

Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist Quarterly Partners Report



Tabitha Panas — Pottawattamie, Harrison, and Shelby County

January—March 2024

The first three months of the year have flown by and I am excited for spring to be in the air. This past quarter, I have been busy helping offices with CRP status reviews and planning practices for wildlife habitat improvement through EQIP and CSP. The USDA Service Centers and I are happy to report that almost all of our wildlife projects were selected for funding and the remaining few applications still have a chance at being picked up for future funding. The past few weeks have been busy with pulling together all of our conservation plans and contract materials so that we can get our landowners obligated for funding and they may begin to get started on their projects. We are excited for these projects—all with amazing landowners who are looking to improve habitat for all wildlife through native grass and wildflower seedings, prescribed fire, brush management, invasive species removal, and more.

This past quarter has also been a busy time for CRP status reviews. I always enjoy these because you get to see some really beautiful habitat on farms all over the three-county area. I especially enjoy giving landowners a call to let them know I will be out when I can, or a follow-up call to let them know I have been out there and they are doing a great job. This can also be a time to give them management recommendations—like timing a burn to push back brome as one example.

On one status review this spring, I had a farmer I had never met tell me to go take his gator if it would make it easier for me. This was a generous offer, but I politely declined, as knowing my luck I would pop a tire or get it stuck in the mud, but he kindly offered to drive me on the gator himself, and I accepted. He has around 150 acres of native grass and wildflower habitat and he told me about all the work he has done to care for the habitat and wildlife. He also told me about how he was diagnosed with cancer about a year ago and they caught it early and after a lot of treatments, he is in remission. I was so happy for him and it was really amazing to hear his story and his love for his family—telling stories about family Christmas and babysitting his grandkids. Besides the work we do to care for the land, it's even more special to make some really genuine, human connections with farmers and landowners who balance caring for their farms and caring for their families so well.

I am grateful for your support so I can continue to provide valuable technical assistance to landowners and partners. I hope you have a great spring and happy planting. Thank you!



Photo — I partnered with the Pottawattamie County Soil Water Conservation District to host two booths at the Council Bluffs Library Water Rocks event on March 9th. We had information for adults and activities for all ages including a prairie roots demonstration and a soil health tunnel scavenger hunt (pictured above).

Quarterly Achievements

- 111 Landowner Contacts
- 18 Site Visits w Landowner
- 2 Burn Plans
- 5 Outreach Delivered
- 55 CRP Status Reviews
- 3 Wildlife Plans

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!

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