

**Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Report To  
Papio-Missouri River NRD Board  
December 11, 2014  
Neil Jensen, District Conservationist**



Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS.

**Papio-Missouri River NRD Field Staff are Busy this Fall**

Fall has always been a busy season to get conservation on the ground. Fall of 2014 is no different. Early cold weather looked to shut down construction prematurely. With somewhat warmer weather in the past two weeks, construction of practices has progressed. Fields that have a heavy layer of residue on the surface

do not have much frost in the ground. Frost in the ground halts construction of many practices that require soil compaction. Frozen ground cannot be compacted.



Staff continues to work on Conservation Stewardship Contract renewals in the district. The Conservation Stewardship Program helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resources concerns. Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance - the higher the performance, the higher the payment.



**Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM34 - Leave standing grain crops unharvested to benefit wildlife**

**Enhancement Description** - Implement a crop management plan that will allow a portion of grain crops to be left in fields unharvested to provide food and cover for wildlife during winter months.

**Benefits** - Row crops such as corn and soybeans can be a very important food source for wildlife. Waste grain left after harvest is used throughout the winter by many species, although under ice or snow cover, this grain may be unavailable to

wildlife. One remedy is to leave a portion of the crop field unharvested. Rows of these crops located on the edges of fields are often less productive from a crop production standpoint, but they can be very productive for wildlife. Corn is especially good for this purpose since it is held above winter snow and remains available all winter. Grain crops such as sorghums, sunflower, wheat, and oats also provide a food source for wildlife. Not using herbicides on the crops that will be left un-harvested will provide additional food and cover benefits. This has the added benefit of reducing the amount of herbicides that are applied to fields. Allowing annual weeds such as foxtail, lamb's quarter, smartweed, and common ragweed to grow among the rows of un-harvested crops will provide an additional food source as well as cover. Weeds in soybeans are particularly important as food and cover for wildlife. Since, compared to corn or small grains, soybeans provide relatively little cover.



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