



North Dakota Discovery Farms are working farms and ranches whose owners partner with natural resource managers. Together, they evaluate the effectiveness of various practices at reducing environmental impacts while maintaining farm profitability. The program is a cooperative effort involving North Dakota State University, the North Dakota Department of Health and U.S. Geological Survey.

More Information

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Bartholomay Brothers Family Farms

Brothers Kent and Keith Bartholomay, Sheldon, N.D., continually seek opportunities to educate themselves and help others understand issues surrounding agricultural land use. They have been farming in partnership since 1992 and previously farmed with parents Joe and Marian. Their “desire to know” and the farm’s proximity to the Maple River make the Bartholomay operation a perfect fit for the North Dakota Discovery Farms program.



Sandi and Keith Bartholomay, Kent and Sandy Bartholomay

The present-day farm consists of about 6,000 acres, with 4,500 acres of cropland. Corn, sunflowers, soybeans, spring wheat, winter wheat and alfalfa are among the crops grown. The brothers also run a predominately Angus herd of 300 spring-calving cows. They background the calves on-farm before selling them to feedlots.

As Discovery Farms participants, the Bartholomays allow researchers to collect surface and tile drainage water at three gaging stations near one of their fields. Nitrogen and phosphorus levels in the samples are monitored to determine whether nutrient loss could be an issue for the Maple River, which is just a half-mile south of the field. If so, the Bartholomays will work with a team of natural resource managers to find feasible options for lessening the impact.

“I have always been concerned about the environment,” says Keith, who has a degree in range management and worked for the Bureau of Land Management for six years before returning to the family farm.

Conservation measures that have been implemented on Bartholomay lands through the years include no-till farming, strip-till corn, crop rotation, cover crops and a nutrient management plan. The Bartholomays also have hosted a number of North Dakota State University research projects, served on county and state soil conservation boards, and even received an award from the local soil conservation district.

Like other Discovery Farms participants, the Bartholomays carefully consider their impact on the land and water sources for the benefit of family.

“We want to continue to make a living and provide a place for our children to farm,” Kent says.

Kent and his wife, Sandy, have three children: Ethan, Emily and Alysia. Keith and his wife, Sandi, have five: Tony, Eric, Lynsee (Kemmer), Karl and Nicole. Some of the children already have returned home to work on the family farm and continue the Bartholomay tradition of land stewardship.



Researchers and producers discuss water quality monitoring at the Bartholomay drain tile site during the 2011 North Dakota Discovery Farms Summer Tour. Pictured are Ron Wiederholt, North Dakota Discovery Farms program coordinator, Carrington; Kent Bartholomay, producer, Sheldon; and Dennis Busch, tour attendee, Platteville, Wis.