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Carney Family Farms field day will explore grazing cover crops – March 30, near Maxwell

MAXWELL, Iowa — Practical Farmers of Iowa and grazier Bruce Carney – in partnership with Land Stewardship Project, The Pasture Project and Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota – will host a cover crop grazing field day on Thursday, March 30, from noon to 3 p.m., at two locations south of Maxwell.

The field day is free to attend and will start with lunch at noon, supplied by Bruce, at Chichaqua Longhouse (8700 NE 126 Ave., about 10 miles south of town), located in Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt park. **Please RSVP for the meal** to Alisha Bower, alisha@practicalfarmers.org or (515) 232-5661, by Monday, March 27.

The event is part of Practical Farmers' 2017 spring cover crop "caravan" field day series, which features events at locations across Iowa exploring cover crop issues in grazing and row crop systems.

After lunch, guests will caravan together to the second stop – one of Bruce's neighbor's crop fields, located on NE 88th Street shortly after turning north from NE 134th Avenue. Guests will get to see Bruce's cows grazing cover crops and compare soil that has had cover crops and cattle grazing to soil in a plot that has had neither.

Bruce will share his experience with planting and grazing cover crops and how they fit into his grass-finished beef operation. He will also discuss contract grazing; the process of crafting agreements with neighboring farmers to graze their cover crops; and how cover crops and animals on the land benefit soil health. Dr. Allen Williams, a grazing and soil health consultant, will also speak, sharing information on the link between grass-finishing and soil health, and regenerative grazing.

Bruce and his family operate Carney Family Farms, which includes 125 cow-calf pairs; a grass-finishing operation; and direct marketing of beef, pork, chicken and eggs.

"I hope attendees learn about the benefits of getting livestock back on the land to improve soil health," Bruce says. "There used to be livestock on all the land. People don't understand what walked off the farm when animals walked off the farm."

Directions: From I-35, take Exit 96 toward Elkhart / Polk City and turn east onto NE 126th Avenue toward Elkhart. Go 5.6 miles, through Elkhart, to a T-intersection; turn left onto NE 72nd Street / NE Yoder Drive. In about 1 mile, the road turns into NE 134th Avenue. Take the first right onto NE 80th Street. In 1 mile, the road curves left at the entrance sign for Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt Park and becomes NE 126th Street. Continue into the park; the longhouse will be on your left near the campground.

Practical Farmers of Iowa's 2017 spring cover crop field days are supported by Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship; Iowa State University Extension; Land Stewardship Project; Natural Resources Conservation Service; Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota; The Pasture Project; and Unilever.

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