

The Paisley Bottom

In the 1930's, my grandfather, James Paisley, purchased approximately 350 acres near Ripley, Illinois, in Brown County. Most of the land was located in the flood plain of the LaMoine River and was wooded and not tillable. After much sweat and a few years, most of the property was cleared, and he began farming the flood plain. Eventually, he had the property tilled to promote drainage, and the land became very productive. I say very productive, except during years that the river delayed harvest or totally took the crop that was to be harvested that year. As profit margins declined in the farming industry, it became more and more difficult to make a profit due to the loss of crops to flooding.



Initially to help provide some stability of income, the edges of the property surrounded by the river were put in what we call a filter strip. It is a strip of thick grass 99 feet wide and totaled approximately 35 acres. It was signed up in a set-aside program for ten years. Then, in the mid-1990s, the property was signed up in lifetime CREP. My point is that initially the farm was signed up in these set-aside programs mostly for economic reasons, and any benefit to the environment, nature, and quality of life was secondary. As time went by, the enhancement the CREP Program provided to the wildlife, environment, and quality of life became

increasingly apparent.

For example, in the past, quail were rarely seen on this property due to what I suspect was loss of habitat. Today, anytime of the year, you can see and listen to numerous quail thriving in their now-plentiful habitat. One thing I enjoy is deer hunting. It is not uncommon to see 25 deer as I sit in my tree stand or ground blind. My cousin has taken great effort to create areas that retain water, so that waterfowl will nest and other animals will have easy access to drinking water. One thing we like about the CREP Program is it allows, with certain restrictions, us to plant food plots. Our food plots have consisted of soybeans, alfalfa, wheat, clover,



sunflowers, milo, corn, and various other things. Food plots not only enhance the hunting opportunities, but they draw many different birds and animals. I know that these food plots provide the nutrition to many migrating birds so that they have the strength to successfully make their seasonal migration. Also, the food plots provide food throughout the winter for the wildlife that spend the entire year in the area.



Another benefit that has resulted from the property being enrolled in the CREP Program is the visual improvement in the quality of the LaMoine River. Prior to enrollment in the CREP Program, the river always resembled the color of “chocolate milk.” Sure, when we get a large precipitation event the river turns brown, but it quickly clears up and reaches a clarity that it never did in the pre-CREP days. I personally believe that the improvement in water quality of the LaMoine River is a direct result of the CREP Program. This has to help the quality of the Illinois River since the LaMoine River is one of the larger rivers that drains into the Illinois River.

Lastly, and probably the hardest to quantify, is the improvement in my quality of life that the CREP Program has made. My family, friends, and I use the property for many recreational purposes that include, but are not limited to: hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, etc. I feel that all of these activities have been enhanced by enrollment in the CREP Program. The CREP Program has made this a great nature area to visit, because it so beautiful, alive with wildlife, but yet so undeveloped. I know the last thing that will be done with me is that my ashes will be spread on this property, and, prior to enrollment in the CREP Program, they would have been washed downstream...now I think they will stay right where I want to be thanks to the CREP Program.



Written by Tom Henninger
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