

Minnesota Wildlifers,

Welcome to the May 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

- [Minnesota's Black farmers working to reconnect to land](#) - Black farmers have experienced discrimination in the United States for the last 150 years. That's decimated the number of Black farmers in the country. But some African American farmers are still trying to connect with their agricultural roots, and at the same time, build a more sustainable and equitable agricultural system.
- [High Commodity Prices Shift Conservation Lands To Crop Fields](#) - Landowners told the USDA they will take 1.7 million acres out of the long-term Conservation Reserve and put it back into crop production, betting on profits from sky-high commodity prices.
- [New Plantings in CRP Not Feasible, According to USDA](#) – Focusing on the global food shortage, many have suggested putting CRP acres back into production—particularly for wheat, as Ukraine produced 6.7 million hectares of winter wheat last fall alone, and SovEcon predicts that number to be cut by half this year. Last week, USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack submitted a letter to Mike Seyfert, president and CEO of National Grain and Feed Association to explain that quickly converting CRP into crop production is “clearly unfeasible.”
- [Singing Hills Dairy one step closer to becoming Lor family farm](#) - A partnership between Renewing the Countryside and American Farmland Trust has made it possible for Lynne Reeck to retire from her operation and for the Lor family to be the new owners of the land. In Laos, Kue Lor said acquiring farmland was a different story than it is here.
- [Minnesota lawmakers want to ask voters to approve 25 more years of environmental fund](#) – Lottery proceeds have supported \$700 million worth of projects over the years. A bipartisan group of lawmakers wants to ask voters to extend the life of a lottery-funded environmental program that has paid for fighting invasive species, protecting Minnesota waters and restoring habitat. But they may have to overcome opposition from other legislators who want to use that money to pay for wastewater treatment upgrades and other infrastructure. A constitutional amendment that requires the Legislature to use at least 40% of money raised from lottery ticket sales on the environmental fund expires in 2024.
- [USDA Accepts 2 Million Acres in Offers Through Conservation Reserve Program General Signup](#) - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is accepting more than 2 million acres in offers from agricultural producers and landowners through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General signup, the first of the program's multiple signups occurring in 2022.
- [With wide-open spaces, the American prairie beckons](#) – “During a 2021 cross-country car trip, I gasped at craggy mountains, sheer drop-offs, river gorges and Yosemite's granite. But the plains, prairies and grasslands are what have stayed with me. Long views stir a longing.”

Pollinators and Insects

- ['No Mow May:' How Wisconsin residents can help pollinators](#) - The idea behind No Mow May is simple – don't mow your lawn. That way, pollinators like bees and butterflies can have an early food source. Experts say it goes a long way.
- [Will Piecemeal Approach to Monarch Butterfly Preservation Save the Species?](#) - State governments and private businesses are collaborating to protect habitat to keep the monarch off the endangered species list. Conservationists say a more comprehensive approach will be necessary to save the butterfly, whose population has dropped nearly 90% in the last 20 years.

Pesticides, Invasive Species, and Disease

- [EPA and USDA officials discuss water and pesticide status](#) - Several top U.S. Department of Agriculture and Biden administration officials in late April told the North American Agricultural Journalists in their national meeting that they are moving ahead on perennial concerns for farmers, including Waters of the United States rules, and crop insurance improvement.
- [Minnesota has 66 sites of confirmed avian flu infection](#) - There are 66 sites of confirmed avian flu infection in Minnesota as of Tuesday, May 3. The inventory of flocks diagnosed with H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza is about 2.73 million, according to the Minnesota Board of Animal Health.
- [When Seeds Become Toxic Waste](#) – Agrichemical companies won't say how they're disposing of seeds coated with hazardous pesticides, and the EPA isn't tracking it. An EPA spokesperson told Civil Eats that it does not track how treated seed is disposed of and that if the seed does qualify as hazardous waste, it "may be possible" to use a database they maintain for hazardous waste disposal to track it. Information in that database is, again, dependent on state laws. Despite the situation in Nebraska, the EPA says it "is not considering any new regulations specifically for the disposal of treated seeds."

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

- [YouTube - The Bird Tales - Sharp-tailed Grouse on a lek in SW MN](#) – [2 minutes] "On 4/9/2022 Briar and I went to Yellow Medicine County near the Mounds Spring habitat complex and discovered a lek of 12 Sharp-tailed Grouse. The video is edited shorter. We watch these birds for ~20mins before they flushed at 7:28am. We drove around the section to look for more birds. We drove past the lek again at 8:15am and they were back. There was also a single grouse on a hilltop ~1/2 mile to the south of these birds. This is the only video evidence of Sharpies dancing in SW MN that I am aware of and the only documented lek in many (a decade?) years."
- [YouTube - NRCS - Rotational Grazing of Sheep on CRP Land in SW Minnesota](#) – [24 minutes] Chris Schmidt and his dad, producers in Murray County, Minnesota, demonstrate how they rotationally grazing their 100 sheep on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land. The landowner, Jim Sehl, Minnesota DNR, discusses the benefits of having sheep graze on his CRP land. He talks about how animal grazing helps to create plant diversity, improve wildlife habitat, and promote pollinators such as Monarch butterflies. Allisa Wendland, Soil Conservationist, NRCS talks about the soil health benefits of having grazing animals deposit their manure on CRP land, instead of back in the farmyard. Megan Howell, Pheasants Forever, discusses how sheep grazing on CRP land has beneficial impacts on plant diversity and wildlife habitat, especially for young pheasants.
- [YouTube - NRCS - Rotational Grazing in Perennial Grass and Cover Crops in NW Minnesota](#) – [12 minutes] Ryan Hough farms with his brother Michael in Clay County Minnesota. On their 2,200 acre cow/calf operation they grow corn, soybeans, malt barley, and cover crops. They have been rotationally grazing their 245 head of cattle for the past 4 years.