

Grant County Success from the Field

Sixmile Habitat Success

Background

Mary Stanek owns a 240-acre farm just upstream from the confluence of the Blue River and Sixmile Branch in the north-east corner of Grant County, Wisconsin. These two river systems represent 15 years of partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Harry and Laura Nohr Chapter of Trout Unlimited and numerous local landowners. Over twenty miles of stream habitat work has been completed on these systems providing a bounty of recreational opportunities for the local residents and the many out-of-state tourists that frequent the area.

Highlights

The Nohr chapter originally approached the Stanek family about pursuing a project. After consultation with the chapter's habitat team and some local neighbors who too had completed projects on their property, while also viewing some of the many completed sites around the area, the family decided this was something they would like to see completed on their land. This is the first farm bill program in which the Stanek's had enrolled into. The project was funded under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Driftless Area—Habitat for the Wild and Rare.

Site conditions before the project were typical in this region, a stream choked with sediment and numerous tall eroding streambanks. These banks contributed tons of sediment into the systems each spring and after the numerous large rain events.

The site was bordered on the northern side by abandoned pasture, which the Staneks had no intention of utilizing for grazing animals in the future. "This presented a unique opportunity, as the vast majority of our projects are bordered by working lands with future production in mind," stated Joe Schmelz, District Conservationist in Grant County. Not only did the project include 2,100 ft. of streambank stabilization, 2,500 ft. of bank shaping and 28 stream habitat structures. It also included 3 large wetland scrapes, all roughly 0.5 acres in size.

"We were really pleased with the project's outcome and how the whole process was handled," explained Mary. She went



One of three wetland scrapes that were installed in the adjacent floodplain. Each of these wetlands was 0.5 acres or slightly larger in size. Other features, such as the log drops, were installed to add a variety of habitat features.

on to say she has received many compliments from area residents and has noticed a real uptick in the amount of utilization on her stretch of the river.

Future Plans

Mary is looking forward to being able to sit on her porch and listen to the chorus of frogs whom are now taking up residence in the newly constructed scrapes. She is also proud to be able to leave the farm in a better state than when they found it, as her late husband, William had always wanted.

