



# Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist

Quarterly Partners' Report



Nicholas Salick — Harrison, Monona, & Pottawattamie

Jan.— Mar. 2018

## CRP Management & Establishment Essentials Workshops

Over the last year producers across Iowa have continued to enroll land into CRP. While that's not new to USDA staff, for many of those producers it is. CRP has continued to evolve as a program over the last decade. Much has changed for the participants who first enrolled land in the 1990's or early 2000 era. New participants are often overwhelmed with information, unsure if they should talk with FSA or NRCS, and often have little to no experience planting and maintaining native plants.

If we want producers to be successful with CRP, we need to ensure that signing the conservation plan isn't our last contact with them. Keeping lines of communication open is crucial for getting producers technical advice after they leave our office.



*Left: Nic Salick discussing seed plan design and 327 Conservation Cover requirements at Onawa workshop*

*Right: Weston Dittmer discusses MCM options for CRP participants at Logan workshop*

The Logan and Onawa Service Centers wanted to follow up with producers in the process of establishing new CRP, and those nearing their mid-contract management. I worked with staff in each county to host workshops to re-open those lines of communication and deliver technical advice for seeding, establishing, and maintaining CRP.

While there was lots of great advice in staff presentations, arguably the most valuable part of each workshop came from audience participation. Both days ended with a group discussion. Producers from all experience levels were able to ask each other, "What worked for you?" Not only did participants leave with great info from staff, but they also left with a new network of land managers who are working on similar projects. 🦋

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## Cooperative Burn Week 2018

Many conversations with landowners and managers gravitate towards prescribed fire, whether that be for mid-contract management in CRP, woody plant control in a pasture, or for the sake of rejuvenating a remnant prairie. While fire may be the most versatile tool in our arsenal, we must ensure that it is used as safely as possible.

The Loess Hills Fire Partners know that training is essential to being able to implement prescribed fire effectively and safely. For the third year in a row this group of agencies, organizations, and fire departments convened in March for Cooperative Burn Week (CBW). The goal of the week: facilitate training opportunities, expand fire capacity in the Loess Hills region, create a network of fire practitioners, and accomplish burn units that require lots of personnel.



Left: Thad Pothast (Harrison CCB) explains strip fire ignition on a burn unit at Old Town Conservation Area.

Right: Creating black line off a mowed firebreak to prevent an adjacent stand from igniting. Photo: Thad Pothast

CBW continues to grow, this year's event had 75 participating firefighters representing 26 different organizations. The event provided excellent training for firefighters of all skill levels, and burns were conducted on high priority public properties as well as adjoining private properties.

I took home a lot more than just sooty clothes. The experiences working with these partners will add to my firsthand knowledge of fire, and will ultimately show through in my conversations with landowners and writing of burn plans. 

Special thanks to the Loess Hills Alliance for financial assistance that made CBW possible!



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## S-211 Portable Pumps & Water Usage

This NWCG course was incorporated into CBW this year, and included both classroom and hands on training. Attendees gained a better understanding of how different pumps work, how to build progressive and simple hose lays, and learned how to calculate pump discharge pressure necessary for delivering water to the fire line.

This course will help me when writing burn plans for addressing water needs for each project. Ensuring that each plan has the right equipment to deliver water, where and when it is needed, will ultimately lead to safer burns.



Left: S-211 class works on hose lays and pump and roll drills on a rainy day during CBW Photo: Brad Elder

Right: 25 firefighters participated in the class which was led by Chad Graeve (Pottawattamie CCB) Photo: Brad Elder

## Getting the R10 Wet

In the flat bottom lands of the Missouri River floodplain it can be difficult to discern elevation changes within a field. In some cases there is less than 6 inches of elevation rise or fall in a mile.

On farms enrolling into wetlands CRP practices we must ensure that our restoration efforts don't back water onto neighbors. Using the R10 has proven an effective way to know precise elevations of a property boundary, and how big surface drain plugs can be.



Thank you to all our partners!

## By the Numbers...

Interaction Type	FY18 Qtr. 3
Landowner Contacts	96
Habitat Proposals	2
Projects with Acres	2
Outreach Efforts	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>

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