

FY 2025 Annual Report

O'Brien County Conservation Board

July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025



Mission Statement:

To provide a connection to O'Brien County's historical, cultural, and natural resources through environmental education and outdoor recreation; and to preserve and protect our lakes, parks and natural areas to be accessible for all generations.

OCCB Personnel

Below is a directory of board members and employees for the fiscal year.

Board Members			
Name	Position	Meetings Attended	Term Ends
Greg Burmakow	Member	14	June 2026
Dan Verrips	Member	13	June 2027
John Putnam	Member	12	June 2029
Kathy Luedke	Chair	14	June 2025
Tom Konz	Vice Chair	12	June 2028

Meetings Held

The Conservation Board held twelve regular meetings and two special session meetings during the year. The minutes of these meetings are on file at the O'Brien County Conservation Board Headquarters.

Full Time Employees		
Name	Position	Employment Dates
Mark Wilson	Director	October 13, 2021
Sarah Fiddelke	Office Manager	May 9, 2022
Lindsey Kleinhesselink	Naturalist	March 28, 2023
Joe Feekes	Conservation Technician	August 2, 2021
Luke Davison	Operations Supervisor	May 25, 2023
Bryce Batien	Park Ranger	January 6, 2024—November 19, 2024

Campground Hosts		
Bob & Vickie Ruden	Mill Creek	2007-2025
LuCinda Siekman	Dog Creek	2020-2025
Kim Remillard	Douma	2020-2025

Seasonal Employees		
Ian Oliver	Naturalist	2024—2025
Bode Bailey	Conservation Tech	2025
Brett Evans	Conservation Tech	2025

FY 25 Financial Statement

Expense and Revenue Report: July 1, 2024—June 30, 2025

Revenue

Camping and cabin rentals from Mill Creek and Dog Creek accounted for the bulk of revenue, generating over \$220,000 in total. Douma and Tjossem camping fees, combined with Mill Creek Lodge rentals, provided additional contributions. Miscellaneous sources, including pet fees, hotel/motel excise taxes, donations, and concession stand lease, supplemented these main revenue streams.

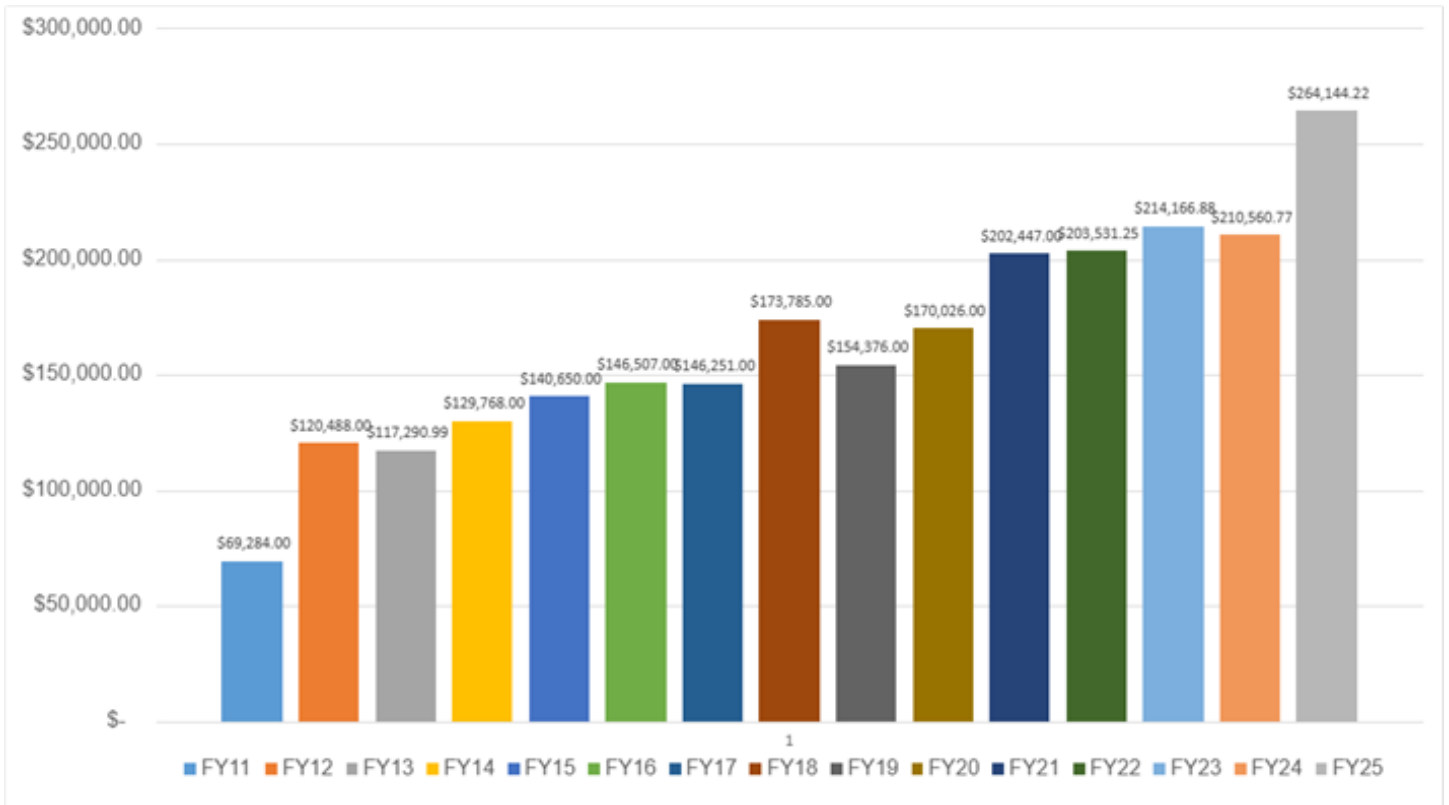
Revenue Source	Amount
Camping Fees - Mill Creek	\$108,312.00
Camping Fees - Dog Creek	\$31,080.00
Camping Fees - Douma	\$27,876.22
Camping Fees - Tjossem	\$3,936.00
Cabin Rentals - Mill Creek	\$44,385.00
Cabin Rentals - Dog Creek	\$42,420.00
Mill Creek Lodge Rentals	\$3,835.00
MCP Transaction Fees	\$7,687.25
Pet Fees	\$2,300.00
Hotel Excise Tax	\$4,372.50
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$5,784.47
General Basic Revenue	\$284,673.87
Donations	\$5,524.59
SEP Fund	\$94.27
REAP Fund	\$14,763.55
Conservation Trust Fund	\$2,864.78
TOTAL REVENUE	\$307,921.06

Expense

Admin Expense	Amount	Operations Expense	Amount
Salaries-Regular Employees	\$228,050.42	Feed, Fish, & Game	\$5,953.45
Wages-Part Time Employees	\$21,929.04	Custodial Supplies	\$6,611.39
Office Supplies	\$3,145.45	Hardware	\$4,918.81
Newspapers & Books	\$70.00	Parts	\$5,000.00
Clothing & Uniforms	\$2,651.10	Fuel & Oil	\$18,959.59
Official Publication	\$161.64	Tires & Tubes	\$2,969.62
Photocopy Services	\$763.49	Minor Parts & Accessories	\$5,014.02
Postage & Box Rent	\$273.98	Recreational Upkeep	\$38,267.51
Board Mileage & Expenses	\$1,334.30	Gas	\$362.66
Employee Mileage	\$636.49	Electric	\$22,086.26
Telephone, Cable, Internet	\$13,993.70	Water	\$4,644.89
Education & Training	\$982.54	Extermination Services	\$85.96
Autopsy & Medical Exams	\$343.00	Sanitation Services	\$14,759.48
Dues & Memberships	\$2,512.00	Excise Tax -Mill Creek	\$2,051.25
Campground Host Stipend	\$7,475.00	Excise Tax -Dog Creek	\$2,165.25
Office Equip & Furniture	\$1,722.46	5% Merchant Acct Fee	\$6,656.76
FICA	\$17,975.74	MCP Trans Fee	\$3,356.00
IPERS	\$21,314.93	Merchant Acct Fee	\$360.00
Medical Insurance	\$63,030.00	Trees & Seeding	\$3,187.52
Total	\$388,365.28	Deposit Reimbursements	\$330.00
PHC Expense	Amount	Area Development	\$153,290.85
Salaries - Naturalist	\$47,122.54	Motor Vehicle	\$41,198.02
PHC Custodial Supplies	\$6,830.37	Shop Equipment	\$2,761.22
Books	\$954.72	Total	\$344,990.51
Equipment & Hand Tools	\$1,472.11	Expense Category	Amount
Audio/Visual Supplies	\$1,149.52	Operation	\$344,990.51
Education Supplies	\$7,088.53	Administration	\$388,365.28
Ad & Promotion - PHC	\$2,555.24	Prairie Heritage Center	\$132,389.96
Telephone & Internet - PHC	\$2,818.64	Total Expenses	\$865,745.75
Electric - PHC	\$4,441.12	General Basic	\$755,371.81
Water - PHC	\$1,035.40	General Supplemental	\$110,373.94
Building Repairs - PHC	\$42,334.93		
Display Maintenance - PHC	\$6,123.89		
Sanitation Disposal - PHC	\$409.68		
FICA	\$3,604.87		
IPERS	\$4,448.40		
Total	\$ 132,389.96		

Conservation Board Revenue

Revenue generated by user fees within O'Brien County Parks. This does not include excise tax, transaction fees, interest, donations, grants, reimbursements or refunds that are accounted for in the full revenue report.



Education and Outreach

O'Brien County Conservation provides a robust education and outreach program.

Throughout Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025), O'Brien County Conservation continued to strengthen its impact on the community by engaging more than 9,000 individuals through a wide range of educational and recreational programs. Of these participants, approximately 7,000 were students and 2,000 were members of the public, all gaining meaningful connections to the outdoors through interactive experiences.

This year's educational outreach brought learning to life beyond the classroom, with field trips to prairies, lakes, and natural areas offering students hands-on opportunities to explore Iowa's diverse habitats and deepen their understanding of the environment.

The Prairie Heritage Center once again served as a vibrant destination for discovery, hosting a full calendar of activities. Signature events such as Bald Eagle Day, the Bison Burger Picnic & Lawn Concert, and National Bison Day Celebration drew strong attendance, while summer camps and winter "Open Range" programs ensured the excitement continued throughout the seasons.

New initiatives and program expansions kept the momentum growing. Enhanced recreational opportunities in the county parks encouraged outdoor exploration, while the increasingly popular Homeschool Nature program provided families with enriching learning experiences all year long. Regular visits to local libraries, senior centers, and schools offered additional educational touchpoints across the community.

Beloved family events, including Winter Funderland, Fall Fest, and the Paullina Gemboree at Mill Creek Park—remained highlights of the year, fostering community connections and outdoor fun for all ages.

As O'Brien County Conservation looks ahead, the focus remains on creating engaging, accessible, and memorable experiences that inspire a lifelong appreciation for nature and conservation.

Media Outreach and Promotion

O'Brien County Conservation's media efforts effectively connect the community with programs, events, and natural resources. In partnership with the Little Sioux Valley Conservation Association, bi-annual newsletters reach 1,800 patrons through mail and email, providing updates on events and initiatives.

Regular press releases and event information are featured in regional newspapers, while radio interviews and social media platforms ensure comprehensive coverage and engagement. The Travel Iowa webpage and promotional materials have contributed to increased visitor traffic, showcasing the area's attractions to a broader audience.

These efforts, combined with strategic use of diverse media channels, ensure ongoing communication, community engagement, and support for conservation programs year-round.



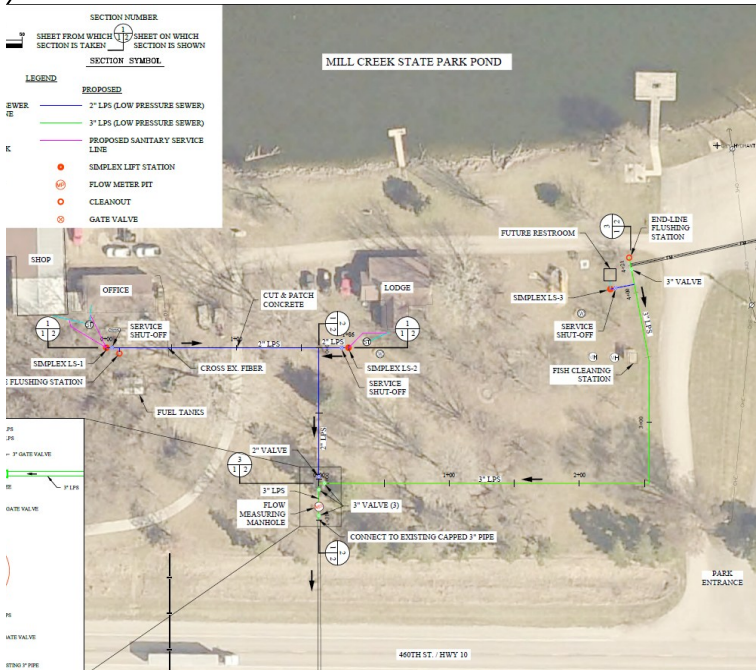
Major Projects

O'Brien County Conservation Board has planned and initiated a number of capital improvement and other development projects throughout the last year.

Mill Creek Sewer Project

Using ARPA funding as a catalyst funding source, OCCB contracted an engineering firm to design a forced main sewer system connecting Mill Creek Park's septic systems to Paullina's sewer system. This multi-phase project began with Phase 1 construction that was completed in FY25. Phase 1 is focused on the west side of the park, to include infrastructure to support a future all-season bathroom.

Future phases will connect the rest of the park, to include sewer hook ups at the parks 48 campsites.



PHC—Exhibit Renovation

Through private donations, REAP, and county funds, OCCB is partnering with a professional firm to redesign and install new exhibits in the Prairie Heritage Center's main floor rotunda. Final design and fabrication continued during FY25, with construction set to begin in Winter 2025.

OCCB graciously thanks all those who have donated. More information about this project can be found at www.prairieheritagecenter.org



Major Projects

O'Brien County Conservation Board has planned and initiated a number of capital improvement and other development projects throughout the last year.

PHC—Basement Renovation

In anticipation of the upstairs being renovated soon, the basement area of the nature center was given a major uplift. The stairwell and aquatic area was painted with educational murals by a local artist and a storage area was renovated into a cozy reading library dedicated to longtime board member Kathy Luedke.

Finally, the main room was painted and displays and furniture changed to reflect OCCB's priority of making the PHC a top tier environmental educational learning center.



PHC—Natural Playscape

As the weather warmed up, staff worked to enhance the outdoor playscape at the nature center. The pioneer wagon was completed re-constructed, with additional play features. Natural rocks were laid out to create a stepping and climbing play area for all ages, while cedar wood play tables and funnel stand were added to the playscape.

Late in the spring, a manufactured 'sway net' climbing feature was added to complete the all-new playscape at the nature center.



Parks and Wildlife Areas

Below is an inventory of the different parks, wildlife areas, and buildings managed by OCCB

Area Inventory

The O'Brien County Conservation Board manages 942 acres of land in 25 locations throughout the county for outdoor recreation and wildlife benefits. Of the 942 acres, the conservation board purchased 363 acres, 411 acres were donated to the conservation board, and the conservation board leases 168 acres.

Building Inventory

Nine areas have a total of 49 structures. These include: 4 pit toilets, 5 shower houses, 14 picnic shelters, 40' x 86' shop/machine shed, 32' x 48' equipment shed, 26' x 52' office/garage, 42' x 20' addition to shed, 32' x 60' shed/shelter, 8 cabins, concession stand, lodge, 4,876 square foot Prairie Heritage Center, 32' x 60' storage building with porch, 40' x 58' shed and 60' x 58' shed with overhang, and 6 miscellaneous buildings.

Mill Creek Park

5660 460th St. Paullina, IA 51046

- Worked with campground host to assist park users and maintain amenities.
- Performed regular maintenance such as mowing, tree trimming, tree removal, painting/staining, garbage collection, and trail repair.
- Maintained roads, spread gravel as needed, installed speed bumps, parking barriers and cable gates.
- Continued shop and office space organization and cleaning.
- Treated aquatic vegetation.
- Poured a new patio at the lodge.
- Stained cabins and scout island shelter.
- Initiated the first phase of natural areas management plan by removing unwanted vegetation throughout the park, with a particular focus on the west side.



Dog Creek Park

4901 Warbler Ave. Sutherland, IA 51058

- Worked with campground host to assist park users and maintain site amenities.
- Maintained campground, cabins, bathrooms, roads, trails and beach.
- Performed storm clean up and hazard tree removal as needed.
- Performed natural areas management tasks; including prescribed burns and tree removal.
- Treated aquatic vegetation.
- Stained cabins
- Renovated beach area parking lot



Douma & Tjossem Parks

3351 Polk Ave. Sanborn, IA 51248—Douma

5949 400th St. Primghar, IA 51245—Tjossem

- Douma: Worked with campground host to assist park users and maintain site amenities.
- Douma: Treated aquatic vegetation.
- Douma: Speed bump was installed.
- Maintained campground, bathrooms, roads, trails and beach.
- Performed storm clean up and hazard tree removal as needed.



Prairie Heritage Center

4931 Yellow Ave. Peterson, IA 51047

- Performed routine maintenance and upkeep of building and surrounding grounds.
- Continued working with design firm to finalize new exhibit designs.
- Contracted painting of murals in stairwell and basement.
- Renovated basement area—including the addition of a reading library dedicated to Kathy Luedke.
- Managed bison herd and pasture;
- Designed, constructed and installed new natural playscape area.
- Hosted annual Bison Burger Picnic on behalf of the Little Sioux Conservation Association.



Wildlife Areas

Bruegmann Area: 39.9 acres

Donated by Gilbert Bruegmann family

3153 – 100th Ave.; 43°11.373 N 95°23.278 W

- Performed routine maintenance and upkeep.
- Managed waterfowl nesting structures.

Burned Bridge Canoe Access Area: 1 acre

Transferred from the county

4901 Wilson Ave, 42°56.265 N 95°25.200 W

- Performed routine maintenance and upkeep.
- Graded parking lot.

Covey Church: 1 acre

Leased from Grant Township.

6598 – 400th St; 43°04.123 N 95°29.249 W

- Performed routine maintenance and upkeep.

Crosbie Wildlife & Nature Youth Center: 160 acres, leased from Crosbie Family. Lease expires 2030.

4270 Roosevelt Ave; 43°01.950 N 95°38.690 W

- Maintained targets and shooting range.
- Managed food plots.
- Mowed fire breaks and maintained prairie areas.
- Mowed and performed weed control around buildings.
- Held Youth Pheasant Shoot and Hunter Safety Education

Flinders Wildlife Area: 3 acres

Leased from James Flinders.

4600 Tyler Ave; 42°58.915 N 95°31.479 W

- Inspected the area.

Hagen Wildlife Area: 11 acres,

Donated by Mr. & Mrs. B.C. Hagen.

4141 Silver Ave; 43°02.927 N 95°37.842 W

- Performed routine maintenance and upkeep.
- Planted and managed food plot.

Hannibal Waterman Wildlife Area: 160 acres,

Purchased with funds from habitat stamp grant, the O'Brien County Sportmen's Club and the O'Brien County Historical Society.

4930 Yellow Ave; 42°56.072 N 95°25.052 W

- Planted and managed food plots.
- Performed natural areas management tasks: invasive species control, surveys, & prescribed burns.
- Mowed and baled hay for supplemental bison feed.
- Maintained firebreaks and pioneer cemetery.

Wildlife Areas Continued

Hartley Shooting Range:

Managed for the O'Brien County Sportsmen's Club.

6723 330th St; 43°10.194 N 95°27.720 W

- Performed routine maintenance and upkeep of range and parking area.

Hill-Little Sioux Lookout Area: 1 acre

leased from Hill family.

7027 Waterman Blvd; 42°45.587 N 95°24.039 W

- Performed routine maintenance and upkeep.

Litka Wildlife Area: 4 acres,

Donated by Arnold Litka family.

6866 420th St; 43°02.336 N 95°26.095 W

- Performed routine maintenance and upkeep.

McCormack Prairie Area: 21 acres

Donated by Francis McCormack.

4710 Wilson Ave; 42°57.685 N 95°25.643 W

- Performed routine maintenance and upkeep.

Mill Creek Wildlife Area: 13 acres,

Donated by O'Brien County Sportsmen's Club.

4175 Polk Ave; 43°02.628 N 95°42.195 W

- Conducted prescribed burn.

Muxlow Wildlife Area: 3 acres

Leased from Merlin Timmons.

310th St; 43.19924 N 95.57407 W

- Performed routine maintenance and upkeep.

Negus Wildlife Area: 17 acres

Purchased from Delbert Negus family.

4882 Vine Ave; 42°56.153 N 95°29.183 W

- Provided routine maintenance and upkeep.

Old Dutch Fred Access: 1 acre.

6800 500th St; 42°55.466 N 95°26.214 W

- Performed routine maintenance and upkeep.

Railroad Right-of-Way Habitat: 3 tracts, 18 acres, donated by O'Brien County Sportsmen's Club.

- Performed routine maintenance and upkeep.

Sheldon Shooting Range:

Managed for the O'Brien County Sportsmen's Club.

2968 Nettle Ave; 43°13.165 N 95°48.176 W

- Performed routine maintenance and upkeep of parking area and ranges amenities.

Waterman Wildlife Addition: 134 acres

Purchased with funds from REAP & NAWCA grants, O'Brien County Sportsmen's Club, Pheasants Forever and Little Sioux Valley Conservation Association.

4921 Yellow Ave; 42° 56.170N; 95° 25.148W

- Maintained fire breaks.
- Conducted prescribed burn.
- Planted and managed food plots.

Weale Wildlife Area: 9 acres

Donated by Mr. & Mrs. Evan Weale

- Conducted prescribed burn.



Equipment Inventory

Below is a list of the major equipment inventory for OCCB

- 2015 Dodge 2500
- 2018 Ford F-150
- 2020 Dodge 1500
- 2022 Ford Escape
- 2023 Dodge Ram 2500
- 2023 Dodge Ram 1500 SSV
- 2023 Dodge Ram 1500
- 28' P & J Gooseneck Trailer
- 12' P & J Mower Trailer
- 16' P & J Mower Trailer
- 12' DCT Dump Trailer
- 22' Midsota Tiltbed Trailer
- John Deere 5085E Tractor
- John Deere 5085M Tractor
- John Deere Gator UTV with Gator Pal
- John Deere Z930 Zero-Turn Mower
- John Deere Z970 Zero-Turn Mower
- John Deere 1570 Front-Deck Mower
- 2022 T76 Bobcat Trackloader
- 2012 Honda Foreman ATV
- 2023 Snow Dog Groomer
- John Deere MX 10' Rotary Cutter
- IH 470 16' Tandem Disc
- Erskine 76" Brush Mower
- Erskine Grapple Bucket
- McClaren Auger Attachment
- John Deere 6' 3-pt Tandem Disc
- John Deere 15' Disk
- John Deere 14T Baler
- John Deere 7000 6-Row Planter
- New Holland 616 Rotary Mower
- Miller 211 Welder
- Vicon Broadcast Seeder
- Hiniker Snow Plow
- Diamond Forestry Mower
- Mueller Grapple
- Brown 12' Box Blade
- Bobcat Stump Grinder
- ExMark LZX820 Zero-Turn Mower

Community Partnerships

O'Brien County Conservation and staff are involved in a number of different committee's and partnerships, both locally and statewide.

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

- Assisted with prescribed burns on wildlife management properties in the Little Sioux River Valley.

O'Brien County Natural Resource Conservation Service

- Annual outdoor classroom was held at the Prairie Heritage Center with 200 students in attendance.

The Nature Conservancy of Iowa

- Worked with a variety of conservation agencies to continue to develop and operate a Little Sioux Watershed Conservation Partnership.

O'Brien County Economic Development

- Partnership that assists with Travel Iowa and Tourism development.

Paullina Chamber of Commerce

- Hosted the Paullina Fireworks display.

Clay County Fair

- O'Brien County Conservation staff provided programming at the Sundholm education center.

Community Libraries

- Provided joint monthly programming.

Iowa State Extension

- Hosted summer camps.

O'Brien County Sportsmens Club

- Hosted a youth pheasant hunt and supported outdoor skills educational programming.

Committee Representation

- O'Brien County Safety Committee
- O'Brien County Health Insurance Review Committee
- Little Sioux Watershed Conservation Partnership
- Little Sioux River Water Trail Development Committee
- Iowa Tourism
- Iowa County Conservation System—District 3
- O'Brien County REAP Committee



LITTLE SIOUX WATERSHED CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP

In May of 2025, O'Brien County Conservation joined numerous other area partners during the Little Sioux Cooperative Burn Week to complete prescribed burn objectives, including multiple units in O'Brien County.