

## Pollinator Habitat Project

Native wildflowers provide valuable habitat for pollinating insects, grassland songbirds, pheasants and quail.

Pollinators impact 75% of the global food supply, are keystone indicators of environmental health and their populations are in decline.



To learn more about pollinators, contact Pheasants Forever at

[www.pheasantsforever.org](http://www.pheasantsforever.org)  
[www.quailforever.org](http://www.quailforever.org)



Aaron Kuehl

# MID-CONTRACT MANAGEMENT FOR CP42 POLLINATOR HABITAT

**DURING THE FALL** of 2018, clouds of monarchs were “snapped” and shared by excited conservationists, farmers and educators across various social media and morning coffees throughout the Midwest. We won’t know if these signs are real increases before official population estimates on the butterflies’ Mexico wintering grounds, but it appears habitat restoration is working.

The CP42 Pollinator program was rolled out in the fall of 2012. After low signups in the first few years, 2016 saw 300,000 new CP42 acres enrolled, of which nearly 250,000 were actually installed. Like other native grassland restorations, pollinator habitat takes a couple years to establish. So 2018 may have provided the first year of high-functioning pollinator habitat for the large 2016 enrollment, resulting in improved reproduction and survival of

monarchs, other pollinators and, of course, pheasants.

This year, 2016 CP42 projects are entering their third year. That means the door is opening for mid-contract management (MCM), allowing stands to be improved or enhanced by a variety of management practices. If you have CP42, expect annual and biennial species to be less showy, but also to see a few new species bloom for the first time.

A disturbance (such as prescribed fire) at this time is required to maintain the highest diversity of wildflowers attractive to pollinators as well as high-value brood cover for grassland nesting birds such as pheasants. Generally, with MCM you will only be impacting one-third of your acres in any one year; this will provide for additional diversity.

Following your prescribed fire is also the perfect time to inter-seed. There are two general inter-seed mix types to consider.

First: There is a chance your stand

might be struggling. In this case you should look for a mix similar to what was initially planted, to bolster seed counts and species.

Second: A more common situation is that many pollinator seed mixes were light on early-blooming and very late-blooming species. This was driven by unavailability and high costs, factors less prevalent today in MCM upgrade mixes. Choosing an inter-seed mix which deliberately “book ends” the bloom periods, including early blooming species and very late blooming species, will extend and bolster the value of your pollinator habitat.

Neither of these options need to be expensive, and both should fall within MCM cost shares.

For a more detailed look at the pollinator MCM practices and other habitat topics, view our new Habitat Information Sheets at [pfhabitatatore.com/resources](http://pfhabitatatore.com/resources). Make every acre count, think habitat! ■