Rose Lake PMC Summer 2010 Newsletter

Rose Lake PMC Hosts Pollinator Habitat Workshop

Jennifer Hopwood of the Xerces Society

On June 24 the Rose lake Plant Materials Center, in cooperation with the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation and Michigan State University, conducted a short course on the establishment and importance of habitat for pollinator insects. Ms. Jennifer Hopwood, Midwest Pollinator Outreach Coordinator for the Xerces Society, instructed modules on the importance of native pollinators, basic native bee biology and identification, pollinator-friendly farming practices, and developing new pollinator habitat. Dr. Rufus Isaacs, Michigan State University entomologist, discussed sustaining bees in farmland to support fruit production. Dr. Julianna Tuell, Michigan State University entomologist discussed the importance of pollinators in biofuel production. In addition to the technical presentations, Mr. Dale Allen, with the USDA-FSA, and Mr. Chris Reidy, NRCS-MI State Biologist, presented information on various cost share programs that include provisions for pollinator habitat.

The Rose Lake Plant Materials Center established a field border planting of about 20 shrubs and herbaceous species that attract native bees and other beneficial insects. A tour of the Plant Materials Center highlighted that planting and provided opportunity for discussions on establishing wildflowers and other plants that benefit pollinators.

About 50 people attended the workshop including Michigan and Indiana NRCS employees, Conservation District personnel, State of Michigan personnel and representatives from conservation partners from around Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana. John Englert, National Program Leader for the Plant Materials Program, and regional Plant Materials Specialists Joel Douglas and Ramona Garner were also on hand for the workshop.

Additional Presenters at the conference

Several of the group viewing the pollinator plots

Rose Lake PMC Partners with Michigan State University for new Plant Release

Dr. Richard Leep, Michigan State University forage specialist, approached NRCS in 2009 to produce seed and co-release an improved variety of yellow-flowered alfalfa (*Medicago sativa* spp. *falcata*). Yellow alfalfa is a perennial legume growing up to 30 inches high with multiple erect stems. It has alternate sets of three oval-shaped, hairy leaflets with yellow flowers. Yellow alfalfa has growth requirements (pH, nutrients and moisture) similar to purple flowered alfalfa. It blooms for a longer duration in the growing season than does purple flowered alfalfa and has been shown in Michigan to produce as much forage in a two cut system as purple flowered alfalfa produces in a three cut system.

Researchers at South Dakota State University (SDSU) evaluated several populations of yellow alfalfa for forage production, resistance to potato leaf hopper damage, resistance to alfalfa weevil damage and resistance to phytophthora root rot. From those trials a population was selected for further evaluation as a forage crop. Research at SDSU and Michigan State University demonstrated that this selection of yellow alfalfa produces as well as, or better than purple flowered alfalfa or birdsfoot trefoil. Yellow alfalfa is a perennial legume that fixes atmospheric nitrogen.

In addition to livestock forage yellow alfalfa is consumed by game animals and birds. Small mammals also graze on alfalfa. Yellow alfalfa can be a source of nectar and pollen for insects and is particularly attractive to solitary bees such as leaf cutter bees.

The Rose Lake PMC received seed from the yellow alfalfa selection and propagated seedlings in the greenhouse during April, 2010. Those seedlings were transplanted into a seed production field in June, 2010.

Dr. Richard Leep, MSU, assists with the planting of the yellow alfalfa.

Collections Still Needed

The Rose Lake PMC is still collecting populations of American Wild Plum, Broomsedge Bluestem, Buttonbush, Coralberry and Riverbank Wildrye. Collections sent to the PMC would be greatly appreciated.

Riverbank Wildrye

Coralberry

Broomsedge Bluestem

American Wild Plum

Buttonbush

Co[illegible]d P[illegible]n County, Ohio

Plant Materials Specialist Dave Burgdorf worked with the Logan County, OH District Conservationist and the Logan County Environmental Health Department to establish vegetation on a constructed wetland for septic tank treatment. The planting is an evaluation of different species for possible use in the wetland treatment system. Plants were grown in the Rose Lake PMC greenhouse and transplanted in the wetland in May, 2008. Prairie cordgrass and Canada bluejoint are established and growing well in the wetland system after three years. Sweetgrass, woolgrass, and prairie sandreed are not growing well under those conditions.

Bob Stoll, District Conservationist is working with Craig Kauffman, Logan County, Environmental Health Director on the planting evaluation and sampling of the treatment system.

Vegetation growing on wetland planting area

Gail Bischoff Retires after 14 Years

John Englert, National Program Leader-Plant Materials presenting a certificate of appreciation to Gail Bischoff

Gail Bischoff, Biological Science Aide and valued team member at the Rose Lake Plant Materials Center, retired June 30 after 14 years of service. Gail worked in all areas of the Plant Materials Program including field experiments, field plantings, seed cleaning, and facilities maintenance. Her greatest contribution, however, was her work in greenhouse plant propagation and greenhouse management. In addition to work on plant studies for the Plant Materials Center, Gail was the primary contact for propagation work conducted through reimbursable agreements with the National Parks Service and the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. Over the last five years Gail was instrumental in propagating over 100,000 plants for various reimbursable projects.

To honor her efforts John Englert, National Program Leader for the Plant Materials Program, presented Gail with a Certificate of Appreciation for her work with the Plant Materials Program. Gail also received recognition from Julie Van Stappen, Branch Chief for Natural Resources at Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, for her work on the reimbursable projects with the National Parks Service.

Gail hard at work

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