

Heather Francis among two new wildlife biologists in state

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Wednesday, 06 March 2013 22:43 -

Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever organizations have hired two new Farm Bill wildlife biologists in Nebraska.

One of them is Heather Francis of Imperial, who will cover Perkins, Chase and Dundy Counties.

The positions were made possible through a partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) and Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever.

With these hirings, Pheasants Forever now has 11 Farm Bill wildlife biologists in the state working to provide technical assistance to farmers and ranchers through one-on-one consulting on the benefits of conservation programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

Francis works out of the Imperial Field Office. She holds an A.A. degree in Production Agriculture from the University of Nebraska School of Technical Agriculture at Curtis.

Prior to joining Pheasants Forever, she worked as a conservation and information specialist at the Upper Republican Natural Resources District (NRD) for 18 years.

Included in her duties at the NRD was working with landowners planning and implementing wildlife habitat improvements on their private land. She worked with the WILD Nebraska program, the Corners for Wildlife program, provided conservation windbreak planning, as well as youth conservation education.

Francis has been involved as a volunteer in the local Southwestern Nebraska Pheasants Forever chapter as the habitat chairperson since 1997 and has been very involved with the chapter's annual Youth Mentor Hunt. The chapter has sponsored 11 youth mentor hunts in the past 12 years.

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Francis said she is passionate about seeing local youths enjoying the outdoors and learning about wildlife, habitat and hunting. She is a native of Nebraska, and she has lived in Imperial since 1987.

Scott Schmidt is the other newly-hired wildlife biologist and is located in the Blair Field Office. He covers Washington, Burt, Douglas, Sarpy, Dakota and Thurston Counties.

The Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist program began in 2003 with four positions and has grown to about 104 biologists in 18 states. Nebraska is home to 62 Pheasants Forever chapters, four Quail Forever chapters and over 10,000 PF or QF members.