



## FARM BILL BIOLOGIST PARTNERSHIP

# Minnesota Precision Ag: Collaborating for Profits, Water and Wildlife

Pheasants Forever has formed a new partnership in Minnesota to embrace precision ag technology as the bridge to achieve habitat, water quality and farmer profitability outcomes. Collaborating with AgSolver, Stearns County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), and the Sauk River Watershed District (SRWD), the partners are working together to combine business, agronomic, and conservation planning services (Precision Ag business planning) for producers in central Minnesota.



Through this collaborative effort, Precision Ag business planning provides the opportunity for producers to increase profits by offering conservation practices that benefit water quality, soil health and provide wildlife habitat on non-profitable acres under current crop production scenarios. The foundation of this partnership is built on the technology of AgSolver’s Profit Zone Manager™ (PZM) platform which focuses on return on investment (ROI), at a subfield level. Precision business planning defines areas where conservation makes sense for producer’s bottom lines by showing how each

acre performs differently and provides the ability to create conservation scenarios to see the financial benefits before implementation.

“Stearns County SWCD is extremely excited to continue our tradition of providing technical assistance to landowners and helping them achieve their production and conservation goals,” states Dennis Fuchs, Stearns County SWCD district manager. “By working together with agriculture and conservation organizations, the sky is the limit to achieving ag production, water and wildlife habitat goals for all of Minnesota’s residents.”

Pheasants Forever has recently hired Jared Nowacki as a Precision Agriculture Business Planning Specialist who will work directly with the farmer, and their trusted advisors, to use their data and input in the planning process. “Because of my background, being raised on a farm near Argyle, Minnesota, and my appreciation for the outdoors, I am excited to use the latest technology to provide economic and conservation opportunities for Minnesota farmers,” said Nowacki. “This is a real opportunity to use technology to enhance sustainability in our state.” Nowacki comes to Pheasants Forever with an Ag Business Degree from the University of Minnesota-Crookston. Jared began working in October 2016 and is based out of Fergus Falls, MN.

“The Sauk River Watershed District is extremely pleased to be involved with Pheasants Forever, AgSolver, and Stearns County SWCD to implement this innovative approach for landowners while providing water quality benefits for not only MN but also states downstream,” expressed Lynn Nelson, environment project coordinator for SRWD. “Working together, we will showcase how conservation is both profitable for farmers and sustainable for Minnesota’s natural resources.”

## Farm Bill Biologist Quarterly Highlights: October 1 through December 31

Landowner Contacts	946 contacts
Contracts Written	130 contracts
Impacted Acres (Contracts, Monitoring, Etc.)	6226.38 acres



“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– Pasque Flower

Pasque flower (*Pulsatilla patens* or *Anemone patens*) is a native perennial plant that belongs to the Buttercup Family (*Ranunculaceae*). One of the earliest blooming native prairie plants in Minnesota, it can be found flowering as early as March when there is still snow on the ground into May. It is a relatively low-growing plant, only reaching heights of 4-10 inches. It can most commonly be found growing on sites of dry, hilly native prairie. Within Minnesota, it primarily grows in the southern half and northwest corner of the state.

A plant can have several stems, with one flower growing at the end of each stem. The stem and leaves are covered with dense, silky hairs. These hairs aid in

trapping warm air next to the plant to help it survive in the cool spring temperatures. Flower color is normally pale blue to white, but can occasionally be pale lavender to purple. Flowers contain 5-7 petals around a yellow center. The seeds have long, feathery hairs that help them to be carried by the wind.



The common name comes from the plant’s bloom period occurring around the Easter (Paschal) season. Another common name for this plant is also Prairie Crocus.

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



## Partner Profile– Ross Hier - MN DNR



"Earth and sky, woods and fields, lakes and rivers, the mountain and the sea, are excellent school-masters, and teach some of us more than we can ever learn from books."

**- Sir John Lubbock**

Vice Chancellor,  
University of  
London

Ross Hier, DNR Wildlife Supervisor in Crookston, retired in December after 35 years.

In his time with the DNR, Ross became known for his passion for the prairie and the wildlife that uses it.

Ross started working part time for the DNR in Bemidji, and after finishing his master's work in New Mexico, Ross was hired onto the DNR as the Assistant Wildlife Manager in Crookston in 1988. He worked on managing WMA's in the Glacial Ridge prairie core area and worked to secure lands to make up the corridor. These lands are a large part of the state's remaining remnant prairie. Ross became known for his interest and work with prairie chickens, and he has been very active in the Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society. His prairie chicken artwork has also been a huge hit.

He considers himself very lucky for the privilege of managing the WMA's and being

able to spend so much time in them. Ross also greatly enjoyed working with the public and getting people to think about natural resources. He was able to do something that he loved every day, and says he never had a bad day at work.



Despite Ross' retirement, he is not going to slow down too much. He has plans to teach a Prairie Eco Management class at the University of Minnesota-Crookston this spring. He also

will keep busy with his very popular wildlife watercolors, and plans to continue to be active in the Prairie Chicken Society.

Ross has been a mentor to many, and a source of encouragement in the world of conservation. He will be missed, but will still be active in many things. We wish you a happy retirement and thank you for your work in Northwest Minnesota!

*\*Article and Photos courtesy of Jill Fejszes Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist.*



Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist Jeff Potts working with a landowner on voluntary conservation practices.

### 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.



“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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**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.

