

Region 6 Work Plan

Spring 2024

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Outline

- R6 Strategic Plan brief
- Planned Habitat Work
- Open Fields and CRP
- Project Expirations
- Monitoring
- Post hunting season and bird report



R6 Strategic Plan Review



- 3 Focus Areas- Milk River Valley, Sage-Grouse Habitat, Eastern R6
- Milk River Valley- long term conservation and restoration
 - Use public lands as cornerstones; partnerships; conservation easements
- Sage-Grouse Habitat- protect and expand sage brush habitats
 - Grazing systems, conservation easements & long-term leases, high quality mesic areas, silver sagebrush corridors to Canada, use partnerships
- Eastern Region 6- habitat enhancement and maintaining quality
 - Work off existing good habitats to conserve past enhancements and expand to install more. CRP, other nesting cover, winter cover, BMAs, Renew projects through HMLs



Habitat Work

- UGBEP projects approved in January:
 - 1 new HML
 - 4 HMLs renewals & additions
 - 1 Diverse food plot renewal
 - 1 new/renewed Open Fields (CRP Lease)
- 489 Habitat acres total
- 950 acres UGB only access + impacting 2,740 BMA acres
- \$79,703.50



Habitat Work

Migratory Bird Wetlands Program (MBWP)

- 1 nesting cover- 92 acres to be planted this spring
 - Partnered with EQIP project that will install grazing infrastructure
- 1 dam repair project- needs contractor assessment
- 1 40-year Conservation Lease



Habitat Work

Food Plots

- 14 Diverse mix = 127 acres
 - Same mix as last 3 years
- 4 standing grain = 21.5 acres



Habitat Work- potential

- Several HMLs on recently expired shelterbelts + additional acres in Daniels Co.
 - 24 acres of shelterbelts & 137 acres nesting cover
 - ~1,400 acres will be enrolled into BMA for this
 - Looking at several additional HMLs with family
- CRP lease addition in Sheridan Co
- Other recent interest/likely projects
 - 1 CRP Lease & HML in Daniels
 - 1 Grain Stubble Management in Sheridan Co



CRP Leases (Open Fields)

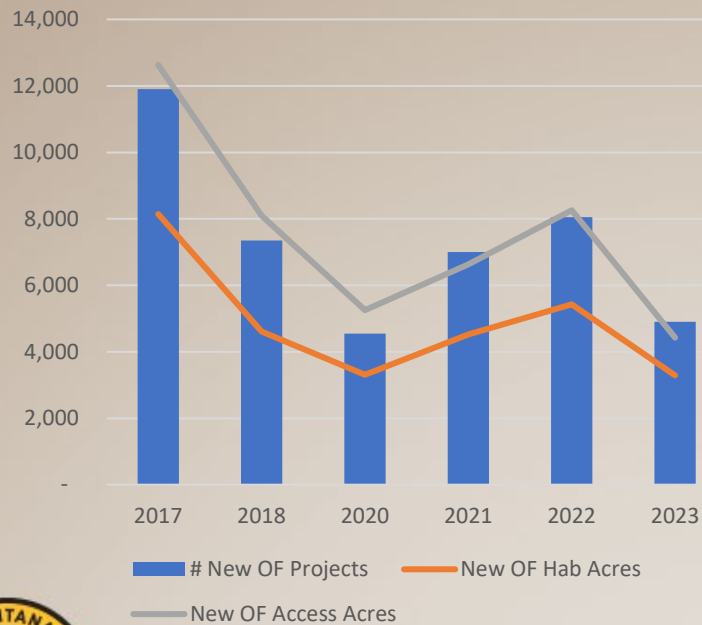
- No VPA-HIP grant but still doing CRP Leases
 - Now \$10/acre up to 640 acres
- Mailing is going out likely this week
 - ~520 CRP producers in R6
- CRP General sign-up open March 4-29th
 - Unexpected, likely limited interest given current rental rates & new seeding costs
 - May be able to generate better interest if we can get word out about our programs, time is short



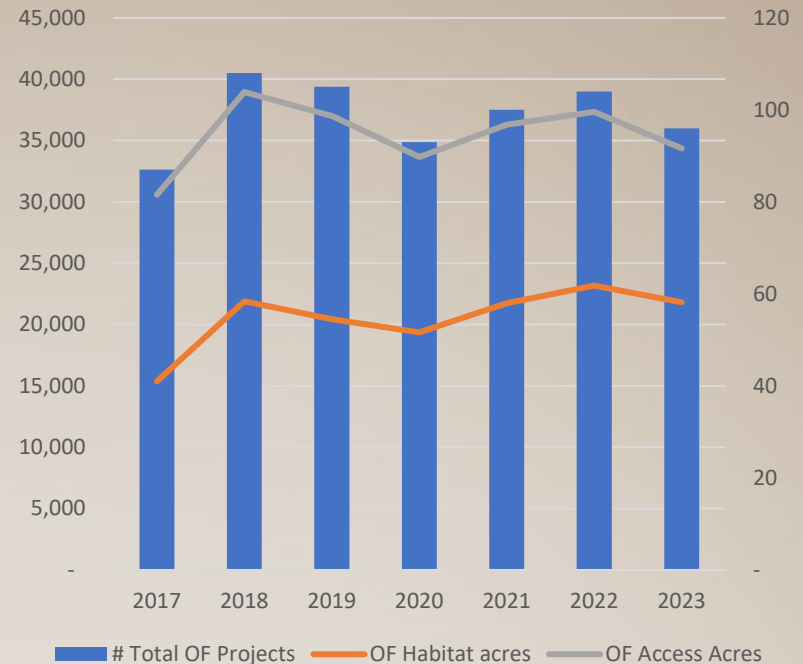
CRP Leases (Open Fields)

R6 Open Fields enrollment relatively consistent in years with a CRP signup
 Allowing BMA cooperators is going to keep enrollment higher

R6 Open Fields New Enrollments 2017-2023



R6 Open Fields Cumulative Enrollment



CRP Leases (Open Fields)

- Holding out in R6 for these projects vs others
- Average 20 CRP lease/OF projects annually on 4,700ac
- Even with a lower enrollment year these could use up a significant chunk of our budget
 - Lost our PR grant that was intended to fund a lot of this work
 - Even ½ of R6 enrollment last year would be ~\$300K



Expirations

- 8 total
- 4 will be renewed, another 1 likely to be
- Other 2 the habitat is remaining intact on BMA or public land
- Only 1 Open Fields could potentially expire, we will see if they reenroll in CRP & OF as well
- Only expirations for 2025 are food plots and all very likely to renew as well
- Best chance to grow the program in R6 for 2 years in a row for the first time in many years



Monitoring



Required Annual

- 111 Open Fields or CRP Lease
- 24 HML
- 18 Food Plots
- 4 Grazing Systems
- 4 Wildlife Friendly Practice

Unscheduled

- 18 Nesting cover
- 7 shelterbelts
- May attempt a veg plots using protocol tested in 2023
 - Especially on 3 newer seedings



R6 Postseason Observations

- Bird hunter numbers high in eastern R6
 - Increasing complaints, mostly social issues
 - Bird numbers also high, expect near record sharp-tail and gray partridge harvest due to combo of hunter numbers and high populations
- Western R6 bird & hunter numbers better but still likely below average



R6

Postseason Observations

- Winter severity rated as mild for Glasgow & average for Havre
- Bird survival good
- Growing season precipitation/drought will determine bird pops again this coming fall



Questions?



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