

# Little hands sow seeds

## Beulah students plant wildflowers for bees

LAUREN DONOVAN  
Bismarck Tribune

BEULAH — Fourth-graders in Beulah learned all about the birds and bees last week — the real ones.

They learned that those winged creatures are in need of a helping hand, so they planted wildflowers on an acre of land on a Wildlife Management Area near Beulah last week.

They charged up and down the freshly plowed field with youthful enthusiasm in hopes that, this year and in the future, the plot would become a rich source of blooming grasses and flowers for bees and other insects.

Hunter Brewster was well prepped on the topic before he took off with his bucket of wildflower seeds.

“We need more bees because they pollinate our food. Farmers and ranchers spray and they kill the bees,” he said — a little wiggly because it was almost time to play a game called “Prey and Predator,” which demonstrated how hard it is for prey animals, such as pheasants, to survive without habitat.

The pollinator project was sponsored by the Knife River Chapter of Pheasants Forever and by Pheasants Forever Inc., which received



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Randy Huntimer, president of the Knife River Chapter of Pheasants Forever, helps his fourth-grade daughter, Alexis Huntimer, plant wildflowers in a one-acre plot near Beulah. The project is aimed at creating a beneficial habitat for bees, other insects and pheasants.

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## Seeds

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a \$20,000 pollinator project grant from the state Outdoor Heritage Fund. The Game and Fish Department, Riverdale district, was a cooperating partner.

The idea is that if bees and other insects are attracted to an area, that same area will be good for pheasant chicks just learning how to grub around for juicy bugs to eat, as well as provide brood cover, said chapter president Randy Huntimer.

In the bigger picture, bees and other pollinating insects

are critical for the reproduction and vibrancy of many plant species. Leah Hager, a fourth-grader, said she worries about that.

“Without them, if the world’s not healthy, it would be a big, old mess and there would be lots of extinct animals. Sometimes, with butterflies, I think what can I do to help them,” Hager said.

The wildflowers and plants were a rich mix — 35 species in all — of perennials, native grasses and wildflowers that should result in a diverse field that could one day be alive with buzzing insects and possibly chicks pecking about.

Justin Edwards of Mandan, a Farm Bill biologist with Pheasants Forever, provided the project support.

He said the educational materials are available to any youth or school group through one of the two dozen statewide Pheasants Forever chapters. The Beulah project was one of two completed earlier this month. Edwards said there’s enough matching money for eight more, and the group has until June 2017 to disburse it. Each project costs several thousand dollars, including seed, site preparation, plants, T-shirts for kids and advertising for sponsors.

He says it’s money well spent — not just for the birds and the bees, but for children, too.

“This is about education and the opportunity to create a pollinator plot. We want the kids to come back in a couple of years and see all the flowers blooming,” he said.

Pheasants Forever also works with private landowners on pollinator plantings and has 16 ongoing projects statewide in its honeybee and monarch program.

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