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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Sunderman Farm Managers Earn ISU**

**Master Conservationist Certification**

***Because there’s a lot more to land stewardship***

***and conservation than row crop and pastures***

*Fort Dodge, IA – July XX, 2019 –* For Iowa landowners, corn and soybeans are top of mind with regard to farm production, but long-time farm managers Brent Larson and Mark Thompson, adopt a broader view of the health their customers’ land and their own farming operations.

This spring and summer, Larson and Thompson took their expertise a step farther by earning certification as Master Conservationists through an Iowa State University Extension and Outreach program which provides education on current conservation methods across many types of land usage.

"We are very excited about how the Master Conservationist program will further enable us to assist our land-owner customers in looking at the entirety of their land use conservation practices,” says Sunderman Farm Manager Mark Thompson.

“For Sunderman Farm Management customers, there’s a lot more to land ownership and conservation than managing row crops alone,” he adds. “Each plot of land is a unique mix of tillable land, pasture, forest, watersheds, aquatic environments and more, all of which must work together to achieve the best results for the land and the landowners.”

Offered at ISU Extension and Outreach locations across Iowa, Sunderman Farm Management team was able enroll locally through Webster County site, which included information and tours of sites across Hamilton, Humboldt, Webster and Wright Counties in Iowa.

“The program teaches participants of all levels of expertise about Iowa’s natural ecosystems and the diversity of conservation challenges and opportunities within the region,” says Linda Cline, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach County Program Coordinator.

“Participants learn to make informed choices for leading and educating others to improve conservation in Iowa.”

The Master Conservationist Program is a collaborative effort by ISU Extension and Outreach, County Conservation Boards, and local conservation leaders and professionals. Regional program steering committee partners for the Webster County Extension Service include Humboldt County Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS), Webster County Conservation, Webster County Pheasants Forever, Hamilton County Conservation, Wright County Conservation, and Wright County NRCS.

“The participants included people with the same areas of interest in conservation, but who aren’t involved with agriculture,” Thompson adds, “so it provided a great opportunity to share how conservation practices are implemented on our own farms and in our farm management practice.”

Topics in the program include prairies, forest, aquatic environments and watershed conservation with curriculum structured into four modules which combine technical information presented and curated by Iowa State University researchers and educators with in-person sessions led by local conservation leaders, practitioners, and experts.

* Module 1 sets the stage for the course, exploring the history and current structure of conservation in Iowa as well as a study of the landforms and waterways that make up the state's land area.
* Module 2 digs deep into the structure, function, and challenges facing Iowa's natural prairie, forest, and aquatic ecosystems.
* Module 3 explores the wide range of conservation practices developed and implemented to address conservation challenges in Iowa.
* The fourth and final module then examines the human elements of conservation and explores how to communicate the importance of conservation to Iowa and Iowans.

Master Conservationist Program graduates are awarded a certificate and encouraged to get engaged locally to apply the information they learn and continue to build their local connections to conservation professionals and other passionate conservationists.

**About Sunderman Farm Management**

Sunderman Farm Management Company, headquartered in Fort Dodge, has been serving the Midwest since 1961, providing professional farm management, farm real estate sales, and agricultural consulting services. Managing farms for generations, we cultivate honest, open client relationships, fortified by timely, effective communication and resulting in remarkably sustainable client retention over many years. For more information, visit [www.sundermanfarm.com.](http://www.sundermanfarm.com.)