



@ORC

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Meredosia Island - CREP Partnerships

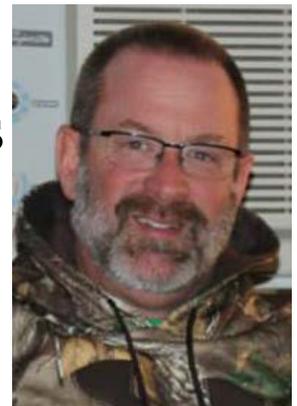
By Mike Chandler, Division of Private Lands and Watersheds

The Division of Private Lands and Watersheds is the newest Division in ORC. The flag ship program of our Division is the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

Mike Chandler first came to DNR in 1993 as the assistant/acting manager of the Helfrich Wildlife Propagation Center in Lincoln then moved to Havana in 1995 as the Private Lands Biologist/District Wildlife Biologist until he came to the CREP team in May 2013 as the CREP Program manager.

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a voluntary incentive based initiative designed to provide long term environmental benefits by restoring, enhancing and protecting eligible environmentally sensitive lands within the Illinois and Kaskaskia River Watersheds for the purposes of improved water quality and sustainable wildlife habitats. Since its inception in 1998, approximately 82,000 acres have been protected in the Illinois and Kaskaskia watersheds.

The success of CREP is a prime example of how partnerships between landowners, governmental entities and non-governmental organizations can join together to address watershed quality and wildlife habitat issues.



Photos:
Last Page – Mike Chandler Before/After photos on a CREP easement

Map:
Second Page – showing Meredosia Island and Partnerships. 2012 Ag Imagery.

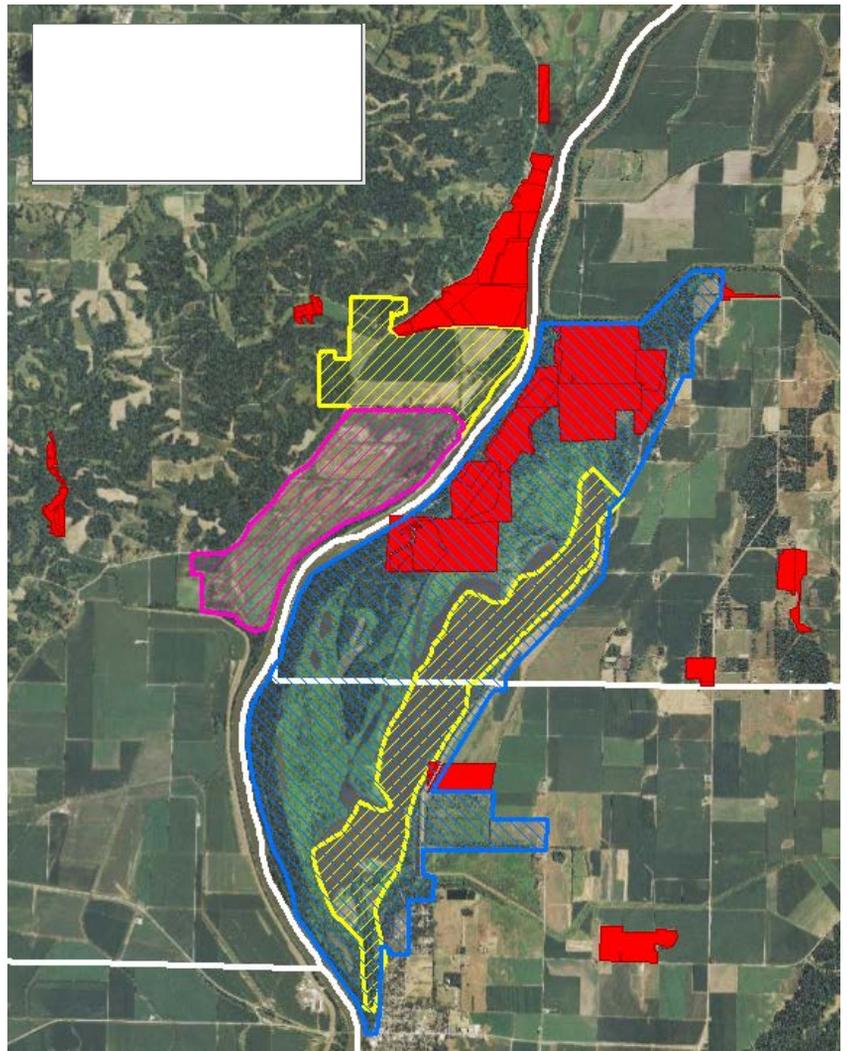
Next Week: Watershed Protection Section

This is very evident along a stretch of the Illinois River just south of the LaGrange Lock and Dam. Meredosia Island, which is partially owned by the USFWS, is located in Cass and Morgan Counties, between the Illinois River and Meredosia Lake. The “island” isn’t really an Island, but given its history of flooding, it’s easy to understand how it got its name.

Between 1990 and 1998, Troy Logsdon who farmed on the island was able to harvest only two crops from his 400 acre family farm. Troy, an avid duck hunter, business man and friend to conservation embraced the idea of CREP, a conservation friendly financial alternative to farming. With Troy’s help the Cass County CREP team (Rhonda Holiday - NRCS, Steve Turner – FSA and Leo Herzberger – SWCD) was able to work with the other landowners to enroll in CREP. Between the USFWS and CREP easements the entire island is now permanently protected from farming and development.

Alone Meredosia Island is a great conservation achievement, however, if one were to look at the big picture this achievement becomes much more, involving both State and Federal Governments along with private conservation groups.

Across the River in Brown County is another partnership success between private



landowners enrolling in CREP, Spunky Bottoms (The Nature Conservancy) and IDNR owned and managed land, collectively totaling 4,017 contiguous acres enhanced and permanently protected.

All told, CREP worked with 9 additional private landowners in Cass and Brown Counties by enrolling 1,144 acres of marginal highly flooded farm ground in Federal CREP with an additional 749 acres of nonfarm ground included, protecting 1,893 acres in permanent State CREP Grant of Conservation Right and Easements.

It is easy to see the importance CREP plays in permanently protecting large acres from development. CREP is just one of the many conservation tools in our tool box that private landowners can use to find a viable alternative to farming flood prone land. With help from our conservation partners and private landowners like Troy, we can team up and strive to make a positive long lasting impact on our natural resources.

Before



One landowner harvested only two crops since 1990 due to frequent flooding, but could not afford to quit farming until the CREP opportunity. Mike Chandler is standing in this cropland to be enrolled in CREP.

After



Natural regeneration of hardwood trees was selected for restoration of the wetland area enrolled in the Illinois River CREP. Mike Chandler is standing in the field, showing the regenerated vegetation of only 5 years.