

Easement Owner Newsletter

Photo by landowner Terry Kaduce, Hancock County.

Enjoying Your Easement

Winter is over, it's time to take in some fresh air and enjoy the sunshine. As you head outdoors, here's a brief sampling of some of the recreational activities allowed on your NRCS easement, and a few things that are not:

Can do!



Hunting – You can hunt on your easement, or lease those rights to others.

Photography – Snap some stills of the scenic Iowa landscape or capture a critter in action. If you have a photo you'd like to share, send it in! NRCS would love to hear from you.

Hiking – Put on those boots and explore the natural features of your easement.

Bird-watching/Nature Observation – Keep an eye out for the wildlife that calls your easement home, especially any Threatened and Endangered species.

Get Out on the Water – Kayaking, canoeing, and fishing are great ways to enjoy any open water areas you might have on your easement.

Mushroom Picking – Those morels will be popping up soon. Happy hunting!

Hand cut weeds or trees – While hiking take along pruners or hand saw to prevent unwanted vegetation from overtaking your easement.

But Don't



Build a Cabin or Park a Recreational Vehicle. Structures for overnight accommodation or that diminish wildlife habitat are prohibited. Contact your Area Easement Specialist for information on what types of structures may be allowable.

Disturb Nesting. Your easement is intended to protect wildlife habitat, but certain activities such as haying or mowing (including trails) have the potential to be disruptive. Because of this, NRCS requires that you have a Management Plan and/or Compatible Use Authorization before beginning any work.

Pave Trails. While mowed vegetated trails are generally acceptable with NRCS approval, improving those trails with gravel, asphalt, or other pavement that destroys the natural ground cover is not permitted.

Alter the Hydrology. As picturesque as open water may be, it is not suitable in all management scenarios. Any activity to increase, decrease, or adjust the amount and flow of water on your easement must have prior NRCS approval.

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You Can Help Conserve the Monarch Butterfly

The Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium recently released a statewide strategy to support monarch butterfly recovery in Iowa and North America, available at www.iowamonarchs.info.

The consortium is a diverse group of more than 30 collaborators, including agricultural and conservation organizations, agribusiness and utility companies, county associations, universities, and state and federal agencies.

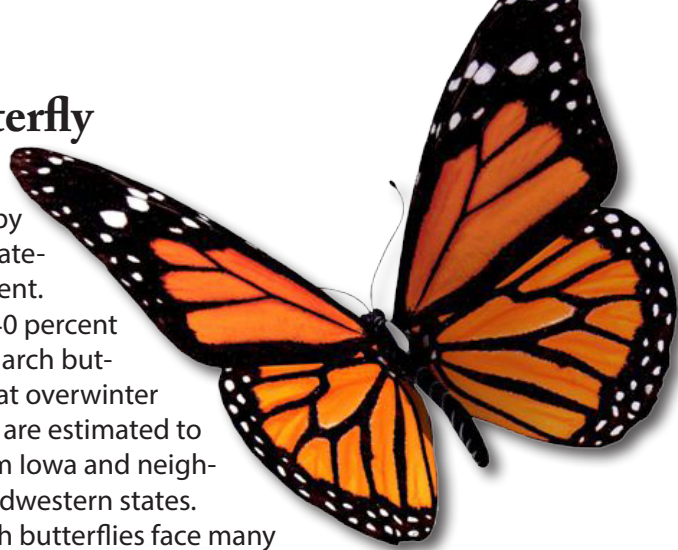
The Iowa Monarch Conservation Strategy lays the foundation for the adoption of conservation practices which support monarchs. Immediate conservation measures include using farm bill programs to establish monarch breeding habitat; volunteering to establish monarch habitat on farms in consortium-sponsored demonstration projects; using monarch-friendly weed management in ditches, roadsides and other rights-of-way; and establishing monarch way stations with native nectar plants and milkweeds in home and community gardens.

A recent report from Mexico found the monarch butterfly population at overwintering sites dropped 27 percent this year. Over the past two decades, the monarch popu-

lation has declined by approximately 80 percent. Roughly 40 percent of all monarch butterflies that overwinter in Mexico are estimated to come from Iowa and neighboring Midwestern states.

Monarch butterflies face many challenges, including the loss of milkweed and nectaring plant habitat in their spring and summer breeding ranges. Female monarchs only lay their eggs only on milkweed plants, and the hatched caterpillars feed exclusively on milkweed.

Iowa NRCS has special funding for monarch/pollinator habitat improvements available specifically for conservation easement owners. Please contact your local NRCS office or your Area Easement Specialist (see map).



Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) Funds Available for Repair, Restoration, Management and Pollinator Habitat Establishment

NRCS has funding available for Wetland Reserve Program easement owners interested in monarch/pollinator habitat improvement and easement management projects. Funding can only be used on existing WRP easements and some EWRP easements. The best part is NRCS will cover the cost and has the contractor to do the work for you. You just need to tell us where you need help on your easement.

Monarch/pollinator funds may be used to re-establish native forbs and grasses that provide habitat for the life cycle of these species. We can also assist in improving existing seedings to better suit the monarch's needs. Mowing the new seeding for establishment and prescribed burning where needed is also funded.

Management project funds can be used for repair of existing wetland restoration practices such as water control structures, embankments and other practices with the exception of those that have a history of

continual damage due to flooding. These sites will be re-evaluated and potentially re-engineered to restore a stable wetland system or structure. Enhancements can also be made to existing wetland easement that may not have been fully restored when enrolled. Funding may also be used for management practices to benefit the easement area such as prescribed burning, brush management, herbaceous weed control, and forest stand improvement. Some new restoration practices can also be established through the WRP funding including tree planting, native seeding, streambank stabilization.

There is a short window of opportunity for the funding. Primary practices must be implemented by **September 30, 2018**. Planning ahead is extremely important so that all necessary planning steps can be accomplished in time to meet the implementation deadline. If interested, please contact your local NRCS office or Area Easement Specialist (see map).



Photo by landowner Terry Kaduce on his family's WRP easement in Hancock County.



Managing Your Easement & Threatened and Endangered Species

Q 1. What are Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species?

A 2. Endangered species are plants and animals in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their range. Threatened species, are in decline and at risk of becoming endangered within the foreseeable future. Both the state and the federal government may list a species as threatened or endangered.

A few examples of some T&E species in Iowa are: Blanding's Turtle, Crawfish Frog, Mead's Milkweed, Southern Bog Lemming, and Indiana Bat. Some of the T&E species are federally protected, some are protected on a state by state basis, and some are protected by both.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) must observe the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which states that we must give all T&E species equal protection.

Q 2. Why must my management "not adversely affect T&E species" on my easement?

A 2. Your wetland easement has been funded by the federal government through NRCS. Federal law requires that actions authorized or funded by NRCS have "no adverse effect" on T&E species.

This law also requires that any management on an easement must not result in the damage to or modification of their habitat.

NRCS coordinates with the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) on federally listed species and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) on state listed species to develop plans that minimize impacts to T&E species.

Q 3. I have never seen that species on my easement: Why do I have to follow these regulations?

A 3. T&E species are not stationary. They move through the environment to fulfill their lifecycle needs, and their territories expand and contract. When new populations or sightings are recorded, the boundaries of suitable habitat also change and may encompass areas not previously included in T&E species considerations.

When these wetlands are restored, it is a program goal to re-establish suitable hydrology and vegetation required by T&E species. Management plans that permit a landowner to manage their easement are developed with date restrictions and guidelines to prevent destroying or degrading restored habitat and avoid accidentally killing or "taking" T&E species.

Q 4. Why do we care about protecting threatened and endangered species?

A 4. Other than the legal requirements above, there are countless other reasons to protect these species and their habitat. They are a part of the natural biodiversity and heritage of Iowa, they add economic and aesthetic value, they provide ecosystem services, they contribute to our scientific understanding and can be used to indicate the health of a natural system.

The major cause of the loss of biodiversity is the destruction or deterioration of habitat by human activities. By protecting and increasing their habitat you are making an important difference in the continued survival of Iowa's threatened and endangered species.



Mead's Milkweed | T&E Species



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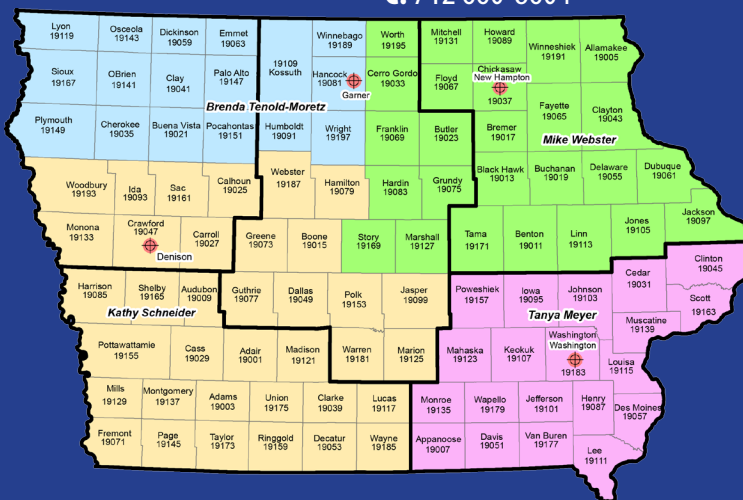
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**Attention
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Owners**