

Minimizing Marginal Acres

Every farm has unprofitable acres. On the floodplain of the Missouri River problem acres are often identified by poor drainage in silty clay soils. Heavy rain events cause crops to drown and delay farm operations while waiting for fields to dry enough to allow reentry. On the other end of the spectrum, prolonged periods without precipitation can cause the soil surface to become extremely hard and form deep cracks. In some of these cases the rocklike soil prevents germinating crops from breaching the surface to deploy the first leaves.

Tiling, digging surface ditches, or installing irrigation may not be the best answer. Many of these agronomic fixes to problems like this have extremely front loaded costs and can take years to break even. Another viable alternative is CRP. In my counties along the Missouri we were very fortunate to get an additional allotment of CP23 acres which can help eliminate the unprofitable acres from production, reduce flooding on adjacent fields, and provide habitat for wildlife.

Practice	Total Acres
CP21—Filter Strip	33.54
CP23—Wetland Restoration	846.66
CP27—Farmable Wetland	128.18
CP28—Farmable Wetland Buffer	406.75
CP38—SAFE Pheasant Recovery	251.01
CP38—SAFE Early Successional Quail Habitat	154.47
CP42—Pollinator Habitat	145.16
Total	1965.77 ac



Missouri River floodplain field showing plenty of water across the surface. Wet conditions kept the tenant out of this portion of the field for additional weeks.



A third year CP23 after a spring burn. Most of the site had an inch of standing water. Enrolling this field allowed the landowner to focus his efforts on his more accessible and profitable acres.

480.63 acres in the Loess Hills



Thank you to all our partners!

Checking In On Projects

Summer is the culmination of many discussions with landowners, hours of planning, site preparation, and seed hitting the ground. Many new CRP plantings are green with new growth by May and June. Following spring rains, wetland restoration practices are likely to be at their peak saturation. These conditions create excellent opportunities for landowners and field office staff alike to begin evaluating projects to that point.

Are there weak points of establishment where nothing is growing? How much weed pressure is there? Are wetlands holding water the way they were intended? What species in my seed mix are establishing? Working with landowners to determine the answers to these questions allows them to create management goals, and form a game plan to reach their target.



Native seeding drill rows show good early establishment of this CP23 mix on a drier portion of this site.

A shallow water excavation in a Farmable Wetland is holding water on June 1st.



1st year CP42 seeding has Sideoats Grama and Western Yarrow alongside small shoots of Mare's Tail.

Youth Pollinator Habitat Program

In early May, the Monona County SWCD's native drill seeded a rich pollinator mix in the ground at the Little Sioux Scout Ranch. The drilling was the exclamation point on a project that has been going on over a year now which total 5.4 acres of quality habitat. The Scout Ranch leadership is thrilled to have an outdoor classroom growing on site that will help scouts fulfill nature studies while at camp for many summers to come.

This project wouldn't have been possible without contributions from many local partners.



Monona County SWCD donated both financially and by volunteering to plant the plots.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Harrison County SWCD

Monona County SWCD

East Pottawattamie County SWCD

West Pottawattamie County SWCD

Loess Hills Chapter of Pheasants Forever

Loess Hills Alliance

By the Numbers

Interaction Type	FY17 Qtr. 4
Phone call or email	94
Meeting (walk-in)	14
Meeting (scheduled)	14
Site visits	20
Habitat Proposals	5
Total	147

Looking Ahead

Pheasants Forever continues to plow ahead with precision ag in southwest Iowa. Lynn Betts, freelance writer frequently published in *Corn and Soybean Digest*, visited with two of our first producers to take the plunge into precision conservation. Look for his articles to hit the stand in August's issue.



Lynn Betts, Jeremy Biggs (PF precision agriculture business planning specialist) and landowner Bob Zimmerman looking over a restored wetland of Bob's.