

Minnesota Wildlifers,

Welcome to the March 2021 edition of the Prairie/Farmland Newsletter. Enjoy!

Remember - we'd love for you to share any relevant content with us for inclusion in the next edition. Please send those items to either Jake (jcnelson8487@gmail.com) or Nicole (ndavros@gmail.com). And if you have any issues you'd like to investigate further with the committee, let Jake know.

Grassland/Farmland Wildlife, Habitat, Farming, Soil Health, & Federal Conservation Programs

- [USDA Offers New Forest Management Incentive for Conservation Reserve Program](#) - Existing CRP participants can now sign up for the Forest Management Incentive (FMI), which provides financial incentives to landowners with land in CRP to encourage proper tree thinning and other practices.
- [USDA Extends General Signup for Conservation Reserve Program](#) - USDA will continue to accept offers as it takes this opportunity for the incoming Administration to evaluate ways to increase enrollment. Under the previous Administration, incentives and rental payment rates were reduced resulting in an enrollment shortfall of over 4 million acres.
- [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service work with rural landowners with easement program](#) - Working lands work — for people and for wildlife. At the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we understand that by collaborating with local landowners, we can grow both healthy landscapes and waterfowl populations — plus a strong farm economy.
- [Senate confirms Tom Vilsack to serve again as agriculture secretary](#) - The Senate confirmed Tom Vilsack as President Joe Biden's agriculture secretary, sending the former Iowa governor to the same Cabinet position he served for the entirety of the Obama administration. The vote was 92-7.
- [Corn belt farmland has lost a third of its carbon-rich soil](#) - More than one-third of the Corn Belt in the Midwest - nearly 100 million acres - has completely lost its carbon-rich topsoil, according to new research that indicates the U.S. Department of Agriculture has significantly underestimated the true magnitude of farmland erosion.
- [Lac qui Parle County public land dispute in hands of judge after parties stipulate to facts](#) - Two years ago this February, the Lac qui Parle County Board of Commissioners denied a request by Phillip Sonstegard to sell 80 acres of land in Baxter Township to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. It's now up to the district court to rule in this closely-watched case and a decision is expected within 90 days.
- [Minneapolis gardener transformed gritty city lot into productive urban farm](#) - This compact oasis of urban agriculture at a busy corner in the Central neighborhood is Lapham's passion. It's a community garden and a demonstration site, where he leads tours and shares what he's learned about permaculture — producing food sustainably within a system inspired by natural ecosystems.

Pollinators and Insects

- [ANNOUNCEMENT: Pollinator Survey](#) - The Interagency Pollinator Protection Team (IPPT) would like public feedback on the 2020 Minnesota State Agency Pollinator Annual Report and how useful it is to Minnesotans. Additionally, the IPPT is interested in learning what actions people and organizations are taking to help pollinators and what barriers they are encountering.
 - Take the Survey Here: <https://survey.mn.gov/s.asp?k=161038710365>
- [Moorhead couple leaps at chance to raise crickets to make high-protein cricket flour](#) - Madeline and Pat Revier are cricket farmers, raising the jaunty Jiminies for consumption by high-performance athletes, eco-conscious vegans, people with gluten allergies and anyone else who is willing to hop on the insect-eating bandwagon.
- [Is it cold enough yet? What winter can tell us about insects in 2021](#) - Generally, this degree of a cold is troublesome for farmers ranging from issues with alfalfa winter kill to waterers freezing up for livestock producers. However, the cold can be a welcome event for pest management, especially with fewer winters in recent years reaching these annual lows.
- [Monarch butterflies are in trouble: Here's how to help in your own yard](#) - After a four-year assessment, the USFWS announced on December 15, 2020, that listing the monarch as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act is warranted, but precluded by higher priority listing actions. The Xerces Society has issued a call to action with steps that you can take, in your own yard.

Pesticides and Invasive Species

- [Ethanol plant near Mead ordered to shut down](#) (This is a follow up to last weeks article: [‘There’s a red flag here’: how an ethanol plant is dangerously polluting a US village](#)) - the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy issued an emergency order to AltEn, the operator of the plant, to immediately cease discharges into its wastewater lagoons, saying that the company was "likely to cause and may have already caused" pollution of the air, land and water.
- [Insecticide known for killing pollinators found in deer across Minnesota](#) - While the exact levels of neonicotinoids building up in deer still have to be determined, early indications are that they pose no threat to human health, said Jim Kelly, manager of environmental surveillance and assessment at the Minnesota Department of Health.

Webinars, Podcasts, Videos, Social Media, & Other Events

- Upcoming Program Signups (Links to fact sheets)
 - [CRP Grasslands](#): March 16th – April 23rd
 - [Minnesota CREP](#): April 12th – April 30th
 - [Minnesota WIA](#): March 15th – May 15th
 - [Local Government Road Wetland Replacement Program](#): Feb. 22nd – April 7th
- The [Prairie Reconstruction Initiative](#) is hosting a 2021 webinar series. Follow the link to their calendar page with links to each of the webinars listed below:
 - Unraveling Prairie Riddles Using the PRI Monitoring Protocol will be Wed, **March 24**, 1pm – 2pm. Speakers will be Pauline Drobney (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and Amanda McColpin (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Contractor).

- [Registration to be a Pesky Plant Tracker now open](#) - Pesky Plant Tracker is a volunteer program that empowers citizen scientists to identify, observe, and report on invasive plants in their area. The program, created by the Minnesota Invasive Terrestrial Plants and Pests Center (MITPPC) at the University of Minnesota, focuses on invasive wild parsnip and Japanese knotweed, two significant invasive species in the state. Becoming a Pesky Plant Tracker is free and open to anyone. Additional details about the program and registration information are available at www.peskyplants.umn.edu/volunteer.
- [CBS News Sunday Morning - Nature: Winter in Minnesota](#) – the popular nature video at the end of CBS Sunday Morning recently featured Blue Mounds State Park in Minnesota.

Other Topics (including those outside of our prairie region)

- [Pheasants Forever Launches National Campaign](#) - *Call of the Uplands* is Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever's first-ever comprehensive, national campaign: a \$500 million effort to cultivate the next generation of conservationists and protect and restore upland habitat.