

Roadmap to Restoration

Over the last year there has been an increasing amount of landowners and farmers who have decided to enroll fields into CRP that are prone to down out. Wetland restoration practices, CP23 & CP27/28, are excellent alternatives for particularly wet fields on the Missouri River floodplain.

Compared with non-wetland CRP, these practices are fairly time-intensive for office staff. Many field visits are needed to survey wetland restoration needs, layout boundaries for required earthmoving, and complete a final inspection before seeding. In addition to data from the field, we must strive to incorporate the landowner's goals and input into our planning process. With so many moving parts, it's important that office staff and landowners stay on the same page.

Monona County had a large workload this fall, which included 19 wetland CRP contracts totaling over 863 acres! To ensure as many landowners as possible completed their work this fall, the office worked with landowners to put together roadmaps for restoration.

Wetland CRP participants notified the field office when the crops were harvested. Our survey work continued before we completed final restoration plans, and had preconstruction meetings with contractors. A final inspection insured that dirt work was as planned, and that seeding could commence.

Due to exceptional teamwork and interagency cooperation we were able to assist nearly 75% of these landowners to complete establishment work in the first months of their new contracts. A big shout out to Jennifer Davis (C.A.) and Jerrilyn Miller (Program Technician) for their exceptional work on these projects, it wouldn't have been possible without them. 🦋



Post-harvest ruts show how wet this field has stayed well into fall.



A scraper making a shallow water excavation on a former Missouri River oxbow site.



This surface drain plug will retain water and help keep soil moist deep into the growing season.

Introduction to Land Management

It's hard to miss the huge smoke plumes rising from Hitchcock Nature Center as you drive near Crescent along I-29 on a fall afternoon with low humidity. The Conservation Board in Pottawattamie County (PCCB) has long attracted attention from area land owners, and passersby, through their aggressive use of prescribed fire. Hikers on the trails of Hitchcock in the summer months can sometimes hear a weed whacker in the distance as land managers cut and control invasive introduced plants. For many locals, the roar of the machinery, smell of smoke, and beautiful fields of wildflowers stimulate the question, "Could I do that on my land?"

This year PCCB sought to capitalize on their captive audience, and empower landowners to put these techniques to use. Twenty-two people attended *Intro to Land Management (ILM)*, a six-class series, to learn management tactics from experienced conservation professionals. Each month's class focused on timing management activities with natural phenology to maximize effectiveness. Throughout the course myself and other instructors discussed a wide swath of subjects like woody vegetation management, ecological effects of fire, management impacts on wildlife, controlling invasive species, and more.



Left: Chad Graeve (PCCB) talks about fuel mixtures and how to properly light and extinguish a drip torch.

“Not only do I use this information every day, I have shared it with co-workers and others. The knowledge I have gained can't really be learned from books. You need hands on experience and instructors that have experience and lessons learned.”



ILM Attendee Survey

Thank you to all our partners!



Intro to Land Management continued. . .

Many conversations about USDA programs were spurred on as we discussed how course subjects could work in concert with programs like CRP and EQIP. Ultimately, attendees left with a better understanding of goal driven management, techniques that can maximize effectiveness, and a better network of landowner peers working towards similar goals.

Surveys from attendees were overwhelmingly positive, and PCCB plans to re-offer the ILM series next year. 🐦

“This is the most interesting and best-presented class I have attended since

ILM Attendee Survey



Ted Burk (Creighton), Jeremy White (University of Nebraska Omaha), and I lead the August ILM class discussing management impacts on wildlife

Training for the future

As we move closer to the national cap on CRP acres, landowners who have expiring contracts are considering their options. Of course, many are hopeful that more CRP acres come available, but some with wetland CRP practices may apply to become a Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE).

This quarter I spent time with Michelle Biodrowski, a Conservation Districts of Iowa Easement Specialist, to learn more about WRE. Arming myself with a better knowledge of program requirements, ranking questions, and the finer details of the application process will help me have more informed discussions with landowners on this topic.

I look forward to putting this knowledge to use and assisting landowners pursue their long-term conservation goals. 🐦

23% of contacts and projects were in the Loess Hills!



WRE site. Photo credit: Michelle Biodrowski

By the Numbers

Interaction Type	FY18 Qtr. 2
Landowner Contacts	144
Habitat Proposals	1
Projects with Acres	20
Outreach Efforts	3
Total	168