

## District Biologists Report for January Board Meeting 01/11/2020

### Healthy Forests, Woodlands and Waters in the Illinois and Kaskaskia River Basins Project:

Stacy continues to work on the deliverables associated with the NRCS grant and has spent much of the last quarter on the Habitat Incentive Program. She has reviewed and approved management practices on more than 250 acres, worked with more than 40 landowners, and has written management plans on 6 CRP properties. Additionally, she has enrolled 21 landowners in the Habitat Incentive Program for a total of 1089 acres. These landowners are receiving funding to control exotic species and to complete Forest Stand Improvements in their timber. During the next several weeks Stacy will be writing prescribed burn plans for landowners; writing and reviewing CRP mid-management and re-enrollment plans; completing Forest Management Plans for interested landowners; and continuing to work with the Habitat Incentive Program.

### Chase Seals: Shawnee Hills Focal Landscape:

- Since Nov. 4, 2019, Chase has enrolled 373.4 acres of private land into the Habitat Incentive Program. This cost share is helping to perform brush management, timber stand improvements, herbaceous weed control, and prescribed fire in Southern Illinois.
- On the Shawnee National Forest, Chase has been working with contractors to get bids for work listed in the Stewardship Agreement. He has awarded most the work already and hopes to start some of the work in the coming weeks. This work is much need and will help begin to restore the Shawnee to its natural ecosystem.
- Chase is still in the process of getting access with NRCS, thus, little work has been done with NRCS in Southern Illinois to date. He has performed a couple site visits with NRCS staff and will begin work on burn plans for NRCS soon. In addition, he will be helping with two landowner workshops coming up this spring/summer in Saline and Randolph counties.

### Habitat Incentive Program Statewide

- As of 1/6/2020, we have currently enrolled 1,445.8 acres of private land into the cost share program for habitat improvements across the three focal landscapes (Driftless Area, Kaskaskia River Basins, and Shawnee Hills). We look to have all the funding allocated to private landowners by March 2020.

### Project Forester Position in Driftless Area:

Since the last meeting, a majority of Olivia's time has been spent working with landowners interested in our NWTF Illinois Habitat Incentive Grant. Most already have a current forest management plan, but needed a site review to ground truth the plan and determine what management they are able to complete this year. To date, Olivia has worked with and completed agreements for 23 landowners covering 395 acres and allocating \$55,906. The most scheduled practices were forest stand improvement and brush management (invasive species removal) with a few tree plantings.

Olivia's outreach efforts have included speaking at two workshops in the Illinois Driftless Area. One was for a group of University Extension naturalists about forest management for wildlife and the other to a group of landowners about oak ecosystems and regeneration efforts. Future workshops include a timber sale workshop and forestry for wildlife workshop on January 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, respectively, in Elizabeth, IL and the Tri-State Forestry Conference held in Freeport, IL on March 14<sup>th</sup>.

Iowa NRCS Deliverables	Acres	Number Completed
Landowner Contacts	-	28
Site Visits	-	26
Outreach Event/Field Days	-	2
Site Reviews	10	1
Management Plans	9.3	1
Plan Updates	71.6	5

## DNR Report:

- Hunter Satisfaction Survey – The survey has been completed and results are in. A final draft of the full report is being finalized by INHS.
- Brood survey – I updated the brood survey protocol last year and feedback appeared to be positive across the board. Results show a record low index.
- Fall gun season total harvest was 301. Marked the 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive year for record low. Participation continues to wain in this season. From all reports, the new OTC availability went well
- Fall archery season is still underway, but trend is showing will be highest total harvest since the record year in 2015.
- Administrative Rules go on first notice very soon and I made suggested changes to lottery process for the 2021 season.

## Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt.

We are into our eighth year since we started our journey to **Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt.** This past year, our accomplishments total 3.6 million acres conserved, 1.5 hunters created, and 628,000 access acres gained. With 2.5 years remaining in the initiative, we have already exceeded our goals for access and hunters created and are on track to easily exceed our conserved and enhanced acreage goals. This is an incredible accomplishment that you helped make happen! As you would probably expect, Illinois is doing our part to achieve mission delivery. Thanks to your continued support, Illinois is seventh in conserved acres at 107,773 and on track to exceed our 175,000 acre goal and first in hunters created through registered events at 9,049.

The following are acreage projections for fiscal 2020 towards our 25,000 acre goal if projects submitted are approved:

### Acres Projected for 2020

- 248 acres from seed program
- 370 acres at Ramsey Lake
- 1,500 acres from SIPBA
- 255 acres at Oakwood Bottoms
- 2,500 Shawnee Hills Cost Share
- 5,000 on Shawnee National Forest
- 200 acres at Beaver Dam Lake
- 10,000 from equipment
- 180 acres at Wildcat Hollow
- 5 acres at Kishwaukee SF&WA
- 476 acres at Kankakee SF&WA
- 1,446 acres from Habitat Incentive Program
- 372 acres at Hamilton County SF&WA
- 200 acres at Crawford SF&WA
- 155 acres at Siloam Springs
- 300 acres at Shelbyville
- 100 acres at Rock Cut SP

**Total = 23,307**

## Dove Fields

The dove field program seems to have run its course. Between the weather and deer depredation, we have dropped to only one participating chapter. I think it is an opportunity that is still worth pursuing because there is no other type of hunt that

can provide opportunity to as many new hunters as a good dove hunt. Therefore, if you know of any landowners that may be interested in participating please let me know.

### **Seed Subsidy**

We are still in a holding pattern with the spring seed subsidy program because our contract with Mossy Oak is about to expire and this will likely change what is offered. However, the seed blends will likely be very similar as will be the pricing. Whatever blends are offered, the program will run like it has the last 2 years. Illinois members will only be able to access the program and order their seed online at: <https://your.nwtf.org/subsidy>