**Farm to Forest**

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**Topic:** Collaborative approaches to conservation - public/private partnerships  
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 **Abstract:**Farm to Forest Cory Gritzmacher Director of Restoration and Operations coryg@mequonnaturepreserve.org 0ffice:262-242-8055 Mequon Nature Preserve has been doing active land restoration for over 15 years on 438 acres in southeastern Wisconsin. What began as a dream for one man has turned into a nature oasis for over 20,000 people that visit the preserve on an annual basis. MNP took it's first section out of agriculture almost 15years ago. That area today has become an environmental corridor that connects two previously existing woodlots on the property. MNP's 150 year master plan directs the transformation of 400 acres of agriculture fields into a mosaic of hardwood forests, wetlands and prairies. Over that past 15 years MNP has created with the help of its' partners and funders over 24 acres of wetlands and has 250 acres in active land restoration. MNP recently removed 65 acres from agriculture production in fall of 2016, which was the largest section taken out of agriculture at one time over the past 15 years. Once home to corn and soybeans is now home to over 10,000 native trees and shrubs. The project area has also created a 5 acre wetland systems by simply breaking drain tile that was installed in the early 1900's. The entire 65 acres project area was seeded with native prairie seed from local genotypes. The now thriving prairie will aid in soil health, prevent erosion and create habitat as the trees to continue to grow to become a forest once again. MNP is now home to 12 species of fish, 5 native crayfish species, 6 frog and 1 toad species and tiger salamanders. Bird diversity has increased from 68 species in 2007 to over 184 species in 2018, which is a great indicator of successful habitat restoration. MNP will share some of the dramatic before and after photos of restoration from over the past 15 years. Share lessons learned, challenges and success that MNP has encountered while taking on this ambitious goal.