



College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

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Conservation Takes Teamwork

AMES, Iowa – The Roadman family owns a farm in Grundy County on a tributary of the Cedar River that has been in the family for five generations. Years ago, Larry Roadman’s grandfather established Roadman Memorial Park on part of the property to honor his father. Inspired by their love of Iowa and its land, the family conservation tradition continues with adoption of new practices like prairie strips and a saturated riparian buffer.



“This farm has always had to support itself,” said Roadman, who lives in New York state. “Even so, we’re looking for returns beyond just bushels per acre, like seeing more pheasants and butterflies and reducing nitrate in the water coming off our farm.”

To realize the Roadman family's multiple goals for their land, they depend on a diverse team of partners that include the farm operator, farm manager, government agencies and researchers at the University of Northern Iowa and Iowa State University.

Morgan Troendle, with Hertz Farm Management in Cedar Falls, is the family's farm manager. "When landowners like the Roadmans comes to us with an idea, there is often a lot more involved than people realize," said Troendle. "For a change to succeed long-term, it's important to give everyone involved a chance to raise concerns and offer ideas about how and where to implement projects. Then get advice from as many informed experts as you can."

The family has cooperated with researchers with Iowa State's [Prairie STRIPS Project](#) and UNI's [Tallgrass Prairie Center](#) that helped design the farm's three prairie strips, advised on seed choices and vegetation management, and continues to monitor outcomes, like changes in water quality and bird numbers.

Expert help and financial assistance also has come from U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies, the Grundy County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Grundy County Conservation Board.

Troendle said he has learned a lot that he can use to assist other farm-management clients. The Roadman farm has been a site for several field days, with another planned for fall. Efforts also have been featured in Hertz company outreach, like a [blog on the Roadman's saturated buffer](#).

"The more people who can benefit from our work, the better," Troendle said.

"Great agricultural partners like the Roadman family and Hertz Farm Management are essential to the long-term success of research," said Matt Helmers, director of the [Iowa Nutrient Research Center](#), which has funded research projects underway on the Roadman's land. "It's vital to get practices out on the landscape where they can be tested and demonstrated. That's where we have a real chance to make an impact."

"It's been so valuable to work with a variety of partners who have different resources to offer," said Larry Roadman. "They've all had a hand in making our conservation practices work while maintaining the farm's profitability."

Read the [related news release about prairie research](#) supported by the Iowa Nutrient Research Center.

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