

Minnesota Wildlifers,

Welcome to the May 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

- [The Darker Side of Tree Planting in the Great Plains](#) - The simple practice of planting a tree, of course, is perfectly fine. Putting trees around a house for shade or protection from wind can be eminently sensible, and there are plenty of important efforts going on to reforest areas where woodland habitat has been lost. However, as someone who has dedicated his career to prairie conservation, I'm painfully aware of the way tree planting and its aftereffects can create problems in grasslands.
- [Impacts of a Recent Bison Reintroduction on Grassland Bird Nests and Potential Mechanisms for These Effects](#) (PDF) - Bison reintroduction increased nest success of target passerine species, but this impact was short-lived and influenced by the most abundant species. This short-lived increase suggests that the impacts from bison on bird nest success may need longer studies to determine overall impact on birds before it should be considered for management of tallgrass prairie restorations. Overall, the nesting bird community at the study site did not change with bison presence, and it is unknown when or if this will occur.
- [USDA raising CRP payment rates, expanding incentives](#) - The Biden administration is increasing payment rates and offering new financial incentives in a bid to spur landowners to enroll 4 million more acres into the Conservation Reserve Program. The higher payment rates and expanded incentives will be combined "with a more targeted focus on the program's role in climate change mitigation" at a total additional cost of \$300 million a year, the White House statement said.
- [CREP program helping restore local wetlands](#) - Nicollet County has helped 21 landowners enroll in the latest round of the program. In Blue Earth County, 14 landowners are enrolled. More than 31,000 acres in Minnesota are now enrolled in CREP.
- [Court says Lac qui Parle County cannot block sale of land for conservation](#) - The decision by the Lac qui Parle County Board to block the sale of 80 acres of marginal farmland to the Department of Natural Resources was "arbitrary and capricious," a district court judge has ruled. Counties must show that a valid local interest is threatened by a proposed sale, and they do not have unlimited veto power.
- [Regenerative ag, carbon sequestration in soils and 30x30 will all depend on advancing conservation on rented land](#) - 40% of US farmland is rented or leased, the majority from 'non-operator landowners' — we only need do the math to understand the importance of these lands to conservation efforts
- [Climate-friendly farming strategies can improve the land and generate income for farmers](#) - Agriculture has not been a central part of U.S. climate policy in the past, even though climate change is altering weather patterns that farmers rely on. Now, however, President Biden has directed the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to develop a climate-smart agriculture and forestry strategy.

Pollinators and Insects

- [“Lazy Lawns” Are Topping the Garden Trends for 2021](#) - (From the UK, but relevant) In its predictions for 2021, the RHS opines that this year gardeners "will turn a blind eye to a bit of browning in summer" and perhaps even swap out grass in favor of embracing "lazy" fuss-free groundcovers. These "interesting and environmentally benign alternatives," not only stay green without fertilizer, but resist drought and can encourage more wildlife.
- [Spare some space for the migrant monarch](#) - For regional inspiration look no further than Fergus Falls, where Mayor Ben Schierer has again signed the National Wildlife Federation's Mayors' Monarch Pledge. The pledge outlines ways the city plans to support the butterfly. They've got 23 projects working to assist the monarch and pollinators in general. Pledges for 2021 in that city include adding habitat, changing city ordinances to promote milkweed/pollinator plantings, eliminating use of chemicals harmful to pollinators and creating art around the beauty of these fluttering bugs.
- [Why bee diversity is essential for maintaining crops](#) - There are over 20,000 bee species and together they help pollinate more than 75 percent of the world's leading food crops.
- [Moorhead City Council opts out of aerial mosquito spraying](#) - At least for now, Moorhead is opting out of any aerial spraying to control mosquitoes this coming summer. Some believe the spraying caused the "monarch massacre" in Fargo-Moorhead last summer.

Pesticides and Invasive Species

- [U of M researchers develop 99.9% accurate genetic test for early detection of Palmer Amaranth](#) - Palmer Amaranth is a high-impact agronomic weed species that has cost the United States agriculture industry billions of dollars since its discovery outside of its native range in the southwestern U.S. and northwestern Mexico. The problem is this particular invasive species—which has shown potential to wipe out up to 91% of corn yields, 68% of soybean yields, and 54% of cotton yields— is difficult to visibly distinguish from other pigweed species, making identification reliant upon genetic testing.
- [Agriculture Department Warns of Invasive Earthworms](#) - The Minnesota Department of Agriculture is warning gardeners to be on the lookout for an invasive earthworm that has sprung up around the Upper Midwest.

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

- [PF's Train the Trainer Events](#) (PDF) - Join Pheasants Forever Staff and partners on some unique field training opportunities throughout the state of Minnesota this 2021 season. These trainings are open to all NRCS, SWCD, and FSA staff within the state of Minnesota. To comply with COVID protocols, space in each session is capped at 20 participants.

Other Topics (including those outside of our prairie region)

- [Pheasants Forever In Montana Selected For \\$6.4 Million Regional Conservation Partnership Program Award For Prairie Grasslands Region](#) - Pheasants Forever - Montana and 12 dedicated partners are set to begin 60,000 acres of grassland restoration efforts aimed at big game migration corridors thanks to a Regional Conservation Partnership Program award announced yesterday. "When we focus on Prairie Grasslands Region improvements for Montana's world-class big game species - elk, mule deer, and pronghorn - upland birds such as sage grouse, sharp-tails, pheasants and partridge all benefit."