



2024 MAFWA Private Lands Working Group Directors Report

Submitted by: Don Kahl, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife

Meeting Time and Place

The 2024 MAFWA Private Lands Working Group Meeting was held May 14-16, 2024 at the Embassy Suites East Peoria Riverfront Hotel in East Peoria, IL, in conjunction with the Public Lands and Wildlife Diversity Working Groups. The meeting began at 9:00 am on the 14th, and concluded at 2:30 pm on the 16th.

Attendance

Thirteen (13) representatives from 11 of the 13 MAFWA states were in attendance (see Appendix 1). Presenters included Tammy Miller, Illinois DNR Division of Private Lands Manager; and John Kaiser, Ohio Division of Wildlife Private Lands Program Administrator.

Executive Summary

The 2024 Private Lands Working Group Committee Meeting concentrated on identifying the greatest successes, opportunities, and challenges of each state's private lands program (see Appendix 2). The meeting began with a presentation by Tammy Miller, who provided information on the Illinois Recreational Access Program. This produced much discussion about the development, administration, and funding mechanisms of each state's private land hunting access programs. John Kaiser then provided an update on the development of the Northern Bobwhite Grassland Initiative's draft of the Coordinated Implementation Program, Regional Plan.

Following the presentations, much of the discussion amongst the Committee was facilitated by the presentation of state reports that were submitted in writing, prior to the meeting (see Appendix 3). Discussions on proposal development to fund various state conservation initiatives through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), was a hot topic amongst the group, as current funding opportunities through the program are ample. **Much like during the 2023 Committee Meeting, other major themes discussed were struggles with the recruitment and retention of staff and the training of new staff.**

In addition to committee meeting discussions, we were presented a breadth of information pertaining to climate change impacts, wildlife management in intensively farmed landscapes, and wildlife disease issues, which led to further discussion amongst and between working groups. (see Appendix 4).

Director Action Items

The Committee presents 2 action items for your consideration, to address the primary struggles that were identified during our meeting: development of a MAFWA job board, and a centralized training program.

May 20, 2024

MAFWA Directors

Dear MAFWA Directors,

Recruitment and retention of the next generation of wildlife conservationists continues to be a high priority for all of the MAFWA states. Declines in the number of applicants for our positions has sparked concern, resulting in several states tasking teams to investigate the issue and develop potential solutions. The potential reasons for this decline (salary, housing, societal trends, etc.) are dynamic and complex. The lack of qualified applicants has led to some positions remaining vacant for extended periods of time. The opportunity for landscape-level impacts on private lands is currently unprecedented. With funding from sources like IRA, RCPP, CREP, and AtB, the potential to advance wildlife conservation on private lands is significant. However, without qualified, trained individuals to implement these funds on the landscape, this opportunity will not be fully realized.

To assist with this issue, we feel as though improvements could be made to increase the visibility and awareness of the opportunities that the MAFWA states have for prospective applicants. Iowa DNR recently conducted a survey of students from colleges and universities across the state. One of the questions within the survey looked at the above question with interesting results. 73% of respondents indicated that they looked at the Iowa DNR website for opportunities; 65% receive job announcements from their college or university job boards and/or their professors; and only 39% of respondents looked to the Texas A&M job board. This was a surprise, as Texas A&M job board has long been the standard for advertising conservation positions. Additionally, for Iowa at least, contracted LTE positions are not posted to the DNR website.

We ask that the Directors work to develop and support a MAFWA region job board, where MAFWA states can advertise our positions. We believe that condensing the scope of job announcements to those of the region will increase awareness and increase recruitment. We do not have all of the answers for how exactly to build and support a MAFWA region job board that would become a useful resource for potential applicants; and we acknowledge that this would not address all aspects of the recruitment and retention issue. However, to remain status quo will result in continued extended vacancies and reduced ability to deliver wildlife conservation.

Sincerely,

MAFWA Private Lands Working Group

Represented here by:

Nick Baumgarten (Iowa Department of Natural Resources), (712) 330-6932,
Nick.Baumgarten@dnr.iowa.gov

Don Kahl (Illinois Department of Natural Resources), (217) 206-0411, don.kahl@illinois.gov

May 24, 2024

MAFWA Directors

Dear MAFWA Directors,

Private land biologist recruitment and retention continues to be common challenges faced by the majority, if not all, of the MAFWA states. When a state is successful in hiring a new private land biologist, the new hires are often recent college graduates with limited hands-on knowledge or experience with land management implementation or working directly with private landowners. Additionally, due to existing capacity limitations, state agencies are often challenged in providing the extensive training needed in a timely manner.

These issues are also shared by other conservation partners outside of the MAFWA umbrella. Pheasants Forever has recently posted a Training Coordinator position to tackle this issue within their ranks. They will develop remote training modules and a boot camp-like, in-person course to train new Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever staff. They are already making plans to collect funds to develop 3 more coordinator positions. Also, in conjunction with AFWA and the Agricultural Conservation Committee, Texas A&M University and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department are developing training coursework targeted at training newly hired biologists.

To bolster our agency ranks and accelerate the training of new hires, we recommend that MAFWA and the member states follow our partners' lead in addressing this deficiency. We've identified a few potential options. One option is to pool funds to develop a "MAFWA Private Land Delivery and Implementation Training course" designed for new private land biologists hired by MAFWA member state agencies. Another option would be to engage partners who are currently developing training programs, support their efforts and join their development process.

If a MAFWA-led training course is the route taken, the training framework should incorporate recommended training topics ranging from how to develop positive and trusting relationships with private landowners to hands-on management implementation skills (e.g., calibrating drills and herbicide sprayers, how to create edge feathering or quail covey headquarters, etc.). The training course should be formatted using a 'training-camp' approach where member states could send new employees for multi-day/week training opportunities organized multiple times per year (or as needed) across the MAFWA region. Funds to support hiring a part-time training coordinator to assist in development and coordination of the training courses would be required.

If we were to instead engage partners that are already underway in training coursework development, state agencies under MAFWA should be involved in the training program development, to ensure region-based training topics and needs are met and to continue the tradition of state and national partners looking towards the state fish and wildlife agencies for wildlife management and delivery expertise.

A centralized training platform that covers the breadth of all MAFWA states is in the best interest of the organization's members, as it reduces both inefficiency and redundancy of each state developing their own program. It also ensures that consistent and high-quality

private land conservation delivery occurs across the region. If no action is taken, each state will continue to rely on their own limited, internal sources and will continue to come up short in quickly training new staff, lessening our impact on the private land landscape.

Sincerely,

MAFWA Private Land Working Group

Represented here by:

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Director Information Items

Program Challenges, Successes and Opportunities – Discussion Summary

Private lands programs must bridge the gap that often exists between the profitability and traditions associated with working lands management and the requirements and the wellbeing of the wildlife that reside amongst those same lands. Throughout the Midwest, there is no shortage of private, working lands to work on, as farming and ranching are the primary land uses throughout most of the MAFWA states. Consequently, across that same landscape, there is no shortage of wildlife conservation and restoration opportunities, which is due to continued habitat and population declines throughout the region. It's an uphill battle to say the least, as private lands biologists contest with increasing land prices and soil rental rates, which leave producers even more motivated to pursue fiscal gains from their operations, which often leads to maximizing acreage in production. CRP has taken a hit on several fronts because of this, as more farmers are returning set-aside acres back into production, while others, several years in a row now in some areas, have utilized the grass for grazing and haying to help support livestock during several drought years.

These are difficult enough exertions to overcome on their own, and yet the struggles are compounded due to internal strife within our own agencies. For some agencies, funding to support programs or purchase equipment can be tough to come by or various administrative processes make getting conservation on the ground more difficult than we'd like to admit. For most all our agencies, staffing levels are often inadequate to allow us to keep up with demand or need. When we do have the funds available, adequately trained and available contractors are often in short supply. Also, when we are able to hire new staff, we struggle with getting an adequate number of applicants, the hiring pool often lacks experienced candidates that possess hands-on experience, we lack the staff and time to properly train the new staff, and we struggle to retain some of the new staff that we do train because they quickly move to jobs up the ladder or within other agencies.

For all of the struggles though, we are experiencing many successes. We possess dedicated and passionate staff, our partnerships continue to strengthen as we work to tackle ever more difficult resource threats, and we have customers who are still knocking on our door, asking for our expertise and assistance. Federal funding sources, through both the Wildlife Restoration Act and the Farm Bill (RCPP in particular) are providing much support for conservation throughout the Midwest. The use of prescribed fire to manage habitat on private lands is growing. We're also beginning to see an influx of new customers outside of agricultural producers, which is providing opportunities in more urbanized settings.

Under MAFWA, as the working relationships between the member states and our partners builds, we have immense opportunities to pool and build funds to tackle regional-scale conservation issues. In this day in age, we can't afford to go it alone. To further build the partnerships ability to make wide-reach impacts, it will take increased capacity. This provides MAFWA with further opportunities to build resources that are needed to recruit, train, and retain new staff and to develop the conservation leaders of tomorrow.

Presentation Summaries

Illinois Recreational Access Program

Illinois' private lands access program, the Illinois Recreational Access Program (IRAP), continues to steadily grow since its inception in 2011. The program provides hunting, fishing, and other recreational access opportunities to the public, on private lands. The program has a strong R3 focus, and it also provides habitat restoration opportunities on acres enrolled. Although popular, funding and capacity are beginning to threaten the future of the program. Predominately funded through VPA-HIP, the uncertainty surrounding the timing of a new Farm Bill is jeopardizing acreage enrollments in the program. Representatives shared information about the private land access programs within their own states, sharing the struggles and successes of their programs. Several states provided information on how they've utilized Pittman-Roberts and RCPP funding to support their programs, including funding to help staff habitat strike teams. Also, representatives discussed various systems they have in place for harvest reporting and distributing hunter opportunity without negative impacts to wildlife resources or relationships with enrolled landowners.

Northern Bobwhite Grassland Initiative's Coordinated Implementation Program, Regional Plan
The Northern Bobwhite Grassland Initiative (NBGI) is currently drafting a Regional Plan for its Coordinated Implementation Program (CIP). CIP is designed to apply adaptive management strategies at a multi-state landscape level, designed to evaluate and monitor northern bobwhite quail and grassland bird populations, in response to the restoration of their habitat. The CIP Regional Plan will be ready for discussion at NBGI's annual meeting, which will be held in Mississippi in late July – early August.

Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held in spring of 2025, in Indiana.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Attendance List

Organization	Participant
Illinois Department of Natural Resources	Don Kahl
Illinois Department of Natural Resources	Tammy Miller
Indiana Department of Natural Resources	Josh Griffen
Iowa Department of Natural Resources	Nick Baumgarten
Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism	Wes Sowards
Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources	Jacob Stewart
Michigan Department of Natural Resources	Kenneth Kesson
Missouri Department of Conservation	Lisa Potter
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Amber Knutson
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	Jenny Prenosil
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	T.J. Walker
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	Madison Fell
Ohio Department of Natural Resources	John Kaiser
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources	Haley Frater

Appendix 2: Private Lands Working Group Meeting Agenda

**MAFWA PRIVATE LANDS WORKING GROUP COMMITTEE
MEETING**

May 14, 2023 – Embassy Suites East Peoria Riverfront Hotel, East Peoria, IL

12:45-1:20 IRAP – Illinois’ Private Land Access Program

Tammy Miller – Illinois DNR

1:20-2:00 NBGI CIP-Regional Plan Update

John Kaiser – Ohio DNR

2:00-2:10 Break

2:10 – 4:10 State Updates

Present a summary of your program’s/state’s greatest challenges and greatest successes/opportunities

2:10-4:30 Discussion of Program Needs



MAFWA Private Lands Report for Spring 2024

Organizational Status and Update

From the fallout of a multi-year budgetary impasse which was then followed by the Covid 19 Pandemic, IDNR weathered a lengthy period of reduced hiring that lasted several years. The tide did turn, and great gains were made in 2023, as many hirings occurred to bring the agency close to its headcount cap, which currently stands at approximately 1,200 employees. Although many long-standing vacancies were backfilled, the Agency is still well below the headcount levels that were held at the turn of the century.

The Division of Wildlife Resources was fortunate in rebuilding their Programs Section, backfilling manager positions for the Ag and Grassland Wildlife, Wetland Wildlife, and Hunter Heritage Programs, while also backfilling 3 clerical staff vacancies and the Waterfowl Program Biologist position. The Field Operations Section was able to backfill 5 District Wildlife Biologist positions and 1 Regional Wildlife Biologist position, but in the process of backfilling other vacancies in the Division, 3 District Wildlife Biologist positions and the Field Operations Section Manager position, were vacated. The Division's staffing levels are still too low for it to be actively involved in private lands conservation work, so we still rely heavily on partners, both internally within IDNR and externally, to carry out private lands work in Illinois.

Greatest Opportunities

- **Division of Private Lands** - IDNR's primary direct link to private lands conservation work is carried out by the Division of Private Lands. Private Lands specifically works with landowners through 3 programs, which includes the Illinois Recreational Access Program (IRAP), the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and the Illinois Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (IDNR-CREP).
 - o IRAP
The Illinois Recreational Access Program (IRAP) provides incentives to private landowners who allow public access on their property for hunting and fishing activities. In addition, IRAP assists private landowners with habitat management their leased acres. IRAP currently has 28,100 acres leased in Illinois and has implemented habitat management projects on over 20,000 acres. Challenges include the need for funding, staff and finding more landowners to meet the need of outdoor recreationalist.
 - o CSP
The Illinois Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) provides a property tax incentive to landowners with 5 or more contiguous undeveloped acres managed for conservation. Currently there are 2,479 active enrollments consisting of 102,039.6 acres.
 - o IDNR-CREP
The Illinois Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is an IDNR/USDA partnership that provides incentives for long-term conservation easements on private lands within the Illinois and Kaskaskia River watersheds. IDNR/CREP is currently working with Wildlife field staff to process 42 new easement applications that will establish conservation practices and wildlife habitat on 2500 acres of frequently flooded cropland and environmentally sensitive acres. Established in 1998, Illinois CREP has recorded over 1300 easements, totaling 90,000 acres.
- **Pheasant and Bobwhite Quail SAFE** - For most Midwestern states, a steady, healthy Farm Bill is paramount for private lands work. Illinois is no exception. SAFE has long provided opportunities to place high quality grassland habitat on the ground for upland species, but the focus area was too small to make a broad impact. Recently,

Illinois modified SAFE, essentially expanding the program to cover the entirety of the state, allowing us to utilize the acres throughout all of our grassland priority areas for the benefit of pheasants, bobwhite quail, and all grassland birds. We hope to build off of these gains through the implementation of other grassland conservation programs tied to some of the numerous and bountiful Federal funded programs (RCPP for example).

- **Conservation Partners** - Without our partners shouldering the load, private lands work in Illinois would be dead in the water. We greatly rely upon their support, although we often lack the ability to provide them with adequate support in return. In Illinois, it is extremely difficult to supply funding to non-government partners outside of a few limited grants, and we continue to look for ways distribute much needed funding to those partners. If we can find ways to provide the needed funding to the appropriate partners, IDNR's ability make a lasting impact on the landscape in private lands conservation would significantly increase.

Greatest Challenges

- **Administrative Processes** - Internally, IDNR is not well positioned for success in the realm of private lands conservation. For the Agency, private lands works has been placed on the backburner for the better part of the past 2 decades and has not been made a priority. In a state that is predominately under private ownership (96% private and 4% public), this is a great concern. Reduced staffing levels along with cumbersome procurement and fiscal constraints, make it extremely difficult for staff to accomplish conservation work at IDNR, both on the private and public sides. Federal aid funding through the Wildlife Restoration Act is currently plentiful. For the Division of Wildlife Resources in Illinois, the funding that is needed to support additional staff is available. We just need the political backing to increase our headcount.
- **Commodity and Land Prices** - High commodity prices coupled with ever increasing land values have made it exceedingly difficult to conduct habitat conservation and restoration on private lands, especially on properties with tillable acres. The almighty dollar drives much in life, so the ability to profit from agriculture in a system that is buoyed by subsidization, leaves less and less incentive to conduct wildlife -focus conservation in intensively farmed areas throughout the Corn Belt. Also, reduced acreage caps, soil rental rate compensation; and reduced cost share availability under recent Farm Bills, have compounded the issue, as far as CRP is involved in Illinois.
- **Conservation Contractors** - As mentioned, staffing levels are short, and it's also difficult to get funding to a partner, who usually can more quickly and efficiently utilize those funds. When IDNR and partners can get funding in place to get conservation projects on the ground, the next hurdle is finding capable contractors to do the work. They are in short supply, and those who are operating in Illinois, are often overbooked. Throw in the fact that we have cumbersome administrative processes, it can take some time for IDNR to cut a check for payment or reimbursement. This has greatly increased restoration costs, as contractors have bumped up their prices, to account for the lengthy wait period to be paid. This impacts both the private and public lands programs in the state,



Indiana Department
of Natural Resources

2024 DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) | MAFWA Private Lands Working Group

Three Successes/Opportunities

Indiana Private Lands Access Program (IPLA)

The Indiana Private Lands Access Program (IPLA) continued to be extremely popular in 2023 and into 2024. This program offers financial incentives to landowners who allow controlled public hunting access for gamebirds, turkey, deer, waterfowl, and small game. IPLA is funded through USDA's Voluntary Public Access program and DFW partner support through Indiana's Grasslands for Gamebirds and Songbirds RCPP. **Through January of 2024, the program boasted over 200 contracts connecting hunters with access to over 22,000 acres across Indiana.**

IPLA Fast Facts:

- 84% of hunters and 100% of landowners surveyed are either happy or extremely happy with the program
- 209 contracts and 22,879 acres accessed (VPA=78 contracts, 8,409.74 acres of access. RCPP=131 contracts 14,469.5 acres of access)
- Over 14,000 landowners and nearly 40,000 hunters contacted via outreach efforts
 - Targeted outreach to landowners with WRE easements (per VPA agreement, despite WRE habitat limitations)
 - Targeted outreach to landowners in Indiana's "Classified Forest & Wildlands" program-popular financial incentive
 - Very popular hunting opportunity amongst hunters, particularly with gamebirds (limited opportunities in Indiana)
- Dozens of testimonials from satisfied customers:
 - Wounded Warriors, youth hunters, displaced hunters, etc.
 - Unbelievable success with deer hunting opportunities and harvests
 - A great testimonial from a youngster:
 - *"...When we had made it back to the blind I thought for sure my hunt was over and I would not get to hunt here again due to my schedule and I was feeling pretty down. My dad said you know son wouldn't it be funny if you shoot your bird in the last 20 minutes of hunting hours. Well it's not how I thought it would happen but just like that my Dad said look a bird. Then at 12:40 I shot my first Turkey..."*

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) is an initiative within the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) that provides financial and technical assistance to landowners needed to achieve species-specific wildlife habitat goals on their property. SAFE is the largest portion of CRP in Indiana, making up roughly 57,000 acres, or 30% of the program statewide (all of CRP=184,831 acres in Indiana). Indiana's SAFE focuses on Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCNs) targeting habitat for the Indiana Bat & Northern Long-eared Bat, Ring-necked Pheasant, Henslow's

Sparrow, and Northern Bobwhite. All 4 SAFE agreements have an aggregated goal of 130,000 acres of habitat developed with a budget of \$317 Million dollars.

SAFE Fast Facts:

- SAFE is currently approaching 50% of 130,000 acreage goal with over 57,000 acres enrolled
- Through the work of the CRP working group in AFWA, FSA requested SAFE updates creating flexibilities that allowed for inclusion of desperately needed early successional habitat development, which is now a requirement of DFW's Northern Bobwhite SAFE. This is likely a limiting factor and a huge step forward in benefitting Northern Bobwhite Quail and other grassland dependent wildlife species that had been woefully underrepresented in past CRP efforts
- Every county in Indiana has at least 2 SAFE options for consideration on eligible private lands
- Can be further leveraged with "incentive payments" from DFW's "Gamebird Development Program" funds (somewhat similar to a CREP approach) for landowners interested in intensive wildlife management
- DFW partners with USDA-NRCS under a contribution agreement to provide technical assistance including management plans, burn plans, status reviews, and practice certifications on SAFE and other wildlife practices through CRP

Grasslands for Gamebirds and Songbirds (GGS)

The Grasslands for Gamebirds and Songbirds Initiative is a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) in its second iteration after seeing outstanding success in the program's first round of funding. This program focuses on the development of native grasslands and pollinator habitat. Indiana landowners are connected to quality technical and financial assistance to implement practices that benefit focal SGCN namely the Northern Bobwhite, Henslow's Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, and Ring-necked Pheasant. GGS continues to be a flagship wildlife program in Indiana with emphasis on partnership, an innovative approach to technical assistance, and interface with Indiana's Private Lands Access program. A unique innovation of GGS is the two regional "habitat teams" [similar to a strike team] which assist private landowners with implementation of habitat development: providing the equipment, supplies, and technical expertise to take the extra steps necessary to ensure habitat gets installed correctly.

GGS Fast Facts:

- GGS 1.0 included 32 partners whose combined financial contributions totaled nearly \$1.83 Million (including \$1 Million RCP funding)
 - Total funding obligated over \$1.9 Million (104% of goal)
 - 3,853 acres of habitat developed (118% of goal)
 - 297 producer contracts completed
 - Award winning program including the 2018 MAFWA Excellence in Conservation Award, and the 2021 Division of Fish and Wildlife Team of the Year Award
- GGS 2.0 expands the program geography
 - Brings over \$2.6 Million in funding and 23 partners together to create and enhance habitat across Indiana
 - Contract sign-ups start in Fall 2024

- GGS 2.0 continues to employ an innovative approach to technical assistance by providing two “habitat teams” which bridges the knowledge and equipment gap for landowners
 - Each team has access to a 1-ton truck, 75 horse tractor, bush hog, disk, tiller, no-till drill, burn equipment, chemical sprayer, etc.
- DFW uses its Cost Share Assistance and Gamebird Development Programming (programs designed to provide cost share assistance to those ineligible for other conservation programming) as in-kind contribution to GGS 1.0 and 2.0. Each phase of the initiative allows for DFW program funding to contribute \$154,274 towards GGS efforts, further stretching DFW habitat dollars and leveraging conservation efforts via partnership

Three Challenges

The success of private lands habitat development and enhancement is heavily dependent on interwoven working relationships among state, local, and federal conservation agencies as well as NGOs, private landowners, and private businesses. Sharing expertise, workload, and leveraging funds amongst one another is the best path for bringing the best financial and technical opportunities to landowners for wildlife improvements. While certainly worthwhile, there are many challenges that come with these relationships as noted below:

Administrative Hurdles

- A disconnect between decision makers at national, regional, and state offices. This is especially apparent with the RCPP program. It has been a challenge in the past with SAFE and other CRP programming, as well.
- A state agency such as DNR is fortunate to partner on multiple sources of federal funds from USDA, USFWS, EPA, USGS, etc. However, these agencies often have their own workflows, matching ratios, reporting guidelines, and scope which causes many internal challenges from a financial management perspective. This can hinder willingness to take on new initiatives.
 - Example: RCPP Portal
 - A lack of understanding of Farm Bill programming vs. WSFR programming
 - Inability to get info, reports, & feedback internally
- Finding a balance of landowner burden via forms, agreements, guidelines and management plan expectations.
- Internal challenge of creating state contracts and needing individual landowners to be state vendors.

Attracting New Customers

- We have a low adoption rate for many working lands practices in agricultural systems, and an even larger challenge for wildlife practices. Example – number of CRP contracts vs. number of producers. Very small percentages. What percentage of these were first time participants?
- Maintaining relationships with repeat participants as they are often great customers and good ambassadors of conservation programs. However, these programs are meant to influence behaviors and create lasting conservation mindsets. Natural resources benefit when financial incentives bring new participants into the fold

- A key challenge all of us will either need to address or are actively addressing. Nearly all federal funding mechanisms have DEI, non-traditional landowner, historically underserved, or new participants language interwoven into guidance

Staffing and Talent Pipelines

- Private lands careers are seldom a first pick for many fresh graduates despite having arguably the largest number of conservation jobs, certainly in Indiana
- We need to encourage academic programming that includes voluntary private lands work in wildlife, environmental, and natural resource curriculum
- Demographic shifts will continue to make staffing a challenge as more suburban and urban graduates pursue wildlife, environmental, and natural resource related degrees. This is a good problem to have, but will require more robust on the job training programs
- **Pay scale!** Low pay scale (both in starting salary and an inability to advance appropriately) is a factor that negatively influences private lands conservation efforts
- Limited number of staff. Despite private property making up 95% of Indiana's geography (similar in many other states, particularly easterly states), the number of staff allocated for private lands conservation is simply inadequate to do the job

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
2024 Private Lands Report to
The Midwest Private Land Wildlife Management Group
May 14, 2024

Challenges:

The primary challenge in delivering private lands conservation in Iowa revolves around the individuals tasked with this responsibility. Recruitment, retention, and training persist as significant concerns. Recruitment has been inconsistent over the past year for our program. While we successfully filled all of our FTE positions (4 Biologists, 4 Technicians, 14 Foresters), we recently lost one of our top performers. For our LTE/Partnership positions (4 Wetland Easement Technicians, 5 Wildlife Specialists, 4 Forestry Specialists), we managed to fill a higher proportion of positions compared to previous years. However, turnover remains a persistent issue. Despite a period of improved recruitment where we attracted just enough qualified candidates to fill most positions, retention and turnover have persisted as challenges. Training exacerbates these issues, as effectively delivering private lands conservation demands a steep and prolonged learning curve. Many of our hires, once they become proficient and capable of effectively engaging with private landowners, depart for different or more enticing opportunities.

This challenge extends beyond the DNR; our partners such as USDA and PF are also grappling with recruitment and retention issues. The vacancies within NRCS are particularly concerning, as they directly impact the delivery of farm bill programs, especially easement programs. At a time when funding for private lands conservation is robust, the effectiveness of delivery and its impact on the landscape will be significantly influenced by the availability of personnel to execute these programs.

Opportunities:

We are involved in a newly awarded RCPP-AFA project in partnership with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, and NRCS. The goals of the project are to restore approximately 10,000 acres of native grassland habitat using the 'batch and build' method and to permanently protect around 8,000 acres through entity-held easements in a 40-county area of western and southern Iowa. The Protection and Restoration of Grasslands in Iowa will emphasize targeting the nationally recognized Loess Hills Landform, a Grassland of Special Environmental Significance. Currently, we are working through negotiations with NRCS and aim to commence delivery this fall.

Additionally, we have initiated the development of another RCPP concept, which will focus on the protection and management of forests, with an emphasis on recruiting the next generation of oaks.

We have also initiated negotiations with FSA for a CREP concept aimed at investing in long-term conservation practices to enhance water quality, maintain agricultural production opportunities, establish native grassland wildlife habitat, and offer public hunting access. The objective is to enroll lands that optimize water quality and wildlife benefits within the 100-year floodplain and highly erodible lands within identified priority watersheds across Iowa. Agreements will span 30 years, with mandatory public hunting access and available opportunities for conservation haying and grazing.





Annual Private Lands Report
Midwest Private Lands Working Group
May 14th-16th 2024, Peoria, Illinois

What are your state's 3 biggest challenges to conducting private lands work?

1. **Match dollars.** Increased costs have limited what we can accomplish. While we have been able to increase NR fees, another fee increase is needed. For a state that is so heavily made up of private ownership (98%) our Agency does not prioritize private lands conservation. We simply, like other states, have too many irons in the fire and work with private landowners, for the most part, is an afterthought. Our Wildlife Division highly prioritizes work on private lands but only receive 50% of our state's allocated Wildlife Restoration dollars and even less of a share of our Wildlife Fee funds to utilize as match.

Furthermore, our Contributory Agreement with Kansas-NRCS remains as a 50/50 share. While other programs and funding opportunities recognize the need for reduced non-federal match, NRCS remains complacent. It has become increasingly difficult to utilize this agreement to its fullest due to the financial burden placed on states.

2. **Kansas-NRCS rigidity when it comes to land eligibility and commodity production.** They WILL NOT work with anyone who is not producing a commodity. NRCS field offices are promoting our state Habitat First program to folks interested in wildlife conservation over any farm bill programs in most cases which puts even more stress on our extremely limited funds (\$1.5 million annually).
3. Continued use of "**cost-share**" approach that does not fully capture the economic investment or need of the landowner. This approach ignores the pivotal role these landowners play in providing critical ecological services. This approach also continues to prioritize landowners with a high interest in wildlife and not those that would have the greatest impact to wildlife populations.

What are your state's 3 biggest successes or opportunities for success?

1. **Broader partnerships** that reduce burden of full match requirements and grant administration and bring unique skillsets to the table. We do not have the staffing, agency support, or budget to impact species at the right scale by ourselves. We must work together to achieve any appreciable outcomes for wildlife conservation.
2. **Kansas state conservation fund.** Introduced bill (since failed) that would take portions of online gaming funds that would go to the state for conservation activities. This would have potential to increase non-federal match for conservation work and engage partnership development.
3. Improved management and interest in **CRP with use of EQIP** to "stack" incentives/outcomes.

Challenges

Hiring & Retaining Employees

Over the past 3 years we have only had 2 weeks of being fully staffed and our new employees are staying for an average of 11 months. Even though 90% of the employees that leave, leave for better opportunities within our agency or NRCS this turnover does not allow the biologist the chance to develop community or partner connections. This also makes it hard for the Private Lands program to grow and focus on the bigger picture because we are constantly training new staff.

Lack of Contractors/inadequate cost share rates

The lack of contracts to complete work creates a challenge to get habitat on the ground at a meaningful scale. We are in the “chart before the horse” scenario on practice such as Rx fire, FSI, and Brush Management to name a few. We don’t have reliable contracts for these practices so the biologist become reluctant to plan practices they know landowners can not see through. If we had reliable contractors or any contractors at all in the case of Rx Fire and cost share rates that where more in line with the actual cost of implementation, we would be a lot more effective getting habitat on the ground.

Reaching non wildlife minded landowners

We do a really good job at utilizing our outlets to reach the hunting population but have not done as well reaching out to and working with the landowner who has no interest in purposely managing for wildlife. This could be industrial landowners, absentee landowners, agriculture producers, or the average Joe who has land that he simply mows. If we are going to have a meaningful impact we have to find ways to get these landowners involved.

Successes

Focus Projects

We have had good success working with NRCS to develop EQIP focus conservation projects across the state. We have had projects such as moist soil unit development and management, cedar removal/glade restoration, and brush management utilizing aerial herbicide application. Each of these projects focused on the county level giving us the ability to do targeted outreach and multiple field days to keep landowners engaged.

Landowner Rx fire training

We have worked closely with the Ky Prescribed Fire Council (KPFC) over the past 1.5 years to increase the training opportunities for private landowners. We have put 250+ landowners through KPFC Controlled Burn workshop. KDFWR also created a waiver to allow landowners to be on a KDFWR fire line. Once the waiver was put into place KDFWR and partners have hosted 15 Learn & Burns across the state hosting 135 landowners.

GIS DATA BASE

Starting July 1 this year we will be rolling out our planning/tracking tool that will help streamline the planning process and put all planning data into one centralized location.



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING



M. SCOTT BOWEN
DIRECTOR

May 21, 2024

RE: MAFWA Committee - Private Lands Report
Kenneth S. Kesson – Michigan DNR, Wildlife Division

Top State Wildlife Private Lands Challenges:

Limited capacity due to staffing levels focused on private lands work.

Limited funding opportunities for certain projects.

There are only a few reputable and reliable conservation contractors in the focal areas for work which limits capacity somewhat.

Seed sourcing for restoration work can be a problem especially from local sources.

Top State Wildlife Private Lands Opportunities:

Game species management and forestry planning and assistance.

Urban and suburban areas offer many opportunities to work with new clients and non-traditional customers. Urban Game Area concept.

Many new rural landowners don't have farming or land management experience and are looking for assistance and ideas for their lands.

Historic prairie, savanna and fen remnants are aging and succumbing to succession, are small and scattered, but highly ecologically significant offer unique opportunities for management.

Five partnership positions with local conservation districts (Farm Bill Biologists) help with NRCS program delivery, but are limited generally to farm bill programs and with other assistance capacity due to both technical and financial constrictions.

Other Topics for report:

The MI DNR is piloting a novel, new, deer donation program in Southern MI where the DNR Wildlife Division is working with participating farmers that receive out of season crop damage permits to harvest deer and use them to benefit local communities. The DNR is providing a refrigerated cooler trailer (rotating/sign up basis) for participants to use to store deer removed from farms with damage permits through the growing season months. The process can be summarized as follows: permits are issued, deer are harvested, cleaned, picked up weekly, inspected for signs of disease, scanned for metals, and then processed into meat by a local processor, the meat is then donated back to the MI food bank network. In a short trial last year, we were able to process over 1,000 lbs of venison in just 5 weeks at the end of the summer. This exciting new program may have potential to alleviate deer population problems which lead to crop damage in some areas and further can help address a lack of meat in local food distribution programs for the needy. Our private lands biologist has been instrumental in working with our Marketing and Outreach Division to develop this program in conjunction with the existing Sportsman Against Hunger program and the MI food distribution network, as well as facilitating cooperation with local farmers and other community partners.

Below is a summary of the other Michigan's private lands efforts for the 2024 season:

HAP (VPA)

- Acres enrolled: 18,383
- Landowners Enrolled: 90
- Habitat Enhanced: 9 acres (food plot, tree planting)

Private Land Grants (grants received by program leads Oct 1 2023-May 1 2024)

- Habitat Projects: 18
- Acres: 659
- Types of enhancement: tree planting, cover crop planting, site prep chemical, moving, seeding, rx burn, wood control, herbicide control,
- Species: deer, turkey, small game, grassland birds, upland birds, rare bird/species, pollinators

MAFWA Private Lands Report- Spring 2024

Challenges:

Minnesota DNR discontinued the majority of our private land programs years ago and now focuses on sending landowners to NRCS, SWCDs, etc. that have funding for private landowners to complete conservation on their property. The programs that remain within the DNR are easement programs providing permanent protection to native prairie and forest tracts within identified boundaries. While there is currently funding to enroll additional acres into these easements, funding for management is limited. Typically, funding for management on native prairie easements comes from state grant sources that are highly competitive. DNR also has programs to provide private land access to designated trout streams through easements as well as hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities through the Walk-In Access program. While there isn't dedicated funding available within the DNR, partners such as Trout Unlimited have had opportunities in applying for state grants to improve habitat along designated trout streams in Minnesota. Walk-In Access in Minnesota is lacking on all fronts; there isn't identified habitat funding available to assist landowners with any maintenance or improvement nor is there any funding currently available past the NRCS VPA-HIP grant that is set to expire.

Successes:

Even though the grant funding is expiring, DNR's Walk-In Access program has become and will continue to be a champion for public access to private lands, expanding outdoor recreational opportunities. In 2023, the MN Legislature passed a law to include additional uses to lands enrolled in the program to include non-consumptive uses such as bird watching and nature photography. In 2024, Minnesota's Walk-In Access program will have approximately 30,000 acres available for the public to use.

DNR also hired a full-time coordinator after years of temporary or work out of class positions. This, along with the expiring grant, has prompted a need for a long-term funding model for the program. Conversations within the DNR and with partners such as Pheasants Forever have generated interest in alternative funding sources. In fact, PF has recently submitted a proposal to the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) to add both additional funds to increase acres within WIA as well as provide habitat improvement dollars.

DNR staff working on private lands continue to have conversations across divisions about funding opportunities for habitat management and improvement. These conversations include identifying areas where we can partner further with NGOs, SWCDs, and other departments within state government to seek grant dollars both at the state level and federal level to increase and improve habitat. Updating Minnesota's Pheasant, Duck, and Deer Plans include language about increasing and improving access and habitat on both state and private lands. The continuous development and implementation of One Watershed, One Plans across the state also reinforces the need for private land management. While these plans do not originate within DNR, that responsibility lies with MN Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR), DNR does provide input and guidance on the document. These plans also open up additional opportunities for discussion at the local levels where improvements can be made on the landscape and identify funding sources for those improvements.



Missouri Department of Conservation Private Lands State Report
2024 MAFWA Private Lands Working Group
May 14-16, 2024

Three Biggest Opportunities for Success in Private Land Conservation

1. Unprecedented amounts of funding available for private land conservation

One of the biggest opportunities for private land conservation in Missouri is the unprecedented levels of federal funding available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Not only has Missouri been successful in receiving multiple program awards to support private land conservation, but the enhanced opportunity for practice implementation and capacity building has helped focus upper administration on private land conservation opportunities. Although MDC executive administration have always been supportive of private land conservation, the new funding and opportunities to advance private land conservation have encouraged MDC leadership across multiple MDC branches to take notice and focus more of their Branch staff and funding resources towards private land conservation.

For instance, Missouri been successful in receiving an America the Beautiful grant that will help protect and restore remnant prairies and other prairie reconstructions and restorations. Through this grant, MDC and other partners will be developing multiple habitat strike teams to help implement the restoration and management work on the ground.

Missouri continues to take huge steps forward in growing the number of acres of native grasses included in working livestock grazing operations. The Native Forage Initiative, administered by NRCS and supported and promoted by multiple conservation partners across the state, is largely funded through the IRA. At least \$6 million over the past 2 years have been solely dedicated to planting native grasses and forbs for production.

This year, Missouri held the first Act Now enrollment for the Working Lands for Wildlife- Bobwhite project. This program was supported by IRA funds and were allocated from USDA national headquarters rather than the state EQIP allocations. Thanks to the quick Act Now enrollment process, Missouri enrolled over \$880,000 worth of early successional habitat and bobwhite quail -friendly practices in just two months.

2. Increase in private land workforce and capacity

The organizational structure of MDC has increased the number of staff with dedicated private land responsibilities from 47 Private Land Conservationists (PLCs), to over 100 PLCs, Private Land Foresters, and Private Land Fisheries Biologists. In addition to MDC staff, the increase in federal funding has provided the opportunity to continue to build the number of private land biologists across the state through partnerships. This includes additional QF/PF Farm Bill Biologists, wetland biologists, Prescribed Burn Coordinators, DU grassland biologists and wetland biologists, outreach coordinators with Missouri Forage And Grassland Council, and multiple habitat strike teams. The additional staff equate to higher

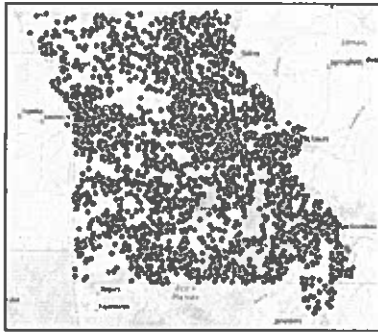


Figure 1.

numbers of private landowners and producers who can receive one-on-one service to help them meet their fish, forest, and wildlife objectives on their lands. Figure 1 represents the total number of site visits completed by MDC staff on private land in FY23.

3. Community Conservation

Community Conservation continues to be a top priority for the Department. MDC provides over \$1 million annually in cost-share programs to communities and municipalities across the state. MDC's presence and service in urban areas continues to maintain MDC's relevancy to all Missouri citizens. A recent survey indicated 80% of respondents connect with nature in their backyard. With 70% of the Missouri population living in urban areas, it's essential to promote and implement wildlife and natural resource conservation in these areas. Community conservation helps MDC engage governments, citizens, and private organizations within municipalities to connect people with nature, raise awareness of the community benefits provided by healthy fish, forest, and wildlife resources, promote conservation of these resources through technical assistance and encourage development that protects native fish, forest, and wildlife diversity.

Three Biggest Challenges to Success in Private Land Conservation

1. Implementing the increased level of federal funding on private land

Although huge opportunities to grow our impact and positive influence in private land conservation are occurring thanks to the unprecedented levels of federal funding, it is still very challenging to obligate those funds in a meaningful way across the landscape. MDC likely has the largest fleet of private land biologists of any state fish and wildlife agency, yet we still struggle to have enough staff and resources to dedicate to these private land opportunities. For instance, our private land staff are also tasked with other Department priorities outside of the private land conservation realm such as working on CWD, public land management and other miscellaneous Department priorities. Private land staff are extremely busy and overbooked, yet are repeatedly asked to respond to program enrollment opportunities throughout the year. The risk of staff burn out is high. The new MDC organization structure also makes it challenging to focus and direct private land staff to new or ongoing opportunities in a consistent manner across the state due to competing statewide versus regional-led staff priorities.

2. Inexperienced new private land staff

Again, although the increase in federal funding has provided a great opportunity to build the private land conservation workforce, many of these newer MDC and partner employees are very inexperienced and lack hands-on management experience as well as experience interacting with ag producers and other private landowners. Every conservation agency and organization across the country are competing for the same positions which makes it challenging for state agencies to hire qualified biologists. MDC often cannot compete in wages with other government agencies or NGOs. We also can no longer rely on our historical approaches to onboarding new private land staff. In many cases, the new norm will be to expect the first 1 -3 years of employment for private land biologists to be considered training years. Training programs that include hands-on management experience and customer relations/human dimensions will be needed.

3. Building a larger private land customer base

As the private land conservation funding and capacity grows, so must the customer base who is interested in establishing practices beneficial to fish, forest, and wildlife resources. Effort will need to be given to growing the number of customers who fall outside the cohort of our typical recreational landowner. Effort is also needed to reach more recreational landowners who may lease their lands for deer hunting or other outdoor recreation, yet are often not interested in improving their lands with additional wildlife habitat management. If we have any hope of continuing similar amounts of available funding for wildlife and forestry resources on private land after the BIL and IRA funding has expired, the conservation field will need a broad and diverse base of customers who are vocal about the need for continued financial and technical assistance into the future.

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission State Report

May 2024 MAFWA Meeting

Great Plains Grassland Initiative Efforts

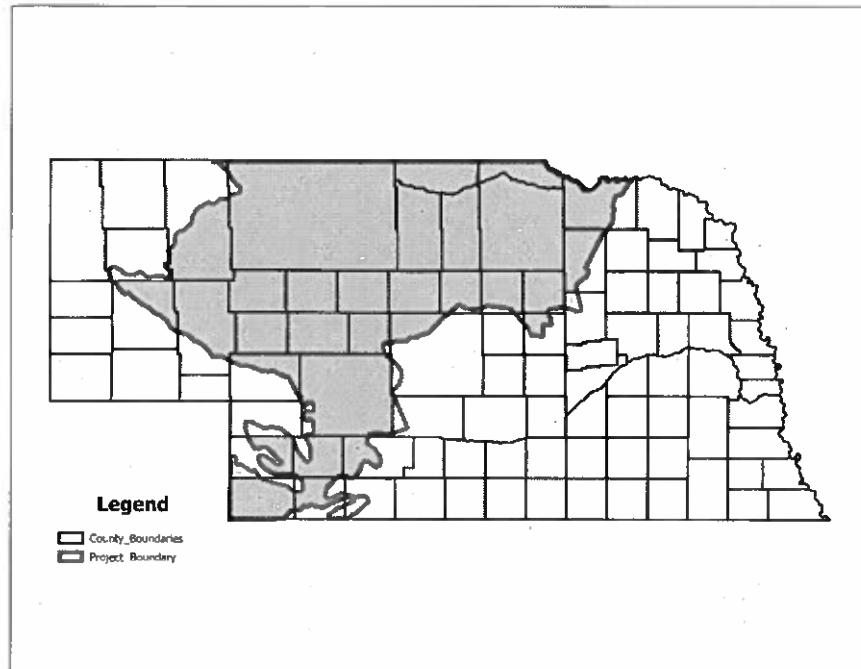


Figure 1 Map of GPGI focus area

The Great Plains Grassland Initiative (GPGI) is a large, multi-agency/organization effort to conserve the grasslands in the Great Plains. The primary focus of this framework is to address Eastern Redcedar encroachment and preventing its spread through management activities. In Nebraska, our focal efforts are the Sandhills and Loess Canyons. The GPGI moto is 'protect the core, grow the core', which means identifying areas which have not been impacted by ERC, protecting those areas (protect the core), and then expanding those areas by addressing ERC encroachment (grow the core). Nebraska Game and Parks was awarded a \$5 million America the Beautiful Grant to work on these efforts with our partner organizations. We have been able begin moving into the implementation phase of using these funds, which is additive of other existing efforts within the GPGI focus area.

Some of these ATBC funds were also used to hire additional key positions within partner organizations to focus on grassland restoration and prescribed fire efforts. One position is a Biological Fire Technician working with the Northern Prairies Land Trust/Santee Sioux Nation is to support the natural resource management priorities of the SSN while building partnerships with other organizations and landowners. The second position filled is the State Grassland Coordinator with the Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition.

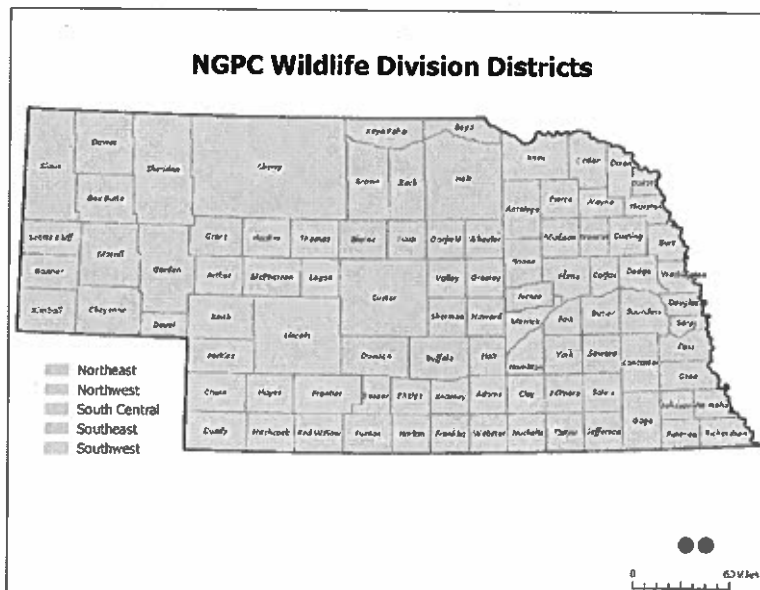
Partner Relationship Building

2023-2024 has been a year of relationship building among new and existing organizations. In 2023, 6 Conservation Practitioner Symposiums were hosted across the state. These meetings involved many of the local resource professionals across various agencies and organizations who do private lands work. The objective was to come together, meet each other, and learn about what programs and strengths each individual or organization can provide to the landowners in that local area. These were well attended and we had good feedback from those who attended.

We were also able to resume our 'All Partners, Partners Section Meeting' in February 2024. We had not had this meeting since Feb 2020. Traditionally this was a 1–2-day meeting of private lands staff to give updates on what they have been able to accomplish over the previous year and looking forward to future opportunities and focuses. Since 2020 we have seen growth and changes within private lands conservation in Nebraska and were excited to invite everyone to get together again. Many people in the room had not been to the meeting in 2020 or have since switched roles or organizations. We identified 100 people to invite across many organizations, and we had over 70 people join us over our 2 day meeting.

In April, NGPC staff participated in a one-day Conservation Connecting Points event. The event was held at Mahoney State Park, with the large majority of the room being NGPC staff and staff within the University of Nebraska Lincoln system across the School of Natural Resources and Extension, as well as students and other identified resource professionals. The objective was to create new connections where we have overlapping interests. Feedback during and after the meeting was positive, many people were surprised to learn about the variety of projects and interests of NGPC. Looking forward, we are currently working with one contact from this even with UNL Extension on how we could host a meeting like this involving landowners.

Staff and Agency Changes



Over the last year our agency restructured our Wildlife Division districts and added a 5th district. This added an additional District Manager for both our private lands Partners Section as well as our Management Section. Currently we have all of our District Manager Positions filled.

We also were able to add and fill a new position of an Access Program Manager (Adam Kester) who has taken on all of the duties involved with our Open Fields and Water program and focusing efforts on expanding our access opportunities.

The addition and filling of these new positions will aid us in our private lands work. Filling these positions does create the challenge of back filling their former positions. We have been able to fill most of our NGPC Partners Section Staff, with several of these people coming from partner organizations. We continue to struggle with filling partner positions with some of them being readvertised several times.

Farm Economics and Local Variables

Weather and farm economics continue to be a challenge to make progress. The decrease in traditional CRP (General and Continuous) interest, results in a loss of habitat and a loss in possible access sites. Arguably CRP rental rates and incentives are not as appealing as cash rent or the possibility of making more income by growing the cash crops especially when high property taxes and other personal or local economics heavily influence these decisions.

Continuing areas of drought has caused many CRP fields to be triggered for emergency haying and grazing sometimes several years in a row has further decreased the habitat availability in some areas. This is only additive to the overall decrease in CRP interest. On a positive note, where we see rain these fields do appear to have good early successional habitat available from the disturbances when they are able to grow.

Grassland CRP continues to have a large gain in interest. We still have not yet found a mechanism or strategy to increase wildlife benefits in these fields.



MAFWA Private Lands Report – Spring 2024
Kevin Kading, Private Lands Section Leader

The Private Lands Section is located within the Department's Wildlife Division. The Section Leader supervises four full time employees located in the Department's headquarters office Bismarck: West Region Supervisor, East Region Supervisor, Habitat Program Manager and GIS Database Specialist. Each Regional Biologist supervises five Private Land Biologists located in district field offices,

Successes

Program expansion: During the sixty-eighth legislative assembly, the Department expressed the need for more habitat on private lands. With support from the Director and state legislature, PLI received an additional \$5M in funding and 3 additional FTEs to create additional habitat and access.

Habitat Program: As a result of additional funding and staff, the Department has developed a new Habitat program. The program is administered by a new Habitat Program Manager position, with assistance from the ten PLI field biologists. Projects are selected based on habitat priority areas in the state.

RCPP: As part of the Department's Meadowlark Initiative, the Department was awarded an RCPP grant in 2020 totaling approximately \$7M. The grant was fully obligated in 2022, the Department applied for a grant renewal in September 2023 and was awarded an additional \$13M in January 2024. The Department also applied for an America The Beautiful grant in July 2023 and was awarded a \$2.5M in November 2023 for 30-year grassland protection agreements.

Challenges

Habitat Loss: Over 74 percent of ND native grasslands have been converted to cropland agriculture production, over 60 percent of wetlands have been converted and there has been a 66 percent decrease of CRP acres in the state since the peak of 3.4M acres. For the first time since the early years of CRP, acres North Dakota will be nearly below one-million-acres unless new acres come into the program. Continued habitat losses have resulted in declines in deer and pheasant populations (55 percent decrease in deer licenses and decreased in rooster pheasant harvest from 900K to 300K since peak CRP years). Other species such as grassland birds and pollinators are also negatively impacted.

High commodity prices, rental rates, and land values: High prices combined with low CRP enrollment rates are creating the perfect storm for accelerated habitat loss in the state. Additionally, federal crop insurance provides an incentive to take risks and bring marginal lands into production that otherwise would not stand on their own. Until monumental changes are made to crop insurance, loss of grasslands and wetlands will continue at a rate that are not sustainable.

USDA challenges: Increased funding presents an opportunity for additional conservation however, with staff turnover and vacancies in USDA, increased pressure to deliver more funds has created challenges when implementing sound conservation practices. The urgency to get money out the door is resulting in lower quality conservation projects getting funded. Even with increased funding, we're still seeing tremendous habitat loss, we cannot buy our way out of this.



Ohio Report

Provided by John Kaiser, Private Lands Program Administrator

Three Challenges to Conduct Private Lands Work:

1. **Connecting with landowners and farmers:** The Ohio private lands team has experienced moderate interest in wildlife habitat technical assistance from farmers and landowners. We've been able to keep up with our workload most of the time. However, increased funding for conservation programs presents more opportunity for conservation. The Ohio private lands team will have to connect with more interested farmers and landowners to help facilitate more conservation work. Connecting with farmers has been a challenge. The private lands team has implemented the following outreach methods to attract farmers and landowners.
 - a. **Workshops:** wildlife/conservation program related workshops for farmers and landowners
 - b. **News Releases:** focused on conservation programs that help improve wildlife habitat
 - c. **Targeted Mailings:** focused efforts to send post cards/letters about conservation opportunities to a specific geographic area
 - d. **Social Media:** social media posts and sharing partner organization posts linking to news releases and/or information about conservation opportunities

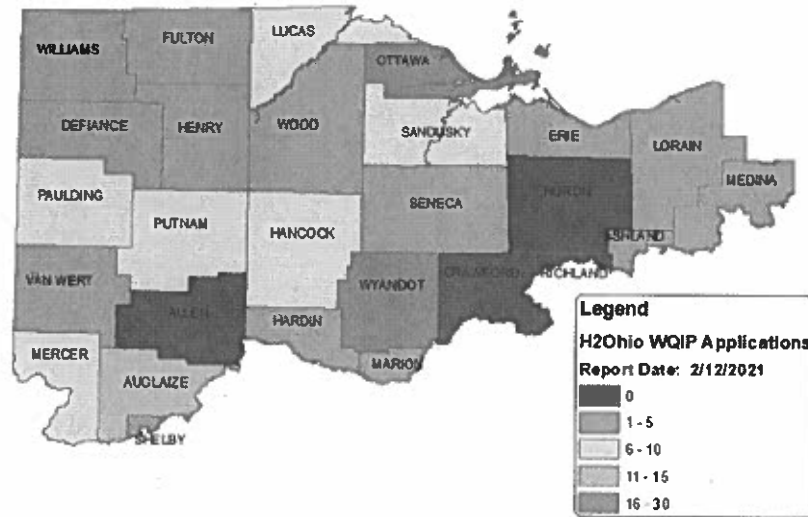
Plans to address this challenge:

- a. **Workshops:** We plan to continue these efforts. While we typically attract landowners primarily interested in wildlife habitat management and not many farmers, these efforts are very beneficial.
 - b. **News Releases:** These are free and are still beneficial.
 - c. **Targeted Mailings:** We'll continue to use this method for targeted areas. The main goal is to spark enough interest for a farmer or landowner to contact a biologist.
 - d. **Social Media:** We'll most likely increase the amount of social media posts, and we might try targeted social media ads for a fee. Our new RCPP project will allow us to use funding and a dedicated staff person to utilize these methods.
 - e. **Agriculture-Based Marketing Services:** Our new RCPP project will allow us to hire the services of an agricultural-based marketing service. This is a new opportunity we feel is worth trying.
2. **Little to no interest in conservation from farmers and landowners:** Farming from edge to edge with little regard for soil, water, and wildlife conservation is and will continue to be a problem. Financial profits from the land is the primary driver of this issue. ODNR, Division of Wildlife; NRCS, and Pheasants and Quail Forever (PF/QF) have made valiant attempts to incorporate wildlife habitat conservation in working lands. Some attempts have been successful, but concentrated efforts focusing on precision agriculture (to encourage CRP enrollment of unproductive cropland) and conversion of cool season grass pastures to native warm season grass pastures have been largely unsuccessful. Pheasants and Quail Forever have 3 staff members focused on these efforts, and they are funded in partnership with the NRCS, Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW), the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), and Heritage Cooperative. We are very thankful for PF/QF's efforts on this front and appreciate their willingness to engage with farmers on these areas of opportunity. Other states that have been successful with precision agriculture or conversion of cool season grass pastures to native warm season grass pastures all have one thing in common. Members of the agricultural community (extension, ag retailers, crop consultants, and other agricultural organizations) are promoting these efforts. It is becoming clear that wildlife biologists are probably not the best to promote precision agriculture and conversion of cool season grass pastures to native warm season

grass pastures. This is a tough nut to crack, but we'll seek opportunities to collaborate with agricultural partners to promote conservation.

3. **Local conservation office promotion of conservation practices:** Conservation offices (conservation district, NRCS, & FSA) promote conservation practices, but not all of them promote all practices evenly. Some are more focused drainage and erosion conservation practices, and others promote all conservation practices. This varies from county to county. Below is an example of CREP wetland (H2Ohio WQIP) enrollment in NW Ohio.

H2Ohio WQIP Applications - Dec-Jan. 2021 Sign-up



The obvious conclusion is that the green and yellow county conservation offices promoted the program. Other factors (site requirements, technical assistance, and program availability) were not factors that influenced the results.

Relationships with conservation office staff are very important. We have and will continue to build relationships with our partners to promote all conservation practices to address soil, water, and wildlife conservation.

Three Successes/Opportunities for Potential Success:

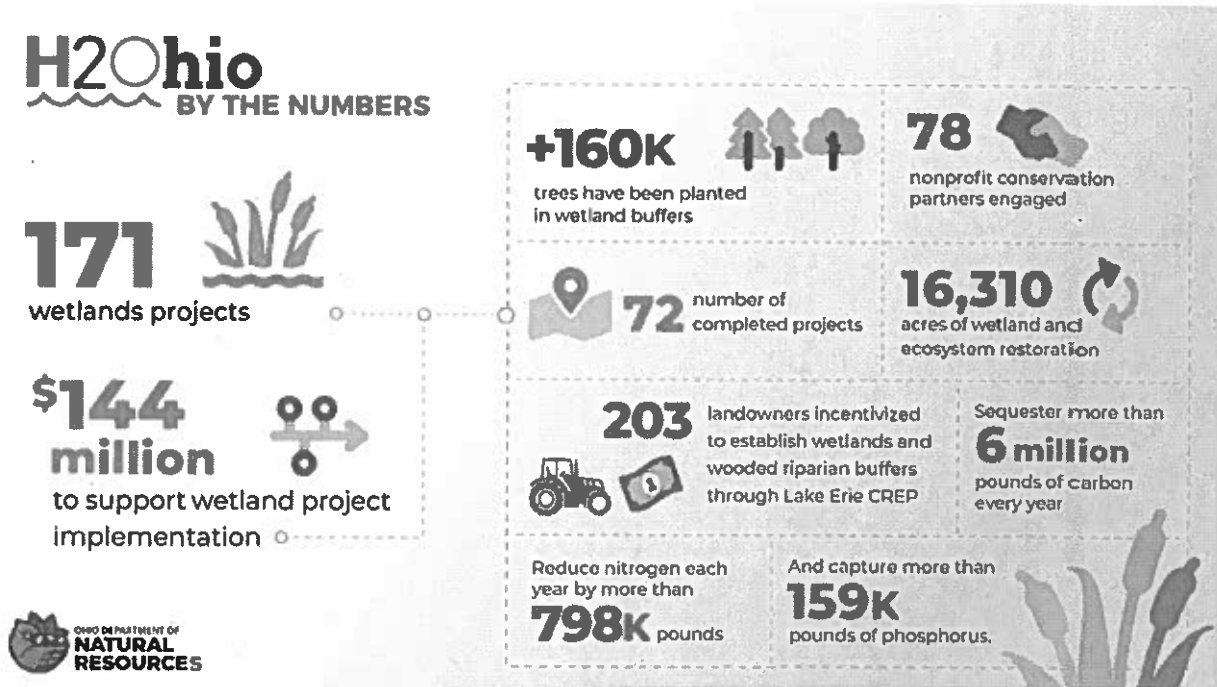
1. **Private Lands Program Structure:** Under the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, we are in the Division of Wildlife. Under the Division of Wildlife, we are in the Wildlife Management and Research section. Under this section the private lands program administrator heads up the private lands section. We hired 9 additional wildlife management consultants (WMC) bringing our total to 14. WMCs in Ohio with private and some public lands responsibilities. The thought behind this is to provide both private and public lands (approx. 20% of WMC time) services. The work on public lands focuses on small satellite areas where the biologists monitor habitat and execute management activities primarily with contractors.

The addition of 9 new WMCs has increased our capacity to provide private lands technical assistance. We've been spending a lot of time training the new staff, but we are already seeing good results.

2. **Water Quality – H2Ohio:** Ohio has been focusing heavily on water quality with the continued support of the H2Ohio initiative (148 million from the Ohio legislature in July of 2019 and spearheaded by Governor DeWine). Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources has spent approximately 144 million on wetland

restoration projects. These projects include enhancements to coastal marshes and restoration of inland wetlands and floodplain wetlands.

Most of the projects highlighted in the dashboard below are what we consider grant projects. These projects typically pay 100% of wetland restoration (design, admin, and restoration expenses) projects. Most of these projects are on public lands and private lands that are enrolled are protected with an easement or environmental covenant.



Out of the H2Ohio Water Quality efforts, our private lands section initiated and operate the H2Ohio Water Quality Incentive Program (WQIP). The program was offered in combination with the Lake Erie (LE) Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to provide one-time payments of \$2,000/acre for new LE CREP wetlands and forested riparian buffers to help improve water quality in the Lake Erie watershed. The ODNR WQIP team worked with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA), Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), and several other partners to implement the program.

The \$2,000/acre incentives for wetlands and riparian buffers still exist today. However, they are now state incentive payments withing the Lake Erie CREP. The number of projects are represented in the graphic ("203 landowners incentivized") above.

The H2Ohio water quality effort has funded both Lake Erie and Scioto River CREP projects. There is currently funding set aside for the new Miami Rivers CREP project in southwest Ohio. This CREP project should be approved in one year.

- RCPP Grant:** The National Bobwhite Grassland Initiative (NBGI) spearheaded and effort last year to pursue two \$25 million-dollar RCPP projects focusing on grassland habitat for the benefit of grassland birds. NBGI received both grants totaling \$50 million and including Ohio and Missouri on one grant and Mississippi and Georgia on the other. We are planning to award \$1.8 million (annually for 5 years) in contracts with landowners to improve wildlife

habitat. We also have built relationships with Historically Underserved (HU) partners to implement this project. Our HU partners include the Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) Food and Farm Network and Agraria. We look forward to strengthening our relationships and helping HU farmers and landowners to implement new conservation practices to benefit wildlife.



**South Dakota State Report
Midwest Private Lands Working Group
Illinois
2024**

Mission

South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks' (GF&P), mission is to "provide sustainable outdoor recreational opportunities through responsible management of our state's parks, fisheries and wildlife by fostering partnerships, cultivating stewardship and safely connecting people with the outdoors." Since approximately 80% of the land in South Dakota is privately owned, management efforts targeting private lands are essential in fulfilling our mission.

Our guiding principle is to develop partnerships with private landowners to develop wildlife habitat on private lands and to increase public outdoor recreation opportunity on private lands.

Infrastructure

The administration of GF&P habitat programs in South Dakota is within the Terrestrial Resources section of the Wildlife Division, staffed by Ryan Wendinger (Habitat Program Administrator) and 2 senior wildlife biologists (Habitat—Mark Norton and Eric Magedanz). The delivery of GF&P habitat programs is primarily completed by 12 private lands wildlife habitat biologists. The local Wildlife Conservation Officers, as part of their duties (law enforcement, public land management, private lands management, fisheries, boating enforcement, etc), also deliver hunting access and upland habitat programs.

Programs Offered in 2023

Private Land Habitat Cost-sharing Programs

- Food and Cover Plots - lands under contract provide food and cover for wildlife. Payment rates are \$80/acre if the food plot is in public hunting access program or \$20/acre if the food plot is not.
- Woody Cover- goal of this program is to increase wildlife populations by enhancing winter survival. GFP will reimburse producers for 75% of their cost incurred for planting woody habitat for wildlife (100% if woody cover is in a public hunting access program). Maximum payment per year is \$10,000.
- Wetland & Grassland Habitat Development - purpose of this program is the restoration of natural wetlands that have been drained by being ditched, tile, or by any other mechanical means and to improve management of grasslands for the benefits of wildlife. Projects typically include:
 - Wildlife/livestock water development (wetland restoration, stock tanks, pipeline rural water hook-ups, multi-purpose dams/ponds).
 - Upland restoration (primarily seeding).
 - Riparian habitat enhancement (primarily grazing systems).
 - Upland enhancement (primarily grazing systems).
 - GF&P partnerships with Ducks Unlimited, US Fish and Wildlife Service, SD Association of Conservation Districts and NRCS.

For more details on any of these programs visit Habitat.sd.gov

Private Land Public Hunting Access in 2023

South Dakota currently has five primary programs that provide free public hunting access to private land. The largest of the programs is the Walk-In Area program. Current funding sources for the program come from a license fees, PR Wildlife Restoration funds, Title VI funds, habitat stamp revenue, and one-half of a \$5 surcharge on most adult hunting licenses.

The Controlled Hunting Access Program provides limited access and payments are determined by the number of hunters that use the area vs. by the acre as all our other access programs.

The Lower Oahe Waterfowl Access program is also partially funded by the sale of special 3-day nonresident private land hunting license. This is a targeted program that is only available to landowners in the immediate Pierre area that provides small game and field waterfowl hunting opportunity.

The Elk Hunting Access Area program leases public hunting access specifically for elk on lands that have depredation. Permission is need by directly contacting the landowner. Leases have base payments with bonuses based on the number of elk harvested.

Our newest access program, which started in November of 2022, is our partnership with USDA to provide 25,000 acres of Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to the Big Sioux River Watershed. All land enrolled in CREP is open year-round to public hunting and fishing access. SD GFP is providing an additional 34% of the base CRP annual rental rate. This CREP is modeled after our James River Watershed CREP that has been active since November of 2009 with a goal to enroll up to 100,000 acres. It is currently enrolling new lands and has been reenrolling expiring contracts since 2020. In 2023 87% of the expiring James River Watershed CREP contracts reenrolled. The funding is provided by interest on money that was given to the state by the federal government when the dams where built on the Missouri river (Title VI) and through PR Wildlife Restoration funds, habitat stamp revenue, and license sales revenue.

For the 2023 Annual Program Achievements, see the last two pages of this report.

Partnership with NRCS, NGOs and GFP

During the summer of 2002, GFP formed a partnership with NRCS and Pheasants Forever to staff up to 6 positions in NRCS offices to sell and enroll landowners in wildlife programs. GFP provided up to \$231,000/year for salaries, Pheasant Forever provided per diem for vehicles, supervision, and accomplishment reports, and NRCS provided training, office space and computer software.

Since then, we have continued to work with more partners to generate more funding to employ additional partner biologists working on private lands habitat through federal conservation programs.

In 2023, GFP provided \$539,164 towards 17 Pheasants Forever Partnership Farm Bill Biologist positions, \$7,500 towards 1 Bird Conservancy of the Rockies Partnership Wildlife Biologist, \$10,654 towards 1 American Bird Conservancy Partnership Wildlife Biologist, \$6,249 towards 1 Ducks Unlimited partnership position working on US FWS grassland & wetland easements, and \$6,250 towards 1 National Wildlife Turkey Federation Partnership Wildlife Biologist for a grand total of \$569,818 towards 21 partner private lands habitat biologist positions in South Dakota.

Public Hunting Access Maps

In 2023 we offered public land hunting maps for free to the public through the printing of 85,000 public hunting atlases, an on-line interactive map, a Garmin GPS downloadable layer, a Google Earth downloadable layer, a map within the SDGFP Outdoors Apple and Android app, printable PDF maps by county, and a downloadable PDF map for the Avenza Maps app.



SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS

PRIVATE LANDS HABITAT PROGRAM SUMMARY

2023 HABITAT PROGRAM SUMMARY



- 907 | FOOD HABITAT PLOTS
- 67 | GRASSLAND ENHANCEMENT
- 41 | WOODY COVER
- 36 | WILDLIFE FRIENDLY FENCE
- 19 | GRASSLAND RESTORATION
- 10 | WETLAND ENHANCEMENTS
- 5 | HABITAT PROTECTION FENCE

ONE YEAR HABITAT MANAGEMENT	
Food Habitat Plots	11,096 Acres
Woody Cover	102 Acres
Habitat Protection Fence	121 Acres
Grassland Enhancement	41,728 Acres
Grassland Restoration	1,331 Acres
Wetland Enhancements	70 Acres
Wildlife Friendly Fence	36 Miles

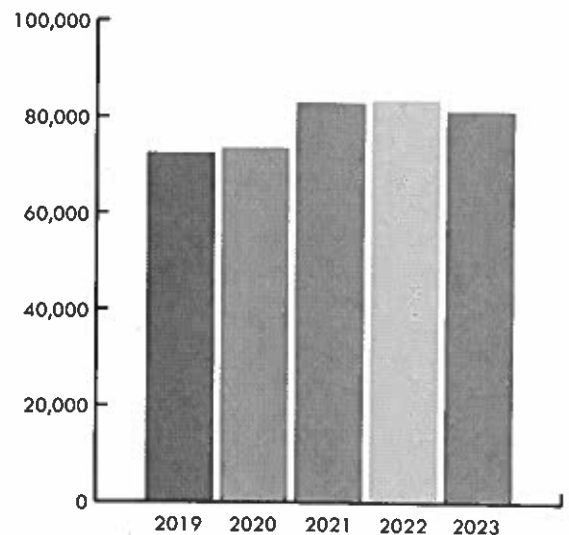
\$2.8 MILLION
TOTAL GFP AND LANDOWNER FUNDS

5 YEAR HABITAT PROGRAM SUMMARY



- 4,723 | FOOD HABITAT PLOTS
- 453 | GRASSLAND ENHANCEMENT
- 215 | WOODY COVER
- 110 | WILDLIFE FRIENDLY FENCE
- 71 | GRASSLAND RESTORATION
- 43 | HABITAT PROTECTION FENCE
- 30 | WETLAND ENHANCEMENT

2019 - 2023 TOTAL ACRES



\$13.3 MILLION
TOTAL GFP AND LANDOWNER FUNDS

COOPERATIVELY FUNDED POSITIONS

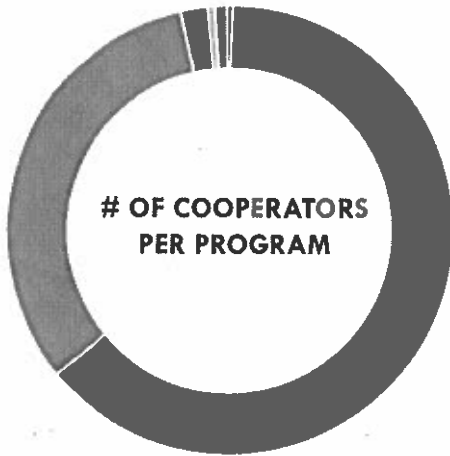
- PHEASANTS FOREVER | FARM BILL SPECIALIST
- AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY
- BIRD CONSERVANCY OF THE ROCKIES
- DUCKS UNLIMITED
- SOUTH DAKOTA GRASSLAND COALITION
- NAT. WILD TURKEY FED. | BLACK HILLS FORESTER

GFP partners with several conservation organization to support 21 private lands habitat specialists across South Dakota who deliver programs - including farm bill conservation programs and GFP private lands programs - and technical assistance to thousands of private landowners each year, impacting hundreds of thousands of acres. GFP's financial contributions to these positions are matched several times over with federal, state, and local funds that both support the positions and the important conservation work they provide to South Dakota landowners.



SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS PRIVATE LAND PUBLIC HUNTING ACCESS PROGRAM SUMMARY

2023 ACCESS PROGRAM SUMMARY

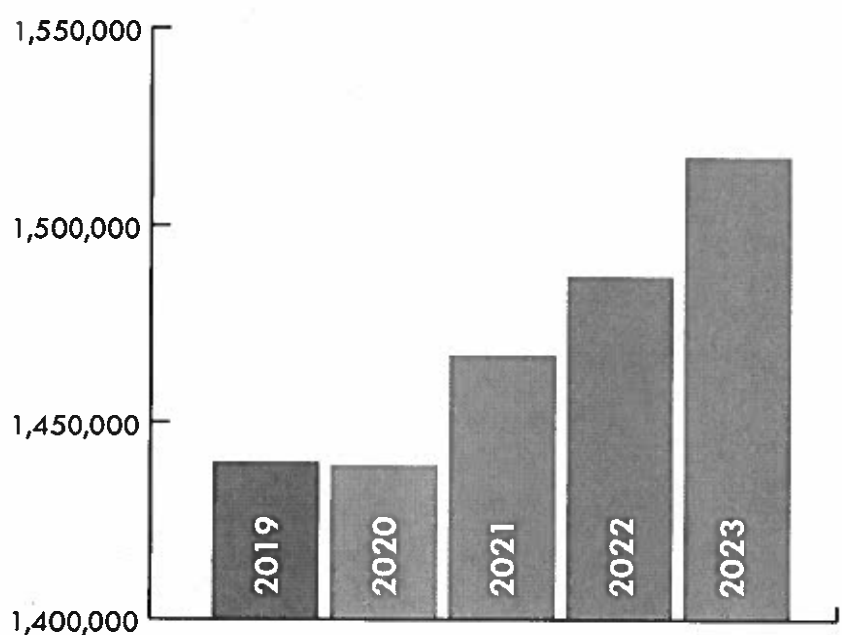


- 1,539 | WALK-IN AREA (WIA)
- 785 | JAMES RIVER WATERSHED CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM
- 43 | BIG SIOUX RIVER CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM
- 17 | ELK HUNTING ACCESS AREA
- 6 | LOWER OAHE WATERFOWL ACCESS AREA
- 15 | CONTROLLED HUNTING ACCESS PROGRAM

\$7,631,978
TOTAL PAYMENTS TO LANDOWNERS

1,517,502
TOTAL ACRES ENROLLED

PRIVATE LAND PUBLIC HUNTING ACCESS PROGRAM ACRES



State of Wisconsin
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
101 S. Webster Street
Box 7921
Madison WI 53707-7921

Tony Evers, Governor

Telephone 608-266-2621
Toll Free 1-888-936-7463
TTY Access via relay - 711



Wisconsin Report

Provided by Haley Frater, DMAP/Private Lands Team Lead

MAFWA Private Lands Working Group

Hosted By: Illinois DNR

May 14-16, 2024

SUCSESSES

Program and Policy Review and Implementation

Conservation Grazing Strategy

Fall of 2023 concluded the development of the first ever Wisconsin Conservation Grazing Strategy. A team of Wildlife and Natural Cultural Heritage staff crafted the strategy which was approved by Wildlife leadership in September. This strategy identifies high priority areas where managed grazing should be used to manage grassland habitat as well as areas where staff do not have the needed resources to manage effectively. The managerial tools that this document identifies will allow limited DNR resources to be focused on the highest priority landscapes as well as creating an excellent opportunity to partner with our cooperating farmers to do habitat management in the form of forage removal and brush control.

Deer Management Assistance Program

In 2023 Wisconsin's Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) undertook a full program review aimed at evaluating its current structure, focus, and offerings. As part of this process, the DMAP team hosted focus groups with internal and external partners as well as DMAP members, conducted programmatic and evaluative surveys, analyzed member and landowner demographics and interests, and reviewed state statute and NR code. This process culminated in the development and approval of a comprehensive program plan. Although many of the proposed changes require NR Code changes, a process that is currently underway, several items were piloted and/or implemented including: centralizing all private lands services to a specialized team of Private Lands Deer and Habitat Biologists and providing members project- rather than property-based plans.

VPA/HIP/THAP

In 2023 NRCS granted WDNR a 1-year no-cost, time extension to the VPA-HIP grant made available through the 2018 Farm Bill. Despite requesting a no-cost extension, the VPA-HIP program had exhausted its available technical assistance funding. To fund the staffing required to continue the program, the WDNR's wildlife program is financially backing the program. The VPA-HIP program sits at 29,848 acres enrolled for hunting, trapping, fishing, and wildlife viewing while our Turkey Hunter Access Program (THAP) sits at 7,760 acres enrolled.

Increased Collaboration and Resource Sharing

Wisconsin Grazing Coalition

Approximately a year ago, the Conservation Ag and Grassland Specialist was invited to serve as an advisor to the University of Wisconsin: Grasslands 2.0 Policy Development Team. Grasslands 2.0 is a collaborative group of producers, researchers, and public and private sector folks working to develop pathways for producers to achieve increased profitability, production stability, and nutrient and water efficiency, while improving water quality, soil health, biodiversity, and climate resiliency through grassland-based agriculture, and perennial living cover. The Policy Development team was successful in hosting a collaboration meeting with 37 different conservation, wildlife and economic development NGO's, farmer groups, food security, and naturalist entities in attendance. The result of this meeting was the re-establishment of the Wisconsin Grazing Coalition (WGC). WGC identified

and prioritized needs across the spectrum of attendees and is continuing work to build new partnerships within entities that typically do not collaborate. These new relationships are focused on achieving multiple goals from support of legislative efforts to meeting the needs on public and private lands.

Ruffed Grouse Society

2023 marked the start of a new partnership between the Ruffed Grouse Society/American Woodcock Society (RGS) and WDNR to support two Forest Habitat Biologists. These positions work to promote forest management practices which encourage the age-class diversification needed to sustain the timber industry and support wildlife. Their efforts are focused on private, via DMAP, and public, state and federally owned, lands and have resulted in management plans and technical assistance on more than 8,000 acres of private land.

R3

WDNR's R3 and VPA-HIP programs are working with WDNR's social science staff to survey private landowners in hopes of gaining a better understanding of their motivations and tolerances for allowing public hunting on their land. The survey aims to evaluate which variables (lease rate, harvestable species, access dates, hunter density, etc.), their relative impact on a landowner's decision to open their property for public hunting, and how they vary with the type or amount of access allowed. The data will be used by VPA-HIP staff for program-review and to inform the next iteration of the VPA-HIP ahead of the 2023 Farm Bill.

Lumberjack RC&D

In August 2014, the WDNR entered into an agreement with several conservation organizations and government agencies for the purpose of enhancing public understanding of the value of young forest. The Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership (WYFP) was created to identify, promote, and deliver conservation programs that assist landowners with land management through the use of combined resources to enhance wildlife populations dependent on early successional (e.g. "young") forest habitats. Specifically, WYFP staff assist private landowners by conducting education and outreach events, providing forest management plans, and connecting them with funding including the DNR's Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program (WFLGP) and NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This agreement is scheduled to last until June 2024.

Pheasants Forever

A five-year agreement was reached with Pheasants Forever, USDA NRCS, and Wisconsin DNR. This partnership provides 8 Farm Bill Biologists whose purpose is to assist with the promotion of USDA Farm Service Agency and USDA NRCS conservation programs such as CRP, WRP, WEP, EQIP, CSP and Precision Agriculture. Recent notification was received that Pheasants Forever is now fully staffed and new staff are ready to provide private lands conservation services across the state. This collaboration has allowed critical expansion of appropriate habitat on private lands which is the best way to move the needle for all bird species in Wisconsin.

Division of Forestry

The Division of Forestry is continuing to work closely with the Wildlife Program to better serve Wisconsin's private landowners. The programs work collaboratively to conduct property walk-throughs and provide management recommendations to DMAP members. Over the last year, we've worked to improve and expand this partnership by simplifying processes to increase access to Forest Stewardship Plans and state grant dollars through the Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program (WFLGP).

Improved Participation and Perception

Participation in our private lands programs continues to grow. Since 2020, the amount of land enrolled in DMAP has increased by 48% and the number of participants by 68%. This growth has resulted in more than 505,000 acres and 3,300 people receiving technical advice and resources on private land deer herd and habitat management. In 2023 alone over 44,000 acres received on-site visits and management plans from DMAP staff, a 60% increase from 2022.

These efforts have positively influenced habitat management implementation on private lands and the perception of the DNR. Of the individuals who received DMAP site visits this year, over 90% reported that their DMAP participation not only encouraged them to do habitat management but made them more likely to implement management. This trend was also apparent when comparing new and continuing DMAP members. Continuing DMAP members receiving site visits in 2023 were 7.5x more likely to have implemented 3+ management practices than new members. They were also 2.5x more likely to be working with cost-share programs. In addition to these interactions improving management implementation on private lands, they also positively influenced the public's perception of the DNR. Over 90% of DMAP members agreed that their involvement with DMAP has improved their perception of the DNR.

CHALLENGES

Capacity

Programmatic growth coupled with recruitment and retention issues has resulted in workload exceeding capacity. Across our private land's programs, we're experiencing high employee turnover and less than ideal applicant pools. This has resulted in several failed searches, increased training needs, and unmet workload. To account for these issues, we're exploring alternative approaches to position funding in hopes of creating more ideal positions and in turn attracting better applications while simultaneously working to develop training resources.

Contingency Planning

Due to uncertainty surrounding the farm bill, government shutdowns, drought, and staff turnover, our staff have had to refocus their efforts to contingency planning rather than programmatic development and improvement. Not only have these issues redirected staff time, in some circumstances, they've also redirected state funding.

Drought Planning

Our Conservation Ag and Grassland Specialist has been an active member of the Drought Task Force sub team which began meeting in the early summer of 2023 when drought conditions began to worsen across our state. This task force duties and responsibilities have been added to existing workload which can be stressful, but it is also critical to have a contingency plan for managing land and habitat through drought. The 2023/2024 drought continued through an abnormally warm and snowless winter which has had negative effects on surface water levels, plant growth, the ability to use fire as a management tool and more. This sub team reports information back to the overarching Wisconsin Drought Task Force comprised of DNR, Department of Ag, Trade and Consumer Protection, Dept of Health and Human Services, Dept of Military Affairs, and USDA Farm Service Agency. Albeit critical to have Wildlife representation on the team, it increases workload and time needed to report out weekly data and addressing the needs that arise when the rain stops, and the snow never comes.

Farm Bill Planning

Lack of movement on the 2023 Farm Bill has put a large strain on the VPA-HIP program and in turn the WDNR's Wildlife Management Program (WM). Staff have been funded solely by WM since July 2023. Lack of assured continuity of VPA-HIP (along with new short-term leases) for our cooperators has disincentivized re-enrollment and we're losing traction and buy-in from landowners.

Uncertainty with the Farm Bill also ebbed into the contingency planning with partners such as Pheasants Forever. Though a cooperative agreement DNR and USDA each provide funding for this valuable joint effort. Unfortunately, if the US Government were to shut down, PF staff would not be allowed to work on the objectives outlined in the USDA portion of the agreement. Time and effort were spent creating additional opportunities so that PF staff could continue working on the DNR portion of the agreement IF the federal government were to shut down.

Staff Turnover

To counter staff turnover and less-than-ideal applicant pools, additional time and resources have been spent on developing in-house training resources and protocols. Although these resources have proven helpful in onboarding new staff, the time needed to develop them took away from administering and enhancing existing programs.

No Front Door

One of the major barriers to private landowners implementing management is funding. As a result, a multitude of organizations have emerged to help connect private landowners to state and federal funding. In Wisconsin alone we have at least 9 entities, not including DNR, with full-time staff dedicated to this effort. The number of involved organizations increases confusion for both natural resource staff and landowners. To add to this confusion, a "front door" or easy entry point to help connect and direct landowners to the most appropriate program/organization does not exist. With the number of entities involved and their continual changes in funding and priorities, we see a need for a one-stop-shop for landowners and natural resource professionals to access the most up-to-date and accurate funding information.

2024 MAFWA Private Lands, Public Lands, and Diversity Wildlife Working Groups Meeting

May 14-16, 2024 – Embassy Suites East Peoria Riverfront Hotel

Meeting Agenda

Tuesday, May 14th:

Start- 9:00 AM CST

-Introductions – 9:00 – 9:20

-Welcome message from Chris Young (IL DNR)

- **Climate Mitigation and Adaptation** 9:20 – 10:35

9:20- 9:45 - Chris Young

Illinois DNR Climate Action Plan

9:45 – 10:10 - Hugh Ratcliffe (MW CASC)

Midwest Climate Adaptation Science Center SWAP Support
Update

10:10 – 10:35 - Tony Henehan (MI DNR):

Assessing SGCN across the Midwest using an Adaptive
Capacity Tool.

10:35 – 11:00 - Break

- **Midwest Landscape Initiative**

11:00 – 12:00 - Claire Beck (MLI)

Midwest Landscape Initiative Update

Lunch- 12:00 – 12:45 PM (Provided)

- **Working Group Committee Meetings**

-12:45 – 4:30 -Break out into Committees

Refreshments will be available if a break is needed for committees

End- 4:30

Dinner- (Provided) 6:30 PM

Wednesday, May 15th:

Start- 9:00 AM

-Wildlife Management in an Intensively Farmed Landscape 9:00- 11:30

9:00 – 9:35 - Dr. Michael Ward (INHS)

Investigating the role of insect abundance, forest management, and pesticides in the decline of whip-poor-wills in the Midwest”

9:35 – 10:10 – Bob Caveny and Mike Chandler (IL DNR)

IDNR Ag Leasing Program

10:10 – 10:30 - Break

10:30 – 11:00 – Mike Redmer (USFWS)

Illinois Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

11:00 – 11:30 – Katie Kauzlarich-Stockman (PF / QF)

Illinois Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever

-Emiquon Preserve and the Illinois River Watershed

–11:30 – 12:00 - Randy Smith (TNC)

Lunch-12:00-12:45 (Provided)

-Additional Time for Committee Business- 12:45 – 1:45

-Wildlife Disease Issues 1:45 – 4:30

1:45 – 2:30 - Dr. Alfred Roca (INHS)

Population genetic insights into the spread of chronic wasting disease in white-tailed deer

2:30- 2:50 - Break

2:50 – 3:30 - Dr. Tricia Fry (MAFWA)

One Health in the MAFWA Region

3:30 – 4:15 - Dr. Matt Allender (UIUC)

Does the Presence of a Pathogen Result in Unhealthiness?
Epidemiology of Common Pathogens Identified in North American Turtles and Relationships to Health, Conservation, and Confiscations.

End 4:15

Dinner – on your own

Thursday, May 16th: Field Trip (Weather Dependent)

Start- 8:30

Lunch-11:30-12:30 (Included)

End- 2:30 and back to East Peoria around 3:30