



## **#FridaysOnTheFarm: Creating Tranquility in Nature**

Each Friday meet farmers, producers, and landowners through our [#FridaysOnTheFarm](#) stories. Visit local farms, ranches, forests, and resource areas where USDA customers and partners *do right and feed everyone*.

This Friday meet Payton Farmer of Brownstown, Indiana. This recent high school graduate and her squad of heifers hit the cattle show circuit and have started a strong foundation for her herd.

### **The Secret to Tranquility**

Tom and Eva Wedel started the foundation to preserve the peaceful benefits of their land. The Wedels main goal for the property is to promote the welfare of endangered and threatened species of concern, both animal and plant, and to take care of them by providing habitat to flourish.

“We want to provide an environment in which they can thrive, and we can benefit from the beauty too,” explained Eva.

The foundation has 400 acres of land. The beautiful landscape has 120 acres of prairie and 280 acres of forested and non-farmable land. Tom and Eva were looking for land in southwest Wisconsin and found the property in 1972. It was previously a dairy farm where the barn had burned down. The Wedels had found the perfect location to purchase and revive the land.

“When we decided not to farm the land anymore, we found out about the Farm Service Agency and their Conservation Reserve Program, we wanted to sign up,” explained Tom. At the joint USDA Service Center, the Wedels were introduced through the FSA to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, learning about beneficial conservation practices and technical and financial assistance available to landowners. With the help of both FSA and NRCS, the Wedels were ready to jump in and get started.

### **Just Getting Started**

The Wedels enrolled 120 acres into CRP. They also planted a monarch and pollinator mix on 45 acres that were previously in corn, to build the soil back up after years of conventional cropping and to increase pollinator habitat. Once their farmable acres were in CRP, they wanted to restore their forested and prairie acres.

The Wedels enrolled in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program to develop a Forest Management Plan with the help of a Technical Service Provider. Once the plan was in place,



they were ready to install planned practices to improve their forest. They did brush management, planted conservation cover, and did prescribed burning in many areas.

The Wedels also had a large sloping field covered with gooseberries and rose bushes; they were determined to restore the area. “We needed to free up the trees in the area and we started work,” added Eva. “We made burn piles and cleared the area. That is now part of our flourishing prairie.”

“NRCS helped us to be purposeful each step of the way,” added Tom.

### **Helping Butterflies Take Flight**

The Wedels also had many acres of prairie they wanted to restore for monarch butterflies and other beneficial insects. They enrolled in EQIP to plant conservation cover and do prescribed burning of their prairie acreage.

Tom and Eva planted 12 acres of a multi-species pollinator mix, four of those acres were to specifically target monarch habitat. They also planted one acre of a multi-species wildflower mix.

Tom explains, “We took what funding we had left and planted an acre of 12–14 different varieties of wildflowers for beneficial insects to have habitat; everyone enjoys all the wildflowers.” As the habitat establishes, more monarchs and beneficial insects are finding the benefits. “One of the species we love seeing thrive over the years and come back is orange milkweed for the monarchs,” added Eva.

### **The Beauty Unfolds**

The Wedels see many different butterfly species including Mourning Cloaks, Baltimore Checkerspots, Swallowtails, Yellows, Eastern Tailed Blues, Eyed Browns, and Pearl Crescents. “We have so many butterfly species out here and bird species too. We had a hobby birder out here for three days and he counted 73 different species,” added Tom.

Finally, the Wedels expanded their conservation an additional level by enrolling over 240 acres in the Conservation Stewardship Program. Through CSP, they planted multi-species monarch and pollinator habitat mixes that will be thriving in a few years.

The farm gives the Wedels a purpose to work and enjoy the scenery at the same time. “It’s quiet and we love being outside,” concluded Eva. “We both love the outdoors and we both enjoy the work. We see that it makes a difference for people, wildlife and beneficial insects.”

### **More Information**

USDA offers a variety of risk management, disaster assistance, loan, and conservation programs to help agricultural producers in the United States weather ups and downs in the

market and recover from natural disasters as well as invest in improvements to their operations. [Learn about additional programs.](#)



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