

Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist Quarterly Partners Report



Tabitha Panas — Pottawattamie, Harrison, and Shelby County

April - June 2023

April through June of this year has been fantastically busy and fun. I was able to get out into the field quite a bit, meeting with landowners that have new and establishing grassland seedings through various programs like CRP, EQIP, or Prairie Partners. Native seedings take a few years to get established, and I have noticed a trend that landowners planting grassland habitat are often very concerned the first year of a new seeding as most new seedings have a fair amount of annual weeds as the new perennial cover is busy building roots below. It is always fun to walk the field and point out the small seedlings of what was planted, often times being able to pick out the plants in rows from the native drill, and give landowners some assurance that the seeding is coming along just fine (as most of them are). I even enjoyed taking some time off to sharpen my own prescribed fire skills so I can continue to provide quality technical assistance for landowners who are interested in burning. I was able to participate in Co-Op Burn Week this April and was among 135 participants from 56 different organizations from conservation, volunteer, and fire department. The main goal of the event is a training opportunity and through the training, we were able to apply fire to 3,961 acres of habitat. Iowa State University held a training on Prairie Strips for USDA and I was able to speak during the afternoon wildlife session, and enjoyed being able to share knowledge in the field with colleagues from both NRCS and FSA. I was also grateful to be able to attend the North American Prairie Conference in Altoona where I was able to make connections with new folks as well as hear the challenges and successes of grassland conservation all across the continent. Aside from traveling to different meetings with landowners, colleagues, and fellow staff, I was also able to assist my four offices with finishing up CRP status reviews and getting started on conservation plans for CRP both new and re-enrolling this year.



Photo taken June 9th on Buckingham IHAP in East Pottawattamie County showing a monarch caterpillar on common milkweed, the host plant for this butterfly. This 155-acre habitat area was burned this spring, and the grassland habitat is showing a positive response. IHAP stands for the Iowa Habitat and Access Program. Administered by the DNR (with help from partner biologists like myself) landowners can receive technical and financial assistance for habitat improvements in exchange for allowing public hunting from September 1 through May 31. It can be a win-win scenario for landowners who would like help with positive land stewardship and also don't mind allowing folks to hunt.

Quarterly Achievements

- 135 Landowner Contacts
- 6 Outreach Delivered
- 24 Site Visits w Landowner
- 2 Habitat Proposals
- 8 Wildlife Plans
- 1 Burn Plan
- 12 Conservation Plans
- 13 Status Reviews
- 3 Seed Plan Reviews

Thank you so much for your support! Without this partnership, I wouldn't be able to provide assistance to landowners and positively impact conservation in Iowa!

Tabitha Panas

Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist II

Pottawattamie, Harrison, and Shelby County

305 Mckenzie Ave

Council Bluffs, Iowa 51503

402-506-0101

Tpanas@pheasantsforever.org

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.