

DODGE COUNTY LAND & WATER CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared by:
Melissa Knipfel
Dodge County Conservationist



DODGE COUNTY
WISCONSIN

Working together to provide education, information and technical assistance to residents and units of government in Dodge County to protect, restore and sustain our soil and water resources.

2025 LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Andrew Johnson -----Chair
Lisa Derr -----Vice-Chair
John Kraus Jr -----Secretary
Dale Macheel -----Committee Member
Benjamin Priesgen -----Committee Member
Bill Foley -----Lake District Representative
Ken Weninger -----Member Representing the Ag Community



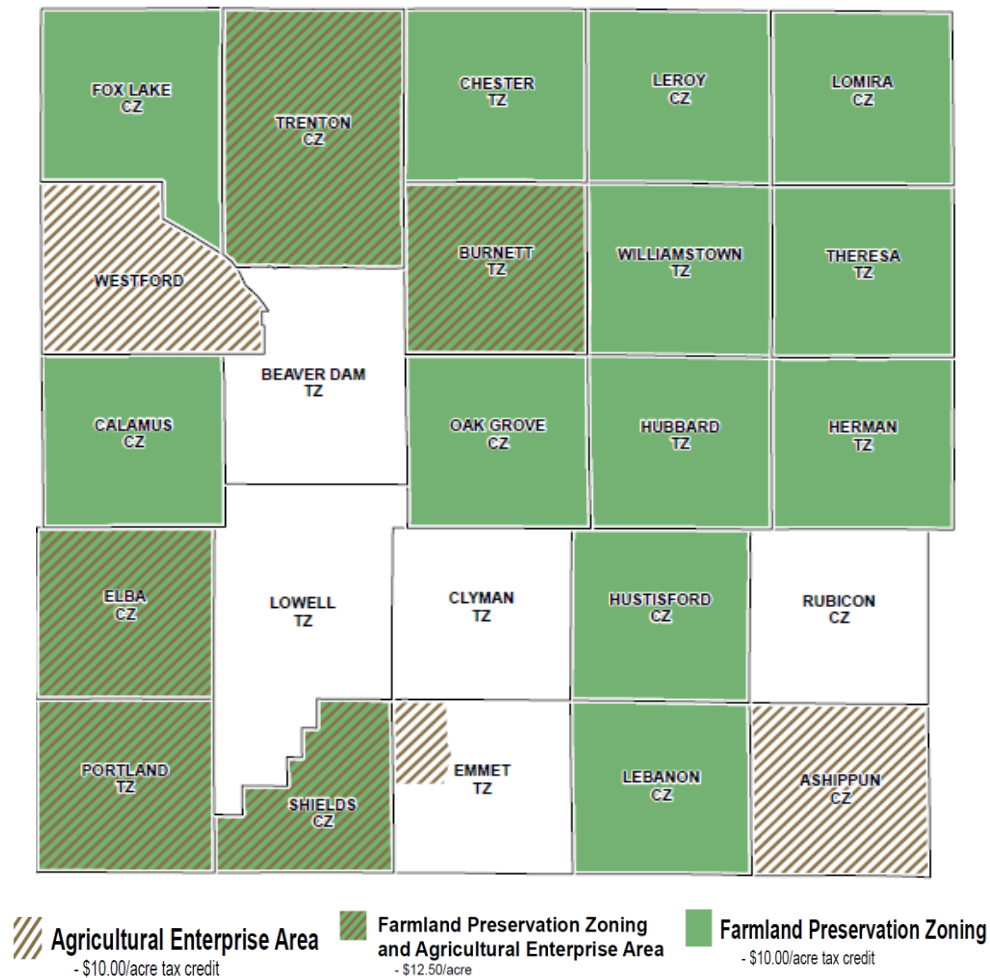
L to R: Benjamin Priesgen, Lisa Derr, Ken Weninger, Andrew Johnson, Dale Macheel, John Kraus Jr., and Bill Foley.

2025 LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT STAFF

John Bohonek -----County Conservationist
Dave Braunschweig -----Conservation Technician
Jon Duckert -----Farmland Preservation Technician
Robert Bird -----Conservation Agronomist
Jared Winter -----Conservation Technician
Cheryl Lohry -----Administrative Secretary

FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM

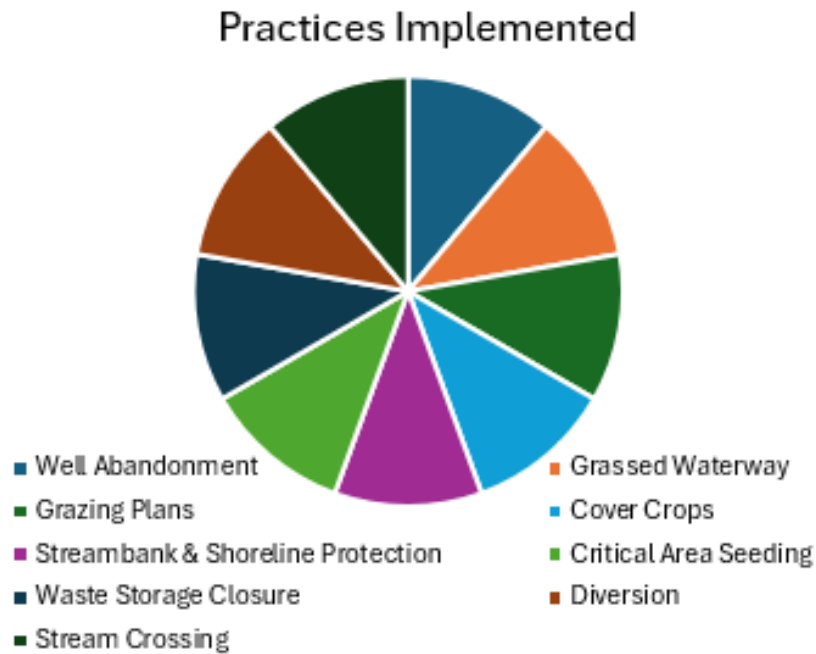
The Farmland Preservation Program offers property owners a tax credit who have land that is zoned A1 and meets state performance standards. Depending on the type of zoning in their township, they may be eligible for a tax credit of \$10.00/acre, or \$12.50/acre. In 2025 we had a total of 116,142 acres in the Farmland Preservation Program. This is an increase of 647 acres from 2024. 148 status reviews were completed, monitoring compliance with NR151 performance standards.



CZ -- County Zoning | TZ -- Town Zoning

LAND AND WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

In 2025, \$5,917.13 of cost share money was spent on the following projects to Dodge County residents. \$47,126.63.00 was committed to projects that could not be completed due to the weather or contractor schedules and will be carried forward into 2026.



What the Practices look like (Before/After):

Critical Area Seeding



Grassed Waterway



Managed Grazing

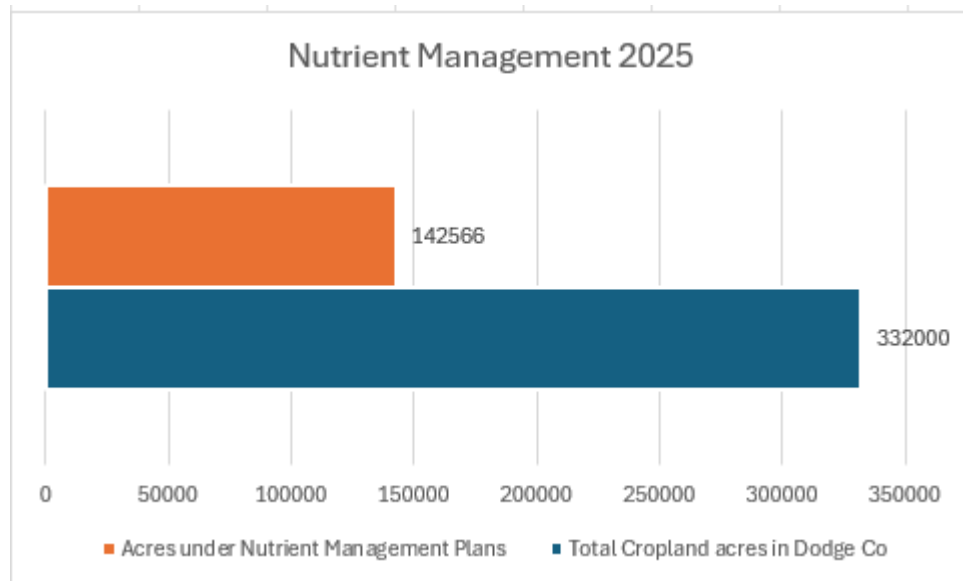


Streambank Protection

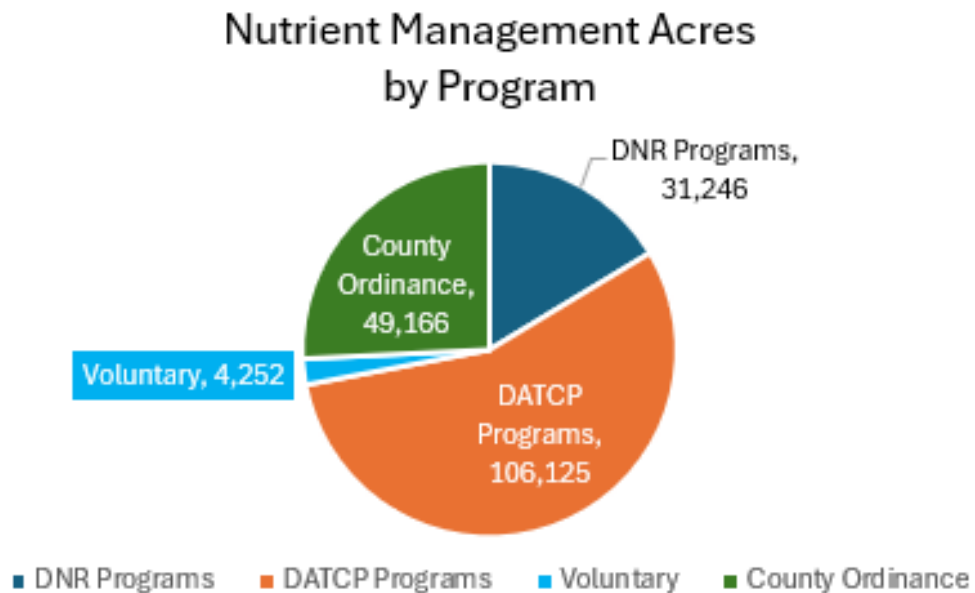


NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

Dodge County had 142,566 acres of land covered by Nutrient Management plans in 2025, an increase of 9,358 acres over 2024.



Programs dictate most of the acres that are covered by a nutrient management plan in Dodge County as seen here:



DODGE COUNTY FARMERS FOR HEALTHY SOIL HEALTHY WATER

The Dodge County Farmers for Healthy Soil – Healthy Water is a farmer led group. Their mission statement reads:

“Improving Our Community’s Soil and Water through Conservation Practices & Education.”

The farmer group’s major efforts have been in their educational events that focus on the benefits of reduced tillage and cover crops. The group is working with UW- Discovery Farms conducting Nitrogen Use Efficiency studies. They received a \$32,000 grant from the Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection that they use to provide the following educational events and offer incentive payments for installing conservation practices including cover crops.

February Conference

This Soil Health Expo was held on February 7th in the Juneau Community Center. The theme for this year’s expo was “Soil Fertility and Soil Health”. The main speaker was Lance Gunderson. 54 people attended the Expo.

Lance Gunderson of Pleasanton, Nebraska Co-Owner of Regen AgLab discussed the benefits of soil fertility and the Haney Testing system to determine soil health.

Other speakers were Chris Bandura-UW-Extension, Brandon Blank-Crop Consultant, Will Fulwider-UW-Extension, Tom Novak – Agronomist/Ag Producer and Marti Viste-Farmers for Sustainable Food. Their topics included: “Finding Soil Health in UW Recommendations”, “On Farm Nitrogen Research Lighting Talks”, respectively.

Pre-Plant Workshop

On April 9th a pre-plant workshop was held in the town of Fox Lake to discuss a variety of topics from slug control to marketing strategies. An equipment representative discussed how to adjust your planters correctly. 39 people attended this event.

Planting Covers after Small Grain Field Day

This event was held on the William Nass Farm, near Watertown on July 30th. This event discussed the termination of Cover Crops, Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Project, and a Soil Probe demonstration was held. 35 people attended this meeting.

August Field Day



On August 28th an event was held in the Town of Westford. The topics for this event was, “How Cover Crops Protect our Lakes and Rivers”. A drone demonstration was given on how they can become part of your practices used. Low disturbance manure injection was also demonstrated showing how you can apply manure with less tillage. 45 people attended this event.

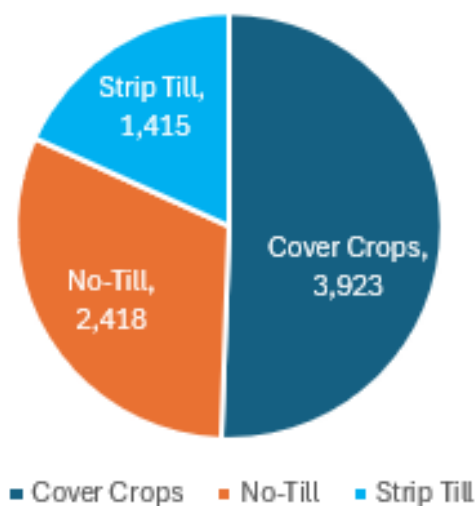
Fall Wrap Up

On December 4th, 32 members met in a more social environment to discuss what worked, what didn't, what challenges they faced, and what changes or new ideas they plan to make next year.

Incentives Programs

The farmer's group incentive program had 19 landowners participate in programs. Cover Crops, No-Till, and Strip-Till. The Cover Crop program had 3,923.2 acres implemented with 645.7 new acres enrolled, while No-till and Strip-Till had 355.4 new acres implemented.

Practices Implemented - Acres

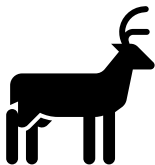


ANIMAL WASTE ORDINANCE

Two permits were issued in 2025 under the Dodge County Manure Storage Ordinance. All projects were designed by private engineers. The construction plans were reviewed by our office and DATCP.

No permits were issued for Waste Facility Closure in 2025.

WILDLIFE CROP DAMAGE ABATEMENT AND CLAIMS PROGRAM



Dodge County had 2 claims for Wildlife damage in 2025. The crop damage was assessed at a value of \$2,449.33. Wildlife crop damage payments were processed to 2 producers for a total of \$1,449.33.

97 deer were donated under the Venison Donation Program, resulting in 2,425 pounds of venison being donated to our local food pantries.

TREE PROGRAM



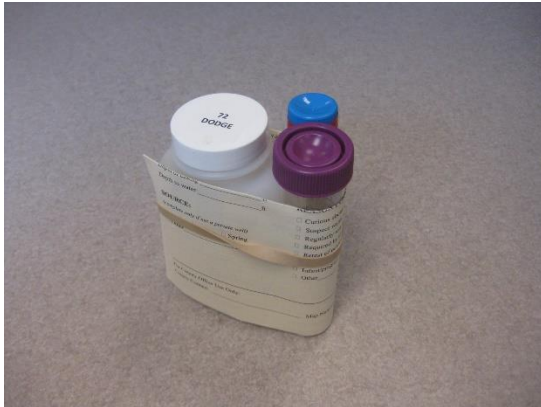
Additional help provided by the USDA NRCS staff located here in Juneau for the packing trees for the tree sale.



Our 22nd annual tree sales program was held in April. Our trees come from Laura's Lane Nursery in Plainfield, WI, and Alpha Nurseries Inc. located in Michigan. We sold 22,025 trees and 4611 tree tubes in 2024-2025 season to 283 property owners.

Our Tree planter was rented out to 2 landowners planting 5,500 trees in Dodge County

Dodge County Groundwater Quality Index



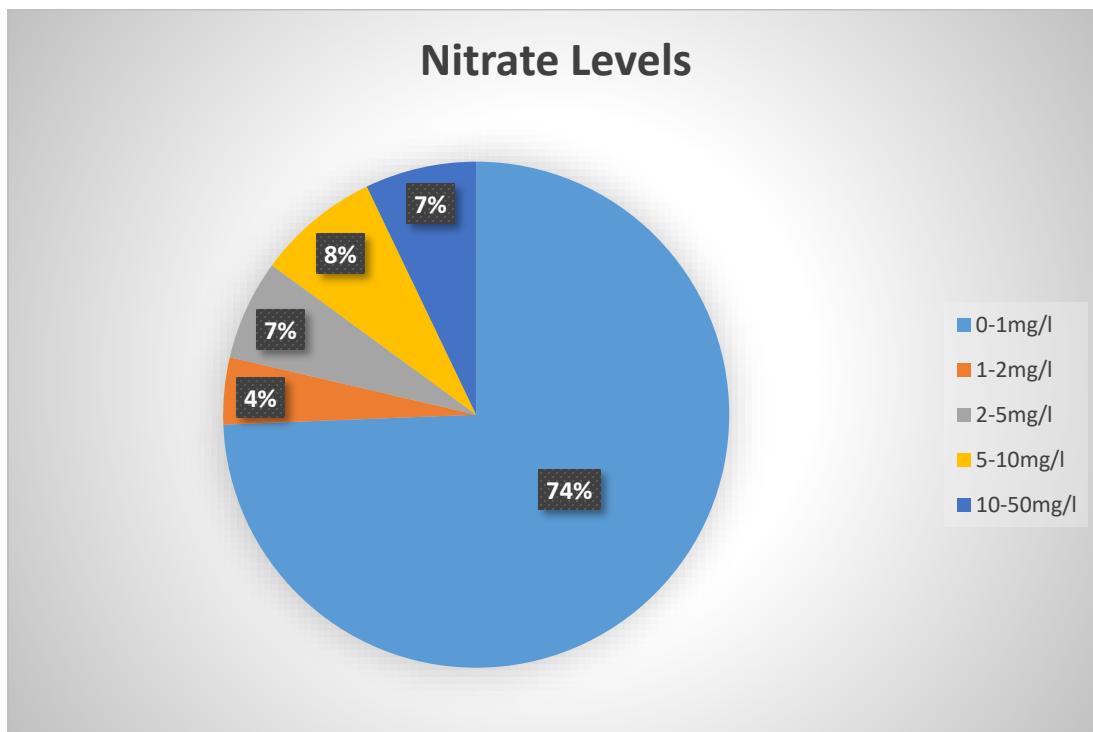
The results from our fifth year of well testing are shown in the graph below. We had a total of 281 wells tested out of the original 376 wells at the beginning of the study.

- 6.7% of the samples exceeded the state and federal standards for nitrate in public drinking water of 10mg/l. No infant or any female who is or may become pregnant should consume any water that exceeds this standard. This was an

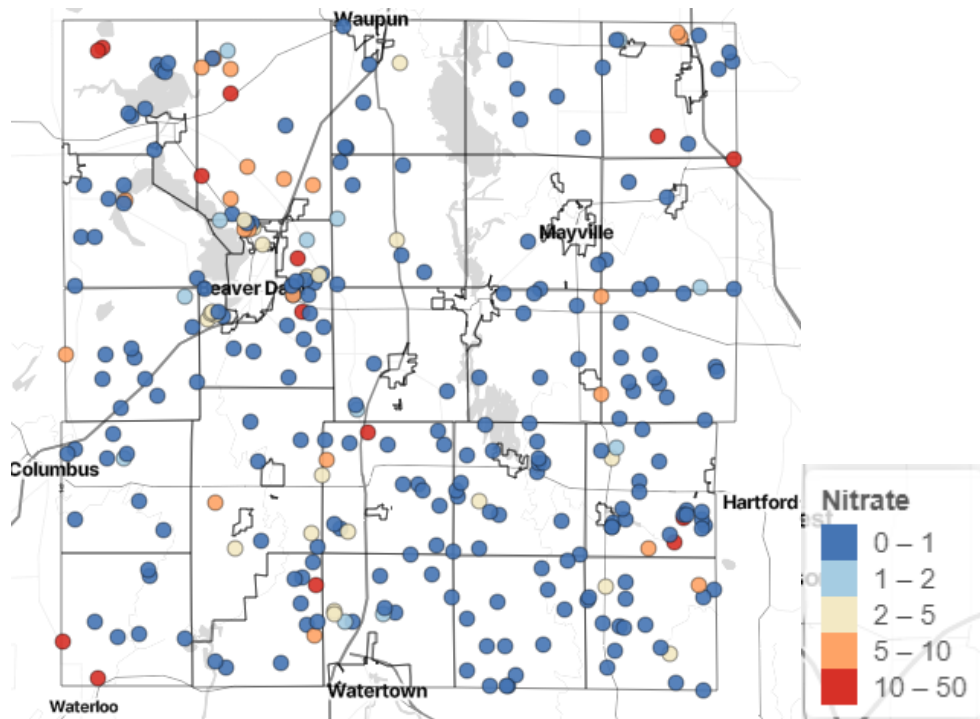
increase of 1.8% from last year.

- 7.3% tested in the range of 5-10mg/l no change from last year. It is recommended that wells in this range be tested annually.

In 2026, a new study will be taking place to continue the monitoring of nitrates in Dodge County.



Percent of Wells testing in Each Range



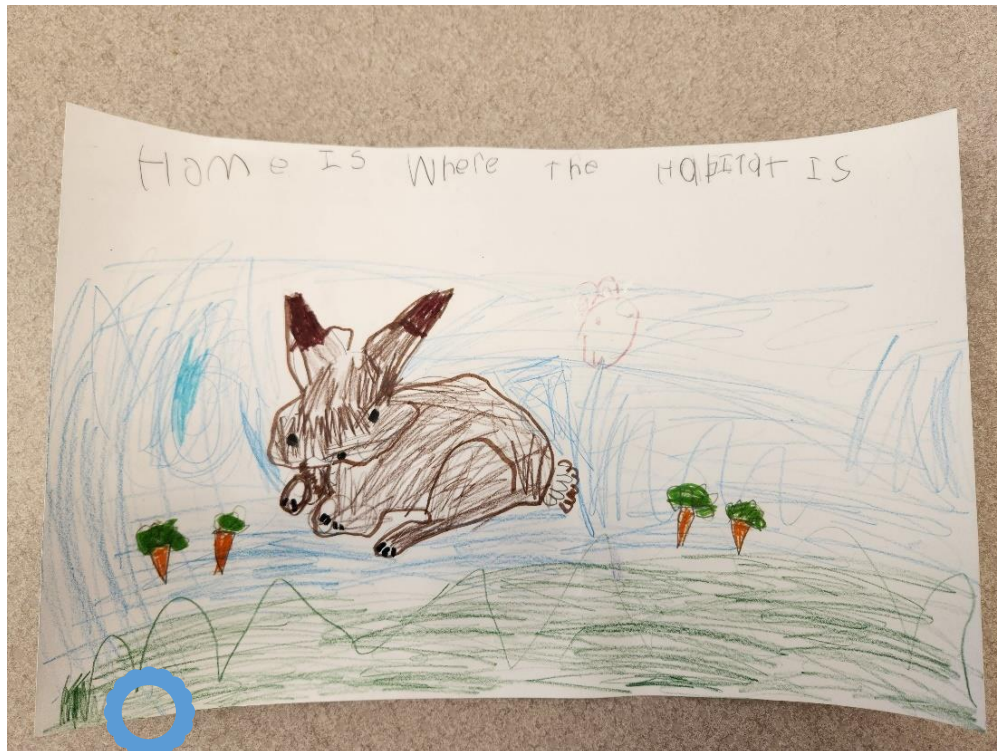
Approximate Location and Nitrate Levels of Wells

Poster Contest

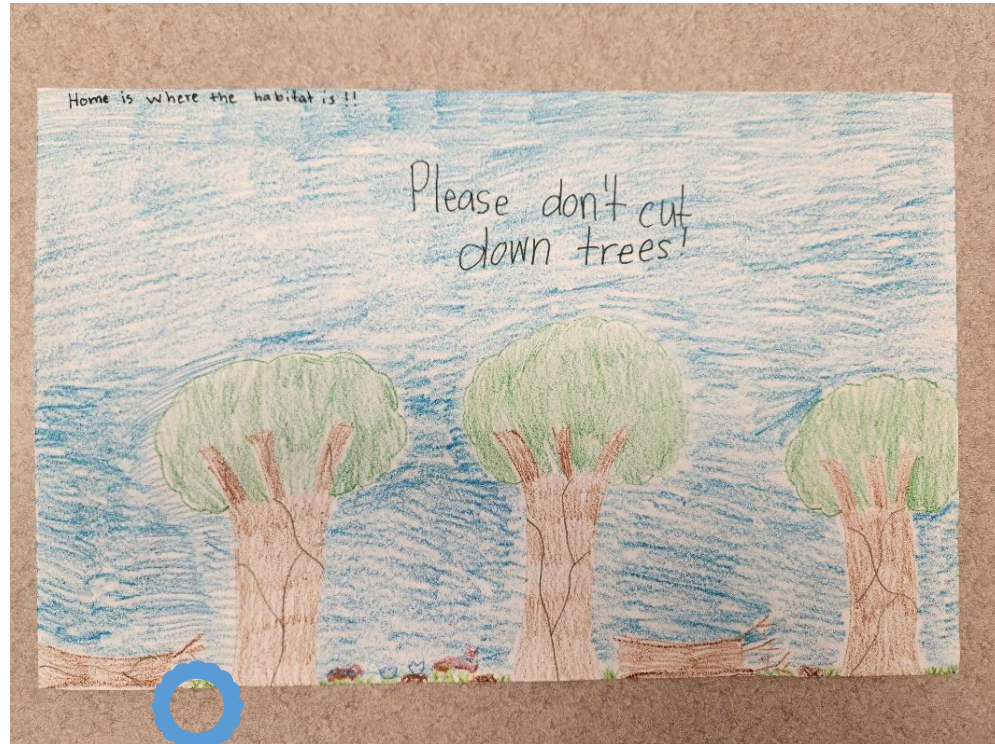
The Theme this year was “**Home Is Where The Habitat Is**”. We received 42 posters in 2025.

	K-1		2-3		4-6		7-9	
Place	Name	Grade	Name	Grade	Name	Grade	Name	Grade
1 st	Britanny Garcia Ramirez	K	Mackenzie Loevenhagen	3	Ellie Laue	5	Makenna Casper	8
2 nd	Goerge Hanks	K	Danica Schraufnagel	3	Levi Papenfuss	4		
3 rd	Camila Avalos	K	Royal McCarty	3				

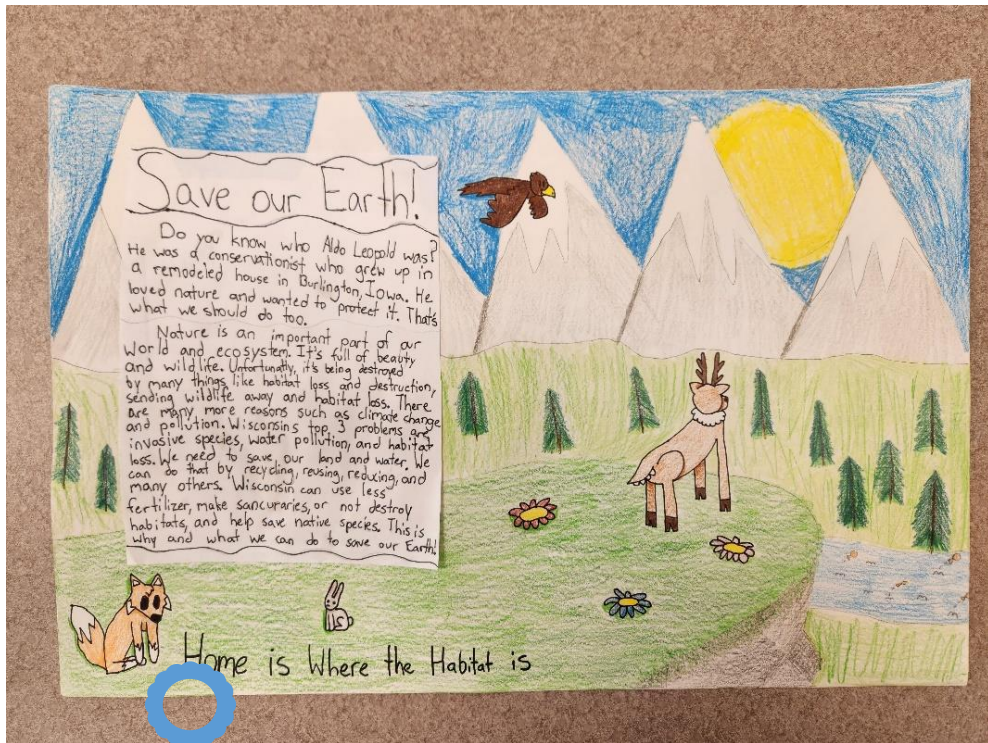
Our first-place winners moved on to the Southern Area Contest. **Britanny Garcia Ramirez in the K-1 grade level placed 3rd at the Southern Area Contest.**



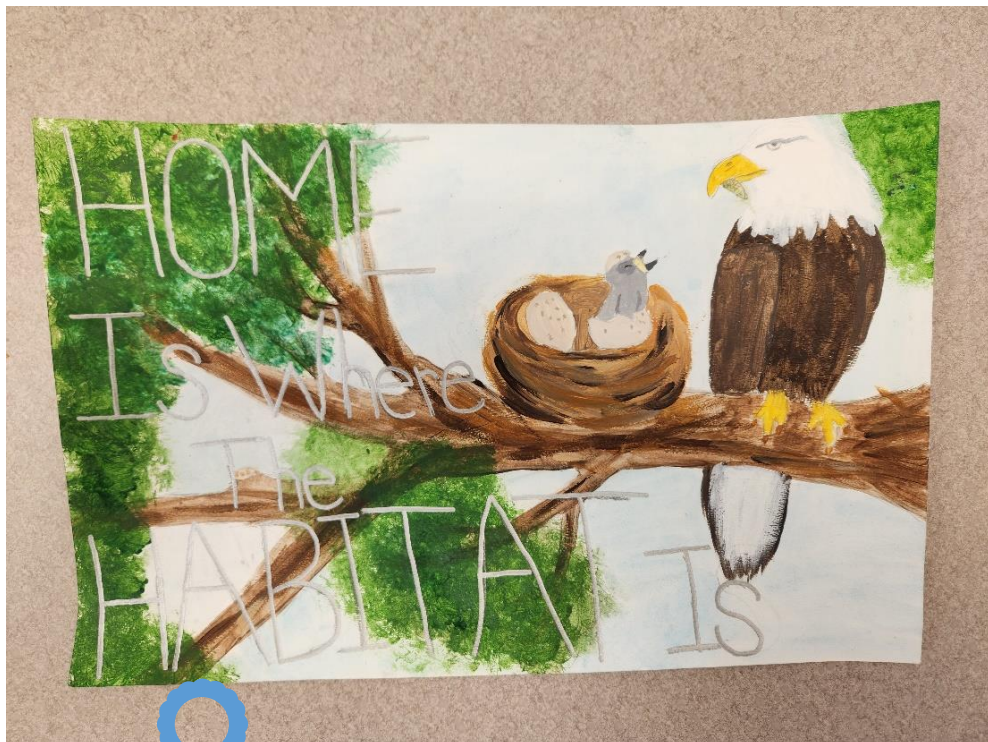
1st place grade K-1 – County Level
3rd place Grade K-1 - Southern Area Contest



1st place grades 2-3



1st place grades 4-6



1st place grades 7-9