

HORIZONS

VOLUME 50, ISSUE 4

FALL 2023

Rockford Public Schools Academy Expo

Each year Rockford Public Schools has an “Academy Expo” to assist high school freshmen in making their Academy/Pathway selection for their high school journey, by exposing them to a variety of careers, and forging a relevant link between the school curriculum and potential future careers. There were four Academy’s the student’s were exposed to: the Service Academy - education, public safety, culinary and hospitality management; the Production Academy - engineering, manufacturing, skilled trades and transportation; the Health Academy - pre-med, nursing, lab science, mental wellness and personal training; and the Business Academy - marketing, business, studio arts, graphic design and information technology. There were about 25 industry professionals in each Academy, and the students had a chance to walk around and decide which three of them they would like to learn more information about.

The District, and our partners with IDOA and Pheasants Forever, had a booth in the Service Industry, where we talked about careers in soil science and natural resources. We discussed the work we do with land use planning and soil science; and information and tools we use in the management of natural areas. In our booth students also had a chance to discuss soil cores and soil texturing samples. We also had a floodplain model that showed different scenarios of how land development has downstream impacts. We had about 200 people stop by from the various schools. It was a wonderful event, and a good way to get young people thinking about potential careers in Soil & Water Conservation.



Conserving Our Land Today For Tomorrow

The Winnebago County Soil & Water Conservation District is a locally operated unit of government functioning under Illinois L.W. Our purpose is to promote the protection, maintenance, improvement and wise use of the soil, water and related resources within the District.
Est. 1940



SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), established in 1937 under the Illinois Soil and Water Conservation District Act, are local units of government. The Act gives SWCD'S the responsibility to provide technical information to individuals and groups on methods of soil and water conservation and to provide natural resource inventory information on properties slated for zoning changes. The Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation was formed in 1940 and is a locally operated unit of government functioning under Illinois Law. Our purpose is to promote the protection, maintenance, improvement and wise use of the soil, water and related resources within the District.

Who develops the policies of the Winnebago County SWCD?

The Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation District is a public body made up of citizens concerned with the protection of our natural resources. It is governed by a five-member board of directors elected by District landowners and residents. This Board of Directors, along with the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) develop annual and long range plans that direct the activities of the District and NRCS.

Who funds the SWCD?

Districts have no taxing authority. Funding is provided by the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA). Districts offer several programs and services which supplement IDOA funding. The additional funding is utilized for operation expenses and education programs.

Melisa Long
Horizons Editor

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Tree Sale 2024



Tree brochures will be available in December. If you already receive "Horizons" in the mail or an email, a brochure will be sent to you. To be added to the mailing list call (815) 965-2392, Ext. 3.

Place orders early! Supplies are limited.

All orders will be picked up in April.

WINNEBAGO COUNTY SWCD

PROGRAM MEASUREMENT DATA - FISCAL YEAR 2023

PRODUCERS BENEFITTED THROUGH SWCD & USDA-NRCS/FSA & IDOA PROGRAMS

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) - Environmentally sensitive cropland or pastureland are enrolled into 10-15 year rental contracts. Areas are planted to cool season grasses and legumes or warm season grasses and forbs. Some practices are planted to trees and shrubs. The program goals are to established grass cover to prevent soil erosion on highly erodible land, improve the health and quality of the soil; improve water quality by filtering sediment and nutrients from runoff before they enter streams and rivers; restore functional wetlands in floodplain areas; and increase or enhance wildlife habitat. Information for Winnebago County for Fiscal Year 2023 include:

- **464** contracts with **400** landowners covering **6,655.80** Acres
There are about **30-35** contracts on **400-450** additional acres in the County, but administered by adjacent offices
- Federal dollars brought into the County through annual rental payments total approximately **\$1,625,000**
In addition, payments are made to landowners for practice installation for new acreages, and to complete mid-contract management practices such as burning, mowing, spraying, inter-seeding or light disking
- On a yearly basis we work with **35-40** percent of the contracts and landowners

Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) – Environmentally sensitive lands are put into long-term or permanent easements. The Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) Program re-establishes wetlands that had been converted to cropland. The Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) Program protects cropland and pastureland by preventing the conversion of the land to non-agricultural uses.

- Monitor **6** parcels with **1,631** acres enrolled in Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) program; with an additional **320**-acre parcel located in Winnebago County monitored by an adjacent USDA office
- Streambank, wetland and habitat enhancement projects continue to be completed on the easements as needed

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) – The program is designed to compensate agricultural producers who agree to increase their level of conservation by adopting additional conservation activities and maintaining their baseline level of conservation. Participants earn payments based on the level of conservation performance. Practices include cover crops, nutrient & pest management, adding buffer strips, creating pollinator habitat, etc.

- **30** Active contracts with **26** Producers, covering **32,818** acres - Payments totaled **\$356,976**

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) – This program provides financial and technical assistance to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits, such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, and improved or created wildlife habitat. This program can include targeted sign-ups to address state and/or local watershed initiatives.

FY23 – 7 New contracts (single-year or multi-year contracts) for a total cost-share of **\$260,808**:

- **3** – Cropland Management BMP's – **1,055.2** Acres (no-till, cover crops, nutrient management)
- **1** – Tree planting – **3.2** Acres
- **1** – Grazing Management Implementation – **9.6** Acres
- **1** – High Tunnel
- **1** – Forest Management Plan – **17.8** acres
- **4.9** Acres of Prairie/Pollinator Planting

Partners for Conservation Program (PFC) – This State Cost-share program provides up to 75% in cost-share assistance for the construction or adoption of conservation practices such as no-till planting, establishing grassed waterways, cover crops, and other practices to address the State's Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRs). Urban-type programs and practices include well sealing, rain gardens and pollinator plantings.

In **FY23** there was **\$28,845** allocated to the following practices, resulting in **125** tons of soil saved.

- **5** landowners – **12** waterways – **8.69** acres
- **2** landowners - sealing of abandoned wells
- **3** landowners – **4.25** of pollinator projects
- **1** landowner – **90.9** Acres of cover crops

Fall Cover for Spring Savings Program - This State program provided Producers a **\$5** rebate on their federal crop insurance to plant cover crops, which help reduce soil loss over the winter, and sequester nutrients from leaching.

- **2** Producers – **118** Acres

Illinois Cover Crop Initiative - The new program was available for farmers who planted cover crops following their 2022 cash crop. Farmers received **\$10** per acre for cover crops planted by December 1, 2022. This program was available for new or repeated fields of cover crops (but could not be used with select other initiatives)

- **5** Producers – **2,157** Acres

WINNEBAGO COUNTY SWCD

PROGRAM MEASUREMENT DATA

FISCAL YEAR 2023

July 1, 2022 thru June 30, 2023

CUSTOMERS BENEFITTED THROUGH SWCD PROGRAMS

Land Use Programs: Soils, Natural Resource Information, Plat Reviews, Sediment & Erosion Control

| | |
|--|---|
| Soil Boring Evaluations for Septic Systems | 86 parcels (1 Boone); 2 supplemental visits |
| Soil Investigations (for potential house sites) | 4 parcels |
| Natural Resource Inventory - Full Reports (Ag/vacant land) | 29 reports - 416.92 acres |
| Zoning Letters for Variances and Special Use permits | 27 reports - 428.95 acres |
| In-office Plat Reviews | 12 - 171.6 acres |
| IEPA Construction Site Inspection | 137 inspections on 52 active sites (30 New) |
| County/MS4 Erosion Control Agreements | 60 inspections on 10 active sites, 4 plan reviews |

Natural Resource - Education, Information and Outreach

| | |
|--|---|
| Educational Events – District Sponsored or Partner Programs | |
| Youth - Pollinator Palooza, Oak planting program, Envirothon | 3 events – 190 Attendees |
| Youth & Adult – Fall Gathering, Dairy Breakfast | 2 events – 90 Attendees |
| Technical Workshops – Soil Health, Erosion & Sediment Control | 2 workshops - 122 Attendees |
| Partnership Meetings - Provide Technical & Natural Resource information to partnering agencies/organizations | |
| Water Scenario planning, Water Health Assessment Com., | |
| No. Regional Groundwater Com, Keith Creek Work Group, | 27 meetings - 380 attendees |
| R1PC Technical Com., Climate Resiliency Forum, KREP | |
| Resource Material - maps, soil sampling and water testing kits, etc. | 125 customers |
| Reference Materials - educational brochures/handouts | 250 people - office & partnering events |

Conservation Products and Sales

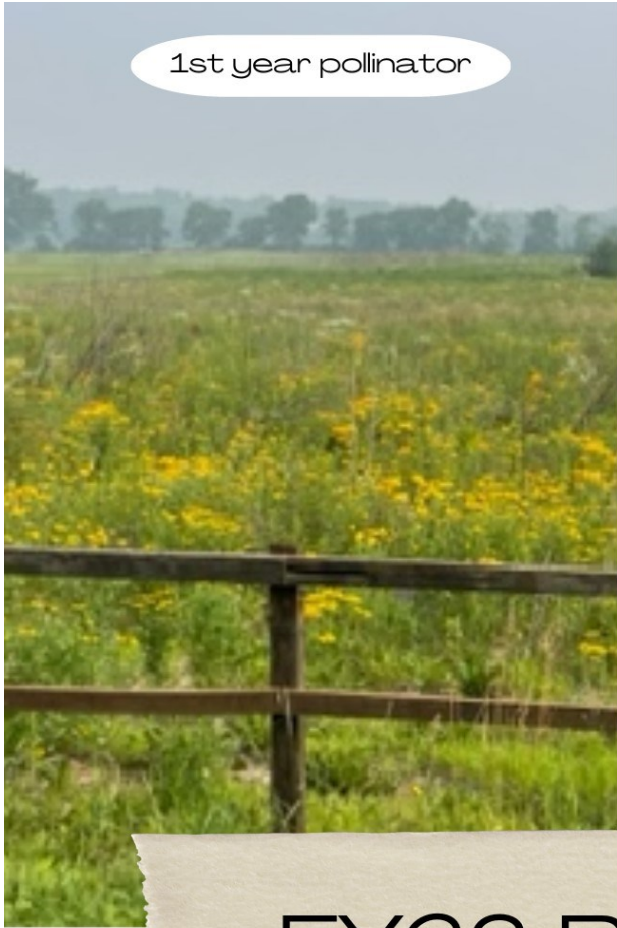
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|--|--|
| Conservation ID books - trees, birds, butterflies, wildflowers, etc. | 15 books sold |
| Conservation Seed Sale - for wildlife and conservation plantings | 20 customers - 265.5 acres of seed |
| Rain Barrel Program - 55-gallon food grade plastic drums | 52 rain barrels sold, plus accessories |
| Tree and Shrub Sale & Accessories Program - bare root seedlings | 185 customers, 5,500 trees sold |

Public Relations

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Horizons newsletters | 5 published - 2,200 mailed/900 e-mailed |
| News Releases/TV interviews | 6 print, 1 TV interview |
| Facebook | used to distribute information, share partner events |

Local Organization & Group Participation

| | |
|---|--|
| Ag in the Classroom - Ag Literacy Advisory Com. | Pheasants Forever – Winnebago County Chapter |
| Certified Professional in Erosion & Sediment Control | Region 1 Planning Council |
| City of Rockford – water division – water testing kits | Climate Resiliency Forum |
| Forest Preserves of Winnebago County | MPO Technical Committee, Environmental Com. |
| Four Rivers Sanitation Authority | Keith Creek Corridor Study Working Group |
| Illinois Department of Natural Resources | Regional Greenways Planning Committee |
| Illinois Environmental Protection Agency | Water Scenario & Resource Management Planning |
| Illinois Soil Classifiers Association | Rockford Park District |
| Illinois Urban Manual Update Committee | Severson Dells Nature Center |
| International Association of Administrative Professionals | Soil Science Society of America |
| Lower Rock River Watershed Planning Committee | University of IL – Cooperative Extension Service |
| LUC 16 (NE Illinois) Envirothon Committee | Winnebago - Boone Farm Bureau |
| Natural Lands Institute | Winnebago County Health Department |
| Northwest Illinois Land & Water Watershed Group | Winnebago County Highway Department |
| Northern Regional Groundwater Protection Planning Com. | Winnebago County Planning & Zoning Department |



1st year pollinator



established pollinator - 4th year

FY23 Projects



waterway - built in 2020



Envirothon

Fall Cover for Spring Savings
Cover Crops



rainfall simulator



FY23 Projects

1st year - bioswale



soil boring for septic suitability



New “Waters of the United States” Rule and Food Security Act Wetlands

“Waters of the United States” Definition Does Not Affect NRCS Wetland Determinations



New regulatory language that defines the types of waters and wetlands that are federally regulated under the Clean Water Act (CWA) does not impact wetland determinations conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA’s) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

On August 29, 2023, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of the Army (Army) announced a final rule amending the 2023 definition of “waters of the United States” (WOTUS). According to EPA and Army, the amendments were made to conform with the U.S. Supreme Court’s May 25, 2023, decision in the case of *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency*.

This EPA/Army rule does not alter the wetland conservation provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended. In the Food Security Act, Congress defined wetlands without respect to their connection to navigable waters, which differs from the CWA. This rulemaking also does not alter the roles or responsibilities of the NRCS, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, or EPA under their respective statutory and regulatory authorities.

NRCS will continue to inform farmers and landowners that wetland determinations (performed by NRCS) may not be valid for CWA requirements, by including in communications advisement to consult with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, EPA, or state/local agencies for CWA or other jurisdictional determinations related to their activities. NRCS will continue to limit independent engagement with the regulatory agencies on behalf of the farmer or landowner without expressed written consent.

This EPA/Army rule also does not change any of the exclusions from the definition of WOTUS, including those for prior converted cropland, and does not affect the longstanding activity-based permitting exemptions provided to the agricultural community by the Clean Water Act.

For more information, please contact your local USDA Service Center.



USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

September 2023

Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

nrcs.usda.gov/



Fact Sheet for the Final Rule: Amendments to the Revised Definition of “Waters of the United States” August 2023



Overview

On August 29, 2023, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of the Army (the agencies) announced a final rule amending the 2023 definition of “waters of the United States.”¹ The amendments conform with the U.S. Supreme Court’s May 25, 2023, decision in the case of *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency*. While EPA’s and Army’s 2023 rule defining “waters of the United States” was not directly before the Supreme Court, the decision in *Sackett* made clear that certain aspects of the 2023 rule are invalid. Therefore, the agencies have amended key components of the regulatory text to conform it to the Supreme Court decision. The final rule provides clarity for protecting our nation’s waters consistent with the Supreme Court’s decision while advancing infrastructure projects, economic opportunities, and agricultural activities.

Changes to the “Waters of the United States” Categories and Definitions²

The agencies’ amendments change the parts of the 2023 definition of “waters of the United States” that are invalid under the *Sackett* decision. For example, the rule removes the significant nexus test from consideration when identifying tributaries and other waters as federally protected. It also revises the adjacency test when identifying federally jurisdictional wetlands, clarifies that interstate wetlands do not fall within the interstate waters category, and clarifies the types of features that can be considered under the “additional waters” category.

Changes that the agencies have made to the January 2023 Rule categories:

| Jurisdictional Category | Key Changes to the January 2023 Rule Regulation Text | Regulatory Text Paragraph |
|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Traditional Navigable Waters | No changes | (a)(1) |
| Territorial Seas | No changes | (a)(1) |
| Interstate Waters | Removing interstate wetlands from the text of the interstate waters provision | (a)(1) |
| Impoundments | No changes | (a)(2) |
| Tributaries | Removing the significant nexus standard | (a)(3) |
| Adjacent Wetlands | Removing the significant nexus standard | (a)(4) |
| Additional Waters | Removing the significant nexus standard; removing wetlands and streams from the text of the provision | (a)(5) |

¹ The “Revised Definition of ‘Waters of the United States’” rule published in the Federal Register on January 18, 2023.

² These tables are provided for informational purposes; the rule establishes the requirements defining “waters of the United States.”

Changes that the agencies have made to the January 2023 Rule definitions:

| Definition | Key Changes to the January 2023 Rule Regulation Text | Regulatory Text Paragraph |
|--------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Wetlands | No changes | (c)(1) |
| Adjacent | Revised definition to mean “having a continuous surface connection.” | (c)(2) |
| High tide line | No changes | (c)(3) |
| Ordinary high water mark | No changes | (c)(4) |
| Tidal waters | No changes | (c)(5) |
| Significantly affect | Deleted definition | (c)(6) |

No Changes to the Exclusions from “Waters of the United States”

The amendments to the January 2023 Rule do not change the eight exclusions from the definition of “waters of the United States” that provide clarity, consistency, and certainty. **The exclusions are:**

- **Prior converted cropland**, adopting USDA’s definition and generally excluding wetlands that were converted to cropland prior to December 23, 1985.
- **Waste treatment systems**, including treatment ponds or lagoons that are designed to meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act.
- **Ditches** (including roadside ditches), excavated wholly in and draining only dry land, and that do not carry a relatively permanent flow of water.
- **Artificially irrigated areas**, that would revert to dry land if the irrigation ceased.
- **Artificial lakes or ponds**, created by excavating or diking dry land that are used exclusively for such purposes as stock watering, irrigation, settling basins, or rice growing.
- **Artificial reflecting pools or swimming pools**, and other small ornamental bodies of water created by excavating or diking dry land.
- **Waterfilled depressions**, created in dry land incidental to construction activity and pits excavated in dry land for the purpose of obtaining fill, sand, or gravel unless and until the construction operation is abandoned and the resulting body of water meets the definition of “waters of the United States.”
- **Swales and erosional features** (e.g., gullies, small washes), that are characterized by low volume, infrequent, or short duration flow.

Additionally, the agencies’ amended definition of “waters of the United States” does not affect the longstanding activity-based permitting exemptions provided to the agricultural community by the Clean Water Act.

For More Information

Additional information is available on [EPA’s Waters of the United States website](#).

HORIZON SPONSORS - 2023

The following businesses are sponsoring your Soil and Water Conservation District.



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HORIZON SPONSORS - 2023



Herbal Thymes Club Visit

The Herbal Thymes Club came to our office on August 28th to learn about what each agency does. We also completed a scavenger hunt in our prairie beside the office. There were 16 different wildflower species that had to be found within an hour.



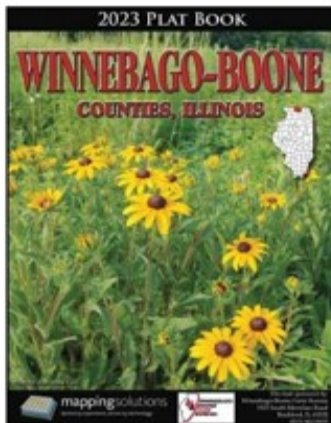
PARTNER PAGES

WINNEBAGO-BOONE

FARM BUREAU NEWS

OCTOBER 2023

WWW.WINNEBAGOBOONEFARMBUREAU.ORG



The 2023 Plat book is available at the WBFB in the following formats: Spiral Bound Hard Copy, SmartMap, and eBook for \$40/member and \$50/non-member.

Spiral Bound Plat Books are also available for purchase at the following locations:

- U of I Extension- Boone County, 205 Cadillac Ct. Suite 3, Belvidere, IL (M-F 8 a.m.-Noon & 1-4:30 p.m.)
- Winnebago Co. Soil & Water Conservation District, 4833 Owen Center Rd, Rockford, IL (M-F 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

Visit mappingsolutionsgis.com to order your wall map of Boone or Winnebago County.

Stop by the Winnebago-Boone Farm Bureau to sign up to win either a wall map or SmartMap by October 31st.

HOLIDAY NUTS, SWEET TREATS & MORE SALES



- Download an order form from our website and return it with check or cash to the Winnebago-Boone Farm Bureau office
- order online and pay with a debit/credit card, PayPal, or Venmo (\$3.00 processing fee will be included with online orders).
- All orders are due by Tuesday, November 14 by 3 p.m. (Orders are to be picked up the week of December 4th.)



TRIPS & TOURS

- **Charleston, Savannah, and Jekyll Island** (March 15-21). Enjoy the taste of the Old South. Visit historic Beaufort, Jekyll Island, St. Simons, Savannah, and Tybee Island's light house/museum.
- **Canadian Rockies, Lethbridge, and the Calgary Stampede** (July 3-9). Experience Lethbridge, Fort Macleod, Bar U Ranch, the famous Icefield Parkway and Ice Explorer ride, World-Famous Calgary Stampede and Chuck Wagon racing, and Heritage Park.
- **Danube Explorer** (August 24-September 3). Travel Europe on the Danube Explorer. Visit Budapest, Hungary; Vienna's Imperial Hofburg, Weisenkirchen; Melk Abbey; Cesky Krumlov; Passau, Germany; and Prague, Czech Republic. **FREE AIRFARE until November 30th!**
- Visit our website for the brochures and registration forms.

PARTNER PAGES

Fall and Winter FAMILY FUN



Predator Prey Party 
November 4th 10am-2pm

Bird Bonanza 
December 2nd 10am-2pm 



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Burning for a Better Tomorrow

How I Utilize Prescribed Fire in my Habitat Management

By: Jared Trickey

It's a warm and sunny August afternoon in Northern Illinois. I stand in a fresh cut burn break, overlooking a prairie area that has seen better days. The trees and shrubs have crept in, and the diverse plant life has turned to mostly cool season grass and Goldenrod. The pollinators are few and far between and the wildlife use has notably declined. In the middle of the field sits a small, deeply rooted cluster of native wildflowers and warm season grasses. These deep root systems provide excellent tolerance to grazing and fire but are no match for the eventual take over by exotic plants. This field represents many native prairies across Illinois and the rest of the United States, a lack of diversity and a quick take over by undesirable plants, like those pesky invasive species and fast-growing trees. Now, this place needs a lot of work and certainly won't change overnight, but I know where I'll start, and that's with fire.



A month ago, I was digging through my imaginary habitat management toolbox, looking for the best approach to get this "prairie" back into looking like a prairie again. As daunting as the task may seem, I plan to turn this field back into a beautiful and diverse prairie, full of color and life like it once had 12 years ago. My toolbox presents numerous options, yet arguably the most impactful and cost-effective tool in my arsenal is prescribed fire. No, not the unpredictable and scary fire that is racing with the wind towards an un-mowed edge. Instead, I

will utilize a slow backing fire working against the wind and slowly consuming years of built-up thatch. I will take the time to develop a plan and make sure I have everything I need to make this a safe and effective burn. My plan calls for a growing season burn that will set back woody encroachment, remove the thatch layer, and promote more wildflowers. One prescribed fire will not flip this prairie on its own, but it is the first step in my restoration efforts.

I will start on the downwind side of a West wind, selecting this wind direction to prevent smoke coverage over roads and nearby residences. I have already obtained my IEPA Open Burn Permit and developed an ignition narrative to follow the day of the burn. My crew and equipment are lined up and the burn breaks are mowed low and wide. At this point, I have checked the weather forecast a dozen times over the past few days, waiting for the day that fits in my acceptable conditions window. A sunny day with a West wind greets me at the end of the work week, it's time to burn! At 9:00AM my crew assembles on the East line ready to set fire to the ground. After an hour the burn is complete, leaving nothing but a field of black with brown stem scattered throughout. The burn was a success, and we gather to discuss how it all came to be. Today, with the use of prescribed fire, we took one step closer to returning this prairie back to its original beauty.

(Burning for a Better Tomorrow continued on page 8)



Prescribed fire can be utilized many ways depending on what you are trying to accomplish. The growing season burn will girdle the trees and shrubs, allowing for easier treatment of the resprouts with an herbicide in the summer of next year. The now bare ground will allow for good seed to soil contact when I go to inter-seed a native mix over the winter. Any native seeds that have been sitting and waiting will now have their chance to germinate in the spring. The fire intensity was low and left many stems behind that will still provide some cover for wildlife over the winter. Burning the prairie is not a one and done situation, in fact I plan to break the area into three units and put them on a burn rotation of once every three to four years. I might vary the timing and intensity of each burn depending on the vegeta-

tive response and how it correlates with my management goals. Regardless, I am excited for a change, especially one that will yield more colorful blooms. Roughly three years from now I will plan a fall dormant burn over part of the prairie to stimulate wildflower growth or maybe a late spring burn to promote more warm season grass. Adjusting the timing and intensity can yield different results, you can build this into your habitat management plan depending on what you are trying to accomplish. I will note that fire should not be looked at as a silver bullet, but a tool in our habitat management toolbox. There will be times where fire is not the best option or perhaps not an option at all, and that's okay. When it is available, it's a fantastic tool to have. This year it's the prairie and next year a 9-acre Oak/Hickory woodlot, and yes, burns are great for most woodland areas too. My burn took an hour and covered 5 acres, yet only cost a few hours of time by everyone involved and a little bit in fuel. I will take that every chance I get!

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farmland.org/icci

WELCOME TO THE TEAM



Drake Propson is the Farm Bill Biologist for Pheasants Forever in Winnebago, Dekalb, Boone, Lee, Ogle and Stephenson County. He grew up in Hilbert, WI, with a younger brother and sister. Drake graduated in May of 2023 with a Master of Professional Science degree in Wildlife Conservation and Management from Unity College in New Gloucester, Maine. He also has a B.S. in entomology and environmental studies from the University of Wisconsin - Madison where he graduated in May of 2020. Before this job he worked at Walt Disney World as a plant science associate working within the Living with the Land attraction at Epcot showcasing foods from around the world and innovative growing techniques for guests of all ages. He has always enjoyed learning about our natural world and cannot wait to see what he can learn from working with Pheasants Forever. Drake can be reached at (815) 965-2392, Ext. 3842 or dpropson@pheasantsforever.org.



Hunter Cejka is the Conservation Planner for the IDOA in Winnebago County. Hunter recently graduated from the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa with a bachelor's degree in history with a minor in political science. While attending the University of Alabama, Hunter co-founded a reforestation company called Reboot Reforestation dedicated to planting trees as quickly and efficiently as possible through sustainable drone technology. He moved back to the Winnebago area to be closer to family and friends, and to continue his career in conservation. His heart has always been in the Midwest. Apart from conservation and history, Hunter is an avid guitar player, a barefoot water-skier, and an overall handyman. Hunter loves to work on cars and get his hands dirty doing mechanical work. Hunter is very excited to be able to continue his career in conservation with the IDOA and beyond. Hunter can be reached at (815) 965-2392, Ext. 3843 or hunter.cejka@il.nacdnet.net.

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

There are two scholarship opportunities available to residents of Winnebago County pursuing a degree in the soil and/or water conservation, or a related natural resource field.

The Winnebago County SWCD has a scholarship available in the amount of \$1,000 for any resident in the County pursuing a degree in an agricultural or natural resource field.

The Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Northeast Illinois also have a scholarship opportunity, the Soil and Water Stewardship Scholarship. This scholarship is available to residents of Winnebago County and Counties to the east, including Boone and DeKalb County's. This scholarship is also in the amount of \$1,000 for someone pursuing a degree in the natural resource field.

The deadline for both of these scholarships is February 15th. For more information regarding either of these scholarships, e-mail danthonyswcd@comcast.net. The scholarship applications are also available on our website www.winnebagoswcd.org.

District helps with the Local Land Use Contest

On September 21st the Pecatonica High School hosted the Section 1 Land Use CDE at the Torstenson Youth Learning Center. Dennis Anthony, with the help of Hunter Cejka our IDOA Conservation Planner, officiated the contest. Jared Trickey, with Pheasants Forever, also helped the day of the contest. After a little morning drizzle, it ended up being a nice and sunny day that I think the students enjoyed!

Fifty-five students from eight schools competed and evaluated four soil pits in the Pecatonica floodplain, old glacial outwash stream terrace of the river, and an upland hillside on the property. Three of the soil pits were judged using the Agricultural scorecard, which helps identify conservation practices and nutrient applications that would be needed for the site based on the slope, drainage, soil composition and other criteria of the site; and one pit was used using the Home Site scorecard, which evaluated the building potential of the site and the on-site sewage disposal suitability, based on the same criteria. The winning team was from Scales Mound, 2nd was Eastland, 3rd was Lena Winslow, and Pecatonica was 4th.



NOTICE OF ACCEPTANCE OF NOMINATIONS

To all persons of legal voting age who own or reside on land located within the boundaries of the Winnebago County Soil & Water Conservation District; beginning on Friday, December 2, 2023 nominations will be accepted for a two-year term of the office of Director of the Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation District at the District's Office at 4833 Owen Center Rd., Rockford, IL, during our normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Please call the office for details at (815) 965-2392, Ext. 3. To be considered for nomination as a candidate for the office of Director, nominees must provide proof of residency or ownership of land located within the boundaries of the District. Interested persons must respond by 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, January 11, 2024.



Winnebago County SWCD

4833 Owen Center Rd.
Rockford, IL 61101-6007

Office Hours
Monday - Friday
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Follow us  
www.winnebagoswcd.org

SWCD STAFF

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ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR - Melisa Long
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RESOURCE CONSERVATIONIST - Katie Peterson
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NRCS STAFF

DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST - Josh Franks
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SOIL CONSERVATIONIST - Colton Asche
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Larry McPheron - Chairman
Paul Beuth - Vice - Chairman
Jim Morrison - Secretary/Treasurer
Mike Leick
Justin Krohn

ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

Judy Barnard
George David Mullen
Dwayne Proctor
Harlan Tipton

Monthly board meetings are held the last Tuesday of the month at the Soil & Water Conservation District Office. Call the office for meeting times and dates.

Meetings are open to the public and interested citizens are encouraged to attend.

Additional details on the SWCD District can be found on our website www.winnebagoswcd.org.

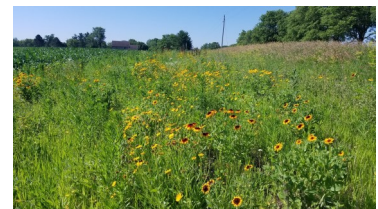
PHEASANTS FOREVER STAFF

FARM BILL BIOLOGIST - Drake Propson
dpropson@pheasantsforever.org

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