

Final Report for "Open Land Enhancement at French Creek Wildlife Area and Swan Lake Wildlife Area" (Agreement Number 30181-9-G030)

Project Sponsor: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Pheasants Forever

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Study Objectives: 1) Enhance 48 acres of state owned "openland" within the Great Lakes Basin in Columbia and Marquette Counties by using prescribed burns, chemical treatment, possible mechanical treatment, and interseeding techniques. In the early 1980's, these fields were planted into pure switch grass. The fields were degraded with invading cool season grasses, some woody plants, and invasive species.

Description of Tasks: These fields were prepped for burning by installing both mowed and rotovated fire breaks around the fields. Proper permits were obtained, and the fields were burned on 4-22-09. The fields were then treated with both Round-up and 2,4-D to kill any cool season grasses and exotics before the switch grass emerged (6-5-09). The fields were planted with a diverse mix of native warm season prairie grasses and forbs on 6-22-09. Box elder trees that were encroaching on these fields were cut and treated on 11-18-09. Aspens were also sprayed at the same time.

Major findings and accomplishments: It is too soon to tell how successful our efforts were to combat invasive/cool season species and encourage the growth of warm season plants. It will probably take 2-3 years for the warm season prairie plants to fully establish themselves. No research on plant or animal communities present was planned for this project.

Management implications of your work: This method may prove to be a fairly economical method to rejuvenate warm season grass fields. Typically, the fields have been leased to farmers to crop for a few years and then are planted back into a warm season grass mix. That method is a little more labor intensive after planting as multiple mowings are required. The main benefit of the approach that we used for this project is that the fields are enriched but not taken out of grass, and are therefore still available for grassland species' use.

Any relevant pictures or images associated with the project: DNR wildlife technician Al Ramminger interseeding the fields:



Additional restoration work needed and/or areas for future research: These fields should need minimal maintenance. Perhaps some spot spraying of invasives and a prescribed fire rotation to keep brush from invading. Something that would be useful in these situations would be to survey the area for species both before and after restoration to see if there is a difference in usage.

List of presentations delivered, outreach activities, reports and peer-reviewed papers completed or in-progress: This work was reported to DNR Wildlife Management staff for the bureau's tabulation of work completed on state lands. The turkey stamp funding also requires an accomplishment report that was submitted (copy is attached).