

# **CHRIS McLELAND**

## **EDUCATION**

***Bachelor of Science (Fisheries & Wildlife)***  
University of Missouri-Columbia

***Associate of Science***  
Moberly Area Community College

## **ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE**

### **Managing Director of Agriculture Programs – Ducks Unlimited**

July 2022 – Present

Responsibilities Include:

- Provide direct oversight and leadership of agricultural staff across the Great Lakes/Atlantic Region, which includes a team of 20 Conservation Delivery staff, as well as administrative support positions ensuring that all strategic goals and priorities are achieved through increased landowner services that address fish, forest, wildlife, and natural community resources.
- Working in coordination with regional leadership, ensure Conservation Delivery staff have the direction and tools they need to effectively implement State and Federal cost share programs (EQIP, CRP, RCPP, WRE, Partners for Fish and Wildlife) that address critical resource concerns within the Great Lakes/Atlantic Region. Responsible for creating a highly functioning, highly successful Regional Team within the that prides itself on innovation and success. Provide professional growth and career development opportunities for staff through the establishment of annual goals and objectives as well as annual performance reviews.
- As the organizational lead for the GLAR Agriculture Team, responsible for building and maintaining highly functioning and effective relationship with State, Federal and NGO partners, and actively look for opportunities to leverage funding and staff to address critical resource concerns. Work with partners to develop new and innovative conservation programs or partnerships and secure the funding necessary to deliver those programs within the Great Lakes/Atlantic Region.
- Coordinate with DU's National Policy Team to develop Farm Bill policy recommendations, as well as coordinate and support legislative events such as field tours and fly-ins.
- Through close coordination with regional leadership, secure and deliver agreements that represent a significant investment by State and Federal partners, processing, and tracking all expenditures and developing detailed quarterly summaries indicating private land effectiveness and accomplishments across the Delivery Team. Work closely with State, Federal and NGO partners to revise and improve the Regional Programs to ensure it remains effective in serving landowners and addressing fish, forest, and wildlife resources. Responsible for developing, administering and tracking all cooperative agreements related to positions and programs within the Great Lakes/Atlantic Region and developing monthly activity reports as required by the agreements.
- Through close coordination and collaboration with the DU's Fundraising Team, strive to secure major gifts through the development of strategic "asks" to major donors and corporate partners within the agricultural space.
- Support Ducks Unlimited on national agriculture issues. Provide leadership and coordination with partner organizations by serving as the regional contact for NRCS National and State Office Staff, and other resource partners. Serve as the regional liaison to related government agencies, conservation, and agriculture groups (Corn Growers, Farm Bureau, Cattlemen Association), civic and commodity groups, municipalities, and

urban partners. Provides regional comments and recommendations for policies, programs or proposed legislation affecting private lands across the Region.

- Serve as the primary point of contact for all coordination and support of state-level legislative needs which concern agriculture or the Farm Bill.
- Support the development of state-level strategic planning across the organization, utilizing these plans to address areas of critical emphasis as well as the development of the new national strategic plan.
- As the private land lead, responsible for developing and coordinating the creation or revision of landowner information and educational needs and/or exhibits. Responsible for promoting private land programs and services through avenues such as oral presentations, news media and personal contacts, social media. Provide oversight and perspective for the Organization by serving on 3 Joint Venture Management Boards, AFWA – RCPP & EQIP Working Group(S).

#### **Vice President of Conservation Delivery – Pheasants Forever Inc. & Quail Forever**

July 2021 – July 2022

Responsibilities Include:

- Provide direct oversight and leadership of all conservation delivery staff across all four operational regions (Midwest, South, Northeast, and West), which includes 318 Conservation Delivery staff, a team of four Regional Directors of Conservation Delivery as well as administrative support positions ensuring that all strategic goals and priorities are achieved through increased landowner services that address fish, forest, wildlife, and natural community resources.
- Working in coordination with Field Leadership, ensure Conservation Delivery staff have the direction and tools they need to effectively implement State and Federal cost share programs (EQIP, CRP, RCPP, WRE, Partners for Fish and Wildlife) that address critical resource concerns within the South Region. Responsible for creating a highly functioning, highly successful Regional Team within the that prides itself on innovation and success. Provide professional growth and career development opportunities for staff through the establishment of annual goals and objectives as well as annual performance reviews. Responsible for developing and coordinating cross training opportunities for all regional staff related to landowner services and Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever strategic Priorities (Habitat, Advocacy and Education and Outreach).
- As the Organizational Lead for the Conservation Delivery Team, responsible for building and maintaining highly functioning and effective relationship with State, Federal and NGO partners, and actively look for opportunities to leverage funding and staff to address critical resource concerns. Work with partners to develop new and innovative conservation programs or partnerships and secure the funding necessary to deliver those programs within the South Region, specifically, working within the programs offered within the Conservation Title of the 2018 Farm Bill.
- As the Regional lead for Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever, coordinate with multiple conservation partners (State, Federal, NGO, Joint Ventures, Private Industry) on Federal Farm Bill policy and the develop and use of private land programs within the South Region. and communicate conservation issues to district, regional, and Central Office administrative teams.

- Through close coordination with the Finance Team, administer agreements that represents a significant investment by State and Federal partners, processing, and tracking all expenditures and developing detailed quarterly summaries indicating private land effectiveness and accomplishments across the Delivery Team. Work closely with State, Federal and NGO partners to revise and improve the Regional Programs to ensure it remains effective in serving landowners and addressing fish, forest, and wildlife resources. Responsible for developing, administering and tracking all cooperative agreements related to positions and programs within the South Region and developing monthly activity reports as required by the agreements.
- Represents the organization on national private land issues. Provides leadership and coordination with partner organizations by serving as the regional contact for NRCS National and State Office Staff, and other resource partners. Serve as the regional liaison to related government agencies, conservation, and agriculture groups (Corn Growers, Farm Bureau, Cattlemen Association), civic and commodity groups, municipalities, and urban partners. Provides regional comments and recommendations for policies, programs or proposed legislation affecting private lands across the Region
- Serve as the primary point of contact for all coordination and support of state-level legislative policy needs or issues. Coordinate legislative activities such as testimony, and media “call to action” efforts within our grassroots supporters. Responsible for developing all legislative goals and strategies for state-level work.
- Lead the development of state-level strategic planning across the organization, utilizing these plans to address areas of critical emphasis as well as the development of the new national strategic plan.
- As the private land lead, responsible for developing and coordinating the creation or revision of landowner information and educational needs and/or exhibits. Responsible for promoting private land programs and services through avenues such as oral presentations, news media and personal contacts, social media. Provide oversight and perspective for the Organization by serving on 3 Joint Venture Management Boards, AFWA – RCPP & EQIP Working Group, National Bobwhite Technical Committee – Ag Policy Committee.
- As a member of the Executive Team, routinely communicate success, needs and challenges to Pheasants Forever Leadership. Providing presentations and updates as requested and coordinating across Departments to provide support and resources to accomplish our mission.

#### **Director of Field Operations – Pheasants Forever Inc. & Quail Forever**

February 2017- July 2022

Responsibilities Include:

- Provide direct oversight and leadership of all private land field operations with the South Region, which includes 119 Conservation Delivery staff. Provide direct supervision of 21 conservation delivery employees, including 5 State Coordinators (Mid-Level Managers) ensuring that all strategic goals and priorities are achieved through increased landowner services that address fish, forest, wildlife, and natural community resources.
- Working in coordination with Field Leadership, ensure Conservation Delivery staff have the direction and tools they need to effectively implement State and Federal cost share programs (EQIP, CRP, RCPP, WRE, Partners for Fish and Wildlife) that address critical resource concerns within the South Region. Responsible for creating a highly functioning, highly successful Regional Team within the that prides itself on innovation and success. Provide professional growth and career development opportunities for staff through the establishment of annual goals and objectives as well as annual performance reviews. Responsible for developing and coordinating cross training opportunities for all regional staff related to landowner services and Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever strategic Priorities (Habitat, Advocacy and Education and Outreach).
- As the Organizational Lead for the South Region, responsible for building and maintaining highly functioning and effective relationship with State, Federal and NGO partners, and actively look for

opportunities to leverage funding and staff to address critical resource concerns. Work with partners to develop new and innovative conservation programs or partnerships and secure the funding necessary to deliver those programs within the South Region, specifically, working within the programs offered within the Conservation Title of the 2018 Farm Bill.

- As the Regional lead for Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever, coordinate with multiple conservation partners (State, Federal, NGO, Joint Ventures, Private Industry) on Federal Farm Bill policy and the develop and use of private land programs within the South Region. and communicate conservation issues to district, regional, and Central Office administrative teams.
- Through close coordination with the Finance Team, administer agreements that represents a significant investment by State and Federal partners, processing, and tracking all expenditures and developing detailed quarterly summaries indicating private land effectiveness and accomplishments within the South Region. Work closely with State, Federal and NGO partners to revise and improve the Regional Programs to ensure it remains effective in serving landowners and addressing fish, forest, and wildlife resources. Responsible for developing, administering and tracking all cooperative agreements related to positions and programs within the South Region and developing monthly activity reports as required by the agreements.
- As the private land lead, represents the South Region Team on Statewide and National private land issues. Provides leadership and coordination with partner organizations by serving as the regional contact for NRCS National and State Office Staff, and other resource partners. Serve as the regional liaison to related government agencies, conservation, and agriculture groups (Corn Growers, Farm Bureau, Cattlemen Association), civic and commodity groups, municipalities, and urban partners. Provides regional comments and recommendations for policies, programs or proposed legislation affecting private lands across the Region.
- As the private land lead, responsible for developing and coordinating the creation or revision of landowner information and educational needs and/or exhibits. Responsible for promoting private land programs and services through avenues such as oral presentations, news media and personal contacts, social media. Provide oversight and perspective for the Organization by serving on 3 Joint Venture Management Boards, AFWA – RCPP & EQIP Working Group, National Bobwhite Technical Committee – Ag Policy Committee.
- As a member of the Field Leadership Team, routinely communicate success, needs and challenges to Pheasants Forever Leadership. Providing presentations and updates as requested and coordinating across Departments to provide support and resources to accomplish our mission.

#### **Private Land Services Regional Supervisor-Missouri Department of Conservation**

September 2015- February 2016

Responsibilities Include:

- Provide direct oversight and leadership of all private land field operations, including the direct supervision of six, full-time Private Land Biologists and one Community Conservationist within Central Region (14 Counties), ensuring that all strategic goals and priorities are achieved through increased landowner services that address fish, forest, wildlife and natural community resources.
- Provide staff with the direction and tools they need to effectively implement State and Federal cost share programs (EQIP, CRP, RCPP, WRE, MDC-LAP, Partners for Fish and Wildlife) that address critical resource concerns within the Central Region. Responsible for creating a highly functioning, highly successful Private Lands Team within the Central Region that prides itself on innovation and success. Provide professional growth and career development opportunities for staff through the establishment of annual goals and objectives as well as annual performance reviews. Responsible for developing and coordinating cross training opportunities for all regional staff (Private Lands, Forestry, Wildlife, Fisheries) related to landowner services and private land programs.

- As the lead private land contact for the region, responsible for building and maintaining highly functioning and effective relationship with State, Federal and NGO partners, and actively look for opportunities to leverage funding and staff to address critical resource concerns. Work with partners to develop new and innovative conservation programs or partnerships and secure the funding necessary to deliver those programs within the Central Region. Recent efforts include:
  - Coordinating partner support and securing funding to establish the Small Game Set Aside program within the newly developed West Fork Quail Focus Area
  - Partnering with the City of Columbia to secure funding to further urban Monarch Conservation efforts by developing a cooperative Community Conservationist Position.
  - Continuing to develop partner support and cost share funds in the utilization of diverse cover crop cocktail mixes within agriculture rotations.
  - Working with State and Federal Partners to develop an outreach and marketing campaign to promote EQIP-Monarch.
- As the regional private land lead, coordinate all private land programs within the Central Region and communicate conservation issues to district, regional, and Central Office administrative teams. Responsible for the development of the annual Regional Operating Budget as well as the Regional Cost Share Budget, tracking and reconciling all expenditures quarterly as well as annually.
- Administer MDC Regional Cost Share Program, processing and tracking all expenditures and developing detailed quarterly summaries indicating private land effectiveness and accomplishments within the Central Region. Work closely with State, Federal and NGO partners to revise and improve the Regional Cost Share Program to ensure it remains effective in serving landowners and addressing fish, forest and wildlife resources. Responsible for tracking all cooperative agreements related to positions and programs within the Central Region and developing monthly activity reports as required by the agreements.
- As the private land lead, represents the Regional Coordination Team on Statewide private land issues. Provides leadership and coordination with partner organizations by serving as the regional contact for NRCS/FSA Area and State Office Staff, Quail Forever, Soil and Water Conservation District and other resource partners. Serve as the regional liaison to related government agencies, conservation and agriculture groups (Corn Growers, Farm Bureau, Cattlemen Association), civic and commodity groups, municipalities and urban partners. Provides regional comments and recommendations for policies, programs or proposed legislation affecting private lands in Missouri.
- As the private land lead, responsible for developing and coordinating the creation or revision of landowner information and educational needs and/or exhibits. Responsible for promoting private land programs and services through avenues such as oral presentations, news media and personal contacts.

#### **Private Land Programs Biologist/Wetland Biologist Supervisor-Missouri Department of Conservation**

November 2011-September 2015

Responsibilities Include:

- Domiciled at the Missouri NRCS State Office, serving as a member of the NRCS Field Technical Services and Water Resources State Office Staff, working directly with NRCS Leadership, State Biologist, Forester and WRE Coordinator to build a proactive and functioning relationship between MDC and USDA. Provided guidance directly to USDA staff to incorporate and address fish, forest and wildlife considerations into USDA programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Wetland Reserve Easement Program (ACEP- WRE) and other Farm Bill programs. Responsible for the development of new or the revision of conservation program policies and standards/specifications related to fish, forest and wildlife programs within the Farm Bill. Work directly with the MDC Farm Bill Coordinator, Area Biologists, Wetland Biologists and other MDC staff to consolidate the MDC perspective into Farm Bill program design and operation. Conducts in-depth review of Farm Bill program operational guidelines and participates in NRCS

state level training efforts and quality reviews to inform and train NRCS, SWCD, and MDC & QF Staff on the utilization of the programs.

- Directly supervised of four, full-time Wetland Services Biologist located within the NRCS Wetland Emphasis Teams across the State Missouri, provide leadership and guidance, ensuring that all strategic goals and priorities were achieved specifically in the delivery of State and Federal wetland restoration programs such as WRP, CRP (CP 9 & 23), Missouri Ag Wetland Initiative & ACEP-WRE. Provide professional growth and career development opportunities for staff through the establishment of annual goals and objectives as well as annual performance reviews, as well as looking for opportunities to expand the scope of our efforts, such as the inclusion of monarch friendly upland seeding's within WRE restorations.
- Responsible for developing and maintaining a high-level working relationship with Federal, State and NGO partners from Missouri and the Midwest, in order to development and secure/leverage funding implement innovative conservation programs and support cooperative positions that aid with the delivery of private land conservation efforts within the State of Missouri, and surrounding states. Such efforts and accomplishments include:
  - Assisted in securing grant funding to support the initial Quail Forever Farm Bill Biologists in Missouri and assisting with staff onboarding.
  - Developed a cooperative partnership with Ducks Unlimited, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NRCS and MDC and secured funding to develop the Missouri Ag Wetland Initiative, supporting wetland conservation efforts within priority geographies in Missouri.
  - Developed a successful Wetland Restoration Enhancement Program (WREP) proposal (\$2.4 million) leveraging staff, partners support and securing long term funding for the program.
  - Co-lead in the development of both a multi-state and local, Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) proposal focused on grassland and woodland conservation efforts within the State of Missouri, leveraging staff time and funding to address critical conservation concerns, and was successful in receiving the grant.
  - Co-lead in the development of the first Voluntary Access Program – Habitat Incentive Program proposal (VPA-HIP) for the State of Missouri. Coordinated the implementation and program roll out of the Missouri Outdoor Recreational Access Program.
  - Work directly with NRCS leadership, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Partners in the development of Federal Farm Bill programs and practice standards and specifications focused on Monarch restoration and conservation throughout the State of Missouri.
- As a member of the NRCS Staff, attended NRCS State Level meetings, and strategic planning sessions, (ARC Meeting, State Technical Committee Meeting, CRP & EQIP Sub-Committee) providing the fish, forest and wildlife perspective to key FSA and NRCS Leadership to aid in setting State and Regional Priorities for Farm Bill Programs. Routinely coordinated and worked with State and Federal counterparts throughout the Midwest (Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Texas) on the development and implementation of regional conservation programs and initiatives. Provided insight and guidance to National groups such as the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies for the purposes of rallying Farm Bill program support.
- Responsible for overseeing annual and regional operating budgets, as well as the WRP-WRE annual allocation through the Wetland Services Biologist. Was responsible for the development of quarterly and annual accomplishment reports for the purposes of meeting Federal and State grant obligations as well as providing accomplishment reports to NRCS for the purposes of annual reporting. Represented the Missouri Department of Conservation, Private Land Services Division on multiple State Level and Federal Level working groups.
- Served and the primary program lead for Farm Bill Conservation policy and advocacy efforts, specifically within the Title II – Conservation Provision.

## **PROFESSIONAL FIELD EXPERIENCE**

### **Private Land Biologist-Missouri Department of Conservation**

April 2010-November 2011

Responsibilities Include:

- Work with State and Federal partners to lead, develop and deliver private land programs and initiatives, the MDC Landowner Assistance Program as well as Farm Bill programs that address important natural resource issues such as habitat degradation and pollinator conservation with the two county districts. Provide one-on-one natural resource technical advice to all landowners within my assigned district through on-site visits and management plan development while actively working to strengthen the relationship between MDC, NRCS, FSA, SWCD and USFWS through cooperative efforts such as landowner workshops and technical assistance. Other efforts included being actively involved with community activities such as the local FFA chapters, local NGO's such as Quail Forever chapters within the two county districts.

### **Assistant Wildlife Biologist -Missouri Department of Conservation**

May 2009-April 2010

Responsibilities Included:

- Directly responsible for planning and overseeing and completing all habitat management activities on six public conservation areas within the Green Hills Conservation District in Northeast Missouri which included a 6,700 acre intensively managed wetland area. Provided direct supervision and leadership to three salaried personnel four temporary employees, ensuring the completion and achievement of annual work objectives. Responsible for conducting annual performance appraisals as well as outlining daily job duties, providing staff with the tools they need to complete projects efficiently and accurately. Responsible for the development and oversight of the District's annual operating budget as well as the permittee Ag Crop program and contracts as well as operating the annual waterfowl hunt program.

### **Supervisory Biological Science Technician-U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

March 2005-May 2009

Responsibilities Included:

- Working in cooperation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Nebraska Fish and Game, South Dakota DNR to monitor and manage flood plain natural communities along the lower Missouri river. Supervised two term employees and seven hourly employees in conducting species sampling, assessing species richness/diversity of four artificial side chutes within the lower Missouri River. Responsible for following all USACE sampling protocols to ensure data was collected and processed accurately. Responsible for coordinating all sampling efforts (weekly work schedules, over-night travel arrangements) for all Mitigation project staff. Responsible for the development of detailed annual reports and management recommendations to the USACE to aid in the management of the lower Missouri River, specifically for Threatened and Endangered Species.

## **ACTIVITIES/COMMITTEES**

NCLI Alumni – Cohort 14

AFWA – MAFWA Private Land Working Group

NBCI – Private Lands Working Group

SBEN – Bioenergy Working Group

Quail & Small Game Task Force

State Wetland Coordination Team

Cover Crop Working Group

CRP Subcommittee – Mo State Technical Committee

EQIP Subcommittee – Mo State Technical Committee  
VPA-HIP Program Development Committee  
MO Chapter of the Wildlife Society-Professional Development Committee  
Chapter President – Mid-Mo Uplanders Quail Forever

#### **AWARDS**

2019 – Most Valued Employee PF/QF  
2018 – Conservation Warrior Award PF/QF  
2014-Tricia R. Radford Team Award- NBCI Focus Area Quail Surveys

2013-Conservation Federation of Missouri Soil Conservationist of the Year  
2010-Missouri Department of Conservation Achievement Award, CWD Coordination  
2007-U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Award of Merit  
2007-U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Award of Merit- Exemplary Supervision  
2007-U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Award of Merit  
2006-U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Award of Merit  
2005-Missouri Department of Conservation Wildlife Division Achievement Award

#### **REFERENCES**

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