

Continual Improvement for Greatest Return

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With so much digital information at our fingertips, instant gratification is easy to find. But effectively managing farms -- where productivity is maximized and sensitive acres are protected -- is not often as easy as checking a few boxes and moving on. Mother nature has a wicked way of messing with best laid plans and schedules.

Peoples Company Land Managers might run into a variety of time-sensitive and relationship-driven work during the growing season:

- Desire to complete a drainage or dirtwork project when field conditions are adequate. To complete the work, the contractor must be available when the work aligns with farmer's planting or harvest schedule.
- A federally funded program requires farm maintenance and weather will not cooperate. Example: CRP mid-contract management of burning a prairie planting in a wet spring with nesting season soon to start.
- Desire to incorporate a new conservation practice on a farm and the need to align that practice with the existing system the farmer is already employing. Example: Wanting to drill cover crops after harvest when farmer is busy until snowfall with harvest and other field work and is unable to drill the cover crop.

Relationships and setting realistic expectations are key to farm improvement. It can be a balance of working with the local farmer and regional contractors to ensure projects are completed in a timely manner. Open and consistent communication with local officials can also save a project with a more rigid timeline, where good faith extensions or exemptions can be given if that foundation is laid beforehand.

Non-farming landowners can also be set up for success when choosing a farm operator to partner with. A tenant with equipment and the motivation to fix a fence, reshape waterways, or repair a tile blowout can be a significant value-add in areas where contractors are scarce. Partnerships like this are possible when an equitable lease is in place and goals of each party are clearly communicated.

This is a good glimpse at what Peoples Company Land Managers talk about doing the "boots on the ground" work. Landowners are certainly able if there is a desire to foster the many relationships needed to maintain and improve a farm, but so much of this work depends on in-person conversations and in-field problem solving that may not be possible for a geographically-removed landowner.



A waterway shaped and seeded down the fall before has silted in and needs minor reshaping for ideal waterflow. Even in a no-till system with cover crops (cereal rye growing in field), soil can move as a new practice is established. The farmer is using a skid loader to lightly skim the high spots of the waterway and spreading excess out in the field.



Set-aside acres in a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) required a burn midway through the ten-year contract to promote new growth. The practice was due the previous year, but the local contractor was unable to complete the burn in the allowed time windows. Open communication with local officials made an extension request possible.

It is common for a Peoples Company Land Manager to “find their fee” over the span of the year. This can come through cost savings when projects are completed and done right the first time and local cost share / incentive payments are found for conservation work. And when production is truly maximized, there is a premium found at time of sale or to rent.

The fickleness of Mother Nature and scarcity of resources is all the more reason to double down on conservation. Practices like cover crops, waterways, and set-aside acres all help weatherproof farms for long term resiliency. Investing a local presence to ensure farms are maintained and improved ensures greatest return to the landowner and the environment.

For more information on how a Peoples Company Land Manager can add value to your farm, please visit www.peoplescompany.com or email landmanagement@peoplescompany.com.