

# CUSTOMNews

Representing custom farming in Wisconsin and beyond | SUMMER 2024



WCO co-sponsored a tractor safety course at the Food+Farm Exploration Center in Plover, Wis. Photo by Brittany Marquard

## Youth tractor safety course a success!

By Brittany Marquard and Maria Woldt

Twenty-one students were enrolled in the first Safe Tractor and Machinery Certificate Program held July 8-12 at the Food + Farm Exploration Center (F+FEC) in Plover, Wis. The event was sponsored by the Mike Biadasz Farm Safety & Education Memorial Fund, Wisconsin Custom Operators, Zinda Insurance Group, Feltz's Dairy Store, the National Farm Medicine Center, and Riesterer & Schnell.

Students were instructed by Tomorrow River High School Agriculture Teacher Katie Loehrke, F+FEC Education Program Manager Brittany Marquard, and F+FEC Exhibit Tech and Education Intern Brooke Mallek.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), every day more than

30 children (under the age of 18) are seriously injured in an agricultural-related incident. One child death happens approximately every three days with the leading factor of fatal injuries being tractors.

During the one-week program, students were trained on safe operation of farm machinery and hazards on the farm. The main goal of the program is preventing fatal injuries and accidents. At the end of the week, students completed a driving practicum demonstrating the skills they learned over the duration of the course.

Special thanks to Jenny Blenker, Aspirus trauma coordinator, and Hazel Packer, Amherst EMS, for training participants on hands-only CPR and Stop the Bleed, as well as Ken Feltz of Feltz's Dairy Store.

*Continued on p. 3*

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## UPCOMING DATES:

**WCO Mini-grant program**  
Accepted on a rolling basis

**WCO Fundraising Auction**  
Coming in late November

**Forage Symposium**  
Feb. 17-19, 2025  
Chula Vista, Wis. Dells

## CONTACT WCO:

execdir@wiscustomoperators.org  
(608) 577-4345

### From the President's Cab: Communication is key

By John Osterhaus



Hello from north-western Illinois.

As challenging as our spring was here in Illinois, I understand that many of our fellow WCO members had

it much worse. Extended periods of rain and storms being a common problem throughout much of the Midwest. These weather events make for some stressful times for the custom harvest crews, manure pumping crews, and the farmers. I think that during these very stressful times, communicating with our customers is of the utmost importance. Even if it's just a quick phone call to touch base with them about how the schedule is looking.

I would much rather have the customer hear our schedule from me, than "hear" it from the coffee shop in town. As much as I don't enjoy calling customers to tell them we are going to be late because of a rain delay, I don't want them guessing or asking others as to when we are going to show up. I have come to understand that most of our customers are pretty understanding of delays due to the

weather. As long as I explain what is happening and what we are doing to try and move forward, they understand and work with us pretty well.

One of the things that I get concerned about when we have weather like this spring are safety issues. The added stress of fighting the weather day in and day

**“During these very stressful times, communicating with our customers is of the utmost importance – even if it's just a quick phone call.”**

out can cause us to make poor decisions that we would not make normally. Please take a few minutes, step back and look at the big picture. Take the time to make sure that everyone is working in a safe manner. I know I have found myself making poor decisions when pressed for time. We want everyone to get home safe at the end of the day.

In July, the WCO board met for our summer meeting. A special thank you to Daryll and Jean Manthe from D&J Manthe Forage Service in DeForest, Wis. for hosting the meeting and allowing us to look through their machine sheds. It's always great to get out of our own local area to see how other custom operators do things in different parts of the state.

At our summer meeting, one of our agenda items is always a "sneak peek" at potential topics for the upcoming Forage Symposium, and as has come to be expected, you are all in for another great conference, make sure to save the date of Feb. 17-19, 2025, at the Chula Vista in Wisconsin Dells.

As you read from our cover story, WCO is working hard to facilitate safety training for all ages. While our core competency remains safety training for our members, we think it's important to promote tractor safety programming for youth and encourage more training events across the state to help the next generation engage safely in agriculture.

As we move forward in the season, I wish everyone a safe and successful rest of summer and fall. 🇺🇸

- John

### tractor safety (continued from p. 1)

#### A team effort

Last winter, the WCO board began discussions about a lack of tractor safety training opportunities in certain areas of Wisconsin. While the association isn't well-positioned to coordinate these trainings alone, WCO leaders wanted to lend financial and promotional support to those who are able to host tractor safety courses.

Coincidentally at Forage Symposium, WCO members Bob and Diane Biadasz mentioned that their local Rural Mutual Insurance agent, Jennifer Zinda-Mancl, was getting some local partners together with the goal of hosting a tractor safety training course in central Wisconsin. Area farm families had been struggling to find training opportunities for their children, and local partners wanted to help.

#### Creating good from tragedy

Safety training is especially important to Bob and Diane because their son, Mike, a passionate young farmer from Amherst, Wis, died on August 15, 2016, when he was overcome by hydrogen sulfide gas. Mike had been agitating manure in the open lagoon at his family's cattle feeding operation.

In the wake of tragedy, the Biadasz family established the Mike Biadasz Farm Safety & Education Memorial Fund to support local agriculture safety and health initiatives.

Mike's sisters Lisa Grezenski and Megan Check, representing the foundation, were critical in coordinating the tractor safety program, garnering support from local businesses, and enrolling children in the course.

#### Curriculum available, course sponsors needed!

The University of Wisconsin-Madison



After completing the required hours of training, participating students enjoyed a tour of Feltz's Dairy Store in Steven's Point, Wis. Photo by Bobbi Kubish.

Division of Extension houses the Wisconsin Youth Tractor & Machinery Safety Certification Program, which is designed to meet requirements established by the US Department of Labor, for the employment of youth ages 14-15 on farms not operated by their parents. In addition, Wisconsin Act 455 provides specific provisions for tractor operation by 12-13 year olds.

Extension endorses the curriculum "Gearing Up for Safety" developed by Purdue University in cooperation with leading farm safety experts.

This curriculum is available for free to groups who wish to coordinate a tractor safety course. More information about course offerings, curriculum, and instructor information, is found on Extension's Youth Tractor Safety website.

More course sponsors are needed! If you know of a local group looking to host tractor safety, contact WCO to help start the process. 🇺🇸



Twenty-one students completed the course. In addition to new found learning, they got swag too! Photos by Brittany Marquard



### Nutrient management meetings and updates

Compiled by WCO, from industry partners

UW-Madison's Nutrient and Pest Management Program, DATCP, USDA-NRCS, and WI Land and Water are hosting their annual nutrient management regional meetings again this summer.

Each meeting is free, and CEUs will be available. Registration is required. Light lunch and snacks will be provided by the WI CCA Board and WI Land and Water.

Scan the QR codes next to the corresponding meeting you wish to attend and register. The full listing is available at [datcp.wi.gov](http://datcp.wi.gov) keyword "nutrient management meetings".

#### Available meetings:



**SE Wisconsin**  
Jefferson County Highway Department  
Aug. 20: 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.



**SW Wisconsin**  
Iowa County Health and Human Services  
Aug. 21: 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.



**NW Wisconsin**  
L.E. Philips Memorial Public Library Riverview Room  
Sept. 4: 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.



**Statewide Virtual Webinar**  
Sept. 5 from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.



**NE Wisconsin**  
Fox Valley Technical College, north end of campus, Room A170 A&B  
Sept. 10: 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.



**NC Wisconsin**  
Northcentral Technical College A165 in A Building  
Sept. 12: 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

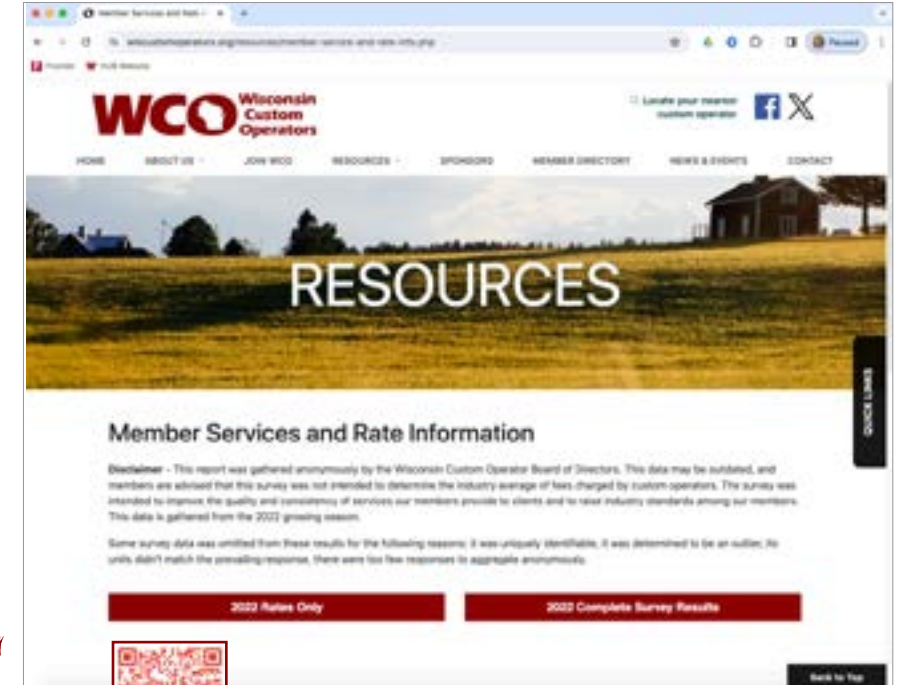
Check out the Runoff Risk Advisory Forecast, "If it's red, don't spread!" scan the QR code to determine runoff risk in your area.



### Member survey data on the WCO website

Data from the most recent member survey is live on the WCO website. Go to [wiscustomopertors.org](http://wiscustomopertors.org) and click the "resources" tab. From the drop down, select "member services and rate information". Users have the option to view rates only, or the entire survey, which contains information on technology adoption, employee management, and other relevant topics.

WCO invested significant time and money into the member survey itself and the resulting data visualization. We hope that you will find value in this resource!



To view the WCO member survey, scan the QR code.



### New AgrAbility and Youth Tractor Safety Coordinator

By AgrAbility



Michelle Bachand

Michelle Bachand is the new AgrAbility & Youth Tractor Safety Outreach Coordinator.

This exciting new position for the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension, is designed to provide outreach and support for programs that promote safety and health for Wisconsin farm businesses.

Michelle will increase awareness of the programs and identify opportunities for new program development. She will create and support partnerships to promote the programs and increase access to diverse audiences.

The position is funded in part by the

USDA AgrAbility grant. The AgrAbility project is a partnership between the Division of Extension and EasterSeals Wisconsin. Since 1991, the AgrAbility project has been promoting success in agriculture for farmers and their families living with a farm injury, disability, or medical limitation.

Michelle has been integral to Extension since joining the Farm Management Program two years ago. Her contributions to the program helped build valuable programming for Youth Tractor Safety and other farm management programs for Wisconsin farmers.

While Michelle has enjoyed her role supporting these programs, working as the AgrAbility and Tractor Safety Outreach Program Coordinator will best

use her skills and 6+ years of experience in the field.

"I look forward to serving the people and communities of Wisconsin," Bachand said. "I am excited to develop partnerships while promoting and supporting programs that improve the lives of hard-working farmers."

Michelle started her new role on May 6, 2024. Her office is located at the Dunn County Extension office. Feel free to contact Michelle at [michelle.bachand@wisc.edu](mailto:michelle.bachand@wisc.edu) or call (715) 619-7467. Learn more about Michelle and the Farm Management Program at [farms.extension.wisc.edu/](http://farms.extension.wisc.edu/) people.



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*This November!*

**Fundraising auction**

WCO receives a percentage of the buyers fee  
More info coming soon!

**Don't forget about WCO's mini-grant program!**

In addition to scholarships and other awards, WCO has a mini-grant program designed to provide smaller, more flexible awards to assist with important projects or programs that will benefit the custom farming and the ag communities.

The WCO board feels strongly that it is important to invest in great people and innovative ideas. To learn more about the mini-grant program and to download the application, go to [wiscustomoperators.org](http://wiscustomoperators.org) and click the "about us" tab.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and awards range from \$500-\$5,000. Funding is available as soon as the application is approved by WCO.

Funds are distributed as follows: 50% upon application approval and 50% upon receipt of final report.

Like most grants, there are reporting obligations and we also ask that recipients be willing to speak about their project at a WCO event such as the annual Forage Symposium.

Priority is given to projects that:

- >>Directly benefit the custom farming community
- >>Involve custom farmers or clients of custom farmers
- >>Involve post-secondary student research or organization opportunities
- >>Emphasize farm safety and health,

leadership, teamwork, sustainability, innovation, or community involvement

This program is open to university/technical college faculty, staff, students, student organizations or non-profit organizations. Others deemed appropriate by the WCO Scholarship and Awards Committee will also be considered.

Examples include: Funding for students as part of larger project, costs associated with hosting an event or farmer meeting, incentive funds for farmers/custom farmers to try new practices.

Questions? Call (608) 577-4345 or email [execdir@wiscustomoperators.org](mailto:execdir@wiscustomoperators.org)

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## Membership incentive program

Don't forget - WCO has a membership incentive program! If you sign up a new member you receive \$25 towards your 2025 membership. Sponsors can participate also. Simply list your company name on the "referred by" line and earn money towards your 2025 membership or sponsorship.

Incentive not to exceed cost of membership or sponsorship. Help WCO grow our membership base!

## Welcome to WCO

**General Members (\$50/year)** derive their income (whole or part) from custom farming. Receive full voting rights and featured on website with business information.

**Associate Members (\$50/year)** support the custom farming industry, but do not engage in custom farming themselves.

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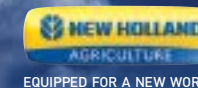
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### Welcome new members!

These individuals/sponsors joined WCO from March – July 2024

- » John Anderson, John R. Anderson Farms
- » Cody Ehlers, Custom Bagging, LLC
- » Al Hanson, Hanson Hilltop Farms and Harvesting LLC
- » Timothy Hobl, B&H Services
- » Andy Stocks, Custom Bagging, LLC

### First round of agricultural road grants awarded

Gov. Tony Evers and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation announced in July grant recipients for the first \$50 million of the Agricultural Road Improvement Program (ARIP). These projects will rebuild local roads that carry over 10.8 billion pounds of agricultural goods each year from farming and forestry operations that have a \$1.6 billion annual impact on Wisconsin's economy.

Wisconsin Department of Transportation received applications for more than \$260 million in projects for the first round, five times the amount of available funding. The awards will go to projects throughout the state to improve the efficiency of transporting agricultural goods, saving money for farmers and consumers.

The program was created by a bill authored by Senators Marklein (R-Spring Green), Tomczyk (R-Mosinee) and Ballweg (R-Markesan), and Representatives Tranel (R-Cuba City) and VanderMeer (R-Tomah), that received unanimous bipartisan support in the legislature and was signed by

Governor Evers. It was funded in the 2023-25 State Biennial Budget.

Upgrading these roads will benefit farms and agricultural industries of all sizes and types.

A listing of the awards can be found on the Wisconsin Department of Transportation website, type "ARIP" in the search bar.

The application for the second round of awards is open, and will include \$100M to fund rural road improvements. Applications are due Sept. 30, materials are found on the ARIP website.

#### And don't forget about the WCO Certification Program!

Safety is the cornerstone of WCO and we are proud to offer a robust certification program. To become certified:

- Attend an in-person safety event, coordinated by WCO, dealership, or other association and submit materials
- Attend Forage Symposium for safety sessions, noted in registration materials

Contact WCO for more information! 🇺🇸

### Please send your photos to WCO

Photos featured in the Custom News are taken by staff or submitted by members and sponsors. We are always looking for high quality images and we do our best to feature diverse equipment brands and custom farming practices.

Please e-mail your high-resolution images (1MB or larger) to [execdir@wiscustomoperators.org](mailto:execdir@wiscustomoperators.org) and we will be sure to feature you on our social media channels and in our publications. Thank you in advance! 🇺🇸



Heim Brothers Custom, Algoma, Wis. serve clients in the Kewaunee County area. In addition to custom services, the Heim family also has a dairy farm. Photo contributed

### Summer board meeting



The WCO board held its summer meeting at D&J Manthe Forage Service in DeForest, Wis. After the meeting, board members toured Daryll's shop and did some "show and tell" with various pieces of equipment. Bruce Dannenberg is pictured looking at an Oxbo 4334 self-propelled hay merger that is part of the D&J fleet. Photo by WCO 🇺🇸



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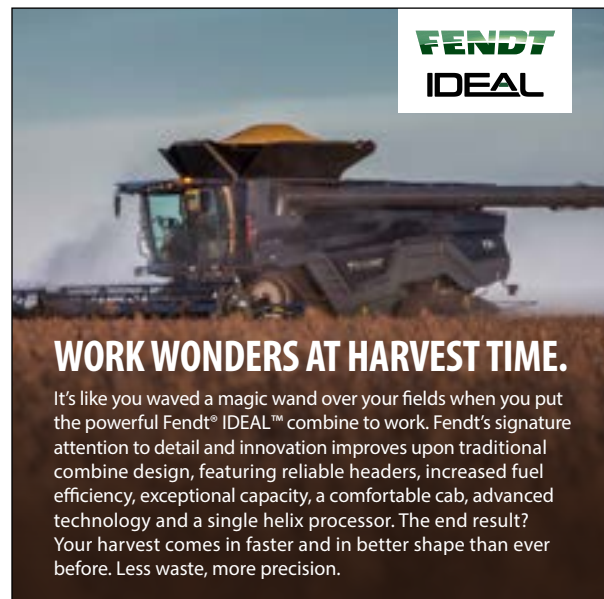
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permit applications?**

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"Implements of Husbandry"**



*Vander Kinter Farms, Denmark, Wis. Photo by Kathy Vander Kinter*