

Precision Conservation

Current conditions in the farming world are fairly unstable with high land values, low commodity prices, and the constantly fluctuating costs of inputs. Circumstances like these call for a return to the old saying “work smarter, not harder.”

Lee and Arthur Wisecup in Harrison County are doing just that, together with Pheasants Forever, NRCS, Heartland Co-op, and AgSolver they’re putting technology to use. Working with Pheasants Forever’s Precision Agriculture Business Planning Specialist, the Wisecups were able to utilize a program called Profit Zone Manager (PZM) to overlay their combine’s yield data with their input expenses. PZM analyzes these data not only numerically, but spatially, showing profitability and return on investment (ROI) across all their acres. The technology allows them to manage their farm down to the sub field level by identifying problem areas based on performance metrics beyond just yield.



Reports from PZM. Areas in orange and red represent areas of negative ROI, yellow and green represent areas of positive ROI.

*Left : 2016 yield data
Right : 2016 yield with CRP implemented on south field.*

*PZM shows a **26.3%** profit increase on those acres.*



While the Wisecups knew where the bad spots in their fields were, this program was able to show them just how much those spots were costing them. Farming primarily in the Missouri River bottom, their wettest and lowest areas lost as much as \$500/ac at points. Areas like that can really bring down field averages, reduce profitability, and decrease ROI; this triggered Arthur and Lee to take a different approach.

Finding conservation programs that meet their needs while maintaining the farmability of their most productive ground, and provide benefits to wildlife is right in the wheelhouse of a PF Farm Bill Biologist. So far they’ve identified portions of six fields that they wish to enroll into CRP. Reducing their operation’s negative ROI areas will improve their bottom line and create wildlife habitat, both important to the Wisecups.

"As the farmer we know the poor areas of our fields, but it is hard to explain to a landlord why that part of the field needs to be put in CRP, or not farmed at all. PZM helped us express our concerns to our landlords so that we could game plan for a more profitable future and maintain a healthy relationship with them as well."

~Arthur Wisecup~



Local SWCDs

Thank you to all our partners!

By the Numbers

Customer Interactions

Interaction Type	FY17 Qtr. 2
Landowner Contacts	90
Habitat Proposals	21
Projects with Acres	3
Total	115

Completed 3 projects for
198+ acres this quarter!
19.55 acres within the Mondamin Special



NRCS and Pheasants Forever Biologists learn to identify Native American burial mounds.

Trainings

Training Type	Outcomes
Cultural Resource Training	Ensuring our work doesn't negatively impact cultural resources starts with our ability to spot them in the field. This was a two day course focusing on our responsibilities as conservation planners to identify these resources.
Toolkit 9 Training	Learned about the latest update of Toolkit 9 and its new tools to help in our conservation planning process.

Making the Front Page

In November, Conservation covered the front page of a local newspaper, the Missouri Valley Times News. One article, interviewing a local landowner, who is also an assistant SWCD commissioner, explained the importance of native plants and CRP for Pheasants and other wildlife. It also discussed the pitfalls of brome and the value of providing a stable food source with food plots.

Also making the cover, the Harrison County Pheasants Forever chapter hosted an outstanding youth hunt that provided a great opportunity to talk to kids about the importance of habitat and conservation.

