

Thinking about a new Windbreak?

Fall 2023



Design requirements are:

- Must protect a farmstead or house
- Minimum of three rows (can add to existing trees to make 3 rows)
- One row must be evergreen
- Tree & shrub species must be suitable for soil types
- No planting within 50 feet of tile lines or septic systems

How the funding works:

- Complete application and get approval before purchasing any trees and shrubs
- 75% cost-share (reimbursement) up to \$30/tree and \$3.75/shrub. Will be less if trees/shrubs are cheaper.
- Labor is not included
- 5% of the cost can be for mulch or fabric
- Maximum of \$1600/project
- Required to be maintained for 20 years. Maintenance agreement will be recorded with deed at the courthouse.

The Grundy SWCD offers cost-share for windbreaks on a first come, first served basis. Windbreak applications are accepted through February for the spring tree planting season. Field windbreaks are also available to protect against soil erosion. To apply for a windbreak, please call or stop in the office. Following a site visit, a design and cost-estimate for your project will be developed. Applications for this program must be approved at the monthly board meeting.

Black Hawk Creek Watershed

This year has been a big year in the watershed for wetlands! Two wetlands were constructed this summer by Lahr Construction of Ryan, Iowa. Pictured is the wetland project developed on land owned by Schildroth Bros. of Reinbeck. This wetland will treat almost 200 acres of tile-drained land and creates new habitat for area wildlife. The project only took just over 6 weeks to complete construction, it was very cool to see! We are looking for more sites that receive pattern-tile drainage. If interested in getting more information on funding options for wetlands call 319-824-3634 ext. 3 or email our project's coordinator at faith.luce@ia.nacdnet.net.



Cost Share Available

Fall 2024 Cover Crops	\$25/ac for both winter hardy and winterkill
Spring 2024 No-till & Strip-till	\$10/ ac up to 500 acres *Only on fields not previously no-tilled or strip -tilled

Prairie Strips	50% cost share with annual payment of about \$225/ac (CRP)
Oxbow Restoration	50% cost share (Must have tile outlet into it)
Treatment Wetland	50-100% cost share
Saturated Buffer	100% covered & potential incentive payment
Bioreactor	100% covered & potential incentive payment



From Crop to Prairie

By Jake Campbell, District Intern for Grundy SWCD

Prairies once covered up to 80% of Iowa's landscape. Within 70 years of settlement, the majority of those prairies were converted. Today, established prairies are few and far between in Iowa. Gary Johnson, a local landowner from Parkersburg, is doing what he can to try and get prairies back into Iowa's landscape.

Gary's inspiration for this project stemmed from a question that his granddaughter, Ava, asked, "Grandpa, what happens when there are no more butterflies?" At the time, Gary did not really have an answer. When he inherited about 70 acres of farm ground, he knew that this could be an opportunity to create habitat for not only butterflies but all wildlife. A little over 20 of those acres were planted into some type of pollinator/prairie mix. The rest of the acreage has a farmstead on it and is in a traditional crop rotation.



Gary Johnson and granddaughter, Ava pictured right.

The land, located in Pleasant Valley township, was inherited by Gary in the summer of 2020, and he had started researching and planning his ideas and thoughts right away. With the help of the Grundy County NRCS District Conservationist Courtney Myers, Gary was able to get a couple of different seed plans to plant in the fall of 2021 after the soybean crop was harvested earlier that year.

Gary enrolled in a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) which is part of the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) initiative designed to restore pheasant habitat in Iowa's core pheasant range. All enrolled contracts will provide a habitat block of nesting cover, winter cover, and a winter grain food plot. There are certain requirements the land and planting must meet in order to qualify for this CRP initially. The winter cover habitat blocks can consist of a native grass mix that includes switchgrass, big bluestem, Indiangrass, little bluestem and Canada wildrye. The dominant species should be stiff stemmed to withstand winter snow and wind. Woody-cover plantings are also encouraged to help pheasant survival in harsh winters by providing stiff upright vegetation while protecting adjacent grassland and food plots from prevailing winds. For the nesting cover habitat block, the cover that is needed consists of a diverse native grasses and wildflowers mix of at least five grasses and ten wildflowers. Short native grasses are encouraged to be included in the mix, as well as adding some additional milkweed for the benefit of the Monarch butterflies. The wildlife food plot is required on 10% of the offer but must not exceed 5 acres per offer. Grain food plots should be planted adjacent to winter cover to benefit the pheasant survival and habitat. This CRP is extremely beneficial towards pheasant habitat but can also be beneficial to other wildlife as well. All sorts of mammals, insects and birds can call places like this home.

When I was out on my visit with Gary at the prairie, we saw several deer that hung out in and around

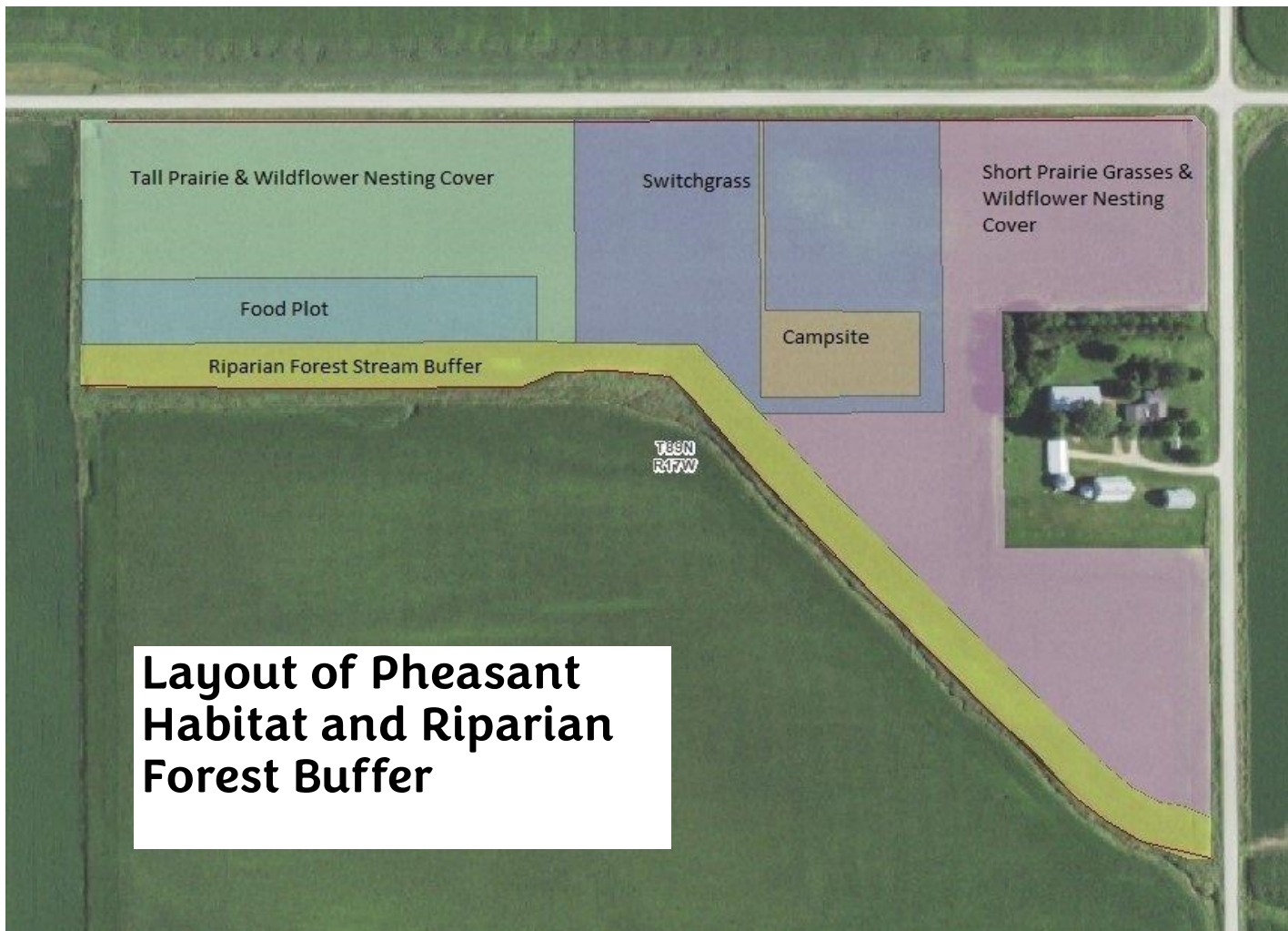


the food plot the whole time I was there. We also saw a bunch of butterflies including Monarch butterflies. Along with the deer and butterflies, we saw a lot of different birds, but also heard many more overhead and in the prairie.

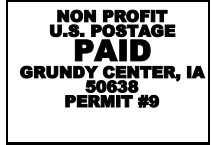
In addition to the pheasant habitat prairie and food plot, there is a riparian buffer, and a campsite section that takes up an acre in the middle of the prairie. Each seed mix had the goal of keeping as many native plants as possible, and to have a wide variety of grasses and forbs. So, in only about 20 acres of land, Gary was able to introduce a very diverse array of plants and even trees into the landscape. The project involved many moving parts and it was a team effort. Gary's tenants, Kevin and Kenny Meester, worked soybeans into the rotation that year to provide an easier seedbed. Gary hired Dan Harris of Greenbelt Seeding out of Parkersburg to plant both the trees and native grasses with specialized equipment. Gary mentioned that in planning he had talked with his friends and family who were pheasant or deer hunters on what might be the best for their habitat.

When you go out to the prairie site today, it is evident that the prairie is quickly establishing. This is amazing especially considering that it was just planted two years ago. The success of the prairie can be attributed to Gary's passion and drive to getting this right the first time. Gary told me, "If you're doing it for wildlife or conservation, take the time to do it correctly and don't take short-cuts." He sought out help when he needed it, researched continuously before and throughout the project, and put in the effort when it came to managing the site.

Some of Gary's future goals include to get the prairie to be self-sustaining, creating a better habitat for predatory birds, the trees in the riparian buffer to be established, and wants to build up the rest of the "recreational" camp site for the rest of his family to enjoy.



Grundy County Soil & Water Conservation District



805 West Fourth Street Ste. 2
Grundy Center, Iowa 50638-1069
Phone: (319) 824-3634, ext. 3



The "Partners in Resource Management" newsletter is provided free to owners and operators of land in Grundy County, Iowa, and others interested with issues involving resource management.

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Send questions or comments to:

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805 West Fourth Street, STE 2
Grundy Center, IA 50638-1069
Phone: (319) 824-3634, ext. 3
Office Hours: 8:00 to 4:30, M-F

Reminder...

Please call the office to make sure someone is available before you come. Since some of the staff is shared with another county or may be in the field, there are times when staff is out of the office.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Grundy County Soil and Water Conservation District is to provide leadership to people regarding technical, educational, and financial assistance that conserves natural resources.

Grundy SWCD is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

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Drone Cover Crop Experiment

This mix of radishes, turnips and rapeseed was seeded at a rate of 6.5 lbs/ac on August 8th with a drone by Murst Precision Application of Conrad. We learned brassicas need sun and where there was "mulch" they germinated quite well in the male rows. Some rain would have helped to!



Photos taken October 17, 2023 of field seeded by a drone on August 8, 2023. Photo at the top left of page shows the drone over the field.