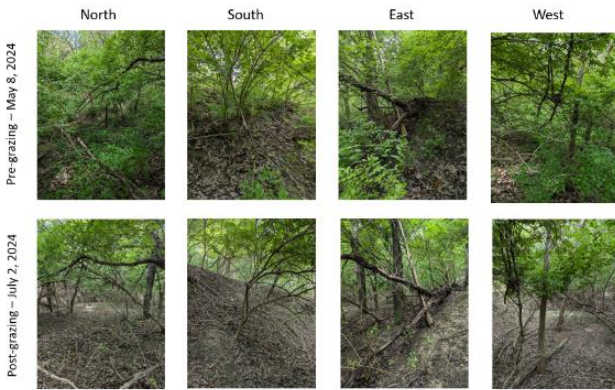


## Observations

While the final results will be available upon study completion, initial observations suggest that goat grazing effectively reduces honeysuckle density. The combination of grazing, cutting, and mulching appears to be particularly promising in preparing the land for future prescribed burns.

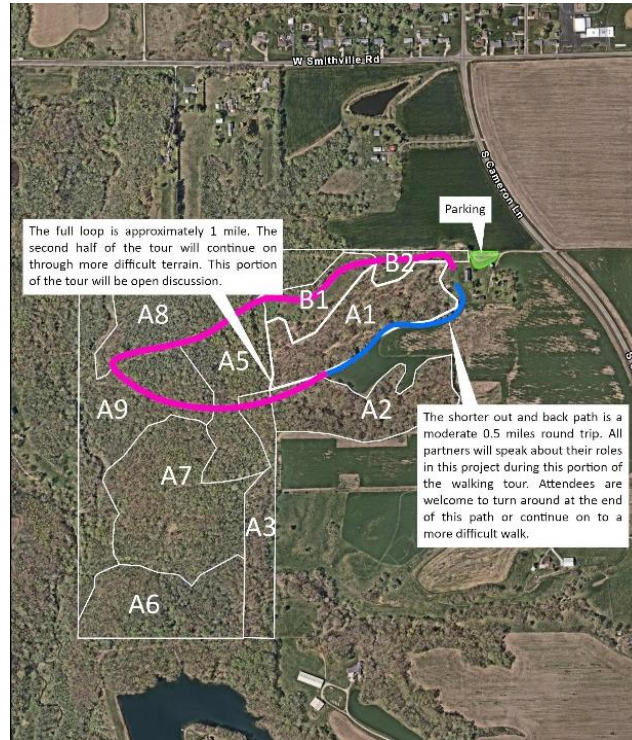
### Unit A1b



## Lessons Learn

- **Goat Grazing is Effective:** Goats significantly reduce honeysuckle biomass, especially when combined with manual cutting
- **Integrated Approaches Work Best:** Combining grazing, cutting, mulching and seeding offers the most comprehensive restoration strategy
- **Collaborative Conservation is Key:** Leveraging technical expertise and resources from conservation partners is beneficial in achieving desired conservation outcomes
- **Community Engagement is a Priority:** Sharing our findings with local landowners encourages broader adoption of sustainable practices
- **Continuous Process:** This is not one and done. Long-term success requires monitoring and additional treatments

## Project Map



## How to Get Started!

Reach out to your local Pheasants Forever or Quail Forever (PFQF) Farm Bill Biologist. PFQF has biologists assisting landowners in every county in Illinois! Find your local biologist at [ihuntill.com/team-illinois](http://ihuntill.com/team-illinois)

**Zach Stephenson** serves **Tazewell, McLean, Woodford, Livingston, and Peoria** counties.  
Phone Number: (217) 691-0922  
Email: [zstephenson@pheasantsforever.org](mailto:zstephenson@pheasantsforever.org)

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# HABITAT TOUR

## Biological Management of Woody Species

### Explore Sustainable Land Management in Action

Date: June 6th, 2025

Time: 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Address: 3105 S Cameron Ln. Peoria, Illinois

### Tour Speakers/Project Partner Representative

Landowner: Shirley Johnson

Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist: Zach Stephenson

USFWS Partners for Fish & Wildlife: Emily Hodapp

USDA NRCS Soil Conservationist: Daniel Sahn

American Farmland Trust: Kristopher Reynolds

Illinois DNR District Forester: Tom Branson

Invasive Plant Removal and Maintenance: Mike McKim

Peoria County Farm Bureau: Charlie Hensley

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education: Cate Loomis



## Welcome!

On this **Habitat Tour**, learn how **targeted goat grazing** is being used to combat invasive **bush honeysuckle** and **restore native oak savanna ecosystems** — all without the use of herbicides. This collaborative conservation project explores practical solutions for land managers seeking to reclaim degraded woodlands and prep for **prescribed fires**.

## About the Farm

- **176-acre family farm** near **Peoria, IL**, stewarded by the Johnson family for over 100 years
- Includes **certified organic crops, prairie strips, and 110 acres of woodland**
- Features past conservation projects like a **woodchip bioreactor and dry dam**

## Restoring Oak Savanna

1939



2019



AREAS THAT WERE ONCE OAK SAVANNA AND OAK WOODLANDS ARE NOW COMPLETELY DOMINATED BY UNDESIRABLE WOODY SPECIES LIKE OSAGE ORANGE, LOCUST, HONEYSUCKLE, MULTIFLORA ROSE, AND AUTUMN OLIVE.

Historically, this land was part of an oak savanna ecosystem, a fire-dependent landscape rich in biodiversity. The farm would have been a mix of prairie, open canopy-oak dominated savanna, and more closed canopy oak-hickory woodland.

## The Challenge: Honeysuckle is a Problem

- **Bush honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp.)** is an aggressive invader in Illinois woodlands
- It **shades out native groundcover, consumes moisture and nutrients, causes soil erosion, and prevents fire** — a critical forest management tool
- Without groundcover, there is **no fuel for prescribed burning**, a key process for restoring healthy oak savannas

## Our Solution: Biological Control (Goats)

This project tests the effectiveness of **non-herbicide treatments** for controlling honeysuckle across **20.6 acres of steep, wooded terrain**:

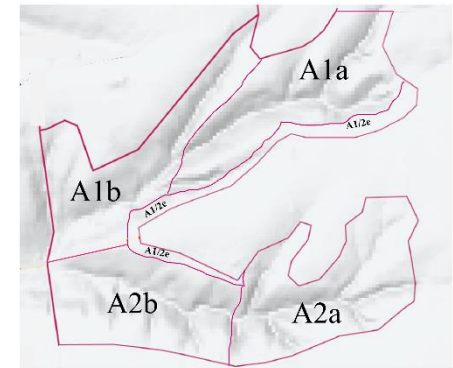
- **Targeted Goat Grazing**  
100 goats grazed down woody understory up to 6 feet tall
- **Mechanical Cutting**  
Cutting reduced honeysuckle canopy where goats could not access
- **Mulching (Machine Shredding)**  
Applied in accessible areas to jump-start treatment
- **Seeding Native Grasses**  
Light seeding during grazing may help establish herbaceous fuel for future fire



## How It Works: The Study Design

Five test units were established with one untreated control area (A5). Treatments are being evaluated over multiple seasons:

Unit	Acreage	Pre-treatment	Treatments		
		winter 23	spring summer 2024	fall 24	2025
A1a	5	none	goats pull cut	goats	goats
A2a	4.8	none	goats	pull cut	goats
A1b	5	none	goats	goats pull cut mulch	goats
A2b	4.8	none	goats	goats pull cut	goats
A1/2c	1	mulch	goats	goats	goats
A5	9.2	none	none	none	none



## Additional Management Actions

The 110 wooded acres were divided into forest management areas (see map on back page).

- A1, A2, and A3: goat grazed, mechanically cleared, more goat grazing in progress
- B2: mechanically cleared then pollinator mix, oak trees, and hazelnut shrubs planted
- B1: mechanical clearing in progress
- A4 through A9: as yet untouched
- Prescribed fire planned growing season 2025