Minnesota Wildlifers,

Welcome to the February 2022 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 Announces Conservation Reserve Program Signups for 2022** - Agricultural producers and landowners can sign up soon for CRP, a key tool in the Biden-Harris Administration effort to address climate change and achieve other natural resource benefits. The General CRP signup will run from Jan. 31 to March 11, and the Grassland CRP signup will run from April 4 to May 13.
- **Conservation agronomist at Morrison County SWCD first in Minnesota** - When Kolby Beehler, conservation agronomist at Morrison County Soil and Water Conservation District, applied for the position, she didn't know the significance of it. Not only is she the first woman, but also the very first to hold that position in Minnesota. Across the United States, there are only 17 conservation agronomists.
- **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation invites proposals for Conservation Partners Program** - The program awards competitive grants aimed at accelerating the adoption of regenerative agriculture principles and conservation practices on private working lands in priority geographic areas. The Deadline is Feb. 23rd
- **Ag Innovation Campus set to launch construction this spring** - Barring delays in securing construction materials, the Ag Innovation Campus in Crookston will be open for harvest delivery of soybeans, said Tom Slunecka, Minnesota Soybean Research and Promotion Council CEO.
- **Using sugarbeets in strip-till systems gains interest in North Dakota and Minnesota** - The advantages to using strip till include retaining soil moisture when it's dry and keeping soil in place on windy days, said Brad Brummond, North Dakota State University agricultural extension agent-Walsh County.
- **Nationwide study will examine the effects of regenerative agriculture** - As he embarks on a massive data collection project, Ecdysis Foundation Director Jonathan Lundgren is confident farmers are very interested in learning more about regenerative agriculture and are willing to help collect the necessary data.
- **Vilsack wants to double cover crop acres by 2030** - Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced a new partnership between the NRCS with Farmers For Soil Health, an initiative of the United Soybean Board, National Corn Growers Association and National Pork Board. The initiative has a goal of doubling the number of corn and soybean acres using cover crops to 30 million acres by 2030.

Pollinators and Insects

- **Beyond honeybees: Pollinators in agriculture** - A 2016 study showed the importance of non-bee insects as pollinators in nearly every cropping system. In fact, there are many crops that rely exclusively on pollination by a non-bee insect. Other pollinators include butterflies (like the monarch), and moths, flies, wasps, beetles, bats, birds, and other small animals. A 2015 Pollinator Health Strategy report tells us that there has been a roughly 90 percent decline in monarch butterfly populations.
- **Western monarch populations grew over 100-fold in 2021. Why?** - Last year at this time, there were no monarchs here at all. In fact, there are five times more butterflies in this tiny park right now than were counted in all of California in 2020. The beloved butterflies had fallen to critical levels in recent years. Experts weigh in on what might be causing their remarkable return.
- **Do Pollinators Prefer Dense Flower Patches? Sometimes Yes, Sometimes No** - A study looking at floral density and pollinators finds that some types of pollinating insects prefer dense flower patches more than others, but that preference can also vary by flower species, too. The complicated findings offer clues to how multiple pollinator species co-exist and compete for floral resources.

Pesticides, Invasive Species, and Disease

- **Weed specialists: Palmer amaranth control requires identification, action and teamwork** - The weed poses a major threat to crops because it grows quickly, produces as many as 1 million seeds per plant and is prone to herbicide resistance. Palmer amaranth has been known to reduce corn yields as much as 91% and soybean yields as much as 79%
- **Smart soil "bugs" offer farmers an ecofriendly route to controlling crop diseases** - An innovative method of controlling a range of damaging crop diseases using native, beneficial soil bacteria has emerged from a research-industry collaboration

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

- **Ecological restoration training - Online** - The Ecological Restoration certificate is a 150-hour program of five courses, offered twice per year by the University of Minnesota Extension. Participants who successfully complete each course will receive 3.0 CEUs and a certificate of completion.
    - Site assessment and setting restoration goals (Prerequisite)
    - Monitoring ecological restorations
    - Designing and using native seed mixes
    - Vegetation management for restored ecosystems
    - Designing, installing and managing native plantings
- **Prairie Reconstruction Initiative Winter Webinars** (Microsoft Teams)
    - **Pollinator friendly solar and prairie reconstruction** - Hosted by Megan Benage, regional ecologist, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and Dan Shaw, senior ecologist and vegetation specialist, Board of Water and Soil Resources (February 9, 1:00-2:00 pm)
    - **Pollination ecology, conservation, and prairie restoration** - Hosted by Dr. Alex Harmon-Threatt, associate professor, Entomology, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (February 16, 1:00-2:00 pm)

- **Cover Crops and Water Quality Webinar** - The Discovery Farms® Programs in Wisconsin, Vermont, Arkansas, and Minnesota will host a one-day webinar on **February 16, 2022.** Join this interactive webinar to learn more about what water quality monitoring across these four states has shown on fields with planted cover crops.
  This 3-hour webinar will begin at 9:00 am. **CEUs will be available. Please register for this free webinar at: https://bit.ly/3KbqJVN**