

Preserving Watersheds: The Little Sioux Watershed Conservation Partnership

Amy Crouch

December 13, 2023



Pasture Project

AT THE WALLACE CENTER

**The Nature
Conservancy**



Protecting nature. Preserving life.

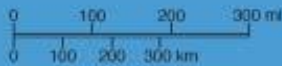


North Pacific Ocean

North Atlantic Ocean

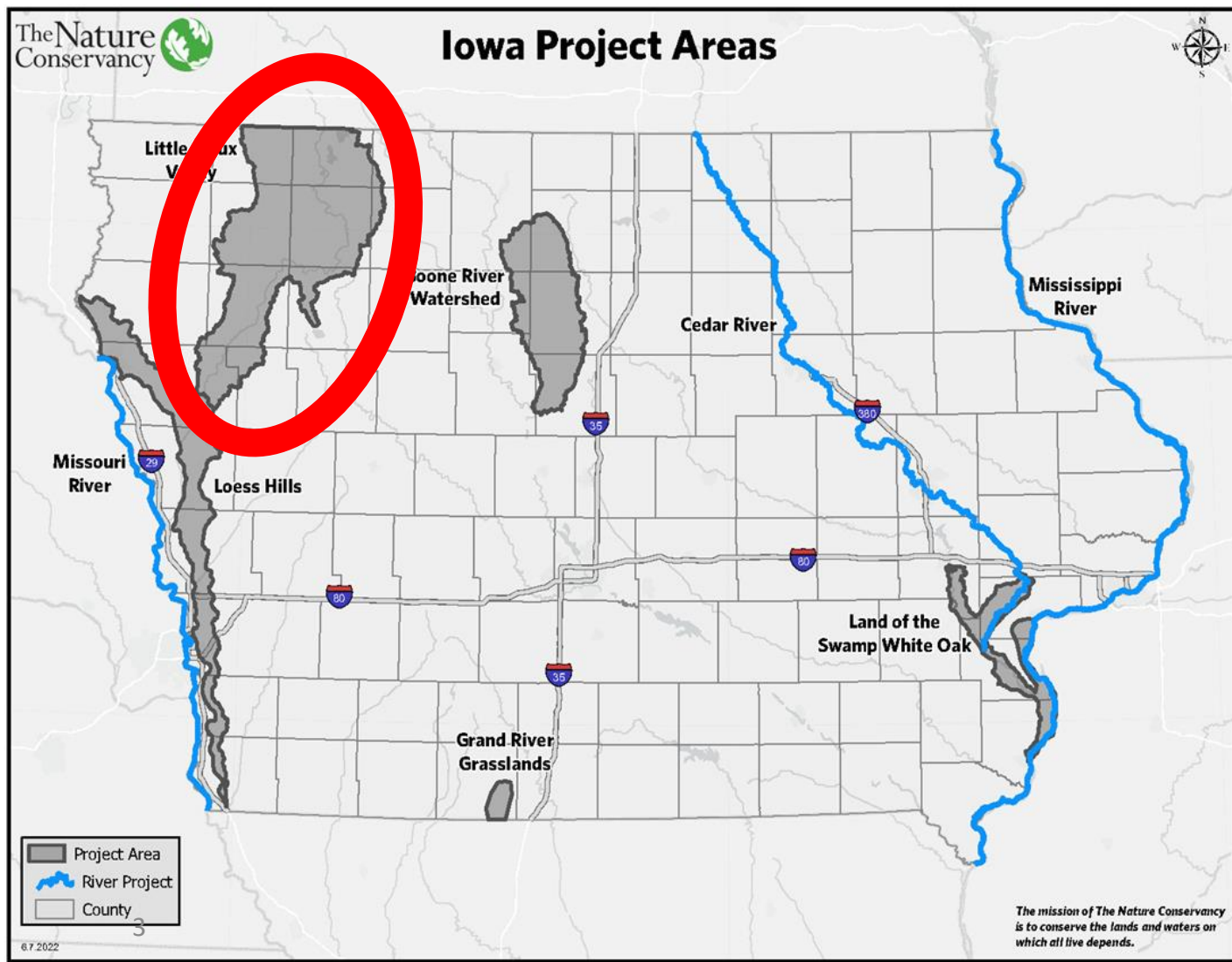
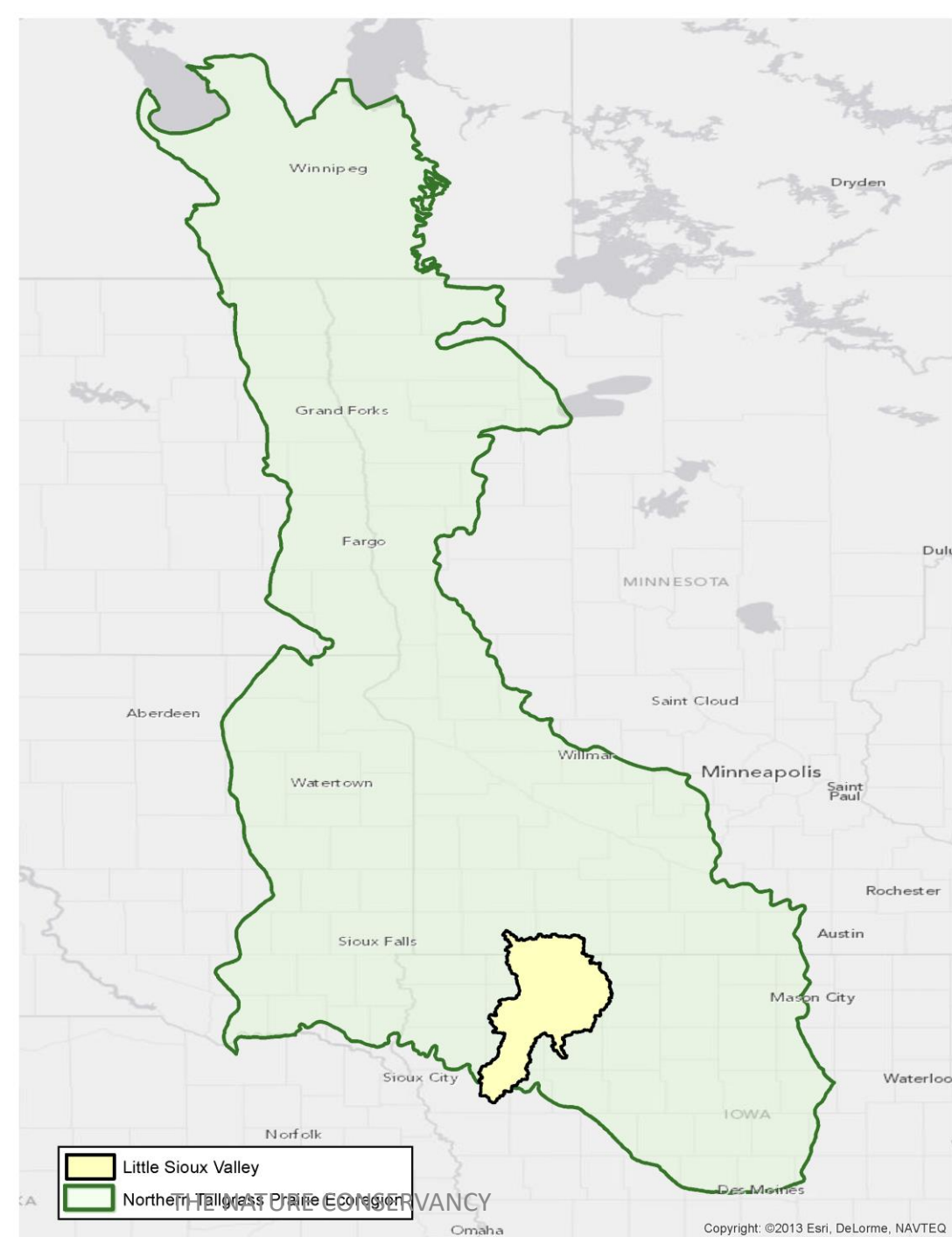
UNITED STATES

- ★ National capital
- ☆ State capital
- City



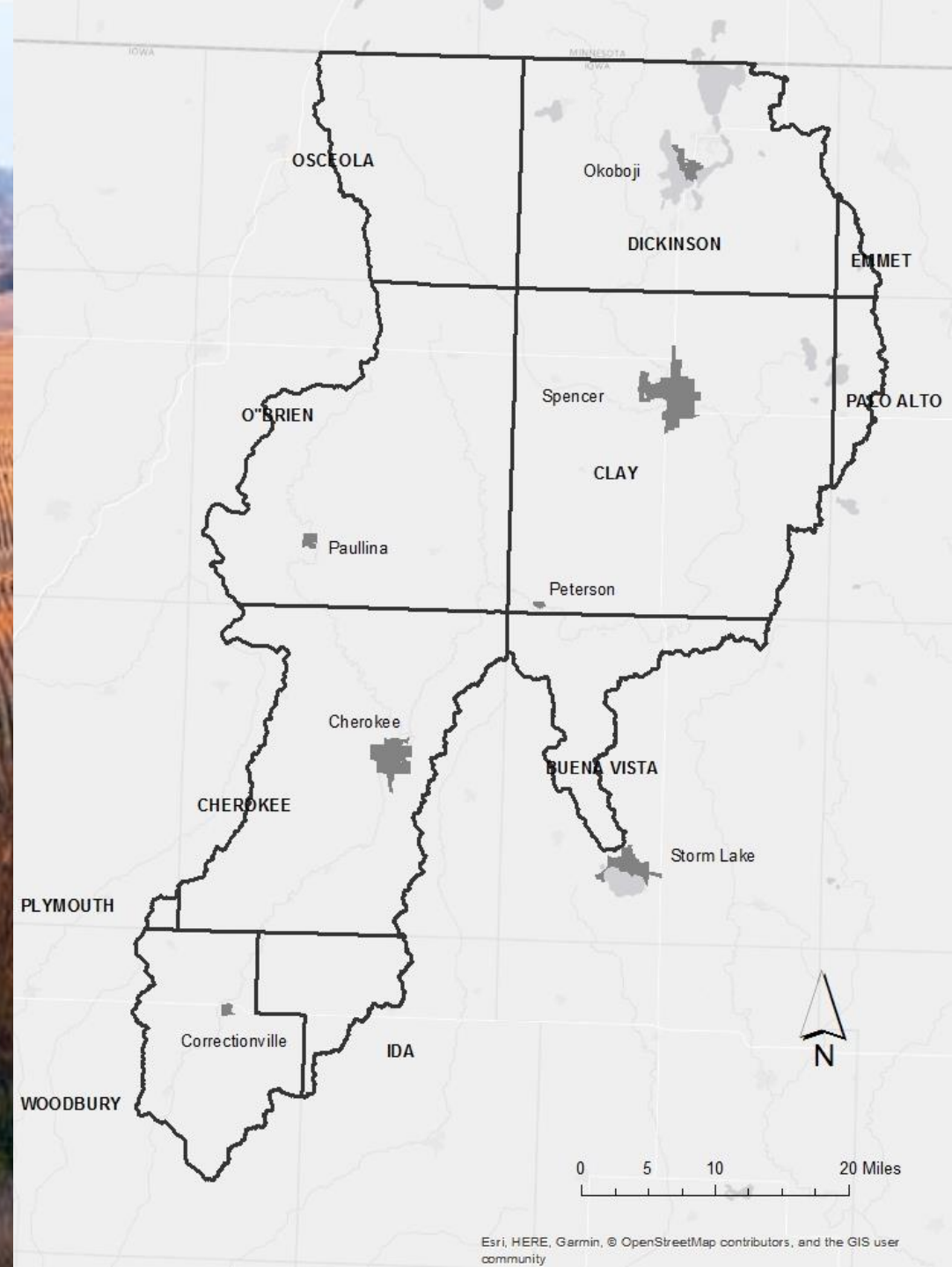
Gulf of Mexico

Little Sioux Watershed



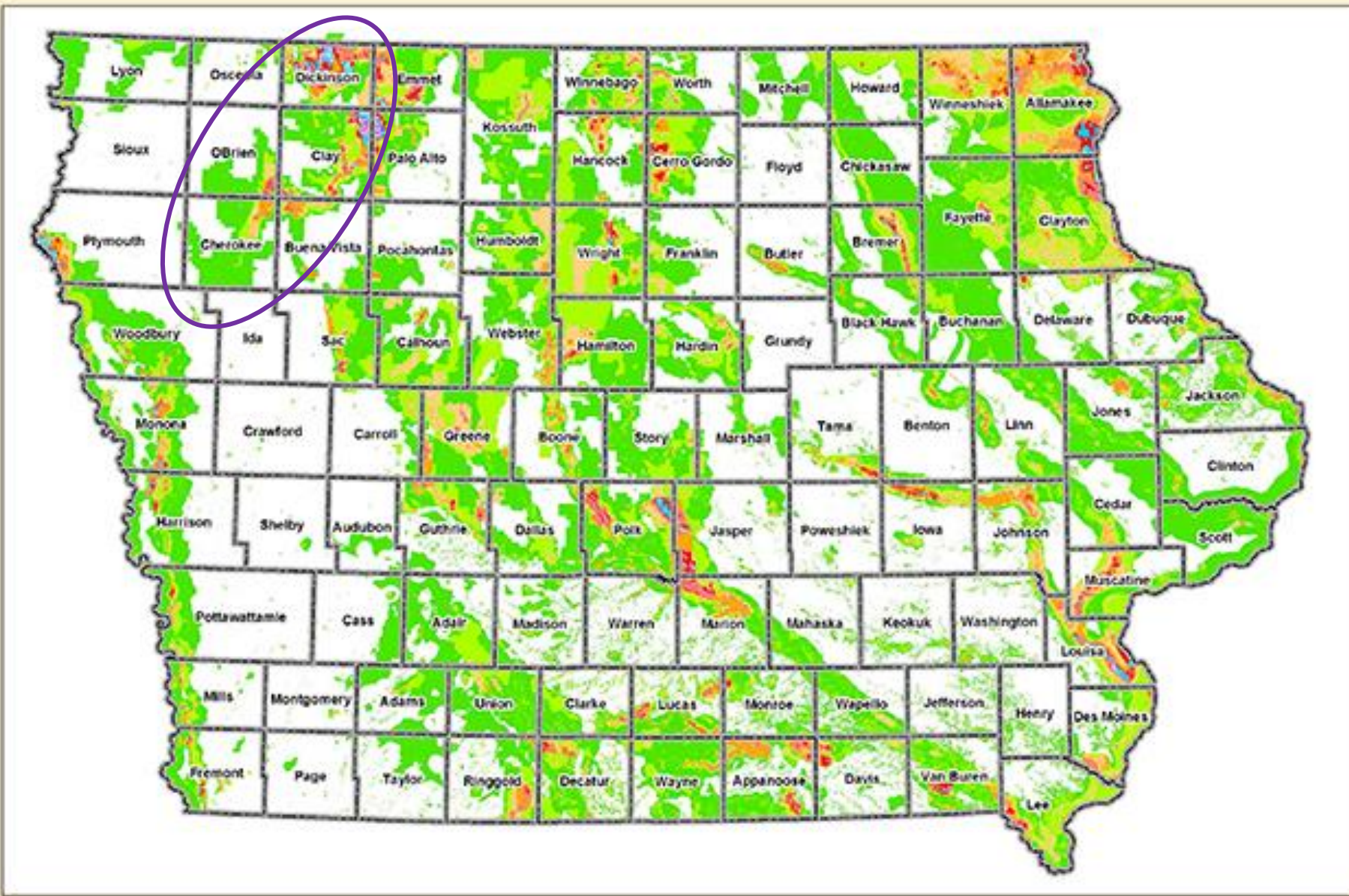
Watershed Ecology

- ❖ Glacially carved river valley
- ❖ Some of the best tracts of remnant prairie left in Iowa
- ❖ Biologically rich
- ❖ Abundant archaeology
- ❖ Rich, productive farmland

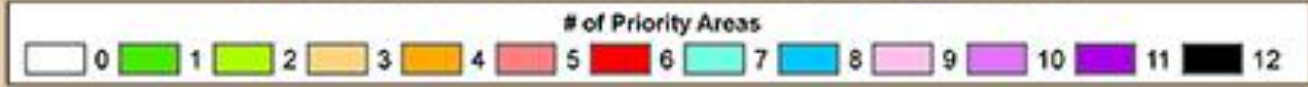




graphy



High Opportunity Area for Cooperative Conservation Actions as Identified in the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan



USDA United States Department of Agriculture
 USDA-NRCS GIS Office
 Des Moines, Iowa
 December 2017

Evolution and Growth

- 2000s
 - Conservation Action Plan (CAP) team formed
 - CAP process started
- 2010s
 - project coordinator hired
 - CAP team became Little Sioux Watershed Conservation Partnership
 - Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge plan – Iowa portion
 - work expanded to focus on sustainable grazing, prescribed fire, and water quality
- 2020s
 - watershed approach to soil, land, and water issues

Little Sioux River Valley Conservation Action Plan



The Nature Conservancy
505 5th Avenue, Suite 930
Des Moines, Iowa 50309

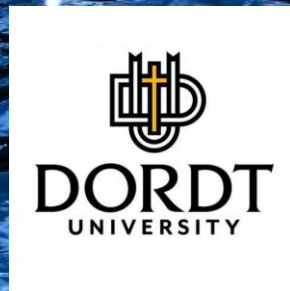
August 26, 2013

**LITTLE
SILOUX**
watershed conservation
PARTNERSHIP



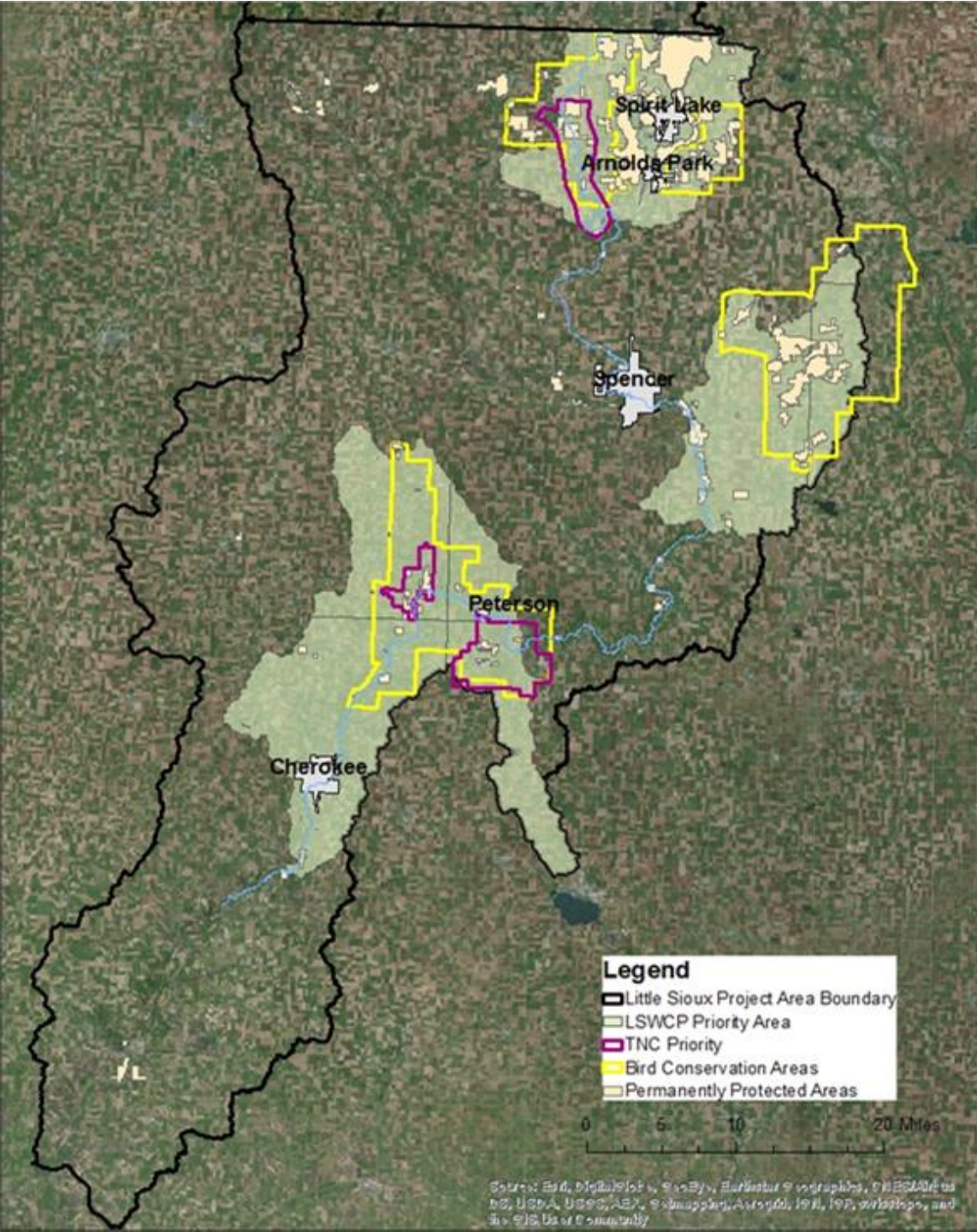
Amazing Partners!

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



Prioritizing Efforts

- ❖ Priority Areas
 - ❖ Target conservation efforts
 - ❖ *Protection*
 - ❖ *Restoration*
 - ❖ *Management*
- ❖ Agricultural Work
 - ❖ Row crop practices
 - ❖ Nutrient reduction
 - ❖ Regenerative practices
- ❖ Water Quality/Quantity Work
 - ❖ Green infrastructure
 - ❖ Watershed Management Authorities



Prioritizing Efforts



Invasive species

Increase and coordinate invasive species management



Grazing management

Improve grazing management on private and public lands



Outreach

Translate the significance of ecological and archaeological resources in the watershed



Wetland habitat

Restore and enhance the hydrology and function of wetland habitats and stream corridors



Protection

Increase collective partner protected land



Water quality

Model watershed to target areas with highest conservation and water quality benefits

Little Sioux Grazing Network

Practical Farmers of Iowa
— **FIELD DAY** —

GRAZING NATIVE PERENNIALS IN THE LITTLE SIOUX WATERSHED

In partnership with The Nature Conservancy

Please join us for a

Grassland Residue Management Workshop



Wednesday, November 9, 2016

10:30 am—12:00 pm

Buena Vista County Park South Shelter House
377 440th St, Peterson

Refreshments will be provided.

Economic and Ecological Benefits of Sustainable Grazing in Iowa's Little Sioux Watershed

Sustainable grazing lowers grassland management costs while increasing grassland health and wildlife habitat. High native plant diversity keeps noxious weeds at bay and requires no chemical fertilizer or interseeding. Producers may generate greater profit with fewer head and report increased rates of gain and better body condition with less management effort than when grazing pastures consisting of non-native forage species. Native vegetation and lower stocking rates also provide more and better quality wildlife habitat, which has been tied to better pasture health, herd health, and cropland health.

Sustainable grazing practitioners are more grassland managers than livestock managers. Successful managers are educated in grassland health and strive to improve their personal knowledge of grassland components and processes.



Capitalizing on Pasture Composition

The prairie pastures of the Little Sioux Watershed have been home to cattle for over 150 years. Historically, they contained both native cool and warm season grasses and forbs (broadleaf plants). Although these pastures have decreased in number, size, and forage quality, there is still a culture of grazing the steep, gravelly side slopes and stream bottoms.

The majority of remaining pastures in the focus area consist of native warm season vegetation on the uplands and side slopes with the stream bottoms containing smooth brome, an introduced Eurasian grass. Although smooth brome is neither native nor ideal because of its tendency to outcompete native vegetation, this combination works well for cattle producers as smooth brome is most nutritious in early spring and late fall, while the upslope native vegetation is most nutritious from late spring through early fall.

A diversity of healthy vegetation is necessary for animal nutritional needs as well as pollinator and wildlife habitat and overall grassland health. This diversity can be maintained, and sometimes increased, by managing livestock stocking times and rates and by incorporating prescribed fire into your management regime.

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Remote Control Cows

AKA

Grazing Research
and Expansion

Little Sioux Cooperative Burning Group



Outreach and Education

- ❖ Field days and workshops
- ❖ One-on-one discussions
- ❖ Clay County Fair Cabin
- ❖ Partner workshops
- ❖ Conferences and events



Non-traditional Partnerships and Projects

- ❖ Watershed Management Authorities (WMA)
- ❖ FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)
- ❖ On-road structure modeling



"Unity is strength...
when there is
teamwork and collaboration,
wonderful things
can be achieved."

- Mattie J.T. Stepanek

Alone we can do so little; together
we can do so much.

— Helen Keller —

Collaboration and
cooperation
will beat competition
every time.

Gail Lynne Goodwin



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LITTLE
SIOUX
watershed conservation
PARTNERSHIP



Opportunities increase when you
help others win. A little win for a
partner is a little win for you.

Thank you!

Amy Crouch

The Nature Conservancy in Iowa

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Nature.org/iowa

www.lswcp.org

Little Sioux Watershed Conservation Partnership on Facebook

LSWCP on Instagram