Southeast District meeting notes: 12-4-19, Schramm Aquarium

* **Jim Swenson – Parks** - Gave update of happenings and achievements in the southeast district and parks throughout the state. Discussed the new renovation at Schramm Park and surrounding area.
* **Parks Division Centennial committee** gave a presentation about the efforts regarding our parks division centennial in 2021. Chadron state park was our first State park in 1921. Events and activities are being planning to celebrate across the state. All divisions are welcome to take part in this important celebration.
* **Jane Gustufson – Communications –** Gave updates and information to the group regarding the communication division and happenings.
* **Jeff Jackson - Fisheries** – Gave update regarding fisheries.
* Matthew Perrion hired as Biologist in Southeast district.
* Standard surveys completed for the fall, focused surveys on advanced walleye lakes, will be processing otoliths for aging them.
* Creel surveys completed by U.N.L this past year; 2020 will focus on Walnut Creek, Flanagan, Fontanelle and Benson.
* S.E Fisheries are preparing presentations and publications for catfish 2020 in Little Rock, AK.
* Added Handicapped kayak launch to Conestoga reservoir.
* Delaying Standing bear boat ramp and fish renovation until 2021 due to close proximity of Cunningham reservoir which would impact considerable numbers of anglers.
* **Scott Leudtke – Wildlife** – Gave update regarding Wildlife.
* Hiring field staff. S.E district now has 5 PF FBWB’S in Wahoo, Lincoln, Syracuse, Fairbury and Grand Island providing farm program and other habitat initiative support. We are currently finalizing the agreement to re - fill the RWBJV Wetland Habitat specialist position. This position support RWB wetland management on public and private lands.
* Participated in the NGPC, Missouri River planning meeting hosted by Michelle Koch and planning and programming division.
* Project work ; BPP Contracts(Tree clearing/Fire) ; RWB wetlands (Pit fills adjacent to W.M.A’S) ; Fontanelle Forest (Oak Woodlands) ; Spring Creek Prairie and city of Lincoln Prairie Corridor ; Olson addition to Jack Sinn W.M.A, PR grant support ; LO and Hunter TA.
* USDA involvements ; Still no CRP announcement, but soon, WRE site visits/projects scoping, CVA and management plan reviews worked with Ted and Eric to draft support letter for Missouri River disaster funding to Nebraska for EWP – FPE (Flood plain easements) site visits to 5 MR sites.
* Budget discussions ; BPP/OFW/VPA-HIP/MQI/Grouse PR
* Other tasks; State Fair/ PF youth hunt/ NGPC Pheasant release monitoring/ Federal Aid report, District fire team duties.
* **Brad Sietz, Rick Souerdyke – Wildlife**
* Fall firebreak work completed – 90%
* Released pheasants at Arrow head on youth weekend and Wednesday before Thanksgiving.
* Program by Brad S. at Fillmore Central High school.
* Rick S. Gave elementary and career program at Thayer Central.
* Habitat Share tree work on Rose Creek West, Sandpiper, Bluebill and Swan Creek completing this fall.
* Tree spraying contract through Meridian, Alexandria, Alexandria S.W was completed early October.
* Fall spraying of smooth brome by Rick S.
* Duck season was excellent on wetlands.
* Quail hunters having a hard time finding birds.
* A few pheasants in uplands surrounding our wetland areas.
* **Jason Luebbe – Wildlife**
* Fall wheat food plots planted.
* Helped with Ponca Expo as a shuttle driver
* Mowed and tilled fire breaks for spring burns
* Pheasant monitoring on opening weekend Sunday at KBN limited participants, rough morning
* Released pheasants ahead of Thanksgiving
* Worked deer check in Seward. We were up 17% from last year
* **Shon Thelen - Wildlife**
* Working on leases and burn plans for next year
* Helping with S.P hunts
* Burn tree piles and help with Rx Burns
* Cut and pile trees
* **Mike Remund, Kyle Smith – Osage WMA -Wildlife**
* Manned Tecemseh and Auburn deer check stations. Deer numbers slightly up from 2018 and more nice deer checked in.
* Have three late fall woodland burns planned – Taylor’s branch, Table rock and Lore’s branch W.M.A’S. These are continued management practices on NWTF super fund and oak woodland alliance grant projects. Goal is to reduce understory invasive species and leaf litter to promote mast producing seedling regeneration.
* Will be initiating 2020 ag lease and service contract work in December and January.
* Management agreement with USACE terminated September, 30 2019. All lower Missouri Corp properties are now solely under Corp management. Potential does exist to establish an agreement for management of wetlands at Langdon Bend mitigation site.
* With the exception of W.M.A pheasant release sites, S.E Nebraska upland bird hunting has been difficult. Hunters finding a few quail, but numbers significantly reduced from a year ago.
* **Krista Lang – Northern Prairies and Land Trust**
* Thinning 25 acres of Oak woodland has been completed at Rock Creek Station S.H.P as part of the Natural Legacy demonstration site. Educational signage has been developed about all the restoration work being done since 2014 as part of the demonstration site.
* Researchers from U.N.L have been working all summer and fall on a long term forest research plot at Indian Cave State Park. This project is funded by the Smithsonian institute and is part of a world - wide network of forest research sites. We have installed educational signage about the research and the oak woodland restoration at the park.
* Tree thinning and brush shredding of 139 acres at Indian Cave State Park will occur this fall as part of the on - going oak woodland restoration and invasive plant control efforts.
* This fall we have already completed a few prescribed fires in the oak woodlands, including private property and Girl Scout camp. Our partners at Fontanelle Forest contributed crew and equipment to the burn at the girl scout camp and offered assistance with future burns. Several other fires are planned with private landowners, girl scout , boy scout and church camps as we continue to share oak woodland restoration techniques with interested parties all across the southeast.
* We also continue to mentor biology students at Peru State College by hiring them as summer temporaries. A past temporary worker invited us to present to the biology club at Peru State college in October about our woodland work at Indian Cave.
* **Chance Brueggemann - Northern Prairies land Trust**
* Three prescription burns were conducted at Indian Cave, burning approximately 1,287 acres of oak woodland and scattered ridge top prairies. The fire will help control understory brush and shade tolerant trees to encourage the growth of woodland forbs and grasses.
* Several acres of grassland and woodland were mechanically cleared of invasive brush (Amur honeysuckle and autumn olive). Removal of these species with help increase diversity of plants within these areas.
* We have postponed a 289 acre hack and squirt tree thinning project until next summer.
* A growing season burn conducted on private lands in the Rulo bluffs to help control high densities of sericea lespedza and encourage the growth of native grasses and forbs.
* Seven mushrooms not previously recorded in the state of Nebraska were identified at Indian Cave state Park. The records and dried specimens will be sent to the Bessey Herbarium at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln
* Callaborating with the Osher Lifelong learning institute at U.N.L, a membership education program for adults 50 and over, to teach an hour and half long class about mushroom ecology and the medicinal health benefits from them.