



Goodhue County SWCD
104 East 3rd Ave, P.O. Box 335
Goodhue, MN 55027
651-923-5286 Ext. 4
www.goodhueswcd.org

Goodhue County Board of Commissioners
509 W 5th St.
Red Wing, MN 55066

Date: July 24th 2025

Dear Goodhue County Commissioners

The Goodhue SWCD staff and Supervisors will be present at the August 7th County Board meeting at the County Fair and would like to present the Goodhue SWCD Conservation Farmer of the Year Award to our 2025 winner. This award is given to landowner owner(s) or operator(s) who employ sound conservation practices on their farm and have proven to be good stewards of the land. Below is a brief description of the merits of this years' nominee.

The Goodhue County Soil and Water Conservation District's 2025 Conservation Farmer of the Year Award winner is the Bruce and LeAnn Waugh Family. The Waugh's run a 320-acre beef operation, called the Cannon Valley Ranch, located in the Belle Creek watershed. When the Waugh's purchased the farm in 2001 the land consisted mainly of row crop. Although some conservation practices were already in place, runoff and soil loss were an issue on marginal cropland acres. They began participating in local conservation programs, focusing on converting acres into a managed rotational grazing system. The grazing system provides ample forage for the 130 cow-calf beef herd and 60 steers that moves through fenced paddocks as pasture grasses are reaching optimal heights and nutrition values. This approach is great for animal health, improves water infiltration, increases organic matter and rejuvenates soil structure. Soil runoff is no longer a concern on the converted acres, now nearly all the 320 acres on the farm.



The Waugh's started off raising mostly Angus, but more recently they have incorporated Akaushi (ah-kah-OO-she) cattle into their heard. Akaushi is a Japanese Wagyu beef breed that produces high protein, incredible marbling and rich flavors. The Cannon Valley Ranch sells both their Angus and Akaushi beef products directly to local restaurants, at farmers markets and through their website. On average, about 100 animals go to market annually.



Starting in 2024 Bruce and LeeAnn incorporated agritourism to their operation by hosting events on their farm known as the "Taste of the Ranch". Attendees are treated to wagon ride pasture tours, music and high-end meat products raised right on the farm. The Waugh's aim to help people connect to the source of their food; to understand where it comes from, how it's raised, the environmental impact and the overall effort it takes to get food onto their plates. In 2025 the Waugh's are hosting 6 Taste of the Farm events that started in June and end in October.



Over the years the Waugh's property has been a local training ground for folks interested in pasture management and animal health. The NRCS has hosted soil health training and research efforts on the converted pasture lands. Representatives of the beef and grazing industry have also held outreach and educational events at Cannon Valley Ranch to promote pasture management while maximizing forage production. The Waugh's have hosted the Goodhue SWCD annual 6th Grade Conservation Field Day at Cannon Valley Ranch since they purchased the place in 2001. They are always willing to educate our next generation about how our food is raised and how we can improve the environment. Local students learn the basics about the farming operation and get up close and personal with the animals as well as a variety of conservation related topics presented by staff from the Goodhue SWCD, Mn DNR, MPCA, and USDA/NRCS at stations scattered across the Cannon Valley Ranch property during the field day.



Taking part in various conservation programs over the years have allowed the Waugh's to enhance their property beyond grazing. The CVR is certified in the Minnesota Ag. Water Quality Program with the MN Department of Ag. This program is voluntary and highlights leaders in the field of agriculture conservation across the state. The Waugh's also have multiple Conservation Stewardship Program contracts with the NRCS. These contracts focus on installing 2.5 acres of pollinator habitat, improving wildlife habitat on 40 acres of woodland as well as implementing a timberstand improvement project on forest land that was recently impacted by Emerald Ash Borer.



When deciding how they could best leave a family farming legacy to the next generation, Bruce and LeeAnn wanted to make sure that their beef production business model could maintain profitability while operating in a sustainable manner with soil conservation at its core. Bruce mentioned that it's been interesting to see the resilience of his farm now that managed grazing is in place. "It took around 3-5 years for us to see the true benefits of the increased organic matter and soil health on our pastures. Now, our infiltration rates are at a point that hardly any sediment and very little water runs off the surface. It has been a good transition for our operation and improving the water quality of nearby Belle Creek."

This dedication to conservation and the foresight to improve the land for the next generation is why we have chosen the Cannon Valley Ranch as our 2025 Goodhue SWCD Conservation Farmers of the Year.

Please feel free to give me a call @ 651-923-5286 or email bkennedy@goodhueswcd.org if you have questions or comments regarding this request. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Beau Kennedy
Goodhue SWCD





