goals for my “conservation” farm?

**Julie:** Patti, great job! You have already done a couple key things that you should continue to do to achieve your goals for your property. You’ve developed goals for your property with the people who have been and will be on the property in the future. And, you have further developed your goals with your local USDA-NRCS office. They have many technical and financial resources to assist you in achieving your goals.

You also have started a small project with the windbreak and now, through the Conservation Reserve Program, you will be expanding your native habitat with a larger planting. It’s good to work in segments like this so you don’t burn out or feel overwhelmed.

Another partner to reach out to is your local Pheasant Forever Farm Bill Biologist. Pheasants Forever currently has 7 biologists working across Wisconsin. Our objective is to help landowners achieve their habitat and wildlife goals on their property. We work closely with landowners and are familiar with NRCS programs as well as resources and partners in your area. We specialize in upland and pollinator plantings but are also very knowledgeable about other practices and resources to achieve wildlife and farming goals.

**Patti:** What resources do you recommend to help increase pollinator habitat?

**Julie:** Improving pollinator habitat is critical for boosting the number of beneficial insects, which pollinate crops and serve as a source of protein for songbirds and pheasants. Your regional Pheasants Forever biologist can help you develop a planting plan for your property. Find one at [www.pheasantsforever.org/Habitat/findBiologist.aspx](http://www.pheasantsforever.org/Habitat/findBiologist.aspx).

The Xerces Society offers good information on pollinator conservation. Check this website: [xerces.org/pollinator-resource-center/great-lakes](http://xerces.org/pollinator-resource-center/great-lakes) and this free publication: [xerces.org/sites/default/files/publications/15-042.pdf](http://xerces.org/sites/default/files/publications/15-042.pdf).

Your local US Fish and Wild Service office may also provide seed and technical help with your planting. Some local DNR and county land and water offices rent out the drills needed to plant native seed. You could also see if the nonprofit Bee and Butterfly Fund can help: [beeandbutterflyfund.org](http://beeandbutterflyfund.org).

**Patti:** Anything other resources you’d recommend?

**Julie:** Pheasants Forever has 30+ volunteer-driven chapters that raise money locally for habitat projects in their area. All money raised stays local and each chapter uses their funds for projects in their area in a variety of ways. Chapter services can include drill rental, planting, management via controlled fire, or cost share. Here’s a link to find your local chapter: [www.pheasantsforever.org/Participate/Find-a-Chapter.aspx](http://www.pheasantsforever.org/Participate/Find-a-Chapter.aspx).

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