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SCOTTSBLUFF/GERING, NEBRASKA

PRIDE IN THE PANHANDLE

Dow Chemical, Extension join together to aid wildlife

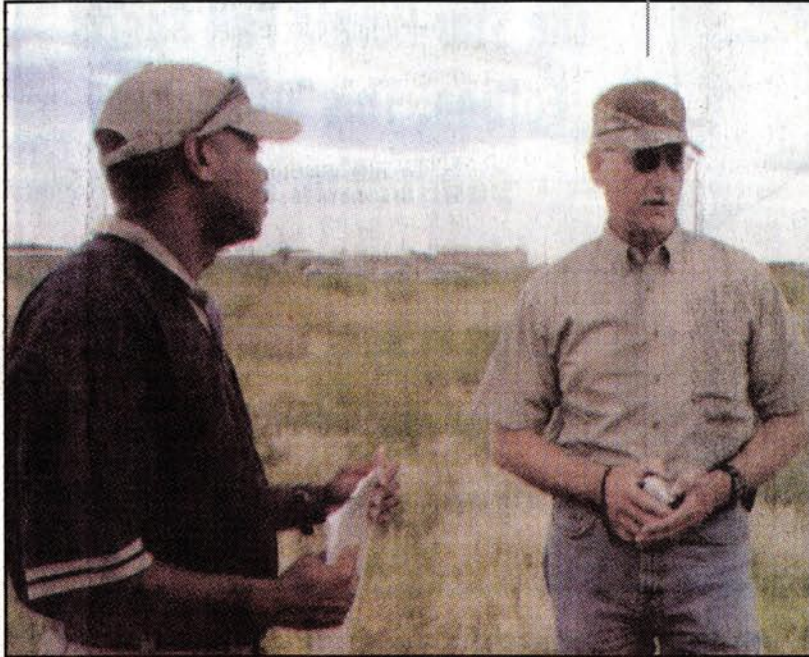


Photo by Chabella Guzman

Steve Knode, right, a part-time employee of Platte River Basin Environments, discusses the difference the herbicides made in the Spotted Creek area with Byron Sleugh, a product tech specialist with Dow Chemical Company and a member of the UNL Panhandle Research Extension weed department.

By CHABELLA GUZMAN
Staff Reporter

MITCHELL — A group of specialists are working together to restore native grasses and wildlife to the Spotted Tail unit.

Steve Knode, a part-time employee of Platte River Basin Environments, and Chris Haun, a local Dow Chemicals representative, prepped the land, delivered the necessary herbicides and are now seeing the results.

Making the land sustainable for more wildlife is what both organizations are trying to accomplish.

"Dow works to find partners to work in different areas of the country providing assistance with evasive and noxious plant life," said Byron Sleugh, a product tech specialist with Dow AgroSciences, a division of Dow. "When we learned of this project, we knew we wanted to be part of it and help with good stewardship of the land."

So far the project has been bene-

ficial for both organizations and Knode hopes it will also be conducive to returning wildlife in the future.

"Eventually we hope to have the areas open for public use, as the area returns to its natural state, with natural grasses," he said. "We really appreciate the donation Dow gave us to get rid of a lot of the noxious weeds and Russian olives. Being good stewards of the land benefits us all.

"There are 830 acres in the Spotted Tail area, and in March we burned 60 acres to germinate the dormant thistle," Knode said.

Dow Chemicals donated the 100 gallons of herbicides for the project. "We have been working with Dr. (Robert) Wilson at the Extension, in noxious weeds and this site proved to be a good test site," said Sleugh.

"Milestone" is a relatively new product and was used on the Canada thistle and targets musk and Scotch thistle as well.

"Thistle can be very evasive in

this area," said Knode. "We did aerial spraying that gave us pretty good coverage and there are only a few areas that didn't get covered."

The group will also be using "Remedy Ultra" for the Russian olives that grow along the creek area. "There will be different applications done," said Haun. "Remedy does a good job of killing off the Russian olives without destroying the other vegetation around it."

Studying the effects of the herbicides on the grasses and noxious weeds were not only staff from Dow, but also Wilson and his group of weed specialists from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Panhandle Research and Extension Center (PREC) in Scottsbluff.

"We sectioned off certain areas to watch the effects of the herbicides on the treated areas and non-treated areas," said Gustavo Sbatella, a weed specialist from PREC. "This way we can determine the best time to spray for the weeds."