



Summer 2017

FARM BILL BIOLOGIST PARTNERSHIP

Updates From the Field:

Lending a Helping Hand



A team of Farm Bill Biologists headed South and East, to Albert Lea, Minnesota, to set up shop in a conference room for several days to assist Freeborn and surrounding counties complete CRP plans. These plans were from landowners who wanted to voluntarily enroll into CRP. Thanks to Sabin Adams, Dusty VanThuyne, Laura Merten and Nick Smetana for putting in the hours and effort to assist our partners and provide landowner service that will result in soil, water and wildlife benefits!

Outreach Event Focuses on Women Farmers, Ranchers and Landowners

Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologists Nick Smetana and Dusty VanThuyne assisted with, and presented at, Ladies Of The Land Event held in Watonwan County. The event was a joint effort between FSA, NRCS, Watonwan Soil and Water Conservation District and PF. In addition, donations were received from

Central Farm Service (CFS), Watonwan Corn and Soybean Growers Association, Minnesota Corn and Minnesota Soybean Growers Association, Smithfield Foods, Darfur Sportsman's Club, and Watonwan County PF Chapter. It was a great event discussing the benefits of conservation including soil health, grasslands and wetland restorations.





Project Spotlight: Partnering for Multiple Benefits



Conservation District, with other partners involved being Minnesota Department of Transportation, CapX powerlines and Jake Nelson, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist in West Ottertail County.

A combined effort went in to installing this living snow fence along I-94 (both sides), west of Fergus Falls. On this site, the shrubs planted are dogwoods, plum and chokecherry, with native prairie planted between the shrubs and the highway. The living snow fence will have many benefits: create habitat and sustenance for wildlife and pollinators, prevent snow from drifting, decrease cost of snow removal, increase road safety, and much more! Planting was done by West Otter Tail Soil and Water



"Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language."

— Aldo Leopold



Plant Profile—Whorled Milkweed

Whorled Milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*) is a perennial plant native to much of Minnesota. This plant

can be found blooming between late spring to summer (typically late June/July -September). It can be found growing in sunny, dry fields and prairies, rocky or sandy soils, or along roadsides, as it can tolerate poor soils.

The flowers are white and very small (1/8" wide) and form fairly flat clusters, approximately 10-20 flowers per cluster. Each individual flower has 5 petals that curve downward and 5 petals that point upwards. Reaching heights of 1-2', plants have a slender stem, with 3-6 whorled leaves running along the length of the stem. Leaves are up to 3" long and are narrow and needle-like with a central vein.

The plant is pollinated by producing pollen sacs which get stuck to the legs of insects and are then carried to flowers. Whorled Milkweed has a rhizomatous root system, giving it the ability to form colonies. A common characteristic of Milkweeds, the plant has milky sap when broken, but is sometimes hard to detect.



It is also poisonous to livestock, but is usually not consumed in large enough amounts to be fatal.

*Article and photos courtesy of Gemma Kleinschmidt, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist II



Program Highlights: Minnesota Bee and Beneficial Species Habitat Restoration



Through a recently received grant, from the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF), Pheasants Forever and partners are working together in Minnesota to establish new high quality pollinator habitat.. Pheasants Forever will be funding projects that aid in the recovery of monarch butterflies and native pollinators by working cooperatively on 75-100 sites to enhance 800-acres of permanently protected habitat in priority Minnesota landscapes. Enhancements will be designed to provide high-diversity native plantings for the benefit of native pollinators, especially the monarch butterfly. Projects will be solicited and selected to maximize benefits to native bees, honey bees & monarchs. Existing sites will be enhanced by seeding a portion (50:50 is desired) of the field to diverse mixes to provide high quality foraging habitat for native bees and honey bees and the remainder of the field to diverse mixes that provide high quality breeding habitat for monarch butterflies.

“We’re working with landowners, conservationists, researchers, and beekeepers to build healthy and sustainable pollinator habitat with maximum benefits” stated Steven Burdick, Minnesota Project Manager. “Our aim is to precisely target pollinator needs by engineering projects that provide appropriate bloom diversity, density, and duration to optimize forage potential.”



For more information on this program or to submit a new project please contact Steven Burdick at sburdick@pheasantsforever.org.



Farm Bill Biologist Quarterly Highlights: April 1 through June 30

Landowner Contacts	1,351 Contacts
Contracts (CRP, RIM, EQIP, Etc.)	541 Contracts
Impacted Acres (Contracts, Monitoring, Etc.)	9,553.6 Acres



"A land ethic, then, reflects the existence of an ecological conscience, and this in turn reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land. Health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal. Conservation is our effort to understand and preserve this capacity."

— Aldo Leopold

Contact a PF Biologist Near You:

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Kevin Roth—Stearns County- (612) 201-7320, kroth@pheasantsforever.org

Nick Smetana—Watonwan County- (608) 797-3375, nsmetana@pheasantsforever.org

Dustin Van Thuyne—Brown County- (507) 317-0786, dvanthuyne@pheasantsforever.org



Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologists Dustin Van Thuyne and Nick Smetana meeting with Brown County landowner Gary Rathman.

About The Farm Bill Biologist (FBB) Position:

Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologists are specialized staff in conservation programs and habitat planning who work with landowners interested in voluntary conservation programs.

These positions are made possible due to the support of the following partners and the Farm Bill Assistance Partnership (FBAP) :

Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), Environment Trust Fund and local Pheasants Forever Chapters.