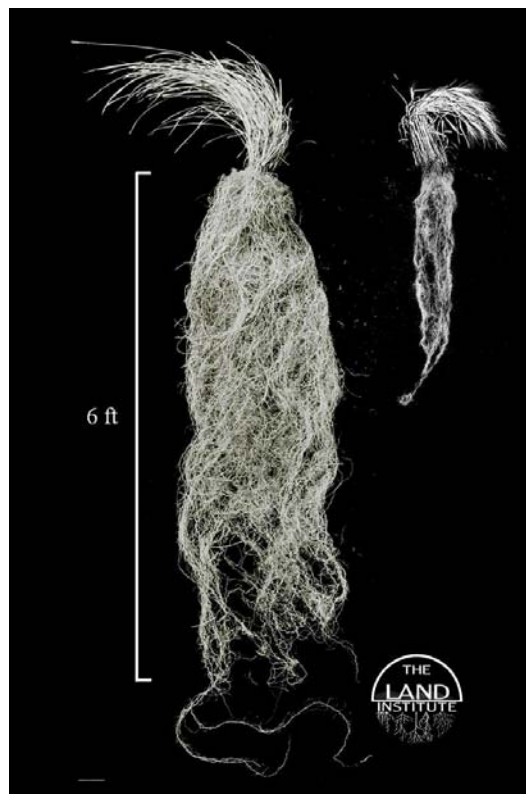


The Power of Perennials

The long-lived roots of perennial plants—such as those of big bluestem, a native prairie grass (below left)—act as important environmental micro-managers reaching water and nutrients deep within the soil. Such root systems helped develop the richest soils in the world.

Unfortunately, perennial roots are largely absent from today's farms dominated by annual crops such as corn, soybeans and wheat (below right).

We now have the opportunity to bring these powerful natural qualities of wild plant communities to our farm fields. Perennial crops mean fewer inputs to purchase, healthier soils, and cleaner water. From food to energy, perennial crops offer greater sustainability and profitability for farm families and communities.



Dramatic Landscape Change

These maps illustrate this progression on approximately 1500 acres of land in north central Iowa through 1976. Since then, the acreage of corn and soybeans has continued to expand, growing another 17% in the five states of the Upper Mississippi Basin through 2005.

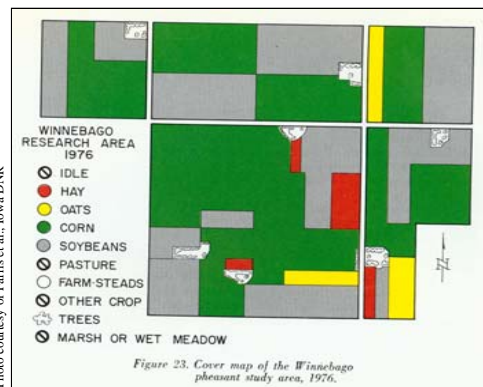
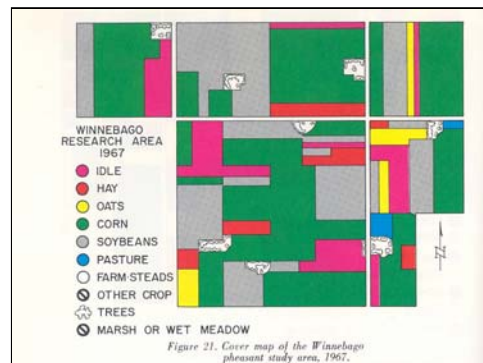
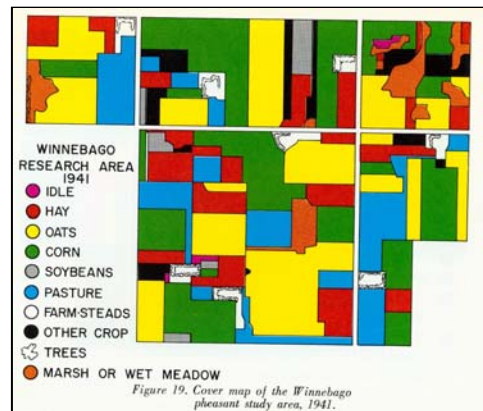


Photo courtesy of Farris et al., Iowa DNR

Green Lands, Blue Waters: Consortium members with signed letters of participation

- University of Illinois
- Iowa State University, including the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture
- University of Minnesota
- North Dakota State University
- University of Wisconsin
- Agricultural Watershed Institute
- Audubon Society, Upper Mississippi Basin Initiative
- Blue Earth River Basin Initiative
- Illinois Stewardship Alliance
- Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
- Iowa Farmers Union
- The Land Institute
- Land Stewardship Project
- Minnesota Farmers Union
- Mississippi River Basin Alliance
- The Nature Conservancy, Upper Mississippi Basin Project
- Practical Farmers of Iowa
- Rural Advantage
- Trout Unlimited

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The Green Lands, Blue Waters Initiative

The next generation of farming systems to sustain the people, lands and communities of the Mississippi River Basin.



PEOPLE



LAND



COMMUNITIES