

# Outagamie County Success from the Field

## Pollinator Walk Highlights Habitat Success



### Background

Over ten years ago, Debbie Boettcher and her husband started a 1-acre prairie garden on their 45-acre plot of land in Outagamie County. She quickly realized that her growing passion for native plants was not only good for her land and wildlife, but also good therapy for her. Debbie's passion for prairies was always a conversation piece with her close friend and nearby landowner Ann Reed, also a landowner in her neighborhood of Seymour, Wisconsin. Debbie started working with USDA in 2012 and enrolled nine acres of land into the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). In 2015, Debbie enrolled six acres into the CRP-Pollinator Habitat. She designed the mix with a Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist and the local co-op air seeded her mix onto the field. In September 2015, Debbie attended and invited her friend Ann to a Women Caring for the Land meeting hosted by USDA, Pheasants Forever, Fox River Watershed Alliance, and the Women Food and Ag. Network. At the meeting, Ann learned more about the native prairie habitat that was growing on her friend's property and was introduced to a host of resource professionals that would help her to achieve her conservation goals on her 55 acres. After the meeting in 2016, Ann worked with USDA NRCS and FSA, Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Pheasants Forever (PF) staff to enroll, plan, and implement seven acres into Continuous CRP-Pollinator Habitat and 11 acres into the CREP program. Debbie and Ann hosted a Pollinator Walk at their properties in August 2017. The objective of the walk was to share prairie establishment and management techniques with landowners and conservation professionals.

### Highlights

Thirteen landowners and five professionals, including representatives from NRCS, USFWS, PF, WI Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), the Oneida Nation, and the Baird Creek Preservation were in attendance. Experts to novices in planting and establishing prairie establishment and management were present.

Hosts, Debbie and Ann, and participants shared their challenges and successes in establishing and maintaining their prairies, as well as other landowners. "Establishing a native planting takes patience and perseverance. It's so fun and exciting to look for the previously established plants, and to see what's new, every season and every year, as the prairie evolves in its' own time and its' own way," said Debbie Boettcher.

NRCS and PF discussed the planning, prepping, establishment, and management of native grass and forb prairie plantings. Plant ID was also a main focus discussed on the walk. WDNR staff taught participants about bees and the various pollinators benefiting from Ann and Debbie's prairie. The Fish and Wildlife Service brought and demonstrated the operation of a no-till drill and other planting techniques.

### Future Plans

In NE Wisconsin, more pollinator walks will be conducted throughout the area to promote planning, establishing, and maintaining prairie habitat for monarchs, pollinators, and birds.



Second year prairie with cardinal plant pictured above with 20+ forb species blooming from April to October to benefit pollinators.



Debbie, pollinator walk host, spies one of her native bumblebees.

Wisconsin Natural Resources Conservation Service

[wi.nrcs.usda.gov](http://wi.nrcs.usda.gov)

