



Partners

A newsletter for Wisconsin's conservation partners

Spring/Summer 2005

Pike River Dam Removal

The Pike River in Kenosha County, WI is sporting a new look this spring thanks to the combined efforts of the Kenosha Country Club, The Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network (WIN), and local, state and federal conservation programs. The USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program played a key role in bringing together this diverse partnership to address fish passage and stream restoration on a segment of the river flowing through the golf course property, four miles above its outlet into Lake Michigan. An old concrete dam built in the 1950's for irrigation water was blocking upstream passage for the annual salmon and steelhead runs and creating streambank erosion and siltation problems. The resulting concentration of anglers fishing at this choke point was matched only by the concentration of fish in the plunge pool below the dam. This created a serious safety concern for the owners and users of the golf course, who daily sent golf balls whistling over the heads of the anglers.

The conundrum was how to meet the needs of the golf course's irrigation system with the desire for dam removal. The answer was to design a step-pool and riffle sequence in the stream to allow fish to move up each riffle using boulders and resting pools along the way. The approximate 6-foot drop could then be spread over a distance of 300 feet with the upstream pool maintaining the same level as before dam removal. After much discussion and the hiring of a private consultant to do a feasibility study of the idea, the project came to fruition. Contributions from four Service programs, Great Lake Coastal Program, National Fish Passage Program, Challenge Cost-share Program and the Partner's Fish Habitat Program, were used to come up with about 45% of the estimated total project costs

of \$160,000. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Dam Removal Program was also a significant partner, as well as the Pike-Root WIN and the property owners themselves.

The contractor hired for the job, Oakes and Sons, Inc., had the daunting task of completing the work during the winter to avoid impacts to the spring and fall salmon and steelhead runs. The dam came out on Christmas Eve and the final work completed by the end of February. Already in the last few weeks of March steelhead trout could be seen moving up through the new rock riffles and pools to explore another 25 miles of stream that was previously inaccessible to them. Along with the trout has come the sporting public, both anglers and golfers. Only this year the soothing sounds of the river gliding over the rocks will replace the frequent sounds of "fore" as golfers hit their tee shots over the river.

Art Kitchen, Wisconsin Private Lands Office



Before



After

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District and The Conservation Fund Working Together on Flood Management

After two consecutive years of 100 year flood events (1997 and 1998), and increased development in the Greater Milwaukee area, the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) is working hard to preserve what is needed to help prevent future flooding in the region. MMSD in partnership with The Conservation Fund—a national non-profit conservation organization—have developed a future flood management initiative called the Conservation Plan. The Conservation Plan is an innovative non-structural flood management program that permanently protects hydric soils within MMSD's service area, which includes 28 communities and covers 420 square miles.

The Conservation Plan identifies undeveloped, privately owned properties for acquisition or perpetual conservation easements. All of the land acquired will remain open space, providing the ability to store rain water and melting snow naturally. Wetland restoration and grassland plantings on newly purchased properties is the final step in this process, and this is where Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) staff have been involved.

Partners for Fish and Wildlife staff from the Leopold Wetland Management District and Wisconsin Private Lands Office have provided technical and financial assistance for the wetland restorations and grassland plantings. To date 643 acres have been purchased under the Conservation Plan with PFW staff restoring over 145 acres to native prairie and wetlands. PFW staff will continue to work with MMSD and the Conservation Fund on future sites to naturally retain flood waters, reduce non-point-source pollution, maintain open spaces, provide wildlife viewing areas and wildlife habitat.

Rhonda Krueger
Leopold Wetland Management District

Websites

Wisconsin's Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program
www.fws.gov/midwest/WisconsinPartners

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Website
www.fws.gov

2005 Spring Prescribed Fire Season



This spring the Wisconsin Private Lands Office used prescribed fire to help private landowners restore and manage habitat for migratory birds and the Karner Blue Butterfly. The Private Lands office did prescribed burning with the help of three Fish and Wildlife Field stations (Leopold Wetland Management District, Necedah National Wildlife Refuge, and Green Bay Field Office) and dedicated volunteers. Help also came from Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, sending four firefighters to Wisconsin, a private contractor meeting NWCG standards supplied a burn boss and crew members, and The Nature Conservancy of Wisconsin provided staff and volunteers. The Private Lands Office also provided staff and resources to assist The Nature Conservancy in their burns this season. Our partnerships with these offices and agencies allowed us to help 15 private landowners burn 510 acres in 4 counties this spring. We will continue these partnerships and hope that our prescribed fire capabilities grow. We are already gearing up for the 2006 prescribed fire season.

Becky Rudolph
Wisconsin Private Lands Office

Phenology Calendar 2006

Staff from The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, along with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.W. Extension are currently working on the 2006 Phenology calendar. An overwhelming response to last year's calendar has prompted us to announce requests for calendar early this year. If you did not receive a calendar last year and would be interested in receiving the 2006 calendar, please contact Rhonda Krueger at 608-742-7100 ext. 14 or via e-mail at rhonda_krueger@fws.gov.

Drummer of Love

The greater prairie chicken is one of Wisconsin's most charismatic grassland animals. Males gather on booming grounds each spring to attract mates by inflating their yellow neck sacs, making loud booming calls, and dancing. It's no surprise that its scientific name, *Tympanuchus cupido*, means "drummer of love".

Seventy years ago, prairie chickens inhabited much of Wisconsin. Farms became more mechanized after World War II and their makeup shifted from large pastures, small grain cropping, and traditionally late-harvested grass hayfields to small pastures, intensive row cropping, and early, frequently harvested alfalfa hayfields. This grassland loss caused prairie chicken and other grassland dependent species' ranges to shrink dramatically and their populations to plummet.

Most of Wisconsin's remaining prairie chickens live south and west of Stevens Point, where state wildlife management areas and privately owned pasturelands support 1,000 birds. In 2003, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) began working with area private landowners to improve their grasslands by clearing trees along drainage ditches, fences, and roads. Tree lines impact prairie chickens and other grassland birds by providing perches and nesting sites for red-tailed hawks and great horned owls, their main predators, and fragmenting habitat (grassland birds avoid tall trees). DNR work crews clear several miles of tree lines each winter by cutting and mowing standing trees and brush, then immediately treating the stumps with herbicide to reduce resprouting.

The future is far less secure for a separate population of 40 prairie chickens living in scattered, small flocks in the secondary range between Owen and Marshfield. Grassland habitat loss continues in the secondary range as abandoned cropland and pastureland grows into young forest and shrub swampland. The number of occupied spring booming grounds in this area has declined from 30 in 1988 to only 3 in 2004. The FWS is working to conserve prairie chickens in the secondary range by managing grasslands on several Conservation Easements near Unity and is actively involved in the DNR led Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area Partnership. The partners provide area landowners with additional voluntary Farm Bill Program-related op-

tions for establishing new grasslands and maintaining their existing open lands.

The prairie chicken is an indicator species for grassland conservation in Central Wisconsin because it requires such large habitat blocks. Ensuring the prairie chicken's long-term survival provides for many other grassland dependent species, including the eastern meadowlark, short-eared owl, and regal fritillary butterfly.

Bill Peterson

Necedah National Wildlife Refuge



Wisconsin Private Lands Contact Stations



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| 1. St. Croix Wetland Management Office
715-246-7784 | 6. Necedah National Wildlife Refuge
608-565-2551 |
| 2. Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge
608-539-2311 | 7. Ecological Services Office
920-866-1717 |
| 3. Upper Mississippi River Refuge
La Crosse District
608-783-8405 | 8. Leopold Wetland Management District
608-742-7100 |
| 4. Upper Mississippi River Refuge
McGregor District
319-873-3423 | 9. Wisconsin Private Lands Office
608-221-1206 |
| 5. Fisheries Assistance Office
715-682-6185 | |

Equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, status as a parent and genetic information. For information contact the U.S. Department of Interior, Office for Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street N.W., Washington, DC 20240

Wetland Restoration Highlights – Southern Wisconsin

The 2004 construction season was another great year for the Wisconsin Private Lands Office despite the record rainfall in May and June. During the calendar year, 22 wetland projects were completed, restoring or enhancing 36 wetlands for a total of 131 acres. Many thanks to our dedicated partners, both landowners and others, that were instrumental in achieving these results. I've had some great conversations this spring with property owners that are seeing lots of wildlife using these restorations. To date I've received dozens of additional calls for site visits – it's rewarding to see the landowner interest in wildlife conservation. It's no wonder that Wisconsin is one of the leading states in the nation for habitat restoration.

Art Kitchen, Wisconsin Private Lands Office



Derr Farms, Inc. – Dane Co. This project restored 8 acres of shallow water marsh through construction of a low embankment and the blocking of 8 under-ground tile lines that previously drained the site. The site had traditionally been too wet to farm and owner Bob Derr was interested in seeing more wildlife use of the area. This spring already a pair of sandhill cranes and numerous ducks and geese were using the restored marsh.



Steve Preston and Dick Karls, pictured above, are enjoying the recent changes to their property as a result of closing several ditches last fall. To close the ditches, several shallow wildlife scrapes were excavated in the ever-present reed canary grass vegetation to obtain the needed fill. Native wetland grasses and flowering plants were seeded on the disturbed areas. This project restored over 10 acres of wetlands on 4 areas within their Green County property.

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