

SE Wisconsin Biologist Brief




2025 Updates from the Field



A majority of our PF biologist team, here in Wisconsin and beyond, was unable to work on normal job duties for 6-weeks due to the government shutdown. Despite this setback, our biologists have been hard at work this quarter!



New easement in Green Lake County that will be restored in the coming years.

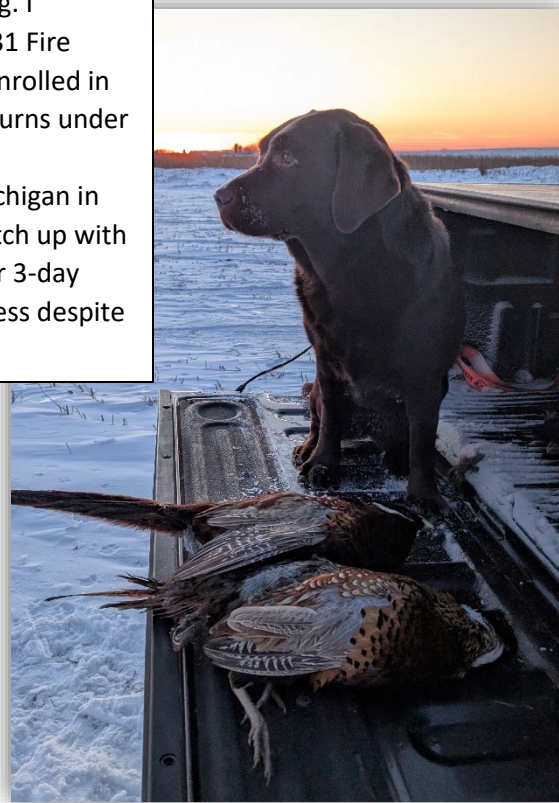


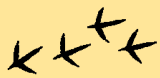
DNR Public Hunting Grounds in Columbia County where Anevey is planning a prescribed burn and Buckthorn control.

Wetland Easement Biologist, Anevey, has been making up for lost time by conducting site visits this December. The easement team has a large fund for stewardship of existing easements this fiscal year. Easement staff will be busy through the winter writing contracts for habitat management on wetland easements across the State.

Rocco's Updates: Though it was late in the growing season, CRP status reviews continued through September. November and December were months of trips and training. I completed two wildland fire courses: S-290 intermediate fire behavior, and S-131 Fire Fighter Type 1. S-290 allows me to review more complex burn plans for lands enrolled in Farm Bill programs. S-131 qualifies me to serve as a squad boss for PF chapter burns under PF's new Rx fire Standard Operating Procedures going into effect in 2026.

Outside of work, I went on a long-tailed duck hunt on Green Bay and Lake Michigan in mid-November. Although we didn't have success we wanted, I was able to catch up with some good friends. In early December, I made a trip to eastern South Dakota for 3-day pheasant hunt. The bird number seemed to be way up and we had a lot of success despite single digit temperatures and high winds.





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Prescribed fire on a DNR prairie planting. Photo by Travis Wilder.

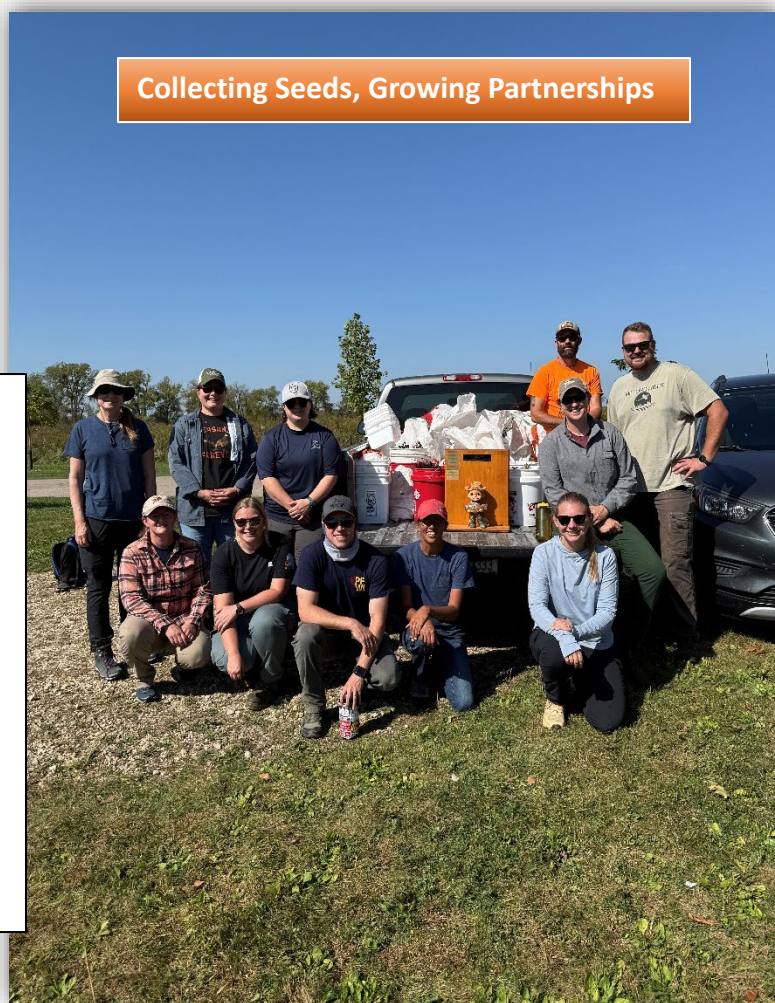
Since the last update, Travis has been performing CRP spot checks, reviewing CRP burn plans, performing landowner site visits, and assisting in prescribed fires. He also attended a Firefighter Type 1 course to be able to better aid in prescribed fires and landowners' burn plans. This training focused on fireline leadership and decision making to ensure safety while meeting burn objectives. He looks forward to the spring fire season assisting the SW WI PF burn team and partner organizations with their prescribed burns.

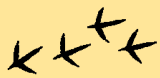
Planning is also underway for a 5th annual Glacial Habitat Restoration Area event to be held the summer of 2026. These events have gained momentum and have been a great mechanism for conservation organizations to reach landowners interested in improving habitat on their property.

In October several PF Biologists from Southern Wisconsin joined partners at Lunney Lake Farm County Park in Dane County for a friendly prairie seed-collection competition. Our team brought together staff from six different conservation organizations. Other teams included Wisconsin DNR, Dane County Parks, and Operation Fresh Start. Our team successfully collected seeds from 16 native prairie species.

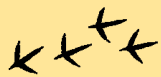
While we didn't take home the trophy this year, the day was a great opportunity to sharpen plant identification skills, strengthen partnerships, and gather native seed that will be used for future prairie restoration and enhancement projects.

Collecting Seeds, Growing Partnerships

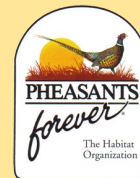
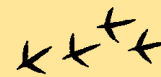




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Learn to
Burn
Workshops

In October, PF Biologist Gretchen had the opportunity to assist with several “Learn to Burn” workshops in Dane and Iowa Counties. These hands-on workshops were led by PF Prescribed Fire Coordinators Jake and Olivia, in partnership with Southern Driftless Grasslands.

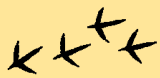
The prescribed fires took place on private lands and followed a mentor-based model, with experienced burners guiding small groups of 2-3 mentees through key roles such as ignition and holding. This approach gave interested landowners valuable on-the-ground experience and increased their confidence and capacity to use prescribed fire as a management tool. It was so great to be able to get some much-needed fire on the ground this fall.



Attendees got a live bird dog demonstration from Chapter members on pointing and flushing dogs.



PF Biologist in the Southeast got to work with the Fond du Lac Pheasants Forever Chapter when they hosted a Learn to Hunt event in early December. The event began in the Hunter's Point hunt club lodge, where attendees learned about gun safety and dog handling from Chapter members and volunteers, and Pheasant habitat from the local PF biologist. The event was well attended, and the Fond du Lac chapter did a great job of bringing PF's mission to the next generation of hunters and outdoorsman.



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MMSD interns cutting and treating woody invasive species



Contractors spreading seed on one of Anthony's restoration projects



In the greater Milwaukee area, Anthony Hatcher, PF Land Stewardship Coordinator, was busy this fall removing invasive species and improving wildlife habitat on public lands enrolled in the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District's (MMSD) Greenseams® program. He supervised two MMSD interns who stayed busy spraying Phragmites, removing Buckthorn and other woody invasives, monitoring past restoration projects, and learning about natural resource management.

In October, contractors conducted a prescribed burn on a low diversity, warm season grass dominated prairie in Oak creek in preparation for interseeding this winter to add forb diversity and improve pollinator habitat. Two large grant funded projects are also underway. A native ground cover was seeded this December on 32-acres of former crop fields in Ozaukee County in preparation for a reforestation project this spring. The project is being partially funded by a grant from the WI Coastal Management Program. The first phase of a 75-acre prairie reconstruction project is also underway in Washington County. This project brings together funds from the DNR Pheasants Stamp Grant program, the Southeastern chapter, MMSD, The Conservation Fund, and the Packers Foundation. Anthony was also lucky enough to attend a luncheon for Packer Foundation grant recipients at Lambeau Field in December.

Thanks for all that you do and Happy New Year!