

Incentives for Ecosystem Restoration in Wisconsin

A Public-Private Partnership in Agricultural Stewardship



Wisconsin Healthy Grown Potatoes[®] was first conceived out of a collaboration of Wisconsin potato farmers, the World Wildlife Fund, and the University of Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Healthy Grown program reduces the use of toxic pesticides by using integrated pest management, making the industry healthier for farmers, consumers and wildlife habitat. The Collaboration's research led to the development of an environmental brand of potatoes known as Wisconsin Healthy Grown Potatoes[®]. The potato production practices are certified by Protected Harvest, a third-party certifier of farmers' use of stringent environmental growing standards. Defenders of Wildlife is supporting Wisconsin Healthy Grown producers' efforts to restore and conserve native ecosystems for at-risk species by helping them market their produce and estimate the economic benefits of their restoration efforts.



The program has expanded beyond reducing pesticide use. The 2006 certification protocol includes minimum requirements for attaining Natural Community Standards. These standards constitute a system of science-based, credible standards that facilitate the planning and measurement of ecosystem restoration and conservation projects on agricultural landscapes. University of Wisconsin staff is assisting landowners in ecosystem restoration activities for native prairie grasslands, oak savanna grasslands and wetlands. Restoration efforts focused on wetland, oak savanna, and native grassland communities on and adjacent to agricultural fields are expected to benefit species, such as the endangered Karner Blue Butterfly, prairie chickens, Sandhill cranes, and several other at-risk animal and plant species. The individual farm plans for restoration and conservation will be a basis for eco-potato certification and is pivotal to the future of sustainable agriculture.

The Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA) and Defenders of Wildlife approved a Memorandum of Understanding in January 2004, defining activities to increase marketing opportunities and to achieve successful ecosystem restoration on agricultural landscapes producing Wisconsin Healthy Grown Potatoes[®]. Defenders is assessing the impact that eco-labeling, as a private market incentive, is having on the goals of ecosystem restoration and species recovery. Defenders is also assisting in the marketing of Wisconsin Healthy Grown Potatoes[®] to our membership in order to recognize the important public ecological benefits producers are providing. Assistance also includes providing endorsements to current and potential market outlets and supporting participating farmers as they implement their plans to protect various habitat and species on their land. Defenders is also a member of the Collaboration's Advisory Committee. Future activities include an economic evaluation of the private and public market and non-market benefits of restoration and possibly using a percentage of sales proceeds from Wisconsin Healthy Grown Potatoes[®] for additional conservation activities.



Karner Blue Butterfly
USFWS – John & Karen Hollingsworth



More information about Defenders of Wildlife & Wisconsin Healthy Grown Potatoes[®]:

Wisconsin Healthy Grown Potatoes[®] <http://www.healthygrown.com>

Protected Harvest <http://www.protectedharvest.org>

WWF/WPVGA/UW Collaboration <http://ipcm.wisc.edu/bioipm/>

Defenders of Wildlife, Biodiversity Partnership <http://www.biodiversitypartners.org>

International Crane Foundation <http://www.savingcranes.org>