

Pheasant

15TH MEETING OF THE MIDWEST PHEASANT STUDY GROUP

IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL WILD PHEASANT CONSERVATION PLAN



HOSTED BY IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

SEPTEMBER 31- OCTOBER 3, 2013

HOLE 'N THE WALL LODGE

AKRON, IA

TODD BOGENSCHUTZ, CHAIR

MARK MCINROY, SECRETARY

2013 REPORT

15TH MIDWEST PHEASANT STUDY GROUP MEETING

**THE MIDWEST PHEASANT STUDY GROUP IS A TECHNICAL WORKING COMMITTEE OF THE
MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES**

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STATE REPORTS



MIDWEST PHEASANT STUDY GROUP

Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri,
Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin

AGENDA 15TH MIDWEST PHEASANT STUDY GROUP MEETING

Monday – Sept 30, 2013

4:00 pm – 9:00 pm Check-in (Registration payable to Iowa Chapter TWS)

7:00 pm – 9:00 pm Evening Social

Tuesday – Oct 1, 2013

7:00 am – 8:00 am Breakfast (provided)

8:00 am – 12:00 pm Morning Session

Welcome and Introductions – Iowa DNR Deputy Director & Plymouth Co. PF

State Status Reports

Pheasant observations during statewide long-term monitoring – IA: Karen Kinhead

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm Lunch (provided)

1:00 pm – 3:00 pm Afternoon Session

Adopt-A-Wildlife-Area: state initiative – IA PF: Ryan Heiniger

Interseeding Forbs – MN: Nicole Davros

Weather Model – SD/IA: Travis Runia, Todd Bogenschutz

Wheat Stubble – NE: Jeff Lusk

3:00 pm – 5:00 pm Field Trip – Plymouth County: Local Chapter Projects

5:15 pm – 6:30 pm Trap Shoot – Sponsored by Pheasants Forever

6:30 pm Dinner – Provided By Plymouth Co. Chapter PF

Wednesday – Oct 2, 2013

7:00 am – 8:00 am Breakfast (provided)

8:00 am – 11:30 pm Morning Session

Landscape Partnerships between government agency and NGOs – IA: Doug Chafa

Loess Hills: unique landform – Plymouth Co. Conservation Board: Victoria DeVos

Field Trip: Broken Kettle Grassland Area – Scott Moats: The Nature Conservancy

11:30 pm – 12:30 pm Lunch (Provided)

12:30 pm – 3:30 pm Afternoon Session

National Wild Pheasant Plan: Implementation vs. Multi Plan-Coordinator

3:45 pm – 8:00 pm Missouri River Tour – (dinner provided)

Thursday – Oct 3, 2013

7:00 am – 8:00 am Breakfast (provided)

8:00 am – 12:00 pm Morning Session

Pheasant Ingestion of Lead Shot – SD: Travis Runia

Steel Shot: perspective from a conservation officer – IA: Steve Griebel

Prairie Chicken translocation between NE and IA – IA: Mark McInroy

MPSG Business Meeting – plans for 2014

12:00 pm Adjourn (lunch on your own)



MIDWEST PHEASANT STUDY GROUP

Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin

MEETING SUMMARY

15TH MIDWEST PHEASANT STUDY GROUP MEETING

Eight Members states (IA-2, IN, KS, MN, NE, ND, OH, and SD-2) of the Midwest Pheasant Study Group (MPSG), along with representatives from the West (Washington Fish and Game and the Canadian Province of Saskatchewan) and Pheasants Forever arrived on Monday, September 30, 2013 at Hole 'N The Wall Lodge, Akron, IA. Our East representative from Pennsylvania could not attend this year.

Guests were welcomed to a 1,100 acre facility by lodge staff Joe Cain, Holly Kutz and Plymouth County Pheasants Forever member Kevin Gengler. The lodge is the property of the Dan Wells family, owners of the Wells Blue Bunny Corporation in LeMars, Iowa, the largest family-owned and operated ice cream manufacturer in the United States. Most of the property is enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program and managed exclusively for wild ring-necked pheasants.

Facility manager Joe Cain uses a mixture of cool and warm season grasses, food plots, and burning to maintain habitat, and clients harvest 500-600 wild pheasants annually. The Lodge will host the 2013 Iowa Governor's hunt as well as other VIP's like Pheasant Forever National staff. The evening was spent getting acquainted and Joe provided personal tours of his habitat management.



Tuesday morning began with formal introductions and welcome by Iowa DNR Deputy Director Bruce Trautman. Additional attendees included Alex Solem South Dakota Game Fish and Parks and Iowa DNR staff Kathy Koskovich, Alex Fosoda, and Kevin Goodrich. Following introductions, state representatives delivered their state reports, summarizing last year's hunting activities, ongoing management activities, and current pheasant research (Appendix 1).

The morning ended with a presentation by Iowa Wildlife Diversity coordinator Karen Kinkead (IA) on Iowa's Multi-Species Inventory and Monitoring (MSIM) program. Iowa developed the MSIM program in response to USFWS requirements for State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAP) and State Wildlife Grant funding. In the upcoming revision of SWAPs, the USFWS has recommended Iowa's MSIM protocol as a model for other states to consider. The MSIM program collects data on all Wildlife Action Plan species encountered as well as habitat variables. So far over 450 protected areas have been surveyed. An online database will be used to determine occupancy and density which can be related to environmental, microhabitat, and GIS/landscape scale covariates. Data will be used to answer questions such as, is there a change in species occupancy and habitat over time? Karen shared some of the occupancy data related to ring-necked pheasants and habitat variables.

Following lunch, Ryan Heiniger (PF) presented information on Iowa Pheasant Forever chapters' partnership/plan with Iowa DNR staff to improve habitat and populations of pheasant and quail around public wildlife areas. Nicole Davros (MN) presented results of research to enhance diversity of warm season grass plantings with native forb interseeding thru burning, mowing and herbicide use. Preliminary analysis suggests interseeding into established warm season grasses had little effect, however 2012 drought and burning regimes likely influenced results. Travis Runia (SD) and Todd Bogenschutz (IA) presented information on weather impacts on pheasant populations. Spring/winter weather parameters are related to survey trends in both states, but predictive ability is poor in SD compared to IA. Finally Jeff Lusk (NE) presented preliminary results on their tall wheat stubble pheasant habitat initiative in southwest NE. Modeling exercises suggested policy related to planted crops has more potential to influence pheasant numbers than conservation policy. Preliminary information suggests high hunter pressure influences hen reproductive success the following spring.

At 3:00 pm on Tuesday, the group left the Lodge for a field trip of local Plymouth County Pheasants Forever habitat projects. The chapter showcased their partnership with the town of Remsen to mitigate the city's nitrogen contaminated wells with native grass habitat that has also benefitted pheasants. Other projects include a riparian habitat project with trees and native grasses. High commodity prices have led to a disappearance of habitat in the county.

Wednesday morning began with two presentations by Doug Chafa, local Iowa DNR wildlife biologist, and Victoria DeVos of the Plymouth County Conservation Board (CCB). Both discussed the Loess Hills landform – geologically unique glaciated windblown soils that form the steep topography of the region. Close cooperation between the DNR, CCB, PF, and other partners like the Nature Conservancy (TNC) is necessary to implement habitat management in the hills as well as the Missouri River Flood Plain. The morning wrapped up with a field tour of the Broken Kettle Bird Conservation Area (BCA). The grassland core of this BCA is the 4,500+ acre Broken Kettle Grassland owned by TNC, and the 1,000+ acre Deer Creek Lake WMA. Partnerships between the DNR, TNC, PF, Loess Hills Alliance, and local landowners are working to maintain grazing and grasslands within the BCA.

The afternoon was spent discussing the National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan (hereafter, the Plan). The discussion began with Todd Bogenschutz (IA) giving an update on the Plan from the annual AFWA meeting. The Plan was approved by the AFWA executive committee. Budd Veverka (IN) will work with MAFWA liaison Ollie Torgerson to post the finished plan on the MAFWA website. Budd attended the 2013 MAFWA meeting in

Kentucky where the directors recommended the MPSG invite all Plan participants to the MPSG meeting and rewrite the groups by-laws to reflect participation by states outside MAFWA. Budd and Todd will work on revising the MPSG by-laws for approval at the MAFWA 2014 meeting. Budd will also work on an outline for a director-led Steering Committee and a National Wild Pheasant Technical Committee as part of the Plan's implementation to be presented with the by-law changes.

Next the group welcomed Allison Vogt, AFWA's Bird Committee liaison, via conference call. Todd and Allison provided an overview of the Bird Committee and its four working groups (Resident Gamebird, Waterfowl, Migratory Shore/Upland Game Bird, PIF/Shorebird/Waterbird) and also brought the group up-to-speed on all the resident game bird plans (pheasant, prairie grouse, bobwhite, western quail, wild turkey, etc.) that have been approved by AFWA in the last decade. Allison provided background on the recent AFWA Resident Game Bird Working Group meeting (10 Sept. 2013) where the prairie grouse folks proposed AFWA develop an NCN for coordination and implementation of the prairie grouse plan. The Resident Gamebird group took no action on the NCN request, but there was discussion of the great deal of overlap amongst the various gamebird plans for coordination and implementation. Allison agreed to host a conference call to discuss the concept of a broader resident gamebird NCN.

With this background the discussion then opened up for MPSG thoughts on the Plan's implementation. Should the MPSG resubmit to MAFWA directors the NCN for a Plan coordinator position that was not accepted last year or perhaps pursue individual state dollars to fund a Plan coordinator (similar to the current NBCI model)? Allison noted AFWA Bird committee NCN requests have a poor track record of success and an NCN request by NBCI failed. Would a pheasant NCN fare any better? Potential redundancies and opportunities for collaborating/sharing positions (e.g., Grassland Coordinator) down the road between the NBCI, Prairie Grouse, and Pheasant Plans were discussed and thoughts were shared on whether a joint resident gamebird NCN might be better received. Allison thought hunter recruitment would be a good fit for the plan in relation to NCN's - hunter retention is a priority with the directors. When it comes to a coordinator request she indicated it needs to be more specific. She emphasized everyone wants more grass but need to be specific: acres, dollars, duties of coordinator. The group decided to host a later conference call following Allison's discussion on the resident gamebird NCN concept to decide what course of action should be taken by MPSG. Todd will coordinate the follow up conference call in October or November 2013.

Discussion then moved to what other action the MPSG could take regarding implementation of the Plan. Todd Bogenschutz (IA) suggested the MPSG make a request to FSA for some type of grassland habitat initiative to implement some of the habitat goals outlined in the Plan. Habitat funding would energize interest by state agencies and NGO's in the Plan. Constructive conversation ensued whether just focusing on pheasants would be successful or would a broader initiative? targeted at multiple species' habitat goals tied to the various gamebird plans (pheasant, quail, prairie grouse, western quail, turkey) be a better approach. All members should think about the nuances of National Grassland Conservation Practice with respect to access, coordination, and recruitment. For example, is CRP the only avenue and how to sell and market the program? Travis Runia (SD) noted habitat/economic information in the Plan is now 3 years old with some states seeing significant habitat losses and agreed to coordinate the updating of numbers in the Plan. The group decided to discuss

the issue further on the NCN conference call. Wednesday wrapped up with a bus tour of the Missouri River flood plain and dinner on the braided channels of the unchannelized portion of the Missouri River. At least two pheasants made fly-by appearances during our tour!

Thursday morning's discussion began with a summary from Travis Runia (SD) on lead shot ingestion by ring-necked pheasants on 3 high-intensity shooting properties. Lead shot distribution on the landscape was similar to slightly lower than other published studies. Shot concentration in fields was related to shooting lanes and blocker locations. Some 621 gizzards have been examined with 29 (4.7%) showing evidence of lead shot ingestion which is in the range of rates reported for other species in the literature. Research will begin this fall in a pen study to dose pen reared birds with lead shot to determine impacts on body condition, survival, and reproduction. For complete details, please contact Travis. Next, Iowa DNR conservation officers Steve Griebel and Marty Eby gave a presentation on the Cooperative North American Shotgunning Education Program (CONSEP). CONSEP is a national program with rigorous training to become a certified instructor. The goal of the program is to influence hunter behavior and improve shooting skills thereby reducing wounding losses that are perhaps twice as high as losses to lead poisoning in waterfowl. Contrary to anecdotal opinion steel shot is ballistically a better material than lead shot for typical shotgun shell loads. Discussion followed regarding some of the myths around lead and steel shot. Stan Kohn (ND) and Mark McInroy (IA) wrapped up the talks with presentations on grassland habitat loss in ND and the extraordinary movements (1,000+ miles) of satellite radioed female prairie chickens released in Iowa's prairie chicken restoration area.

Time and Place of Next Meeting – During the business meeting the decision was made to continue meeting annually because we are still in the important early stages of Plan implementation. Joey McCanna and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife agreed to host the 2014 meeting.

Director Information Items

- Meeting will be hosted outside the Midwest (Washington State) in 2014.
- All states vested in the Plan will be invited to participate at the 2014 meeting.
- Joey McCanna of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife will be new chair per current by-laws.
- Budd Veverka (IN) will work with Ollie Torgerson to host final Plan on MAFWA website.
- Budd Veverka and Todd Bogenschutz (IA) will work with Ollie Torgerson to revise MPSG by-laws to reflect change from Midwest to National group as well as draft proposals for a Steering committee and National Wild Pheasant Technical Committee.

Director Action Items

- Review/approve changes to MPSG by-laws and proposals for Steering and Technical committee structure at the 2014 MAFWA Annual Directors' meeting in Traverse City, MI, June 22-25.
- Consideration of NCN request pending Oct/Nov conference call by MPSG.

MEETING PARTICIPANT LIST
15TH MIDWEST PHEASANT STUDY GROUP MEETING

*** STATE DID NOT ATTEND 2013 MEETING*

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