



VILICUS
FARMS®

Stewards of the Land

Welcome and introductions...

- *Who are we,*
- *Where are we from,*
- *What we hope to learn.*



Who we are, Where we came from...





Who is your farmer?

Today's Reality



- Beginning Farmers at 40
- Barriers to entry are SIGNIFICANT and DAUNTING
- There are very few of us.

Vilicus, Latin for “steward of the land”

Goals of Vilicus Farms:

1. Radically increase the level of Stewardship of Resources in our ecosystem (get as much land “off the drugs” as possible); and
2. Increase the number of Stewards on the Land (to support 1)

A Vilicus was the overseer of a Roman estate, who managed the land, facilities and staff- with an emphasis on maintaining the long-term productivity of the land.

While Vilici were often freed-slaves, they were held in high regard by the land owners and by Roman society. They were said to be slaves, no longer to their (previous) owners, but to the land with which they were entrusted.



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- Hill County population 16,000
 - 40 MI to Havre, MT (pop. 9,800)
 - ~150 MI to Great Falls, MT (pop. 59,000)
 - ~100 MI to Medicine Hat, AB (pop. 63,000)
 - Typical crop mix: Wheat – fallow
 - Typical Farmland Value: \$1,000/acre
 - Annual rainfall: 11"

There are 18 Million Acres of Cropland in Montana.

Less than 1% is certified organic

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- **9,600 acre organic dry land specialty crop farm**
 - 55% harvested for seed/sale
 - 16% green manure cover crops
 - 29% of land base in non-crop conservation
 - Native rangeland
 - Conservation Reserve Program
 - Field Borders & Conservation Strips
 - Approx. 400 acres is re-established native plants, pollinator habitat
 - **5 and 7-year crop rotations, with a perennial phase**
 - small grains, pulses, oilseeds/broadleaves
 - **Seeded 17 crops in 2019, 12 for harvest**
 - **Integrating livestock grazing into cropping system *(more on this later)***

Seeking a more sane system = lower input costs + higher crop prices + less reliance on technology = greater rewards to management

Our “farming philosophy”:

- Organic is a place to start;
- Do NOT grow food using poisons, Conservation cannot include killing;
- Nature is the best teacher;
- Farming is the highest and best calling;
- Farmers must be professional land stewards & advocates
- Farming can (and must) be practiced in a manner that improves the soil and associated natural resources;
- There are no solutions in bottles (or bags or boxes);
- Tillage is the “ART” of farming; and
- The best “fertilizer” is the farmer’s bootprints (*adapted from Wendell Barry*)

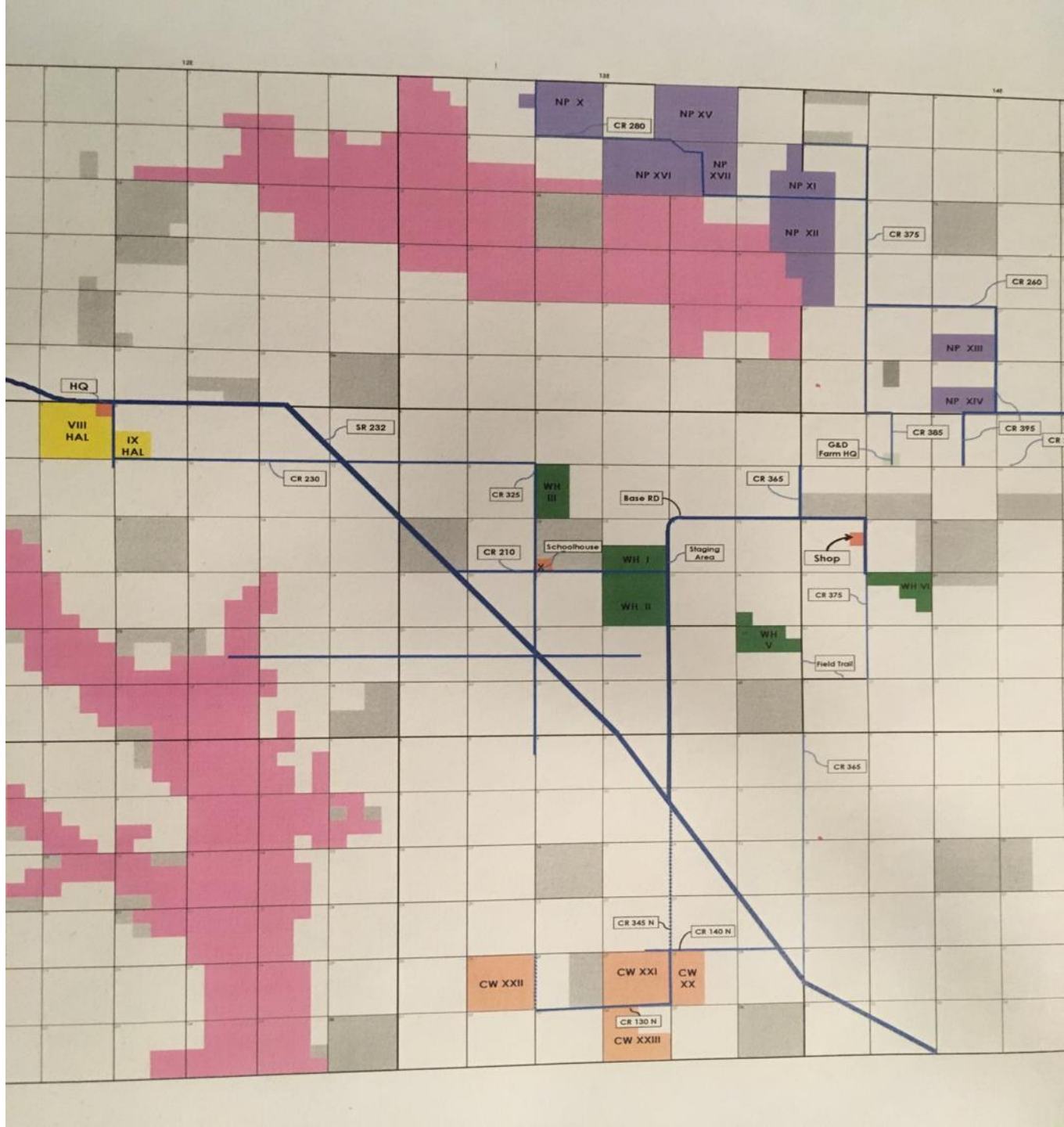
Sense of Urgency...

Can we scale up and transition our current system of agriculture fast enough to make a difference for life on a planet with a changing climate?



14
miles
W-E

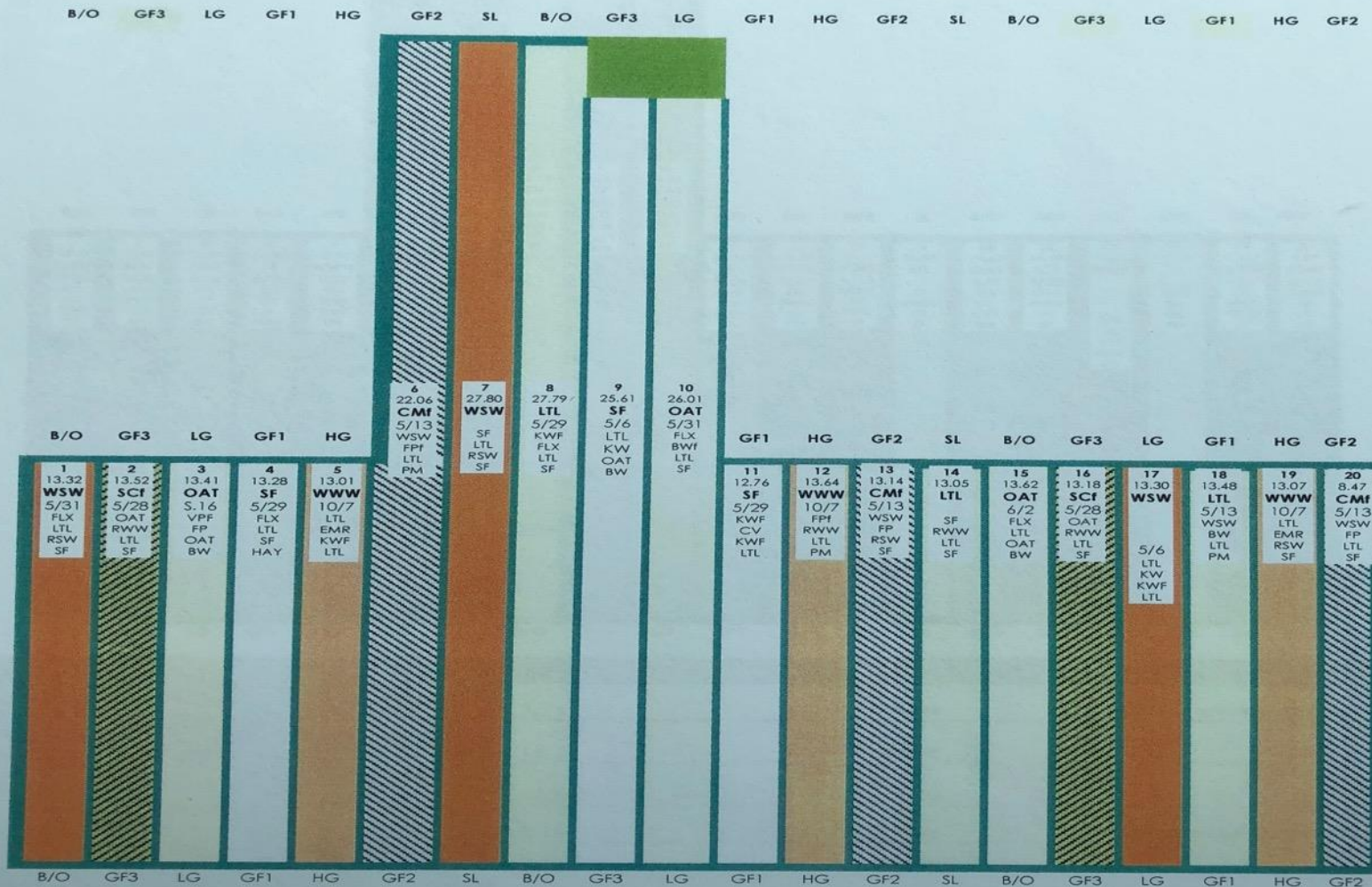
18
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N-S



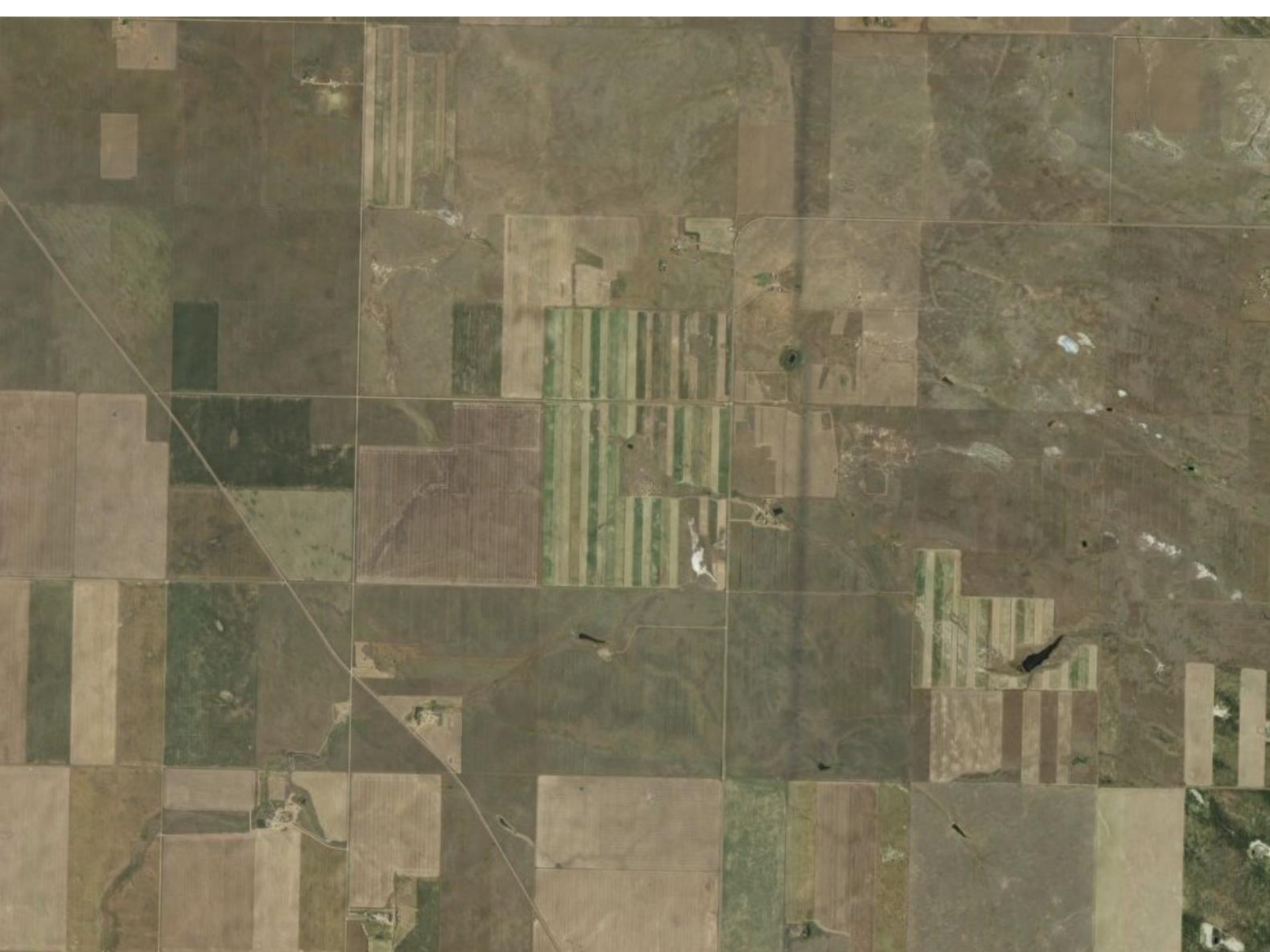


**1900 acres
completed
transition to
Organic in 2020**

**Exploring
Biodynamic
Certification**



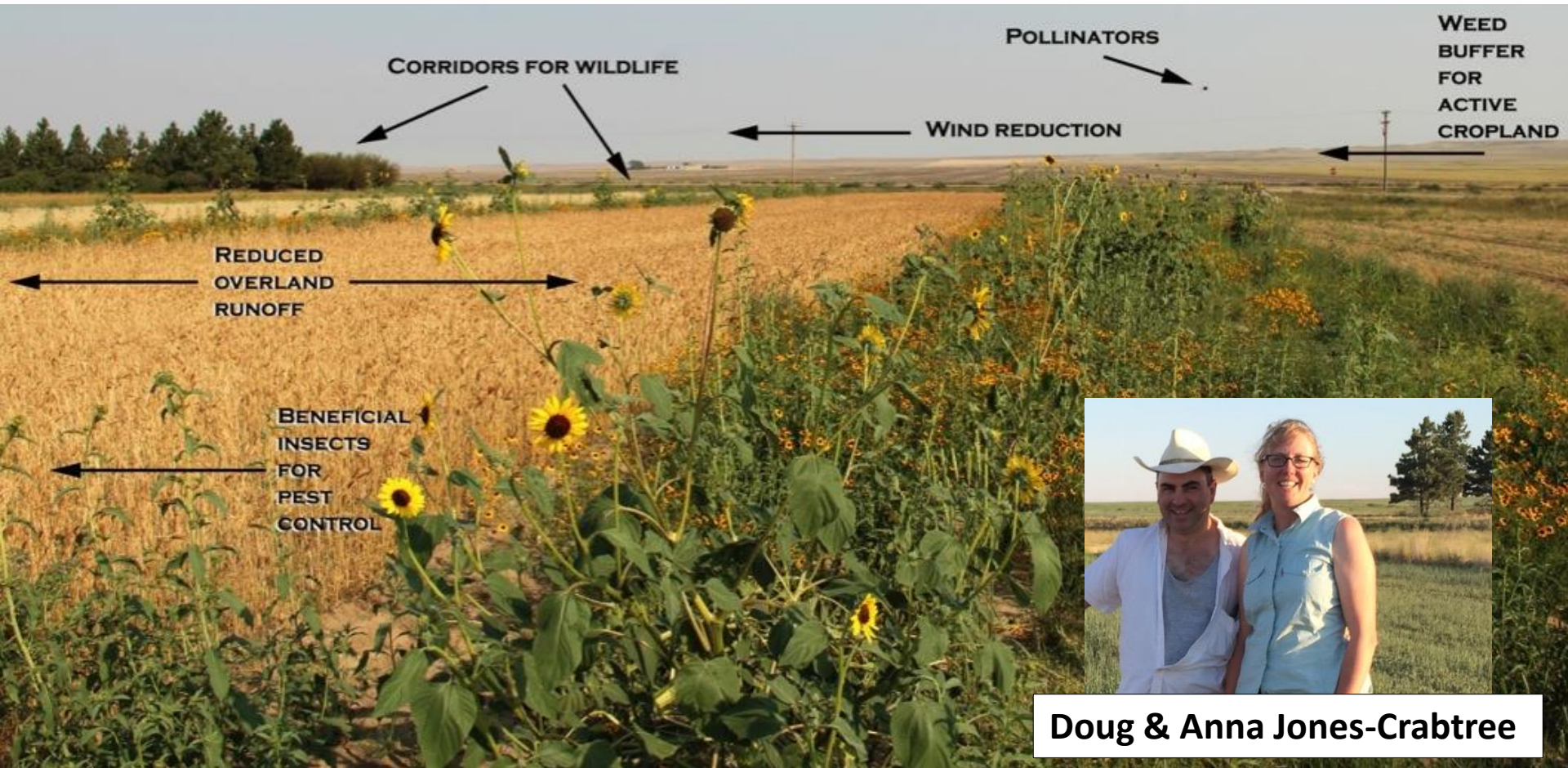




Farm Planning: Perennial Insectary Strips

Example: Vilicus Farms, Havre, Montana

- >5500 acres organic grains, pulses, & oilseed crops
- Native plant strips throughout farm, mostly ~30 ft. wide, totaling over 100 acres
- 20+ species of drought tolerant native forbs and grasses



Doug & Anna Jones-Crabtree



*Certified as an organic producer (farm) by the
Montana Department of Agriculture, under the
USDA National Organic Program*



Bee Better Certified

Bee Better Certified™ identifies and celebrates farmers and businesses that adopt farm management practices that support pollinators, and gives consumers confidence that their purchasing decisions benefit pollinators and the farmers working to protect them.



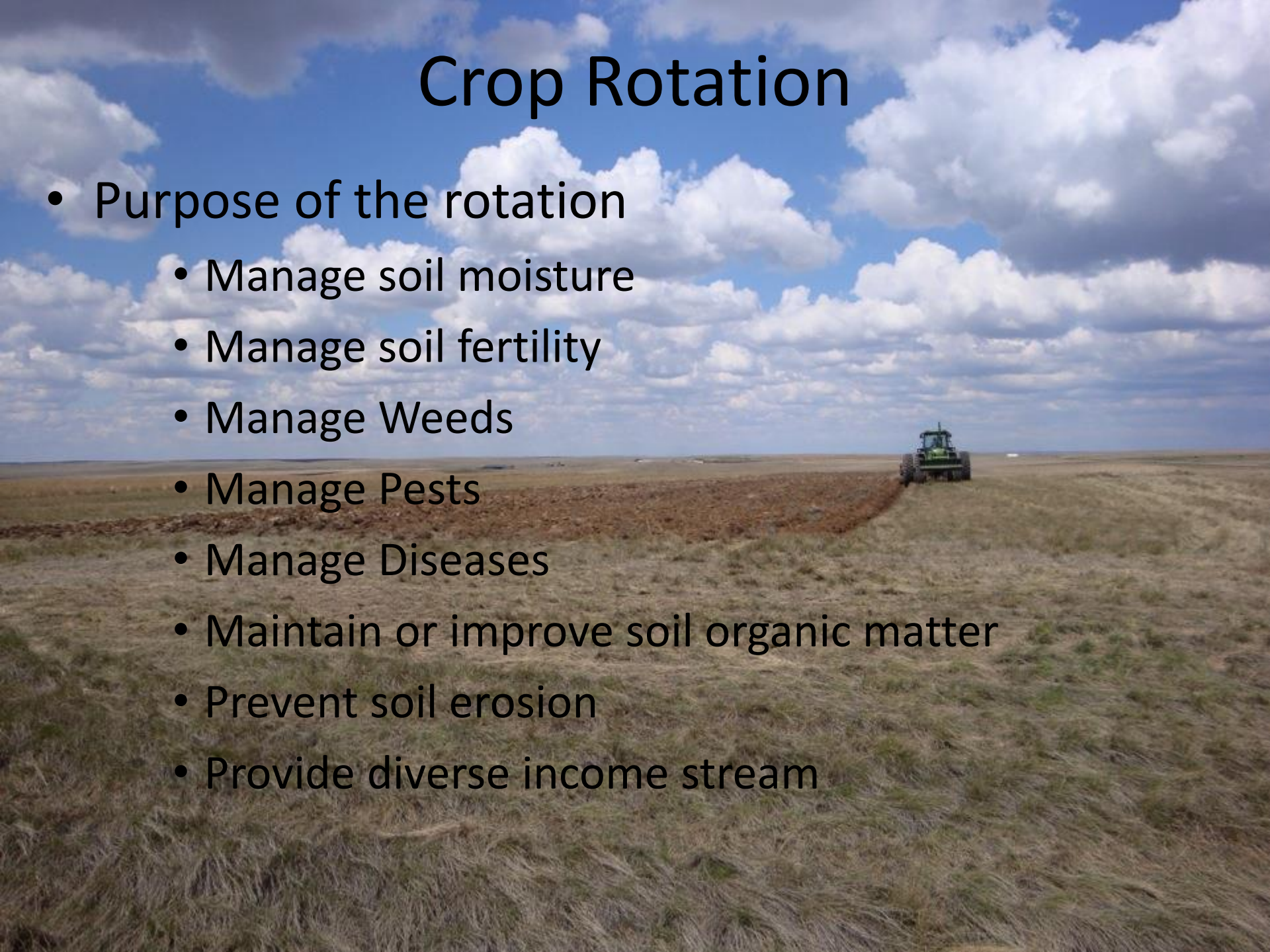
BEE BETTER
CERTIFIED
XERCES SOCIETY





Crop Rotation

- Purpose of the rotation
 - Manage soil moisture
 - Manage soil fertility
 - Manage Weeds
 - Manage Pests
 - Manage Diseases
 - Maintain or improve soil organic matter
 - Prevent soil erosion
 - Provide diverse income stream

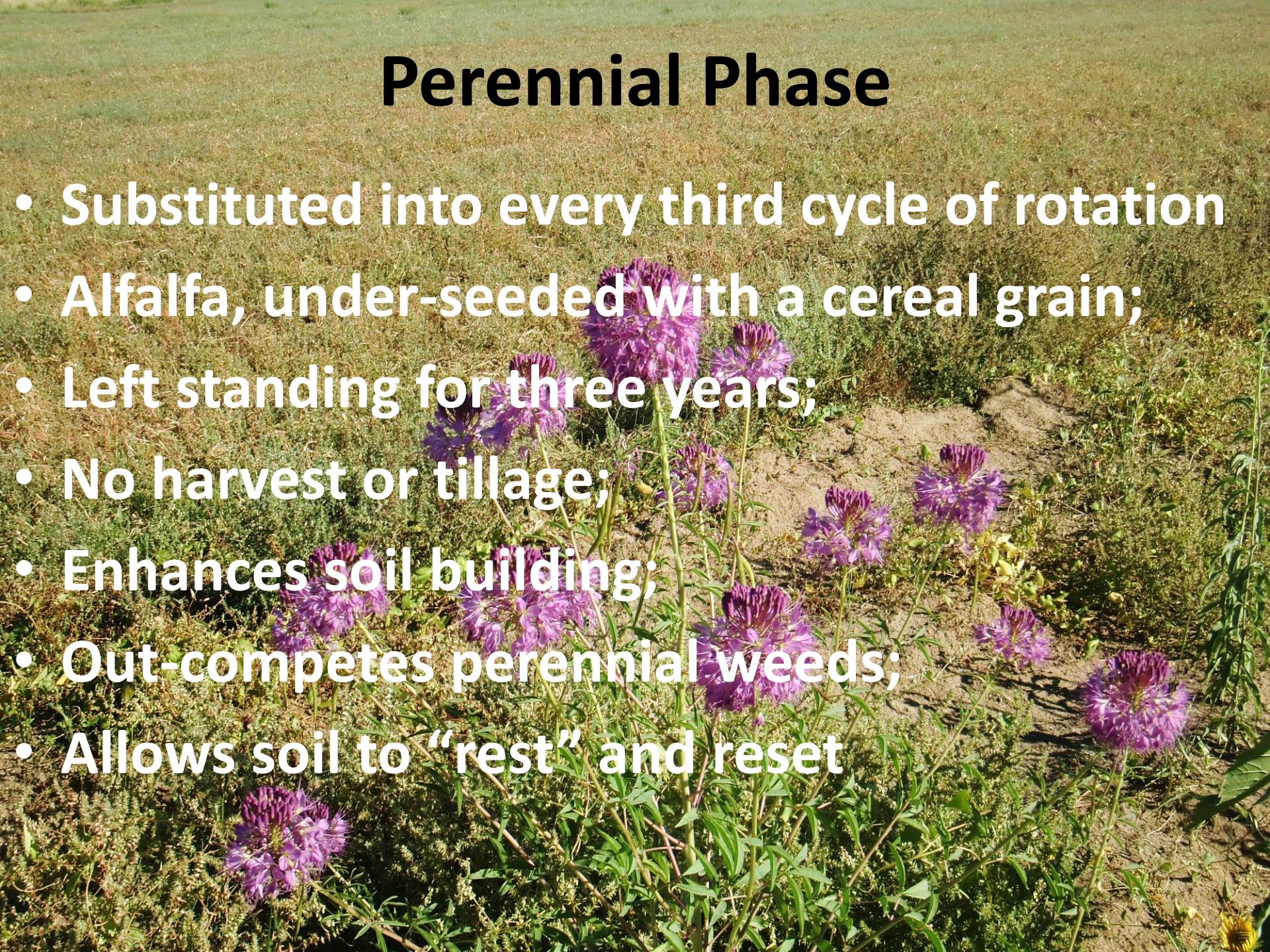


7-year

- **Lite Grain:** spelt, emmer, rye, etc.
- **Green Fallow:** clover, vetch, peas, etc.
Crop terminated at flowering and incorporated as green manure
- **Heavy Grain:** “modern grains” (spring or winter wheat)
- **Broadleaf/Oat:** buckwheat, flax, oats, mustard. *A forage or scavenger crop. REPLACING fallow*
- **Spring Legume:** peas, lentils, vetch, etc.
- **Oat/Grain:** *seeking “oat effect”*
- **Green Fallow:** clover, vetch, peas, etc.

Perennial Phase

- Substituted into every third cycle of rotation
- Alfalfa, under-seeded with a cereal grain;
- Left standing for three years;
- No harvest or tillage;
- Enhances soil building;
- Out-competes perennial weeds;
- Allows soil to “rest” and reset





















**Cover Crop Cocktail (warm season):
Sorghum-Sudan, Millet, Radish, Turnip,
Safflower, Buckwheat, Mustard & Phacelia**





















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Don't always "go it alone"



***Other
organizations that
have helped us...***



**BIODYNAMIC
ASSOCIATION**







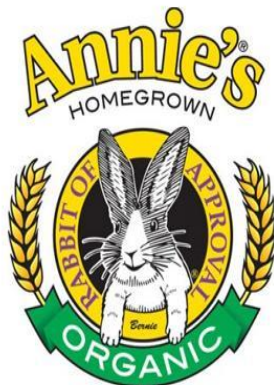
Food Companies Partners

- Risk sharing land leases
- Production Contracts:
 - Provide or “front” Seed
 - Per Acre vs. Per Bushel
 - Timing (delivery & payment)
 - “Act of God” Clause
 - “CSA-model” contract
- Ownership of the farm story





GRAIN MILLERS





Land Investment Partners



IROQUOIS
Valley Farms
Investing with Impact



HOMESTAKE
VENTURE PARTNERS



Growing New Agrarians





An Overview of

INCUBATOR FARM PROJECTS



Project Type*

119

Operational Incubators

66

Potential Incubators

27

University Programs

22

Projects Without Land

IFPs range in size from

1 plot to **45** plots



Average Plot Size

Smallest .36 acres

Largest 2.9 acres



Paul Neubauer
Farm Foreman
Joined Vilicus Farms in 2018

Graduated from the New Agrarian
Apprenticeship Program through
Quivira Coalition in 2016(San Juan
Ranch, Saguache, CO)

Background in Holistic Planned
grazing and organic grass-fed beef

Passion for work-learning and land
stewardship

President, Cottonwood Local
Montana Farmers Union

Helps Doug and Anna managing the
education and work of apprentices

Vilicus Farms Apprentices






KOOKA BURRA
on the
SALMON RIVER











Vilicus Farms is a first generation, nationally recognized organic, dryland crop farm located in northern Hill County, Montana. Established in 2009, Vilicus Farms grows a diverse array of heirloom and specialty grains, pulse, oilseed and broadleaf crops within a 7+year rotation on approximately 9,600 acres.

Applications
open until DEC
15, 2020!

To learn more: <https://quiviracoalition.org/vilicus-farms/>



Paid Organic Farming Apprenticeship Opportunity!



Organic Grain Farming Apprenticeships & Entrepreneurial Opportunities

Havre, Montana

New Agrarian Immersion Experience: Intensive immersion into day-to-day organic farming operations, Vilicus Farm's growing system, conservation practices and ecosystem. This 8 month apprenticeship is offered in partnership through Quivira Coalition's New Agrarian Program.

Registered Apprenticeship in Organic Farming: Structured 2-year paid occupational training in dryland organic farming operations. 4000 hours of on-the-job training and 288 hours of related instruction. This unique apprenticeship has been developed in consultation with the State of Montana Department of Labor and Industry and Montana State University – Northern. Veterans are encouraged to apply and identify GI Bill benefits that may support them pursuing this educational opportunity.

Entrepreneurial Opportunities: For more seasoned agrarians with drive to launch their own enterprise with Vilicus Farms support. Integrated livestock, native seed production, small farm to table restaurant, specialty stone ground flour are obvious synergistic enterprises but any ideas welcome.

For more information: www.vilicusfarms.com / Anna@vilicusfarms.com or
Paul@vilicusfarms.com / 406-459-9944







Contract Grazing Structure

- \$40/pair/month
- Full management provided
- 30 pair grazed for 5 months

Grazing Plan

- Grazed ~200 acres of Barley-Forage Pea CC, Sweetclover CC, and Warm Season CC
- Temporary Electric Fencing
- Hauled Water to animals
- Swath Grazing through Barley-Forage Pea



Swath Grazing









When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect...That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics. That land yields a cultural harvest is a fact long known, but latterly often forgotten."

Aldo Leopold, 1948



Questions?

