MAFWA Legal Committee

Chair Keith Sexson, Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Boating, Kansas Department of

Wildlife, Parks and Tourism

Vice-Chair Chris Tymeson, Chief Legal Counsel, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism

Report:

In 2015, the Legal Committee met in conjunction with the Director's Meeting in Duluth, Minnesota. The focus of the 2015 meeting was to provide continuing education on legal issues related to natural resource protection. Specifically, there were presentations on the Northern Long Eared Bat, Great Lakes wolf litigation, proposed changes to the ESA petition process, wildlife criminal law, canned hunting litigation in Indiana and sturgeon management in Wisconsin.

There were 8 attendees at the committee meeting, representing 5 states and two NGO partners. The meeting was very successful and the committee would encourage participation by the states in the future.

Midwest Associations of Fish and Wildlife Agencies National Conservation Needs (NCN) Report – 2016

Meeting Time and Place: The NCN Committee meets as necessary via teleconference and/or email. Committee members in 2016 are: Jim Douglas (NE) Chair, Ray Petering (Ohio), and Ed Boggess (MN).

Executive Summary: The NCN Committee was created in 2004 and charged to be familiar with the NCN and Multi-State Grant Program (MSCGP) processes and annually counsel the MAFWA on submitting NCNs.

On November 23, 2016 MAFWA leaders were notified and reminded that each regional association may submit one NCN for consideration and encouraged to submit draft language for proposals to the NCN Committee by January 15, 2016.

For the 2017 grant cycle, four (4) proposals for submission were received by the NCN Committee:

- ► Management Strategies for Feral Swine
- ► Integration of Taxa-specific Bird Plans to Create Comprehensive Bird Habitat Goals
- ► Buffers as Pheasant Habitats
- ► Scientific Capacity Assessment and Enhancement of Scientific Information Access

The proposal Integration of Taxa-specific Bird Plans was approved by the Executive Committee for submittal with a conference call vote on February 4, 2016. A letter was subsequently submitted by Executive Director Ollie Torgerson.

Director Action Items: Reaffirm support to MAFWA members for direct participation and engagement in the NCN and MSCGP processes.

Director Information Items: The MSCGP is very important and its success hinges on the willingness and ability of the members of AFWA committees and regional associations to directly participate. For this reason, the MAFWA NCN Committee will continue to vigorously pursue MAFWA membership understanding and engagement of the process by: 1) regular communications to MAFWA members about the process and related deadlines for submittals, 2) assisting with the development of draft NCNs according to AWFA guidelines, and 3) facilitating review of the LOI, if requested by the MAFWA President or Executive Committee.

Respectfully submitted by Jim Douglas, Chair; June 20, 2016.



Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Private Lands Working Group and Public Lands Working Group

Annual Report 2016

May 27, 2016

Respectfully submitted by

Lee G. Hughes and Lisa Potter

Missouri Department of Conservation

Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies State Wildlife Action Plan Technical Working Committee Report

Meeting Time and Place – The technical committee met once over the last year. A call-in meeting was held on May 20, 2016. Committee members from 7 of the 13 states participated.

Executive Summary – Eleven of the 13 states have updated or revised their State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs). Nebraska and Kentucky had updated their plans previously. Updating or revising the State Wildlife Action Plans required a significant investment in staff time and resources throughout the year. This was in addition to the ongoing commitment on the part of the Wildlife Action Plan/Strategy Coordinators and Wildlife Diversity Program Managers to maintain and enhance their current programs for the implementation of their SWAP. With revised plans in place and renewed and new partner engagement, the states are eager to move forward on the continued implementation of their plans.

The group identified the following ways that this technical committee will facilitate SWAP implementation over the next year:

- Meetings will be held throughout the year (approximately quarterly) to promote sharing
 of information and collaboration on SWAP implementation. Initial meetings will focus
 on:
 - Discussion on a regional collaboration of eight states to implement shared SWAP priorities (pollinators, grasslands and mussel conservation) and interest of other MAFWA states in participating in the initiative (supported by the Upper Midwest Great Lakes LCC and Region 3 USFWS).
 - Update on the numerous Monarch/pollinator initiatives and opportunities for involvement of the SWAP technical working committee on moving this work forward through our SWAPs.
 - o Identifying and communicating success at a region scale.
 - Funding and other issues that could affect successful implementation of our SWAPs.
- The annual rotating of co-chair positions will continue. The co-chairs will be the SWAP coordinators for the state hosting that year's MAFWA Director's meeting, and the previous year's host state. This will provide some continuity across years.
- States felt that the revision/updating of their plans had revitalized partnerships that will spur implementation of the revised plans and position the states for effectively and efficiently utilizing new funding sources.

States shared the concern that reductions in State and Tribal Wildlife Grant (SWG) appropriations and the decision to allocate more of those dollars to SWG competitive grants are reducing resources to implement SWAPs at a time when more is being expected of the SWAPs. For example, SWAPs are viewed as a primary vehicle for states to address pollinator conservation and adaptation to changing climatic conditions.

Also of concern are proposed actions by the U.S. House of Representatives that could limit states ability to implement their Wildlife Action Plans by directing funding to Proposed or Candidate species; for states with few proposed or candidate species such actions could limit their access to SWG funds and jeopardize their ability to implement their Wildlife Action Plans

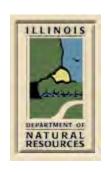


Midwest Wildlife and Fish Health Committee Meeting

April 12-13, 2016 Galena, IL

Hosted by:

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources



Missouri Department of Conservation:

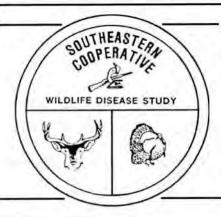


Development of a Wildlife Health Program
From the Ground Up

Missouri Department of Conservation:



Development of a Wildlife Health Program
From the Ground Up



SCWDS BRIEFS

A Quarterly Newsletter from the

Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study College of Veterinary Medicine

The University of Georgia Athens, Georgia 30602

FAX (706) 542-5865

Volume 32

Phone (706) 542-1741

April 2016

Number 1

SPECIAL CWD ISSUE - II

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) continues to dominate the news when it comes to cervid health issues. In view of numerous developments since our updates in 2014 (SCWDS BRIEFS, Vol. 30, Nos. 1 & 3), the growing number of affected jurisdictions, and the importance of this disease, we are devoting this entire newsletter to CWD. We first did this in 2002 when its detection in Wisconsin elevated CWD to a national issue. At that time, CWD had been found in wild deer and/or elk in five states and in 20 captive elk herds in six states; currently it has been detected in free-ranging cervids in 22 states and in 75 captive deer and/or elk herds in 16 states. The prion that causes CWD also has been found in wild and captive cervids in Alberta and Saskatchewan, captive cervids in South Korea, and most recently in free-ranging reindeer and moose in Norway. Because we didn't have space for all of the significant CWD developments here. we will include more information in our next issue.

CWD in Wild Cervids, May 2016

Two additional states have confirmed CWD in free-ranging cervid populations since our last update. In May 2015, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources detected CWD in a female white-tailed deer (WTD) euthanized in East Lansing in Ingham County after it displayed signs of central nervous system disease. Subsequent culling and testing of wild WTD in the area over the summer yielded two more positive deer; all three positive animals were genetically related and were located within a mile of each other. As of June 2016, more than 5,200 deer have been tested with four more positive deer found, all within the five-county CWD Management Zone (MZ). The first MI case detected was in a captive WTD in 2008 in Kent County.

In February 2016, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) announced that CWD was detected for the first time in the state in a wild elk killed by a hunter in 2015 in Newton County. Arkansas' elk population, which is estimated at 600-700 animals and has been hunted since 1998, was reestablished through the release of animals translocated from CO (107) and NE (5) from 1981-85. The elk came from an area in CO where CWD never has been detected; the source(s) of the NE elk is less clear. In March, the AGFC announced CWD was detected in two WTD found dead in Newton County.

The AGFC subsequently initiated Phase I of its CWD response plan by randomly collecting and testing 266 WTD in a core area in Newton and adjacent Boone County: 62 positive animals were detected, including 12 deer less than one year old, indicating a prevalence of 23% (females= 20%, males=32%). Phase II was conducted to determine the CWD distribution throughout the state and comprised testing WTD and elk found sick or dead, including road kills, and nearly 1,000 animals were tested through May 31. Preliminary results indicate CWD detection in Boone, Carrol, Madison, Newton, and Pope Counties. The positive deer in Pope County is more than 40 miles south of the core affected area. The total number of wild deer and elk in which CWD has been confirmed is 93 (89 WTD and 4 elk).

Several states that previously found CWD have reported increased prevalence and/or geographic distribution. In January 2015, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MD DNR) announced that four CWD-positive WTD bucks were harvested in 2014 within the CWD MZ in Allegany County. In March 2016, the MD DNR announced that five additional WTD tested positive; four were within the CWD MZ, but one deer came from Cumberland, outside the CWD

Midwest Region WSFR Report





83rd Annual

Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

June 29, 2016 St. Louis, Missouri

Jim Hodgson, Midwest Regional Chief Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration US Fish and Wildlife Service



APHIS National Feral Swine Damage Management Program



AFWA – Fish and Wildlife Health March 17, 2016



APHIS National Feral Swine Damage Management Program



AFWA – Fish and Wildlife Health March 17, 2016



Climate Science Center Support for MAFWA States

Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies June 2016, St. Louis, MO

Robin O'Malley
Policy and Partnership Coordinator
National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center

Climate Science Centers – Re-Brief

- "Actionable science"
- Climate impacts and adaptation
- ➤ Main focus = Fish, wildlife, ecosystems
- ➤ Eight CSCs at present
- ➤ USGS-university partnership
- > Stakeholder driven science
 - stakeholder advisory committees
- ➤ New Midwest CSC <u>proposed</u> in President's budget
 - Requires Congressional action on funding







UMass Amherst

*College of Menominee Nation
Columbia University
Marine Biological Lab
*University of Minnesota
*University of Missouri

*University of Wisconsin

Colorado State University
University of Colorado
Colorado School of Mines
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Iowa State University
University of Wyoming
Montana State University
University of Montana
Kansas State University

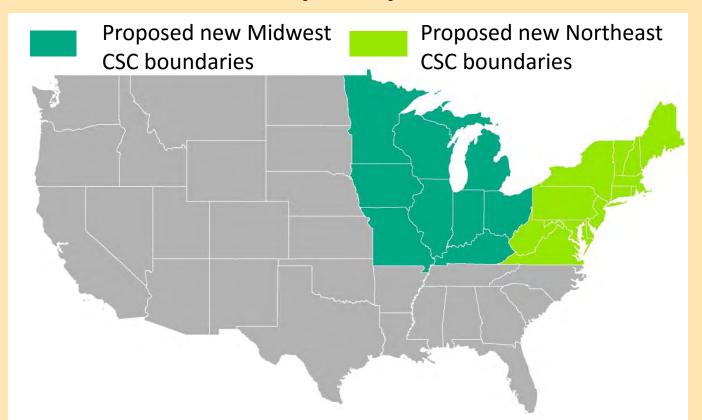




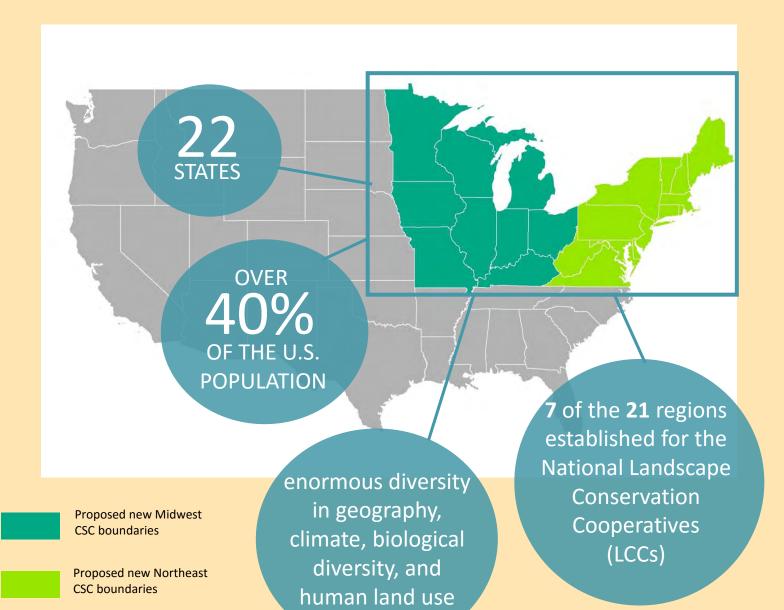
FY 2017 USGS Budget Request

Enabling Communities and the Nation to Enhance Climate Resilience

+ \$1,500,000









NORTHEAST CSC PARTNERS UMass Amherst

- *College of Menominee Nation Columbia University Marine Biological Lab
 - University of Minnesota
 - *University of Missouri
 - **★**University of Wisconsin



Location of Host Institution – TBD Consortium Partners -- TBD

Proposals Due – July 19 Selection announced – December 15





REGIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

2015 - 2016

Impact of climate change on lake systems and fish habitat



Declining ice cover, warming waters, and proliferation of invasive species are rapidly changing aquatic habitat in the region. As a result, fish communities are changing. Cold water species, like cisco and lake trout, are in decline; warm water species, like smallmouth bass and largemouth bass, are now dominant species in many lake systems. What does this mean for the future of fishing in the Midwest?

Impact of rising stream temperature, altered flow, connectivity, and interspecific interactions on macro-invertebrates, including mussels



Stream temperatures are exceeding the physiological thresholds of some organisms. Changing flows, including extreme high and low flows, is reducing survival and reproduction in numerous species. Poor connectivity, due to dams, culverts and other human structures, reduce the resilience of threatened and endangered species to these changes. How can we best manage sensitive invertebrate populations in these systems?

Response of deer, moose, and elk to the direct/indirect impacts of climate change



Winters in the Midwest are milder. Some species, like white-tailed deer, will be favored by warmer nights and decreased snow cover. For other species, like moose, warmer conditions will challenge survival and persistence in the Midwest. How do we adjust management to address changing big game populations and harvest dynamics?

Habitat restoration outcomes under extreme weather events and climate change



The protection and management of large landscapes is an important strategy to buffer fish and wildlife from changing environmental conditions. States invest heavily in the restoration of lands, converting marginal lands to prime habitat. However, a longer growing season, floods, and drought reduce the viability of some restorations. How can we increase the long-term success of habitat restorations?

The MAFWA Climate Change Technical Committee aggregated and ranked issues identified by member states. For questions or more information, please contact Olivia LeDee, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (olivia.ledee@state.mn.us).

Thanks to MAFWA Climate Change Technical Committee

REGIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Impact of climate change on lake systems and fish habitat

Impact of rising stream temperature, altered flow, connectivity, and interspecific interactions on macroinvertebrates, including mussels

Response of deer, moose, and elk to the direct/indirect impacts of climate change

Habitat restoration outcomes under extreme weather events and climate change



Strategy

- Identify CSC/NCCWSC and other USGS work related to MAFWA priorities
- Synthesize CSC/NCCWSC and USGS work related to MAFWA priorities
 - Special interest in application workshops
- Synthesize work by others related to MAFWA priorities
 - Special interest in application workshops
- Co-development of research plan with MAFWA states on regionally-relevant projects
- Allow for key short term needs to be addressed as needed technical assistance etc.



Impact of climate change on lake systems and fish habitat

Impact of rising stream temperature, altered flow, connectivity, and interspecific interactions on macroinvertebrates, including mussels

Response of deer, moose, and elk
to the direct/indirect impacts of
climate change

Habitat restoration outcomes under extreme weather events and climate change

A Decision Support Mapper for Conserving Stream Fish Habitats of the Northeast Climate Science Center (NE CSC) Region

An Integrated Assessment of Lake and Stream Thermal Habitat under Climate Change

Characterization of Spatial and Temporal Variability in Fishes in Response to Climate Change

Developing Fish Trophic Interaction Indicators of Climate Change for the Great Lakes

Development of Dynamically-Based 21st Century Projections of Snow, Lake Ice, and Winter Severity for the Great Lakes Basin to Guide Wildlife-Based Adaptation Planning, with Emphasis on Deer and Waterfowl

An Integrated Assessment of Lake and Stream Thermal Habitat under Climate Change



Development of Dynamically-Based 21st Century Projections of Snow, Lake Ice, and Winter Severity for the Great Lakes Basin to Guide Wildlife-Based Adaptation Planning, with Emphasis on Deer and

Project Leader:

Waterfowl

Michael Notaro, U-W Madison

Research Partners:

- Christopher Hoving (Michigan DNR)
- Michael Schummer (State University of New York at Oswego);
- John Coluccy (Ducks Unlimited Inc, Great Lakes Atlantic Regional Office);
- Karl Martin (University of Wisconsin-Extension)

Presentations:

Atlantic Flyway Tech Section
American Geophysical Union
Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference
Seventh North American Duck Symposium

Publications:

Michigan Journal of Sustainability Journal of Climate

Other:

Syracuse Post Standard Wildfowl Magazine website WORT Radio

An Integrated Assessment of Lake and Stream Thermal Habitat Under Climate Change

Project Leader:

Jordan Read, USGS

Research Partners:

- Matt Diebel, Wisconsin DNR
- Gretchen A. Hansen, Wisconsin DNR
- Luke A. Winslow, USGS
- Kevin Rose, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
- Megan Hines, USGS
- Dale Robertson, USGS

SUMMARY

- Water temperatures are warming >>>loss of many native fish.
- Because surface waters represent a network of habitats, an integrated assessment of stream and lake temperatures under climate change is necessary for decision-making.
- Predict suitable fish thermal habitat.
- Prioritize adaptation and restoration strategies



- Peter C. Jacobson, Minnesota DNR
- Emily H. Stanley, U-W Madison
- Kevin Wehrly, Michigan DNR





Organizations Involved:

- Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS),
- National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center,
- Northeast Climate Science Center,
- North Atlantic LCC
- Massachusetts Div. of Fisheries and Wildlife
- New York State DEC
- US Forest Service NIACS
- New York Coop Unit
- University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science.



Thank you!



Questions?

romalley@usgs.gov



Program Overview

Program incorporates national approaches to reduce problems associated with feral swine, based on local needs and opportunities

Program Components

- Field Operations (WS)
- Disease and Population Monitoring (WS, VS, IS)
- Research (WS, VS)
- Communication and Outreach (WS, LPA)
- Planning and Evaluation (WS, PPD)
- Regulatory Actions (WS, VS, LPA)



Select Highlights for APHIS National Feral Swine Damage Management Program

Field Operation:

- Pilot Projects developed
 - Operation/Research Effort
 - ✓ Demonstrate and Document
 - ✓ Ability to impact feral swine populations in the South
 - ✓ Resulting in less damage to agriculture
 - Mississippi
 - Missouri
 - Alabama
- Tri-State Elimination Area
 - Determine if elimination may be feasible
 - Combined efforts of WS State Programs along with State Agencies
 - ✓ Virginia
 - ✓ Tennessee
 - ✓ Kentucky



Field Operations:

- Four states were moved to Detection Status in FY16
 - New York
 - Maryland
 - Idaho
 - Washington
- Received additional support in FY16 to increase helicopter activities in the eastern region increase fleet by 2 helicopters, likely to be based out of Mississippi and Alabama, enable to enhance support in these states along with Louisiana and other southeastern states



Disease Monitoring:

- Reduce national feral swine diseases monitoring from 5 to 3 diseases
 - FY16 Targated Diseases
 - Classical Swine Fever
 - **❖** Swine Brucellosis
 - Psuedo Rabies
- > FY15 feral swine disease samples (results based on serum)
 - CSF 3082 (0%)
 - IAVS 3073 (7.4%)
 - PRRS 2822 (1.1%)
 - PRV 3063 (18.9%)
 - SB 3051 (4.6%)



Disease Monitoring:

- Completed a joint effort with Food Safety and Inspection Services and Agriculture Research Services to collect samples every other month from 2 facilities in Texas to evaluate risk to zoonotic diseases (376 samples collected in FY15)
 - Brucellosis
 - Leptospirosis
 - Toxoplasmosis
 - Trichinellosis
 - Influenza A



Research:

- Feral swine toxicant and safe delivery system
- Economic analysis to better assess feral swine damage to agriculture
 - NASS survey to assess damage to select field crops conducted FY15
 - NASS survey to assess damage/risk to livestock being developed
 - Limited resource farmer survey to assess feral swine impacts and farmers perceptions implemented through 1890 Institutes
 - Hawaiian survey to assess feral swine damage to coffee and macadamia orchards has been implemented
 - Working with Mississippi State University on a National review of feral swine impacts
- Technique developed to detect feral swine presence through genetic markers in water
- Established a National Genetic Archives



Outreach:

- Implemented approach through Tuskegee University to work with 1890 Institution extension agents to implement a feral swine damage survey and conduct outreach activities with Limited Resource Farmers
- > APHIS has conducted multiple outreach activities
- Developing national outreach campaign
 - Feral swine website being developed (available summer 2016)
 - Factsheets on identifying feral swine presence and damages (available)
 - Brochure covering similar topics (available)
 - Shades/Posters on feral swine damages (available)
 - Factsheets and Brochure on feral swine impacts to endangered and game species (summer available)
 - Ad campaign to remind public/hunters to be aware of potential feral swine disease risk (spring 2016)



Outreach:

Ad campaign to remind public/hunters to be aware of potential feral swine disease risk (spring 2016): request states to use the hog logos and add messages in their respective game law digests.





Summary

 Program is having successes and cooperating on long-term approaches to reach positive outcomes

- Considerations for moving forward:
 - > Develop (continue) dedication to solving the problem
 - Focus on solving the problem Avoid entitlement of resources
 - Ensure communication within and outside the agency
 - Manage expectations



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Three Issues to Highlight

- 1. Grant Application Deadlines
- 2. TRACS Update
- 3. Land Issues Acquisitions, Easements, Licenses, Mineral Rights, and Cultural Review







Grant Application Deadlines

- Thank you for changes to deadlines eased work load conflicts for July 1, 2016 start dates.
- 2. See an improvement in grant application packages use of smart measureable objectives.









TRACS Vision



The Tracking and Reporting Actions for the Conservation of Species (TRACS) data system will track and report the location, status, accomplishments and outcomes of programs and projects funded by USFWS grant programs for conservation, fish and wildlife management, boating and shooting recreation and education; TRACS supports the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program and our state and federal partners to be accountable to the nation's sportsmen and sportswomen, the outdoor industry, elected officials, stakeholders, and the public.



Why TRACS



- Industry Tax Payers, State Partners, and General Public want to know Accomplishments
- Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
 WSFR Program "Not Performing" "for failure to demonstrate results"
 WSFR Program Assessment Rating from OMB, 2009 Notes: "The
 WSFR program does not have a strong accountability system.
- Congress New Laws requiring Accountability and Transparency
- For State Wildlife Grants demonstrate ability to prevent at-risk species from having to be listed under the Endangered Species Act" and as a tool for capturing accomplishments from WSFR funded activities.

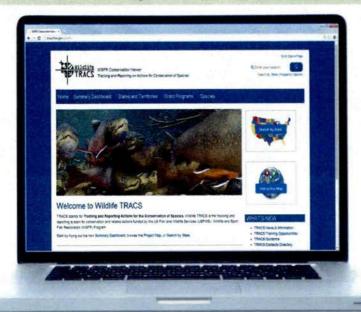
TRACS IS A TOOL TO ADDRESS OMB and CONGRESS REQUIREMENTS



TRACS Facts



- Released to the States April 2014;
- Currently 720 Registered Users;
- Over 5,000 Active Projects in System;
- Nearly 95,000 "Legacy" Projects in System;







Region 3 TRACS Status



- Training and accepted hand-off for new projects going forward completed for five (5) States: Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota (except boat grants), and Missouri.
- Minnesota Boat Grants scheduled for completion June 2016.
- Wisconsin scheduled for September, 2016.
- Indiana scheduled for August, 2016.
- Ohio scheduled for September, 2016.
- Uses TRACS Working Group Recommendation of October 1, 2016 as guide as recommended by TRACs Working Group and approved by WSFR Leadership.
- Midwest Region WSFR will continue to support States with TRACS issues and handle transfer backlogs.



TRACS 2017



- TRACS 2017 Enhancement will support grant processes and fix technical debt.
 - Grant and Project Statements will still be submitted via GRANTS.GOV
 - As required by the Acts and regulations.
 - How WSFR determines eligibility and compliance.
 - Grant process back-end, performance/accomplishment reports will continue to be submitted, as normal. As required by regulations. Allows WSFR to determine if project objectives have been achieved.
 - > TRACS will continue to be used to capture general information about accomplishments and costs associated with project activities.
 - WSFR responsibilities have not changed in the grant processes.



TRACS 2017



- Users will select standard strategies from a list that best characterize the goals
 of their projects to easily produce project and performance reports.
- Interim and long term performance measures will be developed for TRACS in coordination with state partners to demonstrate accomplishments in response to OMB and Congressional requests.
- Reporting requirements will change standardized between states, shorter, easier, and accomplishments can be rolled up between programs / states.
- The core functions and features of the TRACS system will not change; nor will the benefits of current training. All data will be retained.
- Incorporate changes recommended by the WMI TRACs review process.
- TRACS is an on-line reporting tool, a system to allow WSFR and States to convey to constituents, industry, Congress, and the public on WSFR funded accomplishments.



TRACS TO DEVELOP TRACS STRATEGIES



All WSFR Grant Programs

- 1. Direct Habitat and Species Management
- 2. Species Reintroduction and Stocking
- 3. Real Property Acquisition and Management
- 4. Conservation Area Designation
- 5. Environmental Review
- 6. Planning
- 7. Training
- 8. Technical Assistance
- 9. Data Collection and Analysis
- 10. Outreach and Communication
- 11. Incentives
- 12. Stakeholder Involvement
- 13. Facility Construction
- 14. Facility and Area Operation and Maintenance
- 15. Coordination and Administration
- 16. Experiential Education

Wildlife Restoration Grants
Sport Fish Restoration Grants

State Wildlife Grants

Wildlife

TRACS 2017 will Include a TRACS New, Intuitive User Interface



Contact: 800 123.4567 | Info@email.gov

Performance Visibility

WSFR Program Administration

WSFR USFWS Administrative Effectiveness Measures

WSFR-Funded Grants

WSFR Grant Outputs

WSFR
Program
Mission Areas

WSFR Conservation Outcomes e.g. 5-Year Report

WSFR's National Contribution

WSFR Role and Purpose

Land Issues

Acquisitions

- Happen Fast.
- Appraisers and Review Appraisers Procurement Requirements in the States – Plan Ahead.







Land Issues

Easements, Leases, and Licenses.

- Increase in the number.
- Requiring more cultural review (Section 106).







Section 106 Cultural Review

- **National Programmatic Agreement.**
- Development of a Regional Protocol (An agreement between Midwest Region USFWS - WSFR and States on how and what can be done). Goal of four (4) signed in FY 17.
- Recommend States that do not have the expertise (trained Archeologist) on Staff to get the capacity.







Questions

Jim Hodgson 612-713-5131 Jim_Hodgson@fws.gov







MZ. The first MD case was reported in 2011 and the current total is 11.

In Missouri, a buck harvested in 2014 in Cole County tested positive for CWD. Cole County is several counties south of the North CWD MZ, where 11 more cases were found in 2014. A seven-county Central CWD MZ was established around the Cole County case but no more positive deer have been detected. However, CWD was confirmed in 2015 in a buck harvested in Franklin County in east-central Missouri outside the Central and North MZ's. Six more positive deer were detected in 2015 within the North CWD MZ.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) reported finding 12 more CWD-positive wild WTD in 2015, more than doubling the number found from 2012-2014. All 22 of PA's positive wild deer have come from Disease Management Area 2 (DMA-2) in south-central PA. However, DMA-2 has been expanded to 2,846 square miles due to the finding of CWD-positive deer near its periphery. The other two DMA's (1 & 3) in PA are centered on captive WTD facilities in which the CWD prion has been detected. CWD has not been found in wild deer in either of these DMAs.

One of the positive wild deer in 2015 was harvested by a hunter who unlawfully took the carcass to a deer processor located far outside DMA-2, and the specified risk materials (brain, spinal cord, and lymphoid tissues) from this animal went to a rendering facility. The PGC reported that 5,654 deer were tested statewide in 2015, with 1,604 from DMA-2.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department announced in February 2016 that CWD was confirmed in a wild mule deer in Hartley County. This is the eighth case of CWD found in wild mule deer in TX since 2012; however, the other seven were detected in the Hueco Mountains in West Texas where the prevalence is believed to be 10-15%. Hartley County borders New Mexico in the Texas Panhandle, and additional surveillance is planned in this area.

In Wisconsin, 3,144 deer were tested statewide during the 2015 CWD sampling season and 298 were positive. The prevalence continues to increase in affected deer populations in Wisconsin: Within the Southwest Wisconsin

monitoring area that includes northwestern Dane and northeastern Iowa Counties, prevalence was found to be roughly 30% in bucks >2 ½ years old, 15% in adult does, and 10% and 8% in yearling bucks and does, respectively. In the core endemic area in north-central Iowa County, the prevalence rose from <5% to >45% in adult bucks and to >25% in adult does from 2002-2015. In northwestern Iowa County, the prevalence in adult males climbed from <3% in 2008 to >25% in 2015, an annual increase of approximately 4%.

In Wyoming, the Game and Fish Department (WGFD) reported that 1,747 deer, elk, and moose were tested in 2015 for CWD with 98 positive animals (21 elk, 65 mule deer, and 12 WTD). CWD was detected for the first time in five new deer hunt areas and four new elk hunt areas. Of the samples tested, 85% came from hunter-killed animals, 8% from targeted (appeared to have CWD) animals primarily within the known affected areas, and 7% from road kills, primarily from outside the endemic area.

In April 2016, the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission approved a new CWD Management Plan that had been made available for public review twice since autumn 2015. Wyoming's management plan had not been updated since 2006, and revision was deemed appropriate in view of CWD's spatial expansion within the state as well as new CWD and prion research findings.

The following points are from the Executive Summary of the new plan.

- The purpose of this Plan is to provide flexible and adaptable direction for spread, prevention, and management of CWD in cervids.
- The Plan consists of Disease Management, Applied Research, Public Information, and Funding, with one of the stated goals to manage deer, elk, moose and their habitats to delay the spread of CWD and reduce its effects on wildlife health and human enjoyment of wildlife resources.
- Based on known CWD epidemiology in wild cervids, eradication currently is not realistic, but it is the desired long-term management objective.

 The WGFD will conduct surveillance to monitor and estimate distribution and prevalence of CWD and coordinate CWD research and management with other state, federal, tribal agencies and entities of higher education, universities and others.

(Prepared by Kevin Niedringhaus & John Fischer)

CWD in Norway

On April 4, 2016, the Norwegian Veterinary Institute (NVI) announced that CWD had been diagnosed in a wild, adult, female reindeer (Rangifer tarandus). The sick reindeer was discovered in early March by Norwegian Institute for Nature Research scientists capturing animals for radio-collaring in a mountainous area in southern Norway. It died shortly thereafter and was submitted to the NVI for necropsy. It was tested for CWD as part of Norway's national surveillance program, was found to be positive by three different methods (ELISA, western blot, and immunohistochemistry), and later was confirmed by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) Reference Laboratory for CWD in Canada. Since then. CWD has been reported in two wild moose (Alces alces) in an area distant from the affected reindeer. Plans are underway for the NVI and Environmental Directorate to develop more information on CWD prevalence in reindeer and moose and to evaluate any potential changes in cervid populations.

The cases in Norway represent the first detection of CWD in Europe. Previously, CWD had been known to occur in wild and captive cervids only in parts of the United States and Canada, and in captive cervids in South Korea following the importation of infected elk from Canada between 1994 and 1997. While reindeer have been shown to be experimentally susceptible to CWD, the Norwegian case marks the first natural infection that has been found. Natural CWD infection has been seen in low numbers of moose in North America since 2005. (Prepared by Betsy Elsmo)

CWD in Captive Cervids, May 2016

The following information primarily is excerpted from reports provided by USDA-APHIS-Veterinary Services (VS) on developments during Fiscal Years (FY) 2015 and 2016 (October 2014 -

September 2016). The article also includes information from state agencies as well as notes including updates since the original VS reports. The FY2015 information was provided to the U.S. Animal Health Association's Committee on Wildlife Diseases in October 2015. The meeting minutes can be found at http://www.usaha.org/Committees/WildlifeDiseases.aspx.

In FY2015, CWD was identified in eight farmed cervid herds: one WTD breeding herd in PA, one elk breeding herd in UT, one WTD breeding herd and one WTD hunting preserve in OH (owned by the same individual), two WTD breeding herds in WI, one WTD and elk herd in TX, and a second WTD herd in TX (traced from the first positive TX herd). The positive animals in OH, TX and UT are the first reported captive animals in those states.

In October 2014, the National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) confirmed CWD in a 6-year-old doe from a captive WTD breeding facility in PA that was euthanized and tested because it was classified as a CWD-exposed animal that previously resided in two trace-back exposed herds. This herd was assembled in 2013 through the purchase of 16 animals from other Herd Certification Program (HCP)-certified herds in PA, and had been under quarantine for receiving exposed animals from a trace-back exposed herd. The remaining eight WTD were depopulated with Federal indemnity in February 2015, and no additional positive animals were detected.

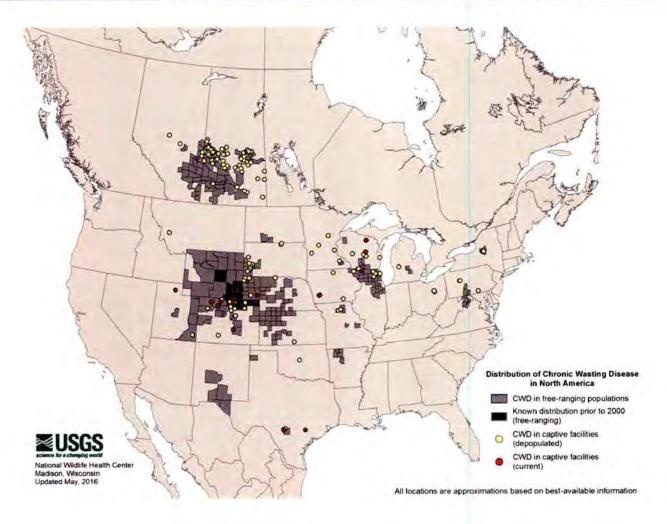
In October 2014, NVSL confirmed CWD in a buck from a captive WTD hunt preserve in OH, the first detection in the state. The herd had been quarantined since April 2014, because it was a trace-forward herd from a CWD-exposed herd in PA. The positive animal was traced to its herd of origin, a certified captive breeding herd in PA, through DNA testing. In April 2015, the remaining 224 WTD were depopulated with no positive deer detected. USDA did not provide indemnity.

In March 2015, NVSL confirmed CWD in a doe from a WTD breeding herd in OH owned by the same individual as the affected OH hunt preserve. The doe was received from a WI farm in February 2013. In May 2015, NVSL confirmed a second case in the OH herd. This herd was established in 2012 with the purchase of a CWD-certified herd. (continued on page 6)

Chronic Wasting Disease Timeline

1967	Wasting syndrome observed in captive mule deer at Colorado wildlife research facility
1975-81	CWD in Toronto Zoo deer that came from Denver Zoo
1978	CWD diagnosed as a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy
1979	CWD in captive mule deer at Wyoming wildlife research facility
1981	CWD in wild elk in Colorado
1985	CWD in wild mule deer in Colorado & Wyoming
1996	CWD in captive elk farm in Saskatchewan; 38 other positive linked farms found later in SASK
1997	CWD in captive elk facilities in South Dakota
1998	CWD in captive elk in Montana & Oklahoma
	 Model Program for Surveillance, Control, and Eradication of CWD in Domestic Elk presented at USAHA meeting to establish standards in monitoring and controlling transmission
1999	WHO indicates no evidence CWD is transmissible to humans, but exposure should be avoided
2000	CWD in wild mule deer in Nebraska & Saskatchewan
	Research - environmental contamination & subclinical infection contribute to transmission
2001	CWD in captive elk in Kansas
	CWD in captive elk in South Korea imported from infected Saskatchewan herd
	CWD in wild white-tailed deer in South Dakota
	 USDA declares CWD emergency in captive elk; Federal funds available for CWD control
2002	CWD in captive elk in Minnesota & captive white-tailed deer in Alberta
7.1-	CWD in wild and captive white-tailed deer in Wisconsin
	CWD in wild white-tailed deer in Illinois, mule deer in New Mexico, elk in South Dakota
	 Joint CWD Task Force of USDA/DOI/States/Universities develops Plan for Assisting States, Federal
	Agencies and Tribes in Managing CWD in Wild and Captive Cervids (National CWD Plan)
	Colorado establishes guidelines to minimize transport of high risk carcass materials
	1st International CWD Symposium held in Denver, Colorado
2003	CWD in wild mule deer in Utah
	 APHIS funds available for CWD work in captive and wild cervids (through 2011)
	USDA publishes Proposed Rule for CWD herd certification and interstate shipping program (HCP)
	to eradicate CWD from captive deer and elk and to minimize spread to naïve herds
	Research - horizontal transmission of CWD likely important in CWD epidemiology
2004	CWD in wild elk in New Mexico
2004	National CWD Plan progress report published and new priorities discussed
	Research - environmental sources, decomposed carcasses can maintain and prolong outbreaks
2005	CWD in captive and wild white-tailed deer in New York
2003	CWD in captive and wild writte-tailed deer in New York CWD in wild mule deer in Alberta, moose in Colorado, white-tailed deer in West Virginia
2006	
2000	CWD in captive white-tailed deer in Minnesota CWD in wild white-tailed deer in Kansas
	USDA publishes CWD HCP Final Rule— never implemented
2007	Research - prion can be found in muscles of infected deer; can be transmitted in saliva and blood
2007	Research - prions in environment more infective in particular soil types
2008	CWD in captive deer in Michigan
	CWD in wild elk in Saskatchewan, moose in Wyoming
2009	APHIS plans to withdraw 2006 CWD Final Rule and issue a new rule based on 2006 rule and the
6542	2009 proposed rule
2009	 Research - CWD may be a plausible explanation for local deer population declines in Colorado;
	prions shed in feces in early stages of CWD in infected deer; prions are present in urine and saliv

2010	CWD in captive white-tailed deer in Missouri
	CWD in wild white-tailed deer in North Dakota and Virginia
2011	CWD in wild white-tailed deer in Maryland
	CWD in wild white-tailed deer in Minnesota
	Severe reduction of USDA funds for CWD work
2012	 CWD in captive white-tailed deer in Iowa and in Pennsylvania
	 CWD in wild white-tailed deer in Missouri; CWD in wild mule deer in west Texas
	 APHIS Interim Final Rule for CWD Herd Certification and Interstate Movement and CWD Program
	Standards published
	Research - possible link between scrapie and CWD
2013	CWD in wild white-tailed deer in Pennsylvania
2014	CWD in captive deer in Ohio
	CWD Program Standards revised
	APHIS CWD Final Rule implemented
	 Research - plants may play a role in CWD transmission and environmental maintenance;
	experimental aerosol transmission in white-tailed deer
2015	CWD in wild white-tailed deer in Michigan
	CWD in captive white-tailed deer in Texas
	 Research – plants can bind prion superficially and uptake prions from contaminated soil
2016	 CWD in wild elk and deer in Arkansas; CWD in wild reindeer and moose in Norway



In spring and fall of 2013, animals were added from at least 9 OH herds, 1 WI herd, 17 PA herds, and 3 IN herds. The OH herd had been quarantined since April 2014 because of traces from several CWD-exposed or positive herds in PA, including the herd that was the source of the positive deer in the OH hunt preserve. The OH breeding herd had received over 120 animals from these herds. In June 2015, this herd was depopulated with federal indemnity: 241 animals, including 44 fawns, were euthanized and tested. Sixteen (7%) more deer were positive: They came from five certified herds in OH and four in PA.

In December 2014, NVSL confirmed CWD in a captive elk killed at a hunt park in northern UT, where it had been for three weeks. All hunter-killed animals at the park must be tested for CWD. The elk was traced back to its herd of origin, which was quarantined. The herd was assembled in 1999 with bulls, and later with cows, that originated from CO. Historical testing records for the herd were unavailable. The remaining 70 elk were depopulated using Federal indemnity funds in March 2015 and 25 (36%) elk were positive.

In October 2014, NVSL confirmed CWD in a doe born in 2012 on a Richland County farm within the WI CWD Management Zone. The remaining 51 deer were euthanized in November 2014, and 7 (15%) more positives were found. Two of the positive animals were purchased with the last deer added in January 2013. All sales from this herd were to shooting preserves. This premises was double-fenced and had been compliant in a HCP for over 10 years.

In June 2015, NVSL confirmed CWD in a doe from a WTD breeding herd in Eau Claire County, WI. The doe was a natural addition found dead with no signs of CWD. This is the first case, captive or wild, in the county. Since 2003, this herd had tested 391 animals for CWD with "not detected" (ND) results, while 317 animals tested ND from the associated hunt preserve. A second positive natural addition doe was confirmed in September. Several escape episodes have occurred from this herd. (This herd was depopulated in November 2015: 28 of 163 adult deer tested positive, 65 fawns were not tested. A total of 33/169 deer (20%) were confirmed as CWD-positive in this herd including two bucks that escaped in May and were killed in October and November: One was killed 13 miles north and the other was killed 11 miles southwest of the facility.)

In November 2015, NVSL confirmed CWD in a natural addition buck on a WTD hunting/breeding facility in Oneida County, WI. The herd consists of approximately 400 deer and is under quarantine. In January 2016, CWD was detected in a captive WTD buck from a herd of 15 deer held on one acre for public exhibition in the CWD-endemic area within Iowa County, WI. The herd continues to be under quarantine as it has been since 2008 due to the presence of CWD in wild deer within five miles of the facility.

In June 2015, NVSL confirmed CWD in a WTD buck from a captive WTD and elk breeding herd in Medina County, TX, the first CWD detection in farmed cervids in TX. The buck was born on the premises. Over 40 pen mates, dams, and other high-risk deer were euthanized and tested: CWD was found in two more deer. All three positive deer had the same artificial insemination sire; however, the significance of this is unclear. In the past five years, 130 WTD from 33 facilities moved into the positive herd and 838 WTD moved out to 147 different herds. One positive WTD was found in September in one of the trace-out herds in Lavaca County. Additionally, 23 elk were moved from the index herd to another TX herd in 2014. All traceouts were intrastate except for two premises in Mexico. Premises that received WTD from the index herd are under movement restrictions (ca. October 2015). APHIS-VS paid indemnity and depopulated the index herd in September no more animals tested positive.

In February 2016, NVSL confirmed CWD in a captive-bred WTD buck harvested from a release site in Medina and Uvalde Counties, TX. The deer's origin was identified as an onsite breeding facility, and the breeder pen and release site are considered index premises. The breeder facility currently consists of approximately 2,400 WTD and is under quarantine. In April 2016, a tonsil biopsy from a doe in this herd tested positive for CWD, and this was confirmed through postmortem testing. Also in April 2016, another affected captive TX herd was identified when CWD was confirmed in a WTD doe that was born onsite. The breeding facility is 2.5 miles from another positive herd in Medina County, contains approximately 1,000 WTD, and received deer 2-3

years ago from the first positive TX facility. Over 60 deer in this herd have been tested by tonsil biopsy since the positive animal was identified, and all results were ND.

In January 2016, NVSL confirmed CWD in an elk from a WTD/elk hunt preserve in Pottawattamie County in southwestern lowa. A WTD breeding facility owned by the same producer was depopulated in 2012 after confirmation of CWD in the herd. The hunt preserve is under quarantine, and the plan is to "hunt out" the remaining animals. (Assembled by John Fischer with information from APHIS-VS, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection.)

CWD - The First Five Decades

The Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) sponsored a Special Session on "Science-Based Management Strategies for Fish and Wildlife Diseases" at the recent North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. One of the papers presented during the session was "The First Five (or More) Decades of Chronic Wasting Disease: Lessons for the Five Decades to Come" by Michael W. Miller of the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife and John Fischer of SCWDS, and the summary is as follows:

Chronic wasting disease (CWD), an infectious prion disease of at least five cervid species, has run the gamut from minor scientific curiosity to national crisis since the syndrome's first recognition in the late 1960s. As of April 2016, CWD had been reported in captive and/or freeranging cervids in the United States (24 states), Canada (three provinces), South Korea, and Norway. With few exceptions (New York and perhaps Minnesota in the US), once in the wild the disease has persisted in reporting jurisdictions

in the face of widely varied control attempts. anthropogenic Natural and factors contributed to the geographic spread and persistence of CWD: Natural factors include prolonged incubation, multiple routes of agent shedding, the agent's environmental persistence. and migratory and dispersal movements of wild cervids; anthropogenic factors include movements of infected live animals (and perhaps infectious tissues and other materials), concentrating susceptible host species, and other artificial wildlife management practices. Many facets of CWD biology and ecology now are well understood, but science informing effective management and control strategies remains comparatively incomplete. Eradicating CWD appears infeasible given its extensive distribution and other epidemiological attributes. Regardless, adaptive approaches for containing foci and reducing infection and transmission rates have shown some promise and deserve further attention. Such pursuits undoubtedly will be more difficult to champion and garner support for in sociopolitical climates ranging from apathetic to combative, particularly when control prescriptions impinge upon or conflict with commercial and sport hunting interests. We believe there are two important motivations for making progress toward sustainable containment and control strategies for CWD in the coming decades: First, data from several sources suggest that heavily-infected cervid populations will not thrive in the long-term. Second, data on CWD prions and experience with other animal prion diseases suggest minimizing human exposure to these agents is prudent.

The Transactions of the 81st North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, including all of the papers from the fish and wildlife disease and other sessions, will be available later this year at http://www.wildlifemanagementinstitute.org/.

SCWDS BRIEFS

Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study College of Veterinary Medicine The University of Georgia Athens, Georgia 30602-4393

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Information presented in this newsletter is not intended for citation as scientific literature. Please contact the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study if citable information is needed.

Information on SCWDS and recent back issues of the SCWDS BRIEFS can be accessed on the internet at www.scwds.org. If you prefer to read the BRIEFS online, just send an email to Jeanenne Brewton (brewton@uga.edu) or Michael Yabsley (myabsley@uga.edu) and you will be informed each quarter when the latest issue is available.

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MDC's Wildlife Health Program: Starting from scratch

- Began September 2012
 - 6 years as a wildlife biologist
 - DVM/MPH (in wildlife!)
- Veterinary curriculum is changing
 - Currently ~30 AVMA-accredited veterinary schools in US
 - Dual degree programs growing (DVM/PHD, DVM/MPH, DVM/MS)
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 - B.S. in Wildlife Ecology
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What do we do?



Outreach



Research



Surveys



Immobilizations



Mortalities



Response

But let's not forget....





WHP: Strategic Plan

- The development of a plan is paramount
 - Resources available (AFWA, other states)
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 - Goals
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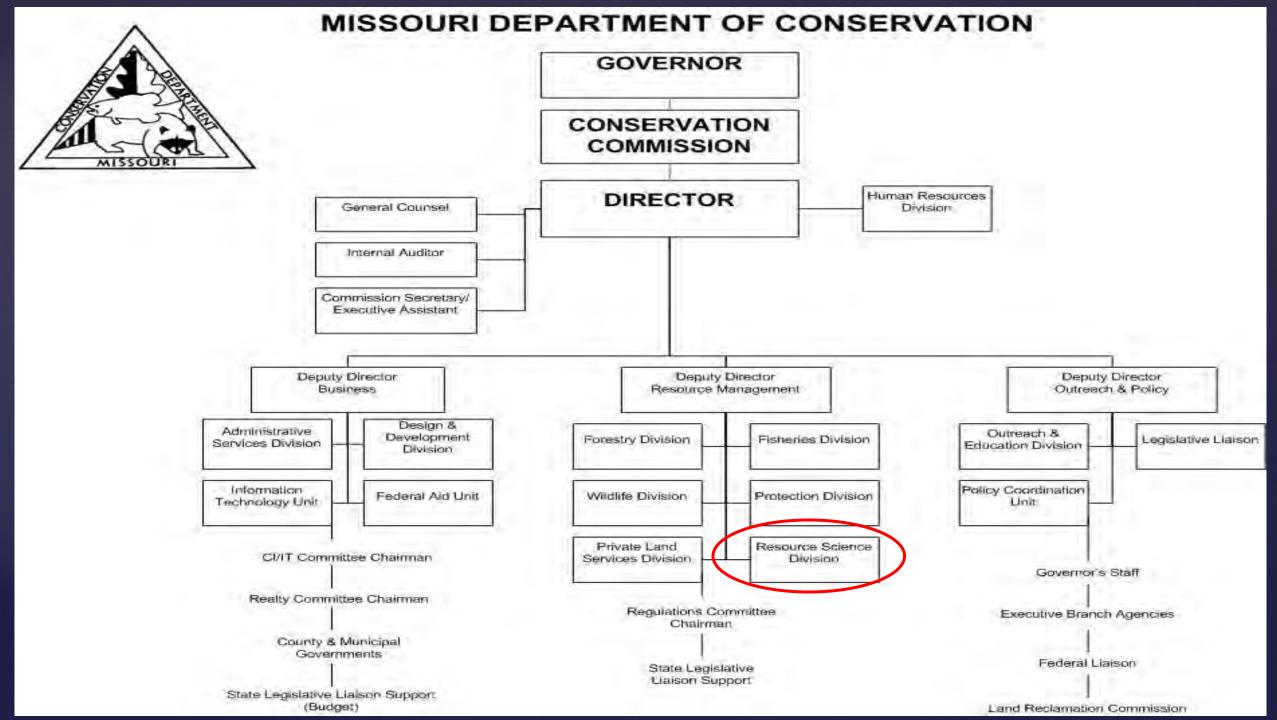
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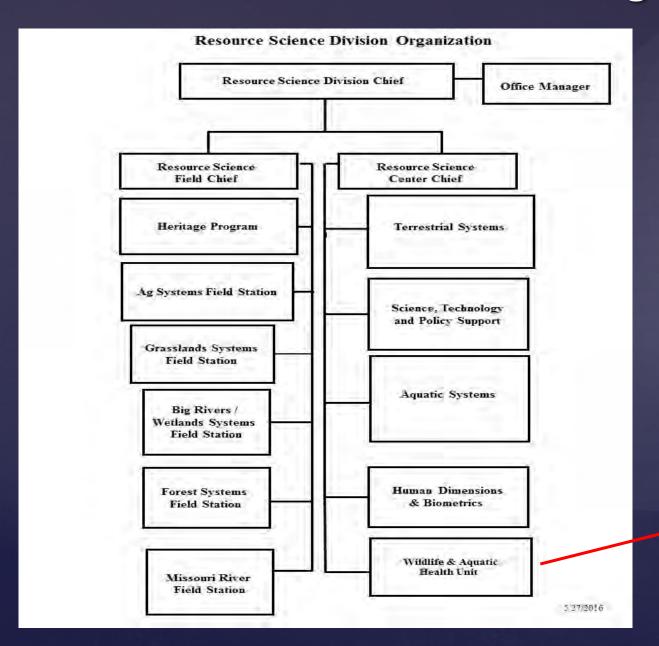
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- Universities/research facilities
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MDC's Wildlife Health Program: Future direction





Wildlife & Aquatic Health Unit

DISCUSSION





Wildlife Diseases Can Change Your World



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Kelly Straka

Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study Missouri Department of Conservation MAFWA Directors Meeting

June 28, 2016

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But they don't have to destroy it









State Wildlife Health Programs

Since 1934





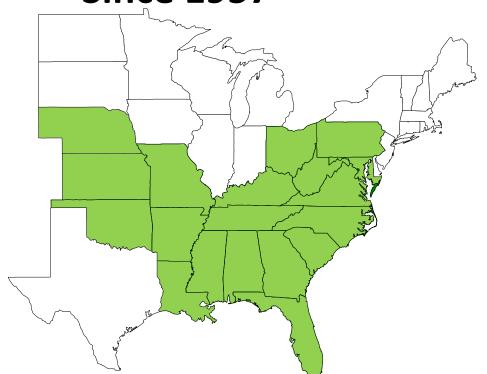
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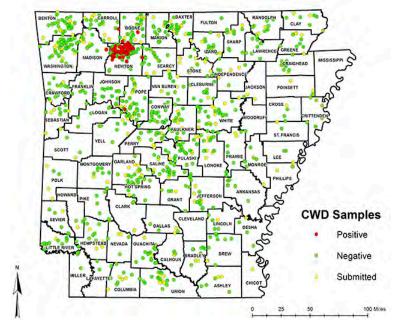




Residents react to chronic wasting disease in two Arkansas counties

UPDATED 9:32 AM CDT Apr 05, 2016

Arkansas

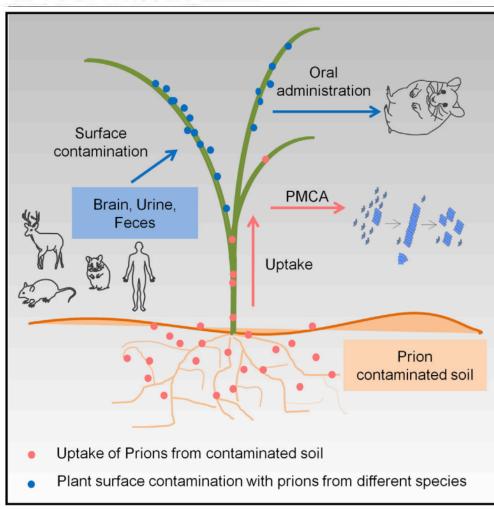


Report

Cell Reports

Grass Plants Bind, Retain, Uptake, and Transport Infectious Prions

Graphical Abstract



 Stems and leaves from grass plants grown in infected soil contain prions

Authors

Sandra Pritzkow, Rodrigo Morales, ..., Edward Hoover, Claudio Soto

Correspondence

claudio.soto@uth.tmc.edu

In Brief

Prions are the proteinaceous infectious agents responsible for prion diseases. Pritzkow et al. report that prions from brain and excreta can bind grass plants and remain attached to living plants for a long time and that contaminated plants can infect animals. In addition, grass plants can uptake and transport prions from infected soil.









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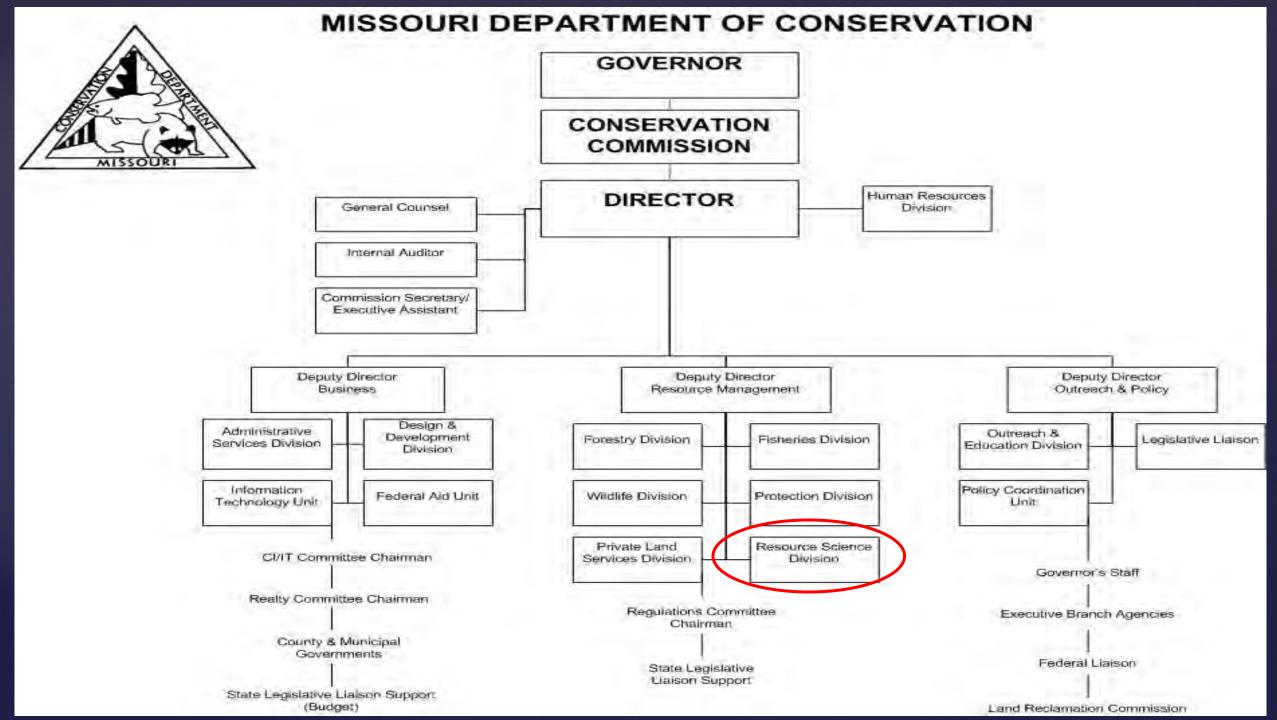
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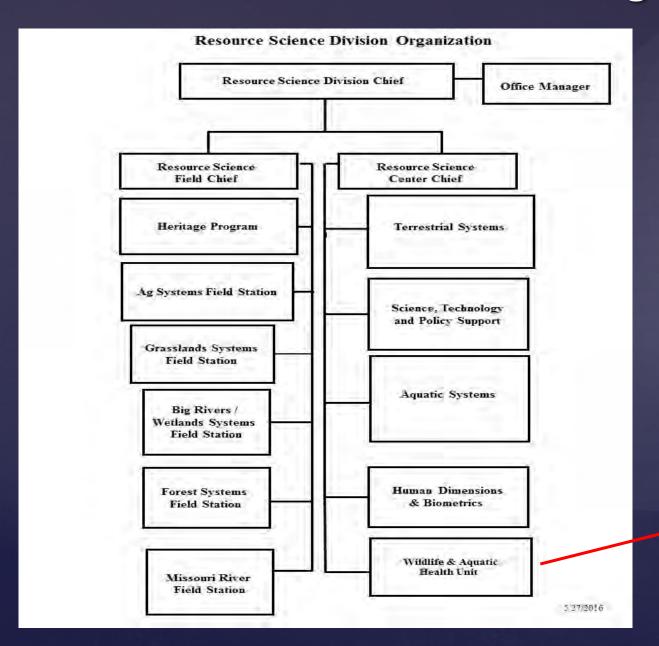
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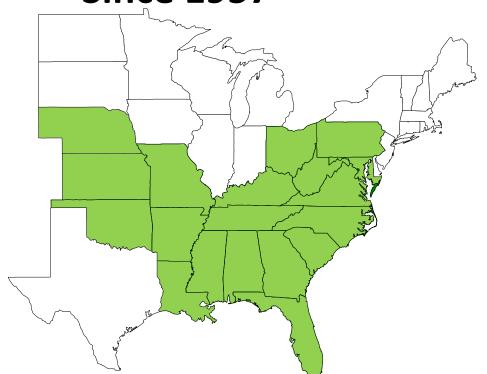
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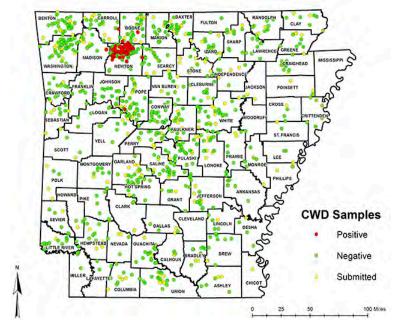




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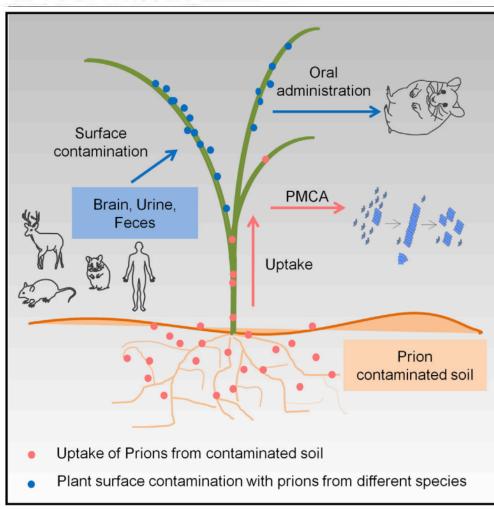


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	CWD Movement and Dispersal Study
	Bald Eagle Lead Exposure in the Upper Mississippi River
	Diseases of Urban Coyotes
	CWD National Update
	Proposed Bovine Tuberculosis and Brucellosis Rule Changes
	Action Items:
	Multi-state CWD Guidelines
	Capture Equipment Cleaning and Sanitation Guidelines
	Joint Resolution in Support of Restoring Federal Funding for CWD
	Management and Research
	Joint Resolution in Support of Discontinuing the Use of Neonicotinoids on
	State Managed Lands under the Authority of the MAFWA Directors
	Director Information Item on the Risk of Spread of CWD Through Importation
	of Infected Hunter-harvested Cervid Carcasses
	Appropriation Recommendations for the 2018 Federal Budget
	Time and Place of Next Meeting
	d in the complete report:
	lix I: Agenda
	dix II: Attendee Names and Contact Information
Append	lix III: State/Provincial Reports:
	Illinois
	Indiana
	lowa
	Kansas
	Kentucky
	Michigan
	Minnesota
	Missouri
	North Dakota
	Ontario
	South Dakota
	Virginia
	Wisconsin

Meeting Time and Place

April 12-13, 2016 Galena, IL

Agenda: see Appendix I

Attendance

Attending this year's Midwest Wildlife and Fish Health Committee Meeting were representatives from 11 state or provincial fish and wildlife agencies: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Ontario, South Dakota, Virginia, and Wisconsin; and representatives from three federal agencies:

- the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA-APHIS-WS),
- the United States Geological Survey, National Wildlife Health Center (USGS-NWHC), and
- the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

A total of 20 individuals were in attendance (Appendix II), including two invited guests from Southern Illinois University and Ohio State University. In addition, 5 individuals participated in the meeting via WebEx, including representatives from 4 state or provincial fish and wildlife agencies (Kansas, Kentucky, Ohio, and Saskatchewan). Nebraska and Manitoba were not represented.

Executive Summary

Disease Reports

Each state or province in attendance (in person or via Web-ex), the National Wildlife Health Center, and USDA-Wildlife Services provided an update on the wildlife disease issues within their jurisdiction. The states or provinces that did not provide written disease updates were Nebraska, Ohio, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. For your convenience, an index of disease reports is included in Appendix III.

Illinois CWD Management Program-Paul Shelton, IL DNR

The first CWD positive was detected in Illinois in 2002. Since that time >95,000 deer have been tested with 72% of those deer having come from the original 4 counties of Boone, Winnebago, McHenry and DeKalb. There have been a total of 609 CWD positive animals. There are 2 basic components to the IL CWD management program: surveillance and management. The objective for surveillance is to test enough deer to track the spread of CWD and determine the distribution and prevalence rate. The objective for management is to prevent the spread and to minimize the risk of infection in the areas where it occurs. Surveillance is conducted by having mandatory check stations, testing animals at meat lockers, sharpshooting, special kill permits, road kills and

targeted surveillance of suspect animals. IL DNR has averaged \sim 7000 samples per year since 2007 with an average detection rate of 35-40 new cases annually. However, the last 3 years the number of positives has risen to 59-71 per year.

The use of sharpshooting has been effective in decreasing the disease prevalence in specific areas in Illinois. Sharpshooting takes into account that the disease is not evenly nor randomly distributed among deer in a population. The disease tends to be spread within social groups of animals. Sharpshooting, in effect, allows for these social groups to be removed from the landscape. Targeting specific social groups has less impact on the overall population but bigger impacts on disease prevalence. Sharpshooting is employed for two reasons: follow-up surveillance in a newly discovered CWD area, and to increase the number of samples to meet sampling goals in a given area. While Il has shown that you can make a difference with prevalence with aggressive methods, disease spread is not able to be controlled.

Overall, with the continued management strategies in place, the adult prevalence rates across all affected areas have decreased. Adult females average 1% prevalence whereas adult males are at 2% prevalence. There are specific areas in the core counties of Winnebago and Boone that have prevalence upwards of 10%. The overall deer density has decreased and the numbers of positive deer per year have decreased. The total number of deer vehicle collisions has dropped too.

Global Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Update-Hon Ip, USGS-NWHC

In general, low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) subtypes H5 or H7 can be transmitted to domestic poultry, and the virus circulates amongst the flock(s) and rapidly reasserts and converts into highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). Most HPAI are restricted to poultry. About 40 HPAI outbreaks have occurred globally since the 1960's. Typically, these outbreaks do not involve wild birds. In the recent HPAI outbreaks in the US, 4 different studies of peridomestic species were conducted and no HPAI was detected in wild birds near infected domestic poultry facilities. The majority of North American outbreaks have been the result of a LPAI being introduced into a commercial facility that then converts into a HPAI. Following concerns of Asian HPAI H5N1 being introduced into the US, the United States Department of Agriculture subsequently tested 283,434 and the United States Geological Survey tested 106,873 birds for the virus, and it was never detected.

Numerous examples of case studies from around the world were presented. Several examples follow. In 2004, the HPAI outbreak in British Columbia started with the detection of LPAI in a facility on February 17th. Within 2 weeks, the virus had converted into HPAI and the original source was never determined. Between Feb 18 and May 18 of that year, 90% of the flocks were depopulated. Overall 42 farms were positive and a total of 410 housed flocks and 553 backyard flocks were depopulated with an estimated 17 million birds being removed.

France had a HPAI outbreak in 2015 that is still ongoing. They found 2 LPAI viruses and 3 HPAI viruses circulating. Index farms and positive farms were depopulated and a large quarantine zone was established. Currently farms within the quarantine zone are no longer being tested. Market ready birds are being allowed to move to market without testing. The facilities are

being cleaned and disinfected. In February, the index farm was repopulated. It became positive again.

From 2006-2008 Nigeria was battling with an HPAI H5N1 that was introduced into the country. In 2008, the virus was eradicated. Falconry birds from Dubai were taken to mid-Asia for hunting and brought back to Dubai with HPAI H5N1. The disease subsequently spread from to the prey facilities in the Middle East and then across Africa where it was again reintroduced into Nigeria.

Other outbreaks discussed, including those in Egypt, Taiwan, Korea and Indonesia. Each case having its own unique set of circumstances surrounding the virus' introduction and maintenance, and what role (if any) wild birds played.

CWD Movement and Dispersal Study-Eric Schauber, SIU

A discussion of the current, multiphase research study being conducted by Southern Illinois University was presented. The study is looking at interactions between members of familial white-tailed deer groups and their interactions with other groups. When looking at a disease and its impact on a population, there are several considerations that need to be taken into account. Is the transmission direct or indirect, and is the ability to transmit disease density-dependent or frequency-dependent? Then, you have to factor in the prevalence of the disease and look at potential contact rates verses the host density. For example, in a large population with close contact, you would expect the force of infection to be higher than in a small population that was widely dispersed across the landscape. A large part of understanding CWD transmission cycle is to fully understand the basic biology of deer interactions and deer social behaviors.

In Phase I of the project, deer were captured and fitted with GPS collars to establish interaction rates with other animals on the landscape. The proportion of simultaneous deer locations were evaluated at relative distances of $\pm 10m$ and time intervals. These data were used to define specific groups of deer. Two study sites were used for comparison, representing two distinct habitat types in IL (Carbondale vs Lake Shelbyville). Various predictors were examined, including time period, deer pairs, volume of intersection, contact at last location pair, group members in the same group, and seasonal contact rates. Not unexpected, group members of the same group were 10 times more likely to have interactions with each other than with other groups. There was less contact among animals in the summer compared to winter. Effect of social grouping on contact rates was strong and broadly similar even in disparate landscapes. Using the movement data, individual-based simulations were run to determine the risk of disease transmission. Findings suggest that disease transmission is largely density-dependent.

The next phase of the study was designed to look at frequency-dependence relative to social grouping. Basically, they wanted to determine what happens when a group dies off and only one animal is left. Does that animal then move into another group nearby, thereby spreading the disease? Phase III of the study focused on this question. A social group of animals was removed while leaving one collared animal to track movements and measure contact rates with other groups. Fawns had lower home-range fidelity and would attempt to join another group. Adult females tended to have less contact and remnant females were almost always alone. The

management implications would suggest removal of whole social groups is best to stem the spread of disease. There was very little genetic relatedness outside of the individual social group.

Phase IV of the study looked at excursion movements with the home-range. Researchers found lots of extra home-range excursions, fawns and yearlings tended to act as dispersers. The average dispersal distance was 12km with a maximum of 50km. Excursions tended to be longer and straighter. Fawns dispersed over longer distances and had a longer duration and higher speed of movement. Dispersals were not linked to winter and summer ranges.

Bald Eagle Lead Exposure in the Upper Mississippi River-Ed Britton, USFWS

An overview of the recent findings of lead poisoning in bald eagles on the National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) in the Upper Mississippi River system was presented. The Upper Mississippi River NWR can have ≥300 bald eagle nests per year. In 2011, 58 dead and moribund bald eagles were found near the Mississippi River. Most were well fleshed and had enlarged livers and gallbladders. The birds were processed by the National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, WI. Sixty percent of the eagles had toxic levels of lead. The levels were 6-10x the toxic threshold. Environmental sources of lead were considered, including landfills, old lead mines, etc. After looking at the natural life cycle of eagles in the area, it was determined that the most likely source of lead was from discarded deer parts from hunter-killed animals.

Just over 1 grain of lead is lethal to a bald eagle. A 20g shotgun shell contains on average 340 grains of lead, a 12g has 417 grains, and a .50 muzzleloader has 340 grains. In the winter, eagles become more dependent on carrion as a food source which leads to more scavenging. Discarded deer parts are brought to nest to feed young. In one study, 9 of 25 (36%) gut piles had lead fragments. Also, 38% of eagles taken to rehabilitation facilities had lead in their GI tract.

In 2014, a Non-toxic Ammunition Working Group for the Midwest was formed. This group did a complete literature review, compiled lead exposure cases, looked at human dimensions related issues, and assessed the risk of lead intoxication on NWR's based on firearms, deer hunting, and bald eagle populations. Over an 8-year period, there were 598 lead poisoned eagles in MN, WI and IA. The recommendations from the group were to initiate voluntary non-toxic programs for deer on the 52 Midwest Region refuges starting in 2016-2018 (IN, IL, IA, MO, MI, MN, WI, OH). The program will be phased in over 3 years based on areas with the highest risk. In 2016, 4 stations will be starting in the program, then 10 additional stations in 2017, and the remaining 38 stations in 2018. Regional Directors Order 2016-07-03, signed on March 28, 2016, required the use of non-toxic ammunition for all management activities on NWR in the Midwest Region.

Diseases of Urban Coyotes-Stan Gehrt, OSU

An overview of the long-term urban coyote study in the Chicago area was discussed. Coyotes have colonized most North American metropolitan areas. In the 1990's, the coyote population exploded in Cook County, Illinois. The research study aimed to look at two factors: urban coyote ecology and conflict/risk of disease transmission. Since 2000, coyotes have been live-captured, fitted with radio telemetry collars, and tracked year round. In total, 980 animals have been studied and 400 pups were marked using microchips. The average litter size is 8.7 pups. Urban

coyote survival estimates were 67% compared to wild Il coyotes (33%) for adults and 66% and 13% for pups, respectively. The urban coyote population is actually a source population and not a sink population.

In the study, they have found that coyotes use physical structures such as roads to establish social territorial boundaries. The primary cause-specific mortalities have been motor-vehicle collision, gun-shot wounds, and mange. The amount of roads within a home-range had no difference in survival. Approximately 750,000 people live in the home range of a single coyote. Primary diet items included rodents, rabbits, deer and fruit; followed by a lesser extent were anthropogenic items and domestic cats. During mange outbreaks, there was no correlation with diet and physical condition relative to an increased disease transmission risk. Coyotes have become very adaptable even using the green spaces on parking structures for den sites. Only 5% of the animals in the study have generated complaints and there have been no cases of bites or attacks on humans or pets during the study period.

Serological testing indicated exposure rates of 100% for toxoplasma, 30% for leptospira, 23% for heart worm, 40% for canine distemper virus, and 100% for canine parvovirus. Urban coyotes serve as an important *D. immitis* host with 43% of 175 necropsied animals having adult heart worms, most being mild to moderate infections as compared to rural coyotes in IL having only 4% prevalence. Sarcoptic mange is considered enzootic in urban coyotes in Chicago. Mange has a worse impact in January and December, but no overall impact on the population. Other diseases of concern that have been found are *Echinoccocus multilocularis* 12%, *Trichuris vulpis* 30%, *Uncinaria stenocephala* 67% and *Toxascaris leonine* 15%.

CWD National Update-Bryan Richards, USGS-NWHC

An overview of known CWD-endemic areas in North America was discussed, documenting the changes in recent years with spread to additional states and provinces. New research articles related to CWD were discussed, including: 1) transmission of scrapie prions to a primate after a 10 year silent incubation periods; 2) shedding of CWD prions can occur as soon as 3 months post-exposure in deer; 3) long-term exposure to CWD can reduce survival of wild elk; 4) *in utero* transmission of CWD was document in elk; and 5) the update of CWD prion by plants suggest horizontal transmission of disease in infected landscapes. New outbreaks in Arkansas and Norway, and increased disease prevalence in wild cervid populations in WI and WY were discussed.

Proposed Bovine Tuberculosis/Brucellosis Rule Changes- Iga Stasiak

The Committee's letter to USDA regarding their proposed rule changes to bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis programs was discussed. The new rule would allow states to set up management zones and not be penalized for having affected herds. Eradication of these diseases is no longer required and depopulation is no longer the long-term strategy. The rule allows for test and cull strategies as a mechanism to get improve from infected/affected status. Allowing these animals on the landscape longer would just increase the potential for spillover into wildlife and establishment of a wildlife reservoir. Further, there is no clear consideration for wildlife and the agencies that oversee them in individual states when states develop their monitoring programs.

There was no funding source for wildlife agencies when asked to respond and assist in domestic operations that become affected with these diseases. The quarantine period for a diseased facility has also been severely reduced from 4 years to 8 months. **See Appendix for full letter.**

ACTION ITEMS

• CWD Multistate Guidelines

The current CWD Multistate Guidelines (produced in 2004) were discussed and it was agreed that this document needs to be updated. A working group was formed and guidelines will be developed in the coming year.

• Capture Equipment Cleaning and Sanitization Guidelines

Many states are utilizing non-agency aerial capture crews for wildlife studies within their state. Often times these crews will go from state to state and there is minimal to no cleaning of equipment. The committee discussed the need for cleaning and sanitization guidelines, or best management practices (BMPs) for capture equipment to prevent the potential spread of disease inter-and intrastate. A working group was formed to develop these guidelines over the next year.

Director Action Item

Joint Resolution in Support of Restoring Federal Funding for Chronic Wasting Disease Management and Research

The Midwest Wildlife and Fish Health Committee and the Midwest Deer and Wild Turkey Study Group both discussed and proposed the following resolution in support of restoring federal funding for chronic wasting disease management and research.

SUPPORTING RESTORATION OF FEDERAL FUNDING FOR CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE MANAGEMENT AND RESEARCH.

WHEREAS, chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a fatal neurological disease of mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, moose and reindeer/caribou;

WHEREAS, CWD has been detected in captive and/or free-ranging cervid populations in 24 states (including all but 2 of the Midwestern states), 2 Canadian provinces, the Republic of Korea, and Norway;

WHEREAS, the geographic distribution and prevalence of CWD continue to grow;

WHEREAS, CWD poses a threat to the health of cervid populations wherever it occurs;

WHEREAS, consequent to the ongoing spread of disease, domestic livestock and human exposure to the causative agent of CWD are increasing:

WHEREAS, effective surveillance of free-ranging and captive populations is a critical component of CWD management;

WHEREAS, public demand for hunter service testing will likely increase as the size of CWD affected areas increase:

WHEREAS, indemnification of captive cervid producers has been important for timely depopulation of CWD-positive herds;

WHEREAS, there remain research needs that are critical for disease control efforts in captive and free-ranging cervids including development of an effective live-animal test and construction of a successful vaccine;

WHEREAS, the USDA declared CWD to be a national emergency in 2001 and Congress appropriated more than \$18 million per year in the early 2000s to USDA for CWD surveillance, management, and research;

WHEREAS, recent federal appropriations for CWD management have decreased markedly to approximately \$1 million to \$3 million per year and surveillance has consequently diminished; and

WHEREAS, in the early 2000s CWD had been detected in free-ranging cervid population in only a handful of states, and the level of federal appropriations for CWD surveillance reflected this level;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Directors, at its annual meeting in St. Louis, Missouri on June 26-29, 2016, encourages AFWA to request restoration of federal funding for CWD management and research in both free-ranging and captive cervid populations to levels greater than those of the early 2000s and commensurate with the needs of the states to (1) conduct adequate surveillance among free-ranging herds and (2) indemnify owners of depopulated positive captive herds.

Director Action Item

Joint Resolution in Support of Discontinuing the Use of Neonicotinoids on State Managed Lands under the Authority of the MAFWA Directors

The Midwest Wildlife and Fish Health Committee at its annual meeting in Galena, Illinois on April 12-13, 2016 and the Public Lands Working Group at its annual meeting in Columbia, Missouri on May 10-12, 2016, both discussed and proposed the following resolution in support of discontinuing use of neonicotinoids on seeds and plants on State managed lands.

SUPPORT FOR DISCONTINUING USE OF NEONICOTINOIDS ON STATE MANAGED LANDS UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE MAFWA DIRECTORS

WHEREAS, neonicotinoid pesticides, including but not limited to imidacloprid, thiamethoxam, clothianidin, and acetamiprid, are insecticides that are applied as seed treatments, in foliar sprays, applied granularly to pastures, and injected into trees;

WHEREAS, the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA) states are concerned about the deleterious effects of broad spectrum pesticide use on seeds and in plants as it pertains to declining native pollinator populations;

WHEREAS, neonictinoid pesticides are increasing in use and wide range application and are considered to be moderately persistent in the environment;

WHEREAS, native pollinators are defined as, but not limited to, bees and butterflies (e.g. Poweshiek Skipperling, Dakota Skipper, Monarch Butterfly, Regal Fritillary, Rusty patched Bumble Bee, Western Bumble Bee, and Yellow Banded Bumble Bee);

WHEREAS, the MAFWA states are concerned that the loss of these pollinators will potentially have wider scale impacts on the biodiversity needed to maintain healthy and sustainable wildlife populations;

WHEREAS, recent studies have shown native bird populations may also be at risk from neonicotinoid treatments;

WHEREAS, insects and other invertebrates are a critical source of food and protein for native wildlife;

WHEREAS, the MAFWA states utilize private cooperators with a variety of skills and philosophies related to regional agricultural practices;

WHEREAS, the MAFWA states recognize the social, political and logistical challenges of implementing abrupt, wholescale changes to agricultural practices and recommend a practical, moderate, phased-in approach; and

WHEREAS, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service has already implemented a program to phase out the use of neonicotinoid pesticides in agricultural practices on National Wildlife Refuges by January 2016;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the MAWFA Directors at its annual meeting in St. Louis, Missouri on June 26-29, 2016 encourage additional evaluation, while concurrently pursuing and implementing wildlife-friendly alternatives as available and practical, and support the discontinuing use of neonicotinoids on those State managed lands under their authority.

Director Information Item

The risk of spread of Chronic Wasting Disease through importation of infected hunterharvested cervid carcasses

As Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) has been detected in wild or captive cervids in 24 states and two Canadian provinces in North America, preventing additional spread into uninfected areas is critically important to maintaining healthy wildlife populations. All states have a percentage of resident hunters that travel out-of-state to pursue game hunting opportunities and, if successful, return to their home state with their harvest. Some states have regulations that prevent importation of cervid carcasses harvested in known-CWD endemic areas, with the exception of cut/wrapped meat, quarters, cleaned skulls or skull cap, and finished taxidermy mounts.

While these rules are meant to safeguard states from importing CWD from out-of-state hunting activities, the risk remains that hunters are either unaware or intentionally disregarding these rules. In Michigan alone, thousands of resident hunters travel out of state to harvest big game on an annual basis. The recent discovery of CWD in wild deer in Michigan, with no obvious epidemiological link to the source of infection, has heightened concerns that importation of CWD- infected cervid carcasses through out-of-state hunting may be involved in this outbreak. Since 2002, Michigan has restricted the importation of hunter harvested cervid parts from states and provinces where CWD has been established. However, every year Michigan Conservation Officers confiscate numerous deer and elk carcasses from Michigan hunters hunting in CWD states. The ban is almost impossible to enforce and undoubtedly these confiscated carcasses are just the tip of the iceberg.

Further, there is a lack of consistency among states in CWD surveillance activities, and this poses increased risk of undiscovered areas with disease. An example of this is Arkansas's recent detection of CWD in a hunter-harvested elk in October 2015, where the disease was not detected previously. Following confirmation of CWD in February 2016, 83 white-tailed deer and 3 more elk were found positive by late April, revealing at least a 23% prevalence rate in Newton and Boone counties. With this amount of disease on the landscape in Arkansas, it is plausible CWD has been there for more than a decade, and hunters that targeted game in this area would have been unaware of the risks.

Efforts to educate hunters on importation laws remain a challenge. Often, hunters are directed to websites of agricultural or wildlife agencies to search for the CWD status of areas they intend to hunt or hunting regulation books in the destination state. If this information isn't readily available, searching for the appropriate rules can be a cumbersome process.

In an effort to minimize risk of further disease spread and simplify cervid importation laws for out-of-state hunters, all states should consider adoption of a blanket ban that disallows intact cervid carcasses to come from any state outside their own regardless of the source population, with the exception of cut/wrapped meat, quarters, cleaned skulls and skull caps, and finished taxidermy mounts.

AFWA Federal Appropriations Recommendations for 2018 Federal Budget

We recommend the following funding is needed to support state and tribal monitoring, research and management of these diseases in free-ranging wildlife:

- Ranking #1, Chronic Wasting Disease for \$30M
- Ranking #2, Avian Health for \$10M
- Ranking #3, White Nose Syndrome for \$15M
- Ranking #4, Invasive Species for \$30M
- Ranking #5, Neonicotinoids for \$3M
- Ranking #6, Bovine Tuberculosis for \$5M
- Ranking #7, Aquaculture/VHS for \$3M
- Ranking #8, Amphibians and Reptile Health for \$5M

We recommend funding is continued \$500,000 for Southeast Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study. We also recommend funding for USDA-APHIS-WS for the Wildlife Disease Monitoring and Surveillance program for \$10M. This program provides wildlife disease assistance to states at no cost, such as CWD and bovine TB surveillance, feral hog control, and participation of wildlife disease biologists in state agency wildlife disease management activities

Time and Place of Next Meeting

During the wrap-up, the committee decided the location for the 2017 meeting would be in Iowa in early April.

This year's meeting was a success and we want to thank the Directors who sent representatives to this meeting and encourage those who did not to consider sending one to next year's meeting. Also, we thank Illinois Department of Natural Resources for hosting this year's meeting.

Submitted by: Michelle Carstensen, Chair and Dan Grove, Vice-Chair

APPENDIX I. AGENDA

Tuesday, April 12				
12:00	Arrival and welcome	Doug Dufford		
12:15	Opening remarks and introductions	Michelle Carstensen		
12:30	State disease reports	State Representatives		
2:15	Break	Ctata Dannasantations		
2:30 5:00	State disease reports (continued)	State Representatives		
3.00	Break for dinner			
Wednesday, April 13				
8:30	Illinois CWD Management Program	Paul Shelton		
9:15	Invited presentation: 2015-16 HPAI Events in Review:	Dr. Hon Ip, USGS		
	Role of Wild Birds			
10:15	Break	D F: 0.1 1		
10:30	Invited presentation: Deer contact and dispersal study	Dr. Eric Schauber, SIU		
		310		
11:15	Invited presentation: Lead poisoning in eagles	Ed Britton, USFWS		
11.10	in the presentation four poisoning in eagles	Eu Billion, OSI WS		
12:00	Lunch			
1:00	Invited presentation: Diseases of Urban Coyotes	Dr. Stanley Gehrt,		
		OSU		
1 45	CIVID G VII O M	D 1111 / D		
1:45	CWD Surveillance & Management	Facilitator, Bryan		
	 Updates to Multi-state CWD Guidelines 	Richards/All		
3:00	Break			
3:10	Bovine TB & Brucellosis Fed Rule Proposed Changes	Iga Stasiak		
		C		
3:20	Recap of 2015 Neonic Resolution and Next Steps	Dan and Tami		
	 Bob Welsh and Lee Hughes, Public Lands Committee 	tee		
2.40				
3:40	AFWA Federal Appropriations Recommendations	All		
4:00	Action Items	All		
7.00	Resolution on CWD funding with Deer-Turkey Group			
	New Items	ν ω ρ		
	- New Items			
4:30	Wrap up and next year's host			
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<u>Thursday, April 14</u> Field Trips (optional)

Tour of the Lost Mound Unit of Upper Mississippi NWFR, Savanna, IL; half-day event

APPENDIX II. ATTENDEE NAMES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Name	Email	Office Phone
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Reynolds, Mike	mike.reynolds@dnr.state.oh.us	740-594-2211

Attendee Contact Information

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Buchanan, Tore	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources	300 Waters St.	Peterborough, ON	K9J8M5
Carstensen, Michelle	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	5463-C West Broadway	Forest Lake, MN	55025
DeLiberto, Thomas	USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services	4101 LaPorte Ave	Fort Collin, CO	80521
Dufford, Doug	Illinois Department of Natural Resources	8542 N. Lake Rd	Lena, IL	61048
Ip, Hon	USGS National Wildlife Health Center	6006 Schroeder Rd	Madison, WI	53711
Garner, Dale	Iowa Department of Natural Resources	502 E. 9 th St.	Des Moines, IA	50319
Gehrt, Stanley	Ohio State University	2012 Coffey Rd.	Columbus, OH	43210
Griffin, Steve	South Dakota Game Fish and Parks	4130 Adventure Trl	Rapid City, SD	57702
Grove, Dan	North Dakota Game and Fish	100 N. Bismarck Expwy	Bismark, ND	58501
Hesting, Shane	Kansas Dept of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism	1830 Merchant	Emporia, KS	66801
Hildebrand, Erik	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	5463-C West Broadway	Forest Lake, MN	55025
Kirchgessner, Megan	Virginia Dept. of Game & Inland Fisheries	4010 W. Broad St.	Richmond, VA	23230
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Shelton, Paul	Illinois Department of Natural Resources	1 Natural Res Way, Fl001	Springfield, IL	62702
Slack, Dawn	Indiana Department of Natural Resources	5596 E. State Rd 46	Bloomington, IN	47401
Stasiak, Iga	Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife	#1 Sportsman's Lane	Frankfort, KY	40601
Straka, Kelly	Missouri Department of Conservation	3500 E Gans Rd	Columbia, MO	65201
Tonkovich, Mike	Ohio Department of Natural Resources	360 E. State St.	Athens, OH	45701

Director Action Items

This technical committee has developed a statement (attached) regarding the role of State
Wildlife Action Plans in carrying out the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel on
Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources. We request that the Directors
review this statement, and consider adopting a broader MAFWA position in support of
the Panel's recommendations and recognizing the role SWAPs would play if the Panel's
recommendations were adopted.

Director Information Items

1. Eight states (IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, MO, OH, and WI) met to begin a regional collaboration to more effectively and efficiently implement our Wildlife Action Plans through shared priorities. This effort was supported by the Upper Midwest / Great Lakes Landscape Conservation Cooperative and the US Fish and Wildlife Service Region 3. The group met in Chicago in April and agreed upon focusing collaboration around freshwater mussels, pollinators, and large grassland complexes. These priorities are important to the state Wildlife Action Plans. The group will look to where implementation of the plans and coordination can add value and focus to existing efforts at the regional scale.

We are currently developing details on the approaches we will take towards conservation of these priorities across the region, how we will work together, key actions and milestones, and partners to with whom to coordinate.

2. State Wildlife Grant funding continues to be a concern given that 2010 funding levels have not been reinstated, as well as the allocation of funds from the apportionment to fund the SWG Competitive grants.

Time and Place of Next Meeting – Summer 2016, call-in meeting

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Meeting Time and Place

The Missouri Department of Conservation hosted the annual joint meeting of the Private and Public Lands Working Groups on May 10-12, 2016, at the Stoney Creek Hotel in Columbia, Missouri.

Attendance

State agency representatives from Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin were present at the meeting. Agency representatives from Illinois and Kentucky were unable to attend. The Pheasants Forever/MAFWA National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan Coordinator was also in attendance.

Representatives from the Canadian Provinces have not attended the meeting for multiple years. The working groups encourage the Directors to revitalize the connection with our Canadian counterparts.

Executive Summary

The 25th annual meeting of the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Private Lands Working Group and the Public Lands Working Group convened in Columbia, Missouri on May 10-12, 2016.

The meeting began with both groups attending a morning session kicked off by a talk from the Director of the Missouri Department of Conservation, and President of MAFWA, Bob Ziehmer, and followed with talks on Missouri's conservation challenges, Audubon's conservation beef efforts, bears, CWD, and partnership efforts with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Pheasants Forever.

This year's Private Lands Working Group session included productive dialog and discussion on current conservation challenges and opportunities on Tuesday afternoon and Thursday morning. Each state contributed information on the opportunities and challenges of addressing local conservation needs on private land. Below is a summary of the major topics discussed:

- 1. Private Land Work Group Report at the June, 2015 MAFWA Director's meeting
- 2. Agricultural Policy Update from the AFWA
- 3. Grazing as Management on the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- 4. Monarch Butterfly State Updates
- 5. National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan Coordinator Update
- 6. CRP Acreage Limitations
- 7. Voluntary Public Access (VPA) state updates
- 8. Farm Bill Priorities for 2018

Meeting notes in Appendix 2a include a more detailed summary of each of these discussion points.

The Private Lands Working Group participated in a field tour to discuss and view several different conservation practices applied on private lands in central Missouri. The first location was an example of how diverse prairie restorations can be successfully managed for wildlife habitat consisting of diverse native herbaceous vegetation through the use of cattle at a low stocking rates. The second stop included explanation of study plots evaluating forb expression planned on a seeds-per-square-foot basis in coordination with a reduced grass component. The intent of these study plots are to demonstrate the ability to use a lower grass seed rate in wildlife plantings that result in higher diversity plantings with less frequent management requirements. The Private Lands group had the opportunity to tour several timber stand improvement practices at the third location. This stop incorporated MDC's development of private landowner cooperatives which work towards creating landscape scale restorations on private land. The site also fell within the Department's Comprehensive Conservation Strategy which prioritizes habitat restoration geographically based on greatest conservation need. The fourth stop was a contrasting view of managing pastureland in ways compatible with livestock production and wildlife habitat. The livestock operation visited incorporated a rotational system of both cool and warm season grass paddocks. The native warm season forage was grazed at the appropriate stocking rate and times to promote wildlife habitat while maintaining the functionality of a working livestock operation. Finally the last stop provided an example of wetland restoration planned and implemented through the NRCS/MDC Wetland Emphasis Teams. The unique multi-agency teams work together to design, implement, and administer the 150,000 plus acre Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) program in Missouri.

The Public Lands Working Group shared and discussed state reports on Tuesday afternoon, and met on Thursday morning to cover the following topics:

- 1. Public Lands Working Group Report at the June, 2015 MAFWA Director's meeting
- 2. Neonicotinoid use on public lands
- 3. Issues related to the use of unassisted aerial vehicles (UAVs or drones) on public lands
- 4. Disposal of abandoned/confiscated property
- 5. Prescribed fire requirements imposed by federal partners
- 6. Allowable uses on public lands

Public Lands Working Group members went on a field trip on Wednesday to several conservation areas. At Danville Conservation Area, the group explored forest, woodland, and glade communities, to discuss management techniques, challenges, and results, while observing the local flora and fauna. From there the group travelled to Prairie Fork Conservation Area, where discussion focused on partnerships, educational efforts, prairie restoration, and native seed collecting. After a brief stop at Crane's Country Store for a taste of authentic Missouri, the group headed to Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area, an intensively-managed wetland area that benefits from partnership with the City of Columbia and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Highlights there included two active bald eagle nests and a stop at Missouri's

state champion bur oak. The group rejoined the Private Lands members for dinner in Rocheport, Missouri atop a bluff overlooking the Missouri River.

On Thursday morning we wrapped up reports and business meetings focusing on action and informational items for the MAFWA directors to consider. Those action items are listed as follows:

Director Action Items

Director Action Items—Joint Private and Public Lands Working Group

None

Director Action Items—Private Lands Working Group

None

Director Action Items—Public Lands Working Group

ISSUE: Use of Neonicotinoid Insecticides on Public Fish and Wildlife Management Lands

The negative impact of neonicotinoid use on ecological systems is the subject of an increasing amount of studies and a growing cause of concern for managers of public fish and wildlife lands, particularly as it relates to farming practices conducted by cooperators on public conservation lands. The Public Lands Working Group worked with the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Health Committee to develop a joint resolution stating that agencies designed to encourage realistic ways to discontinue the use of neonicotinoids in farming practices on public lands.

ACTION: Begin additional evaluation, pursue wildlife-friendly alternatives, and support increased availability of neonic-free seed, with the long-term goal of discontinuing use of neonic-treated seeds on state lands under the authority of the MAFWA Directors.

Director Information Items—Private Lands Working Group

OPPORTUNITY: A Regional "Flyway" Planning Framework for Monarch Butterfly Restoration. This May, several representatives from Midwest State Fish and Wildlife Agencies attended a Structured Decision Making workshop to develop a framework for allocating monarch conservation targets (i.e., milkweed stems, habitat acreage totals) across states/sectors. The final desired outcome is to develop a Regional Monarch Restoration Plan. This planning framework will be used to guide the development of Regional Plan for the North American mid-continental monarch flyway that includes measurable, scale-specific, and time-specific targets for habitat acreage and associated milkweed stem densities by state/sector. The resulting information will integrate state **Prepared by Kelly Smith 05/27/16**

planning efforts and provide a basis for USFWS to track and evaluate the potential impacts of broad-scale conservation efforts. A draft proposal is being developed to establish a Monarch Flyway Council (including a senior-level Council and technical committee) that would coordinate and track implementation efforts across states and sectors/partners.

ACTION: None

Director Information Items

Director Information Items—Public Lands Working Group

ISSUE: Requirements for Prescribed Fire on Federal Lands

At the 2014 Public Lands Working Group meeting, a topic of much discussion was a requirement put forth by The Bureau of Reclamation that all prescribed fires on BOR lands be conducted by personnel meeting National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) standards. This requirement prohibits qualified state employees from conducting or participating on prescribed fires. At this year's meeting, it was revealed that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has made a similar requirement for prescribed fires on Corps land in North Dakota. The states express concern about the feasibility of training their employees to NWCG standards, which would mean less fire management on federal lands managed by state agencies, and loss of habitat quality at a time when habitat for pollinators and migratory songbirds is of great importance.

ACTION: None.

ISSUE: Grazing as an Accepted Wildlife Management Practice

At the 2014 Public Lands Working Group meeting, a topic of much discussion was a requirement put forth by The Bureau of Reclamation that all prescribed fires on BOR lands be conducted by personnel meeting National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) standards. This requirement prohibits qualified state employees from conducting or participating on prescribed fires. At this year's meeting, it was revealed that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has made a similar requirement for prescribed fires on Corps land in North Dakota. The states express concern about the feasibility of training their employees to NWCG standards, which would mean less fire management on federal lands managed by state agencies, and loss of habitat quality at a time when habitat for pollinators and migratory songbirds is of great importance.

ACTION: None.

Time and Place of Next Meeting

The 26th annual meeting will be held in early May 2017 at Fort Robinson State Park in northwest Nebraska.

List of Appendices

- 1. Joint Meeting Agenda
- 2. Private Lands Meeting Agenda
 - 2a. Private Lands Working Group Meeting Notes:
- 3. Public Lands Meeting Agenda
 - 3a. Midwest Public Lands Working Group Meeting Notes
- 4. Private Lands Working Group Meeting Attendees
- 5. Public Lands Working Group Meeting Attendees
- 6. Resolutions
- 7. State Reports

Appendix 1. Joint Meeting Agenda



MAFWA Public and Private Lands Working Groups Conference May 10-12, 2016 Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center Columbia, Missouri

Agenda

Monday May 9, 2015

Hotel available for early arrivals, Hospitality Suite in Room 380

Tuesday	May	10	2016 -	- Columbia Room	ı
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Welcome and logistics
Director's Office Welcome – Bob Ziehmer
Private Land Services Division – Bill White
Wildlife Division – Lee Hughes
Comprehensive Conservation Strategy/ Landowner cooperatives –
Nate Muenks
Missouri Monarch Initiative – Brent Vandeloecht
Health Break
Audubon Conservation Ranching Program – Max Alleger
Black Bear Study – Jeff Beringer
Chronic Wasting Disease Update – Missouri Approach – Mike Hubbard
Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program – Kelly Srigley Werner
Quail Forever – Program Update - Elsa Gallagher
Lunch (Provided)
Public/Private Break-out groups
Public Land Working Group: Meadows Room Private Land Working Group: Pines Room

Dinner on your own

7:30 – 10:00 Hospitality suite available (Room 380)



MAFWA Public and Private Lands Working Groups Conference May 10-12, 2016 Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center Columbia, Missouri

Wednesday May 11, 2016

8:00 – 5:00 Field tours in central Missouri

5:00 – 9:00 Social and Dinner at Les Bourgeois (Rocheport, MO)

Thursday May 12, 2016

8:00 – 12:00 Public/Private Break-out groups

Public Land Working Group: Salon B

Private Land Working Group: Hearth Room

Adjourn!

Appendix 2

Private Lands Working Group Agenda May 10 -12, 2016

Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center Columbia, Missouri

Meeting Purpose: Share and discuss information regarding issues and opportunities affecting private land forest, fish and wildlife resources and provide input on suggested action and informational items to the Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agency Directors.

Tuesday May 10, 2016

- 1:00 Introductions
- 1:10 Review of actions since May 2015 meeting Jodie Provost
- 1:20 State Reports (5 10 minutes each)
- 2:20 Break
- 2:30 State Reports continued
- 3:30 Update from AFWA Andrew Schmidt
- 3:45 Break
- 4:00 Grazing as Management on CP25 Matt Smith
- 4:30 Monarch Programs and State Updates All

EQIP

Update from Monarch Structured Decision Making Workshop - Lisa Potter

5:00 Adjourn

Thursday May 12, 2016

8:00 National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan Coordinator Update – Scott Taylor

8:15 North Dakota Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Bios – Kevin Kading

8:30 CRP

General CRP Acres - ALL SAFE Acres - All Short –term CRP - Eric Zach

State agreements with FSA – Kelly Smith

- 9:30 Break
- 9:45 Updates on VPA-HIP All
- 10:15 Habitat Exchange models Kelly Smith
- 10:45 Next Farm Bill All
- 11:30 Action Items for Directors All
- 12:00 Adjourn!

Private Lands Working Group Meeting Notes:

1. Private Land Work Group Report at the June, 2015 MAFWA Director's meeting

a. Jodie Provost provided an update and review of last year's Private Land Working Group report.

2. Agricultural Policy Update from the AFWA Conservation Reserve Program Enrollment

- **CRP General Enrollment**: FSA will accept 411,000 acres. FSA received over 26,000 offers to enroll more than 1.8 million acres of land, of which 4,857 were determined to be acceptable.
- **CRP Grasslands**: FSA will accept 101,000 acres. FSA received over 4,600 offers to enroll more than 1 million acres of land. According to the announcement, FSA will conduct another ranking period for CRP Grasslands later this year.
- **CRP Continuous Enrollment**: Over 364,000 acres have been enrolled so far this year, which is triple the pace of last year.

Budget and Appropriations

- In late April, the House Appropriations Committee approved an Agriculture spending bill for FY 2017. Some highlights of the bill include:
 - Reduction in enrollment authority for the Conservation Stewardship program to 8 million acres (down from the authorized level of 10 million acres).
 - \$225 million in funding cut from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, bringing the FY2017 funding to \$1.425 billion (down from an authorized level of \$1.650 billion).
 - As a result of the cuts to CSP and EQIP, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program will see a cut of \$46.5 million, since RCPP receives 7% of both programs.
 - o No reduction in funding for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program.
 - An increase of funding for Conservation Operations, which includes Conservation Technical Assistance, for a total of \$855.3 million (up from \$850.9 million in FY 2016), but still short of the Administration's request of \$860.4 million.
- Despite the movement by the House Appropriations Committee, we still have a ways to go in the budget and appropriations process.

USDA news

On April 28, USDA announced the <u>release of a three-year conservation strategy</u> for the lesser prairie-chicken. By 2018, the strategy will guide the restoration of an additional 500,000 acres by focusing on five key threats to the bird: degraded rangeland health, invasive red cedar trees and mesquite, cultivation of grazing lands, and lack of fire in grassland habitats.

- Last week, USDA also <u>announced the availability of \$2 million</u> to help farmers install edge-of-field stations that monitor water quality as it leaves their fields. The financial assistance is available through EQIP to install and maintain the monitoring systems for up to nine years.

3. Grazing as Management on the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Matt Smith from KDWPT provided a white paper on Restoring Functions and Values for Lesser Prairie-Chickens. The goal of the proposal is to *Develop effective management options to enhance and maintain the functions and values of CRP Practice CP25- Rare and Declining Habitat for the benefit of lesser prairie-chickens and provide additional risk management tools for producers in drought prone regions.* The group agreed with the need and management potential of using cattle (no haying) to manage CP25 practices. However, the group recommends states retain the ability to choose whether to allow grazing on CP25s in each of their respective states.

Actions:

- Andrew Schmidt (AFWA) will contact the national Farm Services Agency (FSA) to determine what the process is for officially requesting this change in FSA policy and whether an Environmental Assessment will be required prior to FSA adopting the change.
- After discussions with FSA take place, it will be determined whether a resolution letter in support of
 grazing CP25s should be developed and available for organizations to sign-on in support of the change in
 policy.
- Determine what other agencies/organizations may be interested in the proposal to allow grazing on CP25 practices.

4. Monarch Butterfly State Updates

Iowa: Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium is active. The agricultural organizations have led the effort to write a pollinator plan. The DNR would like to start another monarch plan.

Kansas: Xerces Society has been leading the efforts to date. USFWS – Partners program has also been active in monarch restoration.

Michigan: Monarch Summit is planned in September or October 2016. It has been determined that monarch-only restoration will not be completed on state land.

Indiana: No statutory authority over insects and therefore has not addressed the development of a monarch plan yet.

Ohio: Ohio Pollinator Habitat Initiative is very active with seed collection, outreach, and implementation. ODOT has been leading the charge in finding places to restore monarch habitat on the road system. ODOT is modifying mowing protocols to include early mowing and late mowing to avoid destroying habitat during migration. Ohio will be holding a symposium at the end of August with ODOT funding the majority of the event. Wildlife organizations are leading the effort to write a state plan.

Missouri: The Missouri State Monarch and Pollinator Plan was finalized in April 2016. It was a collaborative effort that included multiple state and federal agencies, private conservation and agriculture organizations and

academia. The plan was developed using the working group structure by dividing the sections of the plan among work groups. A private contractor was hired to write and coordinate the final plan.

Structured Decision Making (SDM) Workshop for Coordination of Midwest Monarch Restoration

Lisa Potter, with MDC, provided a brief update on the recent SDM workshop. The workshop was attended by state agency representatives from Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Texas, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Missouri, and Nebraska. Johnathan Mawdsley from AFWA and USFWS staff also attended.

A Regional "Flyway" Planning Framework: Partners developed a framework for allocating monarch conservation targets (i.e., milkweed stems, habitat acreage totals) across states/sectors. This framework will allow decision makers to evaluate a portfolio of options to explore the implications of:

- 1) *Geographic scope*—which states are included in the plan? How much of the target will these states account for? How might this impact their respective commitments?
- 2) *Population targets*—what are the implications of various population targets; how much habitat is enough under different target scenarios?
- 3) *Milkweed densities by state/sector*—how variable are baseline milkweed densities by state/sector? How much can be expected/achieved through conservation work by partners in each sector, how important/variable are these among states?
- 4) *Timeline*—how quickly will conservation efforts proceed? How long may it take to reach any particular target?

Desired Outcome--A Regional Plan: This planning framework will be used to guide the development of Regional Plan for the North American mid-continental monarch flyway that includes *measurable, scale-specific, and time-specific targets* for habitat acreage and associated milkweed stem densities by state/sector. The resulting information will integrate state planning efforts and provide a basis for USFWS to track and evaluate the potential impacts of broad-scale conservation efforts.

Process for Moving Forward: Additional states and partners are expected to participate in technical or advisory roles, when applicable; efforts will be coordinated by the MAFWA State/Tribal Liaison moving forward.

- **Establishing a Flyway Council:** Participants are developing a draft proposal to establish a Flyway Council (including a senior-level Council and technical committee) that would coordinate and track implementation efforts across states and sectors/partners.
- <u>Fall 2016:</u> MAFWA Meeting (November) in Texas—review allocation portfolios; work to finalize scope, allocation strategies, and timelines for Regional Plan.

5. National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan Coordinator Update

Dr. Scott Taylor, National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan Coordinator provided an update on the National Pheasant Plan. It is a 10-year plan. Participating states each have a harvest plan and a habitat restoration goal based on create enough habitat to support/reach harvest goals. There are 23 primary states included in the plan with 18 states providing funding for the Coordinator position for at least 3 years. One of Dr. Taylor's objectives is to evaluate how Farm Bill programs can provide support and assistance in reaching habitat goals outlined in the pheasant plan.

6. Conservation Reserve Program

CRP Acreage Cap:

- **a.** National CRP acreage cap is 24 million acres. It is expected that this cap will be met by next year. The cap will be maintained until the next Farm Bill.
- b. Continuous CRP at or near cap
- c. Support needed from producers on increasing the CRP acreage cap
 - i. Encourage producers to be vocal to USDA and their legislators about the need for more available acres. Encourage producers to attend USDA State Technical Committee meetings to express their views.

Short-Term CRP practices

Eric Zach from NGPC provided an update on their new Short-Term Set-Aside (STSA) program administered in cooperation with Pheasants Forever. The STSA was a solution to address producers' reluctance to enroll their lands into a 10-year CRP contract. The practice provides low cost inputs for short-lived early successional weedy habitat. Producers agreed to have a seed mix planted in June of 2015 and be left untouched until the spring of 2018. The program has drilled 150 acres of dryland corners to a mixture of forage sorghum, grain sorghum, pearl millet, alfalfa, and red clover at the rate of 10 lb/acres. To date landowner attitudes are very positive about this program. NGPC is planning a field tour in August 2016 to present date to USDA and other conservation partners to see if this program could fit into the next farm bill. The majority of the Private Lands WG felt this could be a popular practice option in their states.

Actions:

Investigate USDA program options for opportunities to include a STSA practice. Possible options include Conservation Stewardship Program enhancements and/or a practice scenario under the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). Potential standards to evaluate are 340 – Cover Crop, 327- Conservation Cover, or 645 – Upland Wildlife Habitat Management.

7. Voluntary Public Access (VPA) state updates

At this time, all states have fully executed VPA-HIP agreements with NRCS. Communication with NRCS VPA staff continues to be difficult. Andrew Schmidt with AFWA will continue to provide assistance to the states by attempting to facilitate communication between VPA staff and states. State VPA managers need NRCS to provide clear timelines and for NRCS to honor and meet the timelines/deadlines that are set.

8. Midwest Farm Bill Priorities for 2018

AFWA plans to adopt a Farm Bill platform by the North American Conference in spring 2017

Preliminary List of Priorities and information needs:

Funding

Double baselines for all conservation programs

Retaining Conservation Compliance

- *How do we measure the success of linking conservation compliance with crop insurance?
- *Discuss how to 'close the loopholes' rather than changing the linkage/policy

Sodsaver

- *Make nationwide
- *Close perennial crop loophole

(Re-word to First time a crop is raised on converted ground)

CRP

- *Increase the cap to 32 million acres
 - *Need to determine specifics on how to justify our request number?

Crop prices

Demand

Pheasant Plan – 40 M acres needed per plan

- *State flexibility (SAFEs)
- *Some states would rather have all continuous practices and no general signup
 - *If there is no General CRP, then FSA must allow whole field CCRP with no acreage limit on size of field.
- *EBI (recommendations already started by AFWA CRP Working Group)
 - *Need more regular review of EBI criteria
 - *Only high quality CRP that meets all resource concerns should be enrolled
- *Do we need longer term options and/or focus on working lands perspective to avoid turnover issue?

Management

- *Remove 'Mid-Contract Management' as label for type of management
- *Need state flexibility on frequency and timing of management
- *Allow management up to year 9 or 14 in 10 and 15 year contracts respectively (currently conflicts with new policy that allows prep for a fall seeded crop)
- *Need more financial support for management/MCM (need higher payment cap)

Grassland CRP

- *Only allow re-enrolling CRP rather than existing native grasses
- *We need more info on recent signup

Discussion needed on short-term set aside and possible implications of cropping history

EQIP

- *Maintain at least 5% of general wildlife funding (is this the correct amount or do we want a greater percentage?)
 - *Initiatives should not count (or be considered) for total state wildlife funding allocations
 - *State Technical Committee should determine how wildlife funds are allocated
 - *Must better track implementation of wildlife scenarios

Do we need a wildlife land use?

Payment rates – need better input system for states on setting regional pricing

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

- *Change to 60/40 Wetland Reserve Easement/Agricultural Land Easement funding split
- *Money needed for management of existing easements (especially WRE)

Agricultural Land Easements

- *Allow 100% payment by NRCS on GRP easements and allow NRCS to hold those easements for grasslands of special significance
- *Need for waiver authority for allowing entire 25% match to come from 1 party (do not require half of the funding to come from land trust and half from landowner contributions)
- *Allow federal funds for match (similar to RCPP)
- *Need waiver for AGI limitations

Wetland Reserve Easements

Allow restorations to be based on state wildlife priorities and not pre-settlement conditions

RCCP

- *Need more NRCS Technical Assistance funding available so partners don't need to provide it as match in their contributions
- *NRCS match should be able to cover partner administration costs

VPA-HIP

Continued funding and at higher levels

Appendix 3. Public Lands Meeting Agenda



MAFWA Public Lands Working Group Meeting May 10-12, 2016 Stoney Creek Hotel Columbia, Missouri

Break-out Agenda

Tuesday May 10, 2016/Thursday May 12, 2016

2015 Committee Report to MAFWA Directors
 Review of Action Items since last meeting

Bob Welsh

State reports (10 minutes each)

State representatives

- Emerging/Existing Issues
 - Neonics on public lands
 - Joint resolution with MFWHC
 - Efforts to regulate the use of drones (UAVs) on public lands
 - Disposal of abandoned property (tree stands, etc.)
 - Fat tire bicycles: restrictions on public lands?
 - Update on the lands chapter
 - Allowable uses Are things changing?
 - Lessons from Malheur NWR Takeover-Could it happen in Your State?
 - CRP on public lands
 - Items for Director's Meeting
- Next Meeting: Nebraska 2017

Appendix 3a. Midwest Public Lands Working Group Meeting Notes

Present: Lee Hughes (Missouri), Paul Coughlin (South Dakota), Mike Ervin (Ohio), Earl Flegler (Michigan), Pete Hildreth (Iowa), Jeff Hoffman (Nebraska), James Kershaw (Indiana), Kent Luttschwager (North Dakota), Dustin Mengarelli (Kansas), Pat Molini (Nebraska), Casey Nelson (USFWS), Stuart Schrag (Kansas), Bob Welsh (Minnesota), Roger Wolfe (Kansas)

Tuesday afternoon, May 10, and Thursday morning, May 12, 2016

2015 Committee Report to MAFWA Directors

Bob Welsh gave the 2015 Committee Report to MAFAWA Directors. He shared his synopsis of the report and insights into the process as the Public Lands Working Group Chair.

The state representatives shared their state reports on Tuesday afternoon, and the group covered many topics brought up in the reports.

The group left off last year talking about Rx fire training standards, and picked up the discussion this year. While the requirement for National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) standards was previously only required on Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) lands and some USFWS lands, in North Dakota, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is requiring that state employees be NWCG certified before being allowed to burn on Corps lands. Iowa has not had the Corps require NWCG standards, but the USFWS has on Michigan has adopted the NWCG standard, Kansas has worked to get state standards accepted on federal lands, and other states have not yet been required to meet NWCG standards. Nebraska worked with the BOR to develop a set of procedures that allowed them to burn on BOR-owned land, and shared language from the NWCG "Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide" that states, "State employees, local cooperators and contractors working on federal agency prescribed fires must meet the PMS 310-1 standards unless local agreements specify otherwise". This is the citation they used to develop their own set of prescribed fire standards.

Shooting ranges received considerable discussion, as it is proving universally difficult to build and manage ranges in a way that fulfills public need without being overly taxing on agency resources.

North Dakota and South Dakota spoke of the success of federal conservation easements on grasslands and wetlands that produce waterfowl. They do not allow for public access, but are popular with cattlemen and produce wildlife.

Non-toxic shot is required on upland dove fields in Ohio, South Dakota, Kansas, and Minnesota. Other states have not yet required non-toxic shot outside of waterfowl areas.

On Thursday morning, the group worked through the remainder of the agenda, including the use of neonicotinoids on state lands, resulting in a joint resolution between the Public Lands Working Group and the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Health Committee, mentioned above in the Director's Action Items.

E-Mail Action Items since Last Meeting

• Illinois asked the group members for insight regarding the details of CRP on agricultural leases on each state's wildlife management lands. Most states do not enroll lands in CRP, but may acquire tracts with CRP on them, but will not accept payments, and will let the CRP expire without renewal. In states like Iowa, where some payment may be made available to the state, the state generally avoids initiating VRP enrollments so as to not compete with private farmers for those dollars. Illinois is in a situation where the income from CRP payments is helpful in funding management efforts.

Emerging/Existing Issues

- **Neonicotinoid Use on Public Lands:** The group discussed the use of neonicotinoid insecticides on public agricultural lands.
 - O Background: Neonics were discussed last year, by both the Public Lands Working Group and the Fish and Wildlife Health Committee. The Health Committee presented a resolution to the Directors in 2015, and it was tabled due to concerns about contract farming on public lands not being thoroughly addressed. In April, Lee Hughes (MO) and Bob Welsh (MN) coordinated with Michelle Carstensen (MN) to discuss a joint resolution with the Health Committee at their meeting in Galena, Illinois. A draft resolution crafted by the Health Committee was discussed by the Public Lands group.
 - Current Discussion: The Health Committee's resolution was broad, and called for an eventual ban of all neonicotinoids on all state lands. The Public Lands group had two main concerns with the resolution:
 - The main issue was with prophylactic use of neonic seed coatings by permittee/contract farmers. The seed treatments are known to provide systemic insecticidal properties in all parts of the plant, while the unabsorbed portion (80-90%) of the seed coating remained as water-soluble insecticide in the soil, potentially contaminating ground water.
 - The resolution should be restricted to just those lands managed for fish and wildlife, as not all state lands are under our control, and it is not our place to dictate how sister agencies managed their state lands.
 - The resolution did not mention the role invertebrates played as food sources for wildlife, the challenges presented by working with farming cooperators, or mention the concerns agencies have with large-scale, abrupt changes to agricultural programs.
 - North Dakota is considering providing seed to contract farmers, and noted that of all agricultural land in the state, only .0001% is in public lands planted with neonics, underscoring that actions we may take as managers may be symbolic at best, but we can provide an example by actions we take.
 - Result: The Public Lands Working Group and the Fish and Wildlife Health Committee worked together to draft a compromise resolution that will be presented to the Resolutions Committee, and is attached as Appendix 6.
- Efforts to Regulate the Use of Drones on Public Lands: North Dakota initiated a discussion on drones or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) use on public land managed for wildlife.

- o Background: The MAFWA states are beginning to consider how to address the use of UAVs on state lands by the public, commercial enterprises, cooperators, and the agencies themselves. Concerns about negative impacts from hobbyists' UAV use include wildlife harassment or injury, hunter harassment, poaching or illegal uses while hunting, privacy concerns on state lands, and more. A study done in Minnesota demonstrated that the use of UAVs near black bears resulted in a greatly increased heartrate in those bears, suggesting that the buzzing drone was stressful to the bears. UAVs used by resource professionals can be valuable and safer than flying in light aircraft for wildlife surveys and observation, but Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) rules are currently very restrictive regarding how state agencies can use drones on state lands. Academic users have slightly more leeway, yet regulations still make UAV use a challenge. Revisions to FAA regulations regarding UAVs are expected.
- O Current Discussion: Hobbyist use of drones is a concern for member states, and regulations lag behind the advancing technology. Part of the issue is a lack of jurisdiction over the airspace above public lands. Most states are currently relying on existing regulations that prohibit most UAV use under wildlife harassment regulations or prohibitions related to the use of aircraft or electronic devices to aid in hunting. The National Park Service has instituted a ban on UAV use in parks while a long-term solution is developed. On the other hand, Iowa has seen benefit from videos captured of state lands by a hobbyist that fostered interest in those areas. However, the FAA prohibits commercial use under the rules governing hobbyists. There are valuable uses for drones in the realm of state wildlife management. The University of North Dakota's Aerospace program is positioning themselves to be a leader in UAV uses, working to provide clarity and guidance on unmanned aerial systems. The University of Nebraska has successfully used drones for aerial ignition of the interior of prescribed burn units.
- o Result: No action items, yet the topic will remain a topic of discussion as events unfold.
- **Disposal of Abandoned/Confiscated Property:** North Dakota initiated a discussion asking how the states dispose of abandoned and/or confiscated property.
 - O Background: In North Dakota, rulings state that abandoned property is still personal property, and cannot be disposed of without input from a judge. The discussion in particular was about abandoned tree stands (i.e., those left standing after the date by which they were to be removed) which are of varying value, and usually sold at auction. Seeking judicial input for every instance can be cumbersome.
 - Current Discussion: Iowa places a seizure sticker on the tree a stand was confiscated from, and if not claimed, the stand is sent to auction. In Minnesota there is some confusion on what constitutes 'abandoned' property; anything "in use" cannot be taken without legal seizure. Most states will make an effort to locate the owner and return the property, along with appropriate citations/fines, yet some owners will still sacrifice expensive equipment to avoid the prospect of fines.
- Allowable Public Land Uses/ 'Fat Tire' Bicycles: Iowa suggested the topic of fat tire bicycle use on public lands specifically, and Michigan proposed a general topic of changing allowable uses.
 - o The main issue with fat tire bicycles is their ability to access portions of public lands not reachable by mountain bikes and other bikes. Missouri allows bicycle use only on public roads or on trails designated for their use by code. Other states have similar regulations, and

all rely on federal interest primary use language to fend of requests for uses (such as bicycling) that could interfere with primary uses. No action items were identified, although the group asked Casey Nelson (USFWS/WSFR) that the Service provide support to states that invoke primary use rules to limit requests for questionable public use activities.

- Changes in the WSFR Lands Chapter: Casey Nelson of the USFWS attended the meeting, providing some perspective from the WSFR level. She noted that she was not privy to specific potential changes, but that she knew completion of the chapter was a priority in D.C. She thought that changes would be made that would increase the "shelf life" of land appraisals in recognition of the realities faced by agencies trying to acquire land.
- Lessons Learned from Malheur NWR Occupation: Michigan initiated a brief discussion on the potential for a Malheur-like occupation of state lands. The states agreed that in such an event, it would not be worth fighting over, and to let law enforcement dictate how the event played out.
- Other Topics:
 - The group briefly discussed LIDAR data collection and use, as it becomes more prevalent in the resource management arena.
 - o Kansas asked if other states had issues with the Corps of Engineers refusing to recognize cattle grazing as a wildlife management tool. Grazing is allowed on Corps lands in Kansas through a complex abatement process that is proving difficult for cooperators to understand. If it were recognized as a wildlife management practice, matters would be greater simplified, reduce confusion, and likely provide more flexibility in grazing prescriptions. The group opted not to request a letter on the topic from the Directors, since currently only Kansas is affected. Kansas will draft and send a letter on their own behalf.

MAFWA Requests: None.

Closing Remarks and Additions: The group expressed appreciation for the meeting and the chance to share information with colleagues. It was lamented that Kentucky and Illinois representatives were unable to attend, and it is hoped all members will receive agency support and be able to attend next year. Missouri was grateful for the turnout, participation, and chance to share some of the areas, management practices, and programs with counterparts from the Midwest.

Nebraska offered some potential sites for next year's meeting, either in the western or eastern part of the state. The group was enthusiastic about all potential options, and are looking forward to it.

Adjourn

Appendix 4. Private Lands Working Group Meeting Attendees

State	Name	E-mail address
AFWA	Andrew Schmidt	aschmidt@fishwildlife.org
Indiana	Josh Griffin	jgriffin@dnr.in.gov
Iowa	Kelly Smith	kelly.smith@dnr.iowa.gov
Kansas	Jake George	jake.george@ksoutdoors.com
Kansas	Matt Smith	matt.smith@ksoutdoors.com
Michigan	Mike Parker	parkerm5@michigan.gov
Minnesota	Jodie Provost	jodie.provost@state.mn.us
Missouri	Lisa Potter	lisa.potter@mdc.mo.gov
Missouri	Scott Radford	scott.radford@mdc.mo.gov
Missouri	Jason Sykes	Jason.sykes@mdc.mo.gov
Missouri	Travis Dinsdale	Travis.dinsdale@mdc.mo.gov
Missouri	Joe Tousignant	Joe.tousignant@mdc.mo.gov
Nebraska	Alicia Hardin	alicia.hardin@nebraska.gov
Nebraska	Shelley Steffl	shelley.steffl@nebraska.gov
Nebraska	Eric Zach	eric.zach@nebraska.gov
North Dakota	Kevin Kading	kkading@nd.gov
Ohio	Jeff Burris	jeff.burris@dnr.state.oh.us
Ohio	Mark Wiley	mark.wiley@dnr.state.oh.us
South Dakota	Mark Norton	mark.norton@state.sd.us
Wisconsin	Mark Witecha	mark.witecha@wisconsin.gov
PF	Scott Taylor	staylor@pheasantsforever.org

Appendix 5. Public Lands Working Group Meeting Attendees

State	Name	E-mail address
Indiana	James Kershaw	jkershaw@dnr.in.gov
Iowa	Pete Hildreth	pete.hildreth@dnr.iowa.gov
Kansas	Dustin Mengarelli	dustin.mengarelli@ksoutdoors.com
Kansas	Stuart Schrag	stuart.schrag@ksoutdoors.com
Kansas	Roger Wolfe	roger.wolfe@ksoutdoors.com
Michigan	Earl Flegler	fleglere@michigan.gov
Minnesota	Bob Welsh	bob.welsh@state.mn.us
Missouri	Lee Hughes	lee.hughes@mdc.mo.gov
Nebraska	Jeff Hoffman	jeff.hoffman@nebraska.gov
Nebraska	Pat Molini	pat.molini@nebraska.gov
North Dakota	Kent Luttschwager	kluttschwager@nd.gov
Ohio	Mike Ervin	Michael.Ervin@dnr.state.oh.us
South Dakota	Paul Coughlin	paul.coughlin@state.sd.us
USFWS	Casey Nelson	casey_nelson@fws.gov

Appendix 6. Resolutions

Joint Resolution in Support of Discontinuing the Use of Neonicotinoids on State Managed Lands under the Authority of the MAFWA Directors

The Midwest Wildlife and Fish Health Committee at its annual meeting in Galena, Illinois on April 12-13, 2016 and the Public Lands Working Group at its annual meeting in Columbia, Missouri on May 10-12, 2016, both discussed and proposed the following resolution in support of discontinuing use of neonicotinoids on seeds and plants on State managed lands.

SUPPORT FOR DISCONTINUING USE OF NEONICOTINOIDS ON STATE MANAGED LANDS UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE MAFWA DIRECTORS

WHEREAS, neonicotinoid pesticides, including but not limited to imidacloprid, thiamethoxam, clothianidin, and acetamiprid, are insecticides that are applied as seed treatments, in foliar sprays, applied granularly to pastures, and injected into trees;

WHEREAS, the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA) states are concerned about the deleterious effects of broad spectrum pesticide use on seeds and in plants as it pertains to declining native pollinator populations;

WHEREAS, neonictinoid pesticides are increasing in use and wide range application and are considered to be moderately persistent in the environment;

WHEREAS, native pollinators are defined as, but not limited to, bees and butterflies (e.g. Poweshiek Skipperling, Dakota Skipper, Monarch Butterfly, Regal Fritillary, Rusty patched Bumble Bee, Western Bumble Bee, and Yellow Banded Bumble Bee);

WHEREAS, the MAFWA states are concerned that the loss of these pollinators will potentially have wider scale impacts on the biodiversity needed to maintain healthy and sustainable wildlife populations;

WHEREAS, recent studies have shown native bird populations may also be at risk from neonicotinoid treatments;

WHEREAS, insects and other invertebrates are a critical source of food and protein for native wildlife;

WHEREAS, the MAFWA states utilize private cooperators with a variety of skills and philosophies related to regional agricultural practices;

WHEREAS, the MAFWA states recognize the social, political and logistical challenges of implementing abrupt, wholescale changes to agricultural practices and recommend a practical, moderate, phased-in approach; and

WHEREAS, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service has already implemented a program to phase out the use of neonicotinoid pesticides in agricultural practices on National Wildlife Refuges by January 2016;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the MAWFA Directors at its annual meeting in St. Louis, Missouri on June 26-29, 2016 encourage additional evaluation, while concurrently pursuing and implementing wildlife-friendly alternatives as available and practical, and support the discontinuing use of neonicotinoids on those State managed lands under their authority.

State Reports Private Lands Working Group Meeting Missouri 2016

Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife 2015-2016 Private Lands Program Report

Mission

The mission of the IDNR, Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) is to professionally manage Indiana's fish and wildlife resources for present and future generations, balancing ecological, recreational, and economic benefits. Indiana's Private Lands Program is the Division's mechanism for applying this mission to the vast majority (96%) of Indiana's landscape that is in private ownership. This is accomplished through 4 primary areas of responsibility: technical assistance, financial assistance, public information/education, and wildlife conflict resolution.

Private Lands Unit Structure & Responsibilities

Staff

During the 2014-2015 fiscal year, the DFW experienced a sizeable reduction in staff due to retirements. DFW leadership took this as an opportunity to evaluate current direction and staffing within each section before filling vacancies. As a result of this evaluation, the private lands unit was reorganized. Reorganization included development of an urban wildlife conservation program and a landscape-level conservation program to complement the smaller, original private lands program that remained. The unit went from 15 biologists to 12 (8 district wildlife biologists, 2 urban biologists and 2 landscape biologists). During the 2015-2016 fiscal year, new staff have been hired and adjusted programs have been implemented.

The 8 district biologists are each responsible for a 9 county region. They strategically focus their habitat efforts with cooperators in identified habitat priority areas. Wildlife conflict, disease monitoring, and species population monitoring are addressed by District Biologists across each county of their districts.

The new urban biologist positions focus their efforts on wildlife conflict management, promoting sustainable natural resource planning and development, working with non-traditional cooperators in urban and suburban environments to create wildlife habitat, and promote fish and wildlife associated recreational activities in urban and suburban environments. Both urban biologists focus their habitat-related technical and financial assistance efforts in municipalities within each of their urban districts.

The new landscape biologists focus their efforts on current and future landscape initiatives in whatever capacity is needed; serve as the point person in developing and submitting new proposals (Joint Venture, RCPP, Small NAWCA, LCC, VPA, etc.); interpret, coordinate and integrate state, regional and national wildlife plan objectives into landscape initiatives; coordinate the implementation of new initiatives, track initiative outcomes and prepare reports. These positions target habitat-related technical and financial assistance opportunities with landowners where the project can have an impact on a landscape scale.

Chief of Wildlife **Public Lands Private Lands Private Lands** Private Lands 4 District Biologists **4 District Biologists Public Lands Public Lands** 1 Urban Biologist 1 Urban Biologist 1 Landscape 1 Landscape **Biologist Biologist**

Organizational Chart of Private Lands Section

Private Lands Essentials

Facilities – All private lands biologists are located at State property or Regional office complexes within their assigned districts.

Equipment – All private lands biologists are provided with a 4-wheel drive vehicle, office space, desk, file cabinets, telephone, cell phone, binoculars, spotting scope, and laptops with Internet access.

GIS-All private lands biologists have laptops instead of desktop computers, and each has an individual ArcGIS 10.0 license. This allows our biologists

to work interactively with landowners while on-site as well as show various DVDs created to promote habitat programs and habitat management activities to the landowner. Each biologist is also equipped with a Garmin 205W Nuvi to assist them in locating landowner properties and conducting survey routes.

Private Lands Programs

Classified Wildlife Habitat Program

Through legislation passed in 2006, the Classified Wildlife Habitat Act and the Classified Forest Act were merged into one program called the Classified Forest and Wildlands Program and is now administered by the Division of Forestry. Within Habitat Priority counties, the Private Lands Unit provides technical assistance to the Division of Forestry to prepare wildlife management plans for parcels of land wanting to enroll in the wildlands portion of the program.

Wildlife Habitat Cost-Share Program

The Division of Fish and Wildlife allocates \$50,000 from the Fish and Wildlife Fund annually to implement the Wildlife Habitat Cost-Share Program. This program provides landowners up to 100% cost-share assistance, not to exceed \$6,000 (\$2,000 for pre-existing cooperators), for wildlife habitat development on private lands. This financial assistance is available to landowners in Habitat Priority counties. The program focuses on providing permanent wildlife habitat, although food plots may be cost-shared if they are part of a program to maintain early successional habitats in a rotational basis. Biologists develop a written agreement specifying the work to be completed and the amount that the Division will reimburse the landowner. Payment is made after the biologist has inspected the work for completion. In the past, we have reimbursed landowners based on the selected cost-share rate and eligible receipts. Beginning in July of 2007, we began using standardized rates for all practices which are periodically updated.

Game Bird Habitat Development Program

Each year the Division typically allocates \$100,000 from the Game Bird Habitat Stamp Fund for the Game Bird Habitat Development Program. This program provides landowners up to \$330 per acre for game bird habitat development projects, not to exceed \$8,000 (\$4,000 for pre-existing cooperators). This financial assistance is available to landowners in Habitat Priority counties. The program focuses on providing permanent

game bird habitat, although food plots may be cost-shared if they are part of a program to maintain early successional habitats in a rotational basis. Biologists develop a written agreement specifying the work to be completed and the amount that the Division will reimburse the landowner. Payment is made after the biologist has inspected the work for completion. In the past, we have reimbursed landowners based on the selected cost-share rate and eligible receipts. Beginning in July of 2007, we began using standardized rates for all practices which are periodically updated.

Urban Wildlife Habitat Cost-Share Program

With the creation of urban biologists, the Division of Fish and Wildlife experienced the need for a financial assistance program for landowners and cooperators in urban environments interested in participating in conservation efforts. For fiscal year 2015, the Division of Fish and Wildlife initiated the Urban Wildlife Habitat Cost-Share Program by allocating \$20,000 from the Fish and Wildlife Fund. This program provides landowners cost share assistance for habitat development projects, not to exceed \$6,000 (\$2,500 for pre-existing cooperators). This financial assistance is available to landowners in Urban Habitat Priority Areas. The program focuses on providing beneficial wildlife habitat such as pollinator habitat, butterfly gardens, and development of native grasses and forbs around retention ponds to both increase beneficial habitat and reduce conflicts with resident Canada Geese. Biologists develop a written agreement specifying the work to be completed and the amount that the Division will reimburse the landowner. Payment is made after the biologist has inspected the work for completion. The Division of Fish and Wildlife uses standardized rates for all practices to assist in determining payment amount. These rates are periodically updated.

Habitat Priority Areas

District biologist priorities for habitat development are directed at enhancing wildlife habitat around State Fish and Wildlife Areas, current and future landscape initiatives, and high CRP enrollment counties. Urban biologists focus for habitat development includes municipalities within their assigned urban counties. Landscape Biologists focus habitat development efforts around projects that are larger in scope to address conservation needs at a landscape scale. As a result, each District Biologist has a habitat priority area of approximately 4 counties. The urban biologists have multiple priority areas falling within municipalities of their urban county assignments. Landscape biologists work in their respective region of the state on projects that support landscape-level conservation initiatives

CRP Initiatives

As of March 2016, Indiana had 228,959 acres enrolled in CRP with an average rental payment of \$133 per acre. As of March, 2016 a total of 11,678 acres of CP33 and 37,175 acres of CP38 have been enrolled in Indiana. CP38 (SAFE) in Indiana has 6 priority areas: Ring-necked Pheasant (10,000 ac.), American Woodcock (1,150 ac.), Indiana Bat (5,800 ac.), Northern Bobwhite (16,275 ac.), Henslow's Sparrow (11,675 ac.), and Sedge Wren/Grasshopper Sparrow (8,050 ac.). The increase in available CP38 (SAFE) acres coupled with expiring CP33 contracts (no longer eligible since they no longer buffer agricultural production) is the main cause of the increase in CP38 enrollment while the decrease in other CRP acreages. Approximately ¼ of the 2015 SAFE acreage allocations (20, 150 ac. for Indiana) has been obligated to contract.

Partnerships

Farm Bill Biologists

In early 2016, the DFW partnered with Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever and the NRCS office in Indiana to fund 4 new Farm Bill Biologists in Indiana. These positions are supervised by Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever personnel, are housed at NRCS Area offices, and receive technical assistance, training, and guidance from IDNR-DFW, Private Lands Unit. These positions were conceived to implement Farm Bill practices throughout the state. They each have a quarter of the state to cover. They can work in any county, but try to focus efforts in "non-priority counties" of District Biologists. These Farm Bill Biologists also can assist with some of the busiest counties from a Farm Bill workload standpoint during periods of high activity, such as during a General CRP Signup.

Game Bird Partnership Program

Each year the Division allocates \$30,000 from the Game Bird Habitat Stamp Fund for the Game Bird Partnership Program. This program provides Quail Forever, Pheasants Forever, and The National Wild Turkey Federation up to \$10,000 per organization per year for game bird habitat development projects on privately owned lands. Local chapters, in cooperation with Division biologists, develop agreements with landowners. The Game Bird Partnership Committee prioritizes all projects and notifies the chapters of selected projects. The Division reimburses 50% of the chapters' costs, not to exceed \$330 per acre, upon completion of the selected projects. This program creates approximately 1,100 acres of game bird habitat annually. Total cost of projects completed by landowners typically exceeds \$165,000 annually.

Northeastern Wetland/Grassland Restoration Program (NWGRP)

The NWGRP is a voluntary program that encourages private landowners to restore

wetlands and grasslands on their property. Ducks Unlimited (DU) and a coalition of conservation partners, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Pheasants Forever (PF), and private landowners works in partnership to restore wetlands and grasslands on private land in an eleven county area of northeastern Indiana. The program pays up to 100 % of habitat restoration costs. Annual funding for the program combines \$20,000 from USFWS, \$20,000 from Ducks Unlimited, and \$8,000 from IDNR. Pheasants Forever contributes seed and labor for native grass establishment, and the USFWS and IDNR staff provide technical assistance, participant screening, site review, survey and design work, and permit coordination.



Iowa Department of Natural Resources

2016 Private Lands Progress Report to
The Midwest Private Land Wildlife Management Group
Columbia, MO
May 10 – 12, 2016

Vision

Leading in the application of science-based wildlife management on private lands

Organization

The Wildlife Bureau within the Iowa DNR has three Sections; Research, Public Lands Management, and Private Lands Wildlife Management. The Private Lands Wildlife Management Section is made up of 2 programs, the Wildlife Depredation Program and the Private Lands Program (PLP). The PLP consists of a PLP Coordinator, a Farm Bill Coordinator, 5 Private Lands Biologists (PLB), 5 Wildlife Specialists (2 currently vacant), and temporary/partner staff. Currently, the PLP has 8 temporary staff; 4 Wetland Easement Team (WET) Technicians and 4 Wildlife Specialists employed by through Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI).

The PLP Coordinator works primarily to provide support to PLP staff and District Supervisors, administer and manage budgets, grants, and state run private lands financial assistance programs, as well provide input on a statewide level to partners involved in activities that affect wildlife habitat on private lands. The PLP Coordinator also serves as the lowa Habitat and Access Program (IHAP) Coordinator. The FB Coordinator works to provide input on a regional and national level to influence the development and implementation of conservation programs of the Farm Bill. PLB's serve as DNR/NRCS Area Wildlife Biologists and are located in USDA-NRCS Area Offices.

The PLB's provide wildlife training to NRCS staff and serve as a lead worker for individuals considered part of the Iowa DNR's PLP. The PLB's work with the NRCS AC's and DC's to negotiate the location of employees, work with partners to determining workload priorities, provide technical training, and serve as a mentor, and advocate. PLB's seek out funding opportunities to address resource issues within their assigned Area, provide comments on NRCS standards, and conduct experiments to further the benefits of private lands conservation and financial assistance programs. The PLB's also provide one-on-one technical assistance to landowners when necessary. PL field staff work with one on one with private landowners to develop wildlife plans and serve as a liaison between the landowner and federal, state, and county programs. They also identify and develop strategies to address priority resource concerns in the area in which they are assigned.

Partners

lowa has had an exciting opportunity to partner with Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) to hire 8 additional PLP staff. During the summer of 2015 the Iowa DNR was approached by NRCS with the interest of entering into a contribution agreement to hire 4 additional Wildlife Specialists and 4 new Wetland Easement Team Technicians (WET Techs). While the expansion of the PLP staff is an important identified need in the PLP Strategic Plan, state government limits the DNRs ability to hire additional employees. The DNR has entered into a contract with CDI who has agreed to employee and supervisor these 8 new PLP members. The DNR PLB time is used to match the \$481,000 in NRCS funds.

While the DNR has partnered with Pheasants Forever, RC&Ds, and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the past there has never been a partnership with CDI directly to fund staff. CDI functions to support the 100 soil and water conservation districts throughout the state of Iowa. Prior to this agreement CDI staff consisted of an Executive Director and an Office and Projects Manager.

Funding

The PLP Coordinator and the PLBs are funded with the Iowa Fish and Wildlife Trust Fund exclusively while the Wildlife Specialists funded through the Iowa Fish and Wildlife Trust Fund and PR Federal Funds. The PLB time is used to match a Contribution Agreement with NRCS. This agreement provides federal USDA funds to employ 8 CDI staff (4 WET Techs and 4 Wildlife Specialists. Iowa DNR has an MOA with NRCS to house these individuals in NRCS offices and provide vehicles.

Competitive State Wildlife Grant (C-SWG)

	Partnering States	Location					Iowa PL Funds	Focus
Open Woodland	MN, WI	Driftless Area NE Iowa	\$1,755,500	\$450,000	\$349,000	\$799,000	. ,	Woodland/Savanna Birds and Butterflies
Riverine Turtle Habitat	MN, MI, WI	Black Hawk and Butler Co	\$911,000	\$100,000	\$80,560	\$180,560	\$38,000	Wood Turtle
Grand River Grassland	IL, MO	Ringgold County	\$863,322	\$443,891	\$326,931	\$770,822	\$11,900	Greater Prairie Chicken
NE Iowa Bluff Prairie (Goat Prairies)	MN, WI	Allamakee Co. NE Iowa	\$842,300	\$166,000	\$77,700	\$243,700	•	Dry Prairie Butterflies and Reptiles
Stream Fish	MN	Rock, N. Raccoon, Boone River Watersheds	\$737,321	\$453,144	\$240,902	\$694,046	, ,	Stream Fish of GCN (i.e. Topeka Shiner, Plains Top Minnow)

Farm Bill Conservation Programs

Conservation Reserve Program

As of February 2016, lowa has a total of 1,647,392 acres on 104,645 contract enrolled in CRP. This is an increase from 1,509,629 as of October 2015. Iowa will have 99,669 acre expire on September 30, 2016. Therefore, Iowa will see a net gain in CRP acres enrolled for FY '2016 (38,094 as of Feb. 2016). Iowa continues to have one of the highest average rental rates in the nation of \$186/acre; second only to Massachusetts at \$207/acre (of which only 10 acres are enrolled).

Summary of	Iowa CCRP Initiatives						
	CP23 Wetland	CP23A Non-	CP33 Habitat Buffers	Highly Erodible Land		CP42	Farmable
	Restoration	Floodplain	for Upland Birds	Initiative (HELI)	SAFE	Pollinator Habitat	Wetlands
Allocation	132,500	14,036	46,500	120,000	184,500	=	135,000
Enrolled	130,900	8,657	30,010	120,000	184,500	79,825	98,786
Available	1,100 (being held for	5,379	16,491	0	0	(40% of national	36,214
	reenrollments)					enrollment)	

Environmental Quality Incentive Program

The 2014 Farm Bill requires that a minimum of 5% of EQIP funds are utilized to benefit wildlife. Iowa has an EQIPO Wildlife Sub-account which has been funded up to \$500,000 annually which is approximately 2.5% of the Iowa allocation. The remaining 2.5% were reported to the national office through the use of the 15 national practices.

The DNR PLP worked through the EQIP State Technical Sub-Committee to propose an increase from \$500,000 to a full 5% of the state's EQIP allocation to be set aside in the Wildlife Sub-Account. While a contentious proposal within the EQIP Sub-Committee it passed unchallenged in the full State Technical Committee. Depending on the given year's allocation this could nearly double the funds in the Wildlife Subaccount.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program – (RCPP)

Regional Grassland Bird and Grazing Land Enhancement Initiative

Iowa partnered with Missouri, Nebraska, and Kansas to submit a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) proposal in 2014 to implement grassland practices for the benefit of northern bobwhite quail and greater prairie chickens with an emphasis on grazing lands management. Iowa will receive \$400,000 of EQIP funds to spend in the southern 2 tiers of counties over the next 5 years.

Midwest Agriculture Water Quality Partnership

IDALS along with the Iowa Agriculture Water Alliance took the lead in developing a proposal which pulled together a diverse group of partners including federal and state agencies, non-profit and for profit entities, agriculture and conservation groups, and water quality and wildlife organizations to develop a comprehensive approach to addressing both the water quality improvement needs as well as the wildlife habitat needs of the North and South Raccoon Watersheds. The successful \$10 million proposal incorporated \$8 million in working lands practices targeting water quality through EQIP and CSP and \$2 million for easements which will benefit both water quality as well as wildlife in the North Raccoon Watershed.

WREP

The Iowa DNR submitted a successful \$3 million proposal focusing in NC Iowa. The proposal targets land that once enrolled in WRE, existing NRCS wetland easement sites would have potential for improved restoration. Each of the properties enrolled in WRE through WREP would also be required to enroll in IHAP and allow public hunting for 5 years.

FY 2015 Private Lands Program Summary

Total Contacts/Technical Assistance: 586 landowners

Total Acres of Habitat Improvement Recommendations: 30,093 acres **Total Acres of Habitat Improvements Implemented:** 18,605 acres (61.8%)

Implemented Common Practices:

- CRP: 10,156 acres (55% of recommendations)
- Prescribed Burning: 4,194 acres (85% of recommendations)
- Other Wildlife Habitat Improvements (edge feathering, food plots, interseeding, native plantings, trees/shrubs, periodic disturbance, TSI, woody invasion removal etc.): 4,255 acres

VPA-HIP - Iowa Habitat and Access Program (IHAP)

The lowa Habitat and Access Program (IHAP) is the lowa DNR public hunting access program which kicked off in 2011. 25,671 acres on 175 private sites are enrolled in IHAP. Through IHAP an incentive payment is provided for the development or improvement of habitat in exchange for the property being opened to the public for hunting. Fishing and trapping are not authorized on IHAP sites. PLP staff evaluate each potential property and write a wildlife habitat development and management plan. This plan determines which habitat practices are installed and therefore what incentive payments are made.

\$1 from every Habitat Stamp purchased in Iowa goes to fund IHAP. These equates to approximately \$180,000 annually. The Habitat Stamp fund is used to leverage other federal funds to fully maximize the program's enrollment potential. To date the State funds have leveraged ~\$13 million additional fund (2 VPA-HIP Grants \$4,000,000 and 4 WREP Grants \$9,000,000)

Prairie Partners Program

lowa DNR, lowa PF and the lowa Native Seed Growers Association (INSGA) entered into an agreement in 2003 that the INSGA would donate 5% of specified seed sales to DNR/PF seed trust fund. The trust fund is split 50:50 by DNR and PF. The funds are used to provide landowners an incentive to seed natives by providing a 1 to 1 cost-share program for the cost of the seed. Since the inception of the program the DNR has used their share to provide \$595,000 and with the landowner match a total of \$1,255,000 on seeding projects on over 9,100 acres of new or improved native seedings.

In 2015 the FWS in Iowa received \$100,000 to establish habitat for monarch butterflies. The FWS partnered with the DNR to spend \$75,000 of those funds with the DNR's Prairie Partners funds to establish monarch habitat along the I-35 corridor through Iowa. The FWS received another \$100,000 for FY 2016, again the DNR and FWS are partnering together to establish monarch habitat along the I-35 and now expanded I-29 corridors. The DNR portion of these funds are also being used to match a \$250,000 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grant which is being utilized to establish, manage, or restore Monarch habitat on public and private land.

Wetland Easement Teams

During 2015 lowa NRCS piloted a Wetland Easement Team process modeled after the Missouri WET Team process. This included many discussions and meeting with MO WET Teams and NRCS Staff office Staff. During late 2015 and early 2016 the WET Team concept was fully deployed throughout the state. Due to lowa budgetary restrictions a modified process was developed. Through this modified process only 2 of the Team members are solely dedicated to wetland easements; the Area Easement Specialist and the WET Tech (currently CDI employee). The other member of the team; Soil Scientist, Engineer, and DNR Private Lands Biologists; serve on the team during peak times but continue to serve in their previous capacities as well. This is facilitated by having blackout weeks in which the entire team meets at an off-site locations for a pre-determined period of time to review, rank, and design new wetland easement applications and easement.



Annual Private Lands Report Midwest Private Lands Working Group

May 9-12, 2016, Columbia, MO

Walk-In Hunting Access Program (WIHA)



We celebrated 20 years of WIHA in KS this year. We have continued to maintain between 1.0-1.1 million acres for fall access annually. Spring WIHA in 2016 opened approximately 237,000 acres for public hunting access.

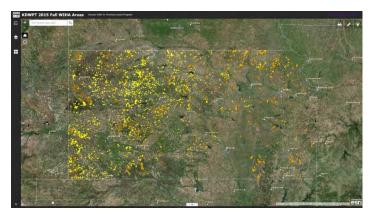
Voluntary Public Access & Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP)

We were successful in our application for the final round of VPA-HIP funding. KDWPT received an award of \$2.7 million. Finally received fully executed agreement in March 2016. We are continuing with the previous VPA delivery model which focuses on long-term access leases on CRP/CCRP contracted properties. Close to having the first \$1 million committed in new contracts which will begin fall 2016. Anticipate adding 50-60,000 acres (depending on contract lengths) between now and fall of 2018.

Special Hunts on Private Lands

We are continuing to offer limited access opportunities on private lands through the Special Hunts program. Enrollment has decreased some, but the program remains an option for those not wishing to allow open public access on their property (our preference). There remains a strong youth/novice hunt component to the program which is great from a hunter R&R standpoint.

Access Mapping Updates



www.ksoutdoors.com/fish

All previous improvements to our printed atlases have continued. We added an embedded web map to the department page for the fall of 2014. This has since been improved upon to offer fully functional web mapping applications for both hunting and fishing access (see links below...Complete Online Maps).

www.ksoutdoors.com/wiha



Private Land Habitat Work

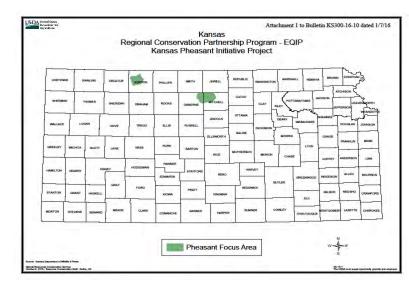
The Habitat First program is intended to create a marketable brand for the services we have to

offer willing landowners throughout Kansas. Our wildlife biologists are able to assist with habitat management planning on private properties, provide equipment loan for habitat projects as available, and offer cost-share reimbursements for completed habitat projects through both state and federal programs. The standardized practices and rates make the program easy to understand for those delivering it and easy to explain to potential cooperators.

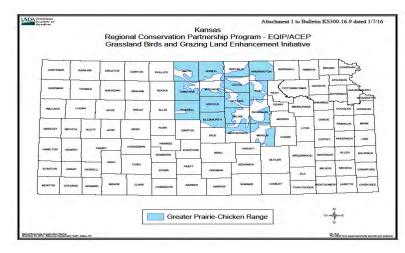
In addition to simplifying the program, we have also begun to increase our marketing efforts. The Private Landowner Assistance web page (www.ksoutdoors.com/private-lands) has been streamlined for a quicker review of content, and a web map application for look-up of who to contact in your area of the state if interested in learning more about our programs. Countertop displays have also been distributed throughout the state at retail stores, USDA offices, and state offices, with informational cards on the Habitat First program and where to go for additional information. Future plans include targeted direct mail marketing as well.

RCPP Projects

KDWPT is the lead on two RCPP projects in Kansas. The Kansas Pheasant Initiative Project and the Grassland Bird and Grazing Land Enhancement Initiative. The goal of the Pheasant Initiative Project is to increase brood-rearing habitat within two narrow focus areas by offering incentives for targeted practices such as cover crops, brood-strips in cropland, CRP management and grass/forb plantings. EQIP practices used are 328 — Conservation Crop Rotation and 340 — Cover Crop.



The Grassland Bird and Grazing Land Enhancement Initiative was designed to benefit greater prairie-chickens and rangeland health within the Smoky Hills region in Kansas. The project builds on successful easement acquisitions within the area and targets projects where woody encroachment is increasing. Within the known current range of the GPC KDWPT offers 100% cost share on high priority practices such as Brush Management – 314, Herbaceous Weed Control – 315 and Prescribed Burning – 338. Both initiatives were approved for a continuous sign-up process. If the application meets the program objectives and a conservation plan is in place to address the identified resource concerns, then the application is automatically approved for funding.



Playa Lakes Focus

Ducks Unlimited recently awarded PLIV/ConocoPhillips Grant to increase playa conservation in Western Kansas. Targeted sites will be playas enrolled in WIHA program. Restoration cost will be paid by KDWPT and engineering

work provided by DU. Du will also be working on a RCPP project to seek enhanced funding for WRE projects on playa wetlands. Historically, DU has not had a large role in playa conservation in Kansas. These new partnerships should lead to greater conservation of playa's into the future.



Michigan Conservation Partners Program Midwest Private Lands Working Group Annual Report – May 10, 2016

Conservation Partners Program:

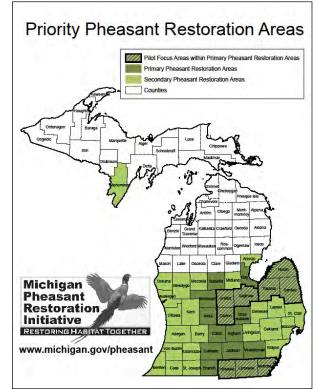
Michigan's Conservation Partners Program (CPP), formerly called Private Lands Program, provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners to improve habitat for priority game and non-game species. The program's mission is to deliver goals, objectives and strategies identified in the Wildlife Division's strategic plan - Guiding Principles and Strategies on lands not owned by the DNR. CPP takes a regional approach to address differing wildlife priorities throughout the state. Grasslands, oak savanna and prairie fens are the primary focus of staff in the southern Lower Peninsula. Early successional forest, barrens and jack pine are priority habitats in the northern Lower Peninsula. In the Upper Peninsula, priority habitats include early successional habitat and mesic conifers.

In 2015, DNR staff provided technical assistance to 127 landowners covering 12,135 acres. A total of \$408,259 in financial assistance was provided to 114 landowners to enhance 2,918 acres of wildlife habitat. From 2004 through 2015 CPP staff provided technical assistance to 1,320 landowners and impacted 142,922 acres while providing financial assistance on 812 projects impacting 33,468.

Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative Midpoint:

Partnering with Pheasants Forever, Michigan United Conservation Club, state and federal departments of agriculture, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Wildlife Division is working on revitalizing Michigan's pheasant-hunting heritage. The Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative (MPRI) targets both public and private lands in priority areas where grasslands can be improved and habitat deficiencies can be corrected. Three pilot areas were identified: Huron, Sanilac, and Tuscola counties; Hillsdale, Lenawee, and Monroe; and Gratiot, Saginaw, and Clinton counties. Through this cooperative project MDNR is funding eight Farm Bill Biologists (FBB) employed by local conservation districts. FBB's target habitat restoration in priority areas, enroll landowners in Farm Bill programs, and form local landowner cooperatives to promote the initiative and increase local habitat restoration efforts.

Large-scale habitat projects have been initiated in each of the three primary focus area, including Lake Hudson Recreation Area, Maple River State Game Area (SGA), and Verona SGA. These public land projects are to being used to increase



public hunting opportunities and to provide a nucleus around which private landowners can expand to impact habitat on more of a landscape scale. 2015 marked the midpoint of the 10-year initiative. In the first five years of the initiative, the DNR has enhanced 8,760 acres of grassland habitat, 5,363 acres of food plots on public land, provided \$1.1 million in grants to partners to enhance habitat, enhanced

2,866 acres of grassland habitat on private lands, purchased 917 acres of new public land within the priority counties and expanded the Hunting Access Program to over 20,000 acres. MPRI partners have enhanced or restored 18,945 acres of grassland, 1,041 acres of wetland, 170 acres of woody cover and 59,247 acres of food plot. For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/pheasant.

Farm Bill Biologists:

In addition to DNR private lands staff, the Wildlife Division provides funding to employ eight Farm Bill Biologists (FBB) to deliver our habitat mission in priority southern Michigan counties. FBB's provide technical and financial assistance to landowners enrolling in wildlife friendly Farm Bill programs, including CREP, CRP, EQIP and WRE. Technical assistance is also provided to landowners that do not qualify for funding from a state or federal program. In 2015, Michigan's four FBB's within the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative (MPRI) priority counties assisted **293 landowners enroll 4,870 acres in Farm Bill programs** or manage existing contracts to enhance the value for wildlife. FBB's organized 10 local workshops attended by over 200 landowners to promote the 2015 General CRP enrollment and other state and federal wildlife programs. Technical assistance was provided to an additional 305 landowners not participating in Farm Bill programs. FBB's used DNR and other partner programs to provide financial assistance to 97 additional landowners. In addition private lands habitat, FBB's also assist habitat on priority public lands. Four DNR Wildlife Habitat Grants totaling \$141,039 were written by FBB's, and granted to Conservation Districts, to enhance grassland habitat on public land. FBB's are also key to the success of the pheasant initiative by developing landowner cooperatives to implement

habitat projects on a landscape level that include both private and public lands. In 2015, partnering with Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and USDA NRCS four new FBB's

were added, increasing the number of FBB's to 8.

Landowner Cooperative Coordinator:

Wildlife Division partnered with Michigan United Conservation Clubs, Quality Deer Management Association and Pheasants Forever to hire a full-time Cooperative Coordinator to develop landowner cooperatives to create and maintain improved habitat for wildlife. Cooperatives bring like-minded neighbors together in a manner that can benefit habitat restoration on a landscape level, a major goal of the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative (MPRI). Landowner coops also provide social engagement, shared resources and increased hunter satisfaction. To

MICHIGAN WILDLIFE COOPERATIVES

date, Farm Bill Biologists and the Coop Coordinator have formed 10 landowner cooperatives in southern Michigan as part of the MPRI. Several additional coops are in the works.

Deer Habitat Improvement Program:

In 2015 the wildlife Division partnered with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and local conservation districts to provide funding to produce tangible deer habitat improvement on private land in northeast Michigan. Programs goals include reducing the transmission of Bovine Tuberculosis and agricultural damage relate to deer in northeast Michigan. A total of \$50,000 was available to private landowners in grants up to \$2,000. Thirty-three landowners received funding to enhance whitetail habitat. Funded projects included 55 acres of conservation cover (perennial food plots, switchgrass), planting 25,843 trees (conifers & hardwoods) and 23 acres of early successional habitat.

Deer Habitat Improvement Partnership Initiative is a grant program designed to foster productive relationships between the DNR, sportsmen's organizations, concerned citizens and other partners that produce deer habitat improvement benefits and educate the public about the importance of the work and scientific principles involved in it. This initiative targets habitat restoration in the Upper Peninsula. In 2015, 15 partners were awarded grants totaling \$104,105 to enhance 1,031 acres.

Private Land Assistance Network is a grant program to foster productive relationships between the DNR, sportsmen's organizations, concerned citizens and other partners that produce tangible deer habitat improvement benefits in order to assist in reducing transmission of Bovine Tuburculosis and agricultural damage related to deer in the northeast Lower Peninsula. In 2015, 10 partners were awarded grants totaling \$45,639 to enhance 369 acres.

Native Grass Drill Drill Program: Since 1997, the private lands program has been responsible for the coordination and distribution of **31 native grass drills** through a cooperative working relationship with county conservation districts. Drills were purchased in partnership with DNR, Ducks Unlimited and Pheasants Forever. In 2015, the drills planted 3,230 acres of habitat, mostly native grasses, on 229 sites. Since 1997, this partnership has resulted in planting more than 63,000 acres of grassland wildlife habitat.

Competitive State Wildlife Grant (cSWG):

The Wildlife Division actively seeks matching funds from a variety of conservation partners to help deliver our habitat mission. In recent years, the CPP has been awarded five USFWS Competitive State Wildlife Grants. These grants provide critical funding to the Private Lands Program to expand conservation efforts for a number of at-risk species. In 2015, a new cSWG grant was implemented to restore and enhance 400 acres of prairie fen and associated savanna to benefit the federal candidate eastern massasauga rattlesnake (EMR). Wildlife Division staff worked with Michigan State University to identify 27 habitat restoration sites and to develop monitoring protocols to estimate the probability of occupancy of EMR at habitat units classified as low, moderate and high habitat suitability in southern Michigan and Illinois. Monitoring is a critical aspect of this program to help direct future restoration activities. Management practices will include prescribed fire, invasive species removal and hydrology restoration.

Michigan's ongoing Diverse Grassland cSWG grant focuses on restoring and enhancing large grassland complexes for species of greatest conservation need in southern Michigan. Priority species include grasshopper sparrow, Henslow's sparrow, Northern harrier and Karner blue butterfly. Emphasis is placed on creating grassland complexes of 250 or more acres. Focus areas include all nine pilot counties identified in the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative, plus additional areas identified working with

partners and stakeholders. In 2015, 26 private landowners totaling 1,141 acres received technical assistance and \$146,228 in financial assistance.

Michigan genotype native warm-season grass fields: Seed production fields at Rose Lake are managed annually to produce Michigan genotype switch grass, Indian grass, big bluestem, and little bluestem seed. Each site is approximately 1-3 acres in size. Harvested seed is used for targeted projects on public and private lands, including the ongoing restoration of over 500 acres of grassland



habitat at Lake Hudson State Recreation Area, a focus area of the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative.

Michigan's *Hunting Access Program* (HAP) was created in 1977 to increase public hunting opportunities in southern Michigan where 97 percent of the land base is privately owned. Providing access to quality hunting lands close to urban areas is a key component to offering additional hunting opportunities as well as hunter recruitment and retention. Utilizing \$1.2 million from a USDA Voluntary Public Access-Hunting Incentive Program grant (VPA-HIP), the wildlife division set a goal to expand HAP to 180 farms and 24,000 acres by 2017. The Wildlife Division partnered with 20 local conservation districts to conduct local HAP promotion, enroll new farms and provide landowner support. In 2015, HAP enrollment increased to 170 farms totaling 20,089 acres. Michigan was awarded a third VPA-HIP grant in 2015 for \$953,000. Grant funds will help fund a full-time HAP Coordinator as well as expanding HAP to the Northern Lower Peninsula with the goal of enrolling 10,000 new acres. Enrollment will be focused on areas with limited public access, including the Bovine TB area in northeast Michigan, as well as the active fruit orchard areas in northwest Michigan.

To increase awareness of HAP lands, all enrolled properties are mapped and included on both the HAP webpage (www.michigan.gov/hap) and Mi-Hunt. Mi-Hunt is a cutting-edge, web-based application that allows users to plan their hunting trip. Mi-HUNT users can navigate through a variety of map layers to create their own custom maps or download pre-made maps to meet their specific hunting needs. Mi-HUNT also includes GPS download so users can pick a spot on the map in Mi-HUNT and navigate to it while hunting. For more information, visit Mi-Hunt at http://www.mcgi.state.mi.us/mi-hunt/.

Michigan's Private Lands Program also places a major emphasis on providing input and support for the implementation of the *federal farm bill program* such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Wildlife Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). The Wildlife Division provides funding to employ 8 Farm Bill Biologists to assist landowners and provide outreach for conservation programs. DNR private lands staff promote wildlife benefits and opportunities through the Michigan Technical Committee, field offices and providing information to private landowners. In 2015 Michigan's CREP program reached a major milestone by reaching the original goal of enrolling 80,000 acres.

Habitat Incentive Program:

The Wildlife Division is partnering with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and USDA to provide an enhanced Continuous Conservation Reserve Program in the Upper and Headwaters of the St. Joseph River watershed.

Private landowners who implement specific conservation practices, agree to plant native species, and/or increase the minimum standard width of conservation practices will receive a one-time Habitat Incentive Payment (HIP) of \$150 per acre, in addition to the federal compensation provided under current Continuous CRP policy. **The goal is to enroll over 5,000 acres.** To ensure HIP's success, DNR added a Farm Bill Biologist at the Branch Conservation District to provide local field implementation and outreach.

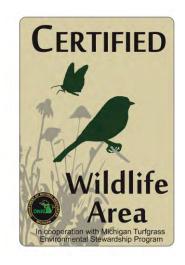
Eligible conservation practices include:

- CP5A (Field Windbreak) of native trees and/or shrubs
- CP21 (Filter Strip) of native grasses and/or forbs and planted a minimum width of 50 feet

- CP22 (Riparian Forest Buffer) of native grasses and/or forbs, trees, and shrubs planted a minimum width
 of 50 feet
- CP23 (Wetland Restoration) of native grasses and/or forbs
- CP23A (Wetland Restoration Non-Floodplain) of native grasses and/or forbs
- CP33 (Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds) of native grasses and/or forbs

Certified Wildlife Area Program:

DNR staff developed a Certified Wildlife Area Program to challenge golf courses, university and college grounds departments and park and other grounds maintenance operations to create and improve habitats to benefit wildlife. Michigan's 800+ golf courses offer significant potential for the DNR to work with a non-traditional partner to promote wildlife habitat management. The goal of this wildlife module is to engage these facilities across Michigan to become more wildlife-friendly. Enhancing existing or developing new habitat areas can provide a safe haven for migratory birds, mammals, amphibians, and beneficial pollinating insects. This program recognizes facilities that go above and beyond to make their lands wildlife-friendly. The program provides guidance for evaluating existing wildlife habitat conditions, establishing goals for wildlife conservation, implementing management activities to enhance wildlife habitat, and providing conservation education to the public. DNR provides successful participants a sign to signify their participation in the program and commitment to wildlife habitat.





Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Division of Fish & Wildlife - Section of Wildlife - Habitat Program 2015-2016 Private Land Report MAFWA Private Land Work Group Meeting Columbia, Missouri, May 10-12, 2016

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) works with citizens to conserve and manage the state's natural resources, to provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and to provide for commercial uses of natural resources in a way that creates a sustainable quality of life. The Division of Fish and Wildlife manages, protects, and regulates the state's fish and wildlife resources.

Within the Section of Wildlife's Habitat Program, a Habitat Manager oversees three Habitat Supervisors that coordinate Prairie/Farmland, Forest and Wetland Habitat Teams. Each team includes a Private Land Specialist (PLS). These PLS work to strategically influence protection, enhancement, and restoration of wildlife habitat on private land, and integrate wildlife habitat management on public and private land. They collaborate with agencies and organizations, such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), and assist private landowners to provide technical assistance, resource materials, group presentations, workshops, field tours, referrals, and support on habitat projects. Area Wildlife Managers also provide technical guidance and financial incentive to private landowners to encourage restoration and enhancement of habitat.

This report includes private land habitat conservation efforts in Minnesota in the last year in which MN DNR and partners have been involved. It is not exhaustive but should capture most key projects and activities.

Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan

The Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan continues to be very beneficial in steering targeted use of programs, funding and people power to accelerate targeted conservation of the state's prairie and surrogate grasslands. Conservation partners developed the 25 year plan in 2011. It includes aggressive targets of 40% grasslands and 20% wetlands in 36 core areas totaling 1.5 million acres, with similar goals in complexes of corridors linking core areas. Many partners, and especially ten, multi-disciplinary, local technical teams (LTTs) implement on the ground habitat projects to make it happen. For addition information, see http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/prairieplan/index.html.

Local Technical Teams' work from May 2015 to May 2016 included hiring two positions to provide dedicated support to seven teams, securing a \$75,000 NACWA grant to improve grassland habitat on 411.5 acres, training and providing equipment to four volunteer fire departments so they can write burn plans and conduct prescribed burns, conducting four native plant identification training sessions, and funding of 57 habitat projects (8,000 acres of protection, upland and wetland restoration, tree removal, grazing, prescribed burning and seeding) and 14 outreach projects with \$764,000 by MN DNR Working Lands Initiative (WLI).

An especially note-worthy project is a Native Prairie Bank Program easement in the Glacial Ridge/Agassiz Dunes prairie core area which perpetually protected 216 acres adjacent to other permanently protected conservation lands through the MN DNR Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA) Program. The parcel has Northern Dry Oak Barrens Savanna and prairie of outstanding biodiversity significance which is 46% of the remaining unprotected native prairie in the immediate complex, is the 9th largest unprotected native prairie remnant in that prairie core area, and is 10% of all documented Northern Dry Barrens Oak Savanna left in Minnesota. Numerous rare species have been observed on or near the parcel, including Louisiana broomrape, creeping juniper, sandy tiger beetle, blunt sedge, annual skeleton weed. Flexibility of WLI funding made this protection project possible by paying the difference between the allowable Native Prairie Bank rate and value of 90 acres of former agricultural fields present on the parcel.



Minnesota Local Technical Teams

The SNA Program hit a milestone protecting 10,084 acres through the Native Prairie Bank Program. In FY15, seven new easements of 1142 acres total were secured for a total of 119 statewide, prairie enhancement projects involving 37 landowners were implemented, 16 sites were monitored, and 21 baseline property reports completed. Forty-four prairie management projects on private lands included woody encroachment removal on 74 acres (six sites), nine acres of prairie reconstruction and restoration (three sites), invasives treatment (non-woody) on 22 acres (14 sites), prescribed burning on 850 acres (19 sites), and prescribed grazing on 53 acres (two sites, does not include sites that retain grazing rights).

Pheasant Summit Action Plan

Governor Mark Dayton convened the state's first-ever Minnesota Pheasant Summit in December 2015. The Pheasant Summit Action Plan stemming from this gathering was completed in 2016. The four-year plan outlines an aggressive set of short- and long-term steps to increase and improve habitat for pheasants and opportunities for hunting, including measurable goals and recognizing that habitat conservation will need to continue far into the future. Actions are explicitly designed to increase pheasant habitat and pheasant populations. They are: 1. target habitat efforts, 2. more habitat on private land, 3. education and marketing, 4. more habitat management, 5. more public lands, 6. buffer strips, 7. better roadside habitat, 8. maintain walk-in

access, 9. expand citizen education, and 10. more habitat research. Emphasis is being placed on utilizing Farm Bill programs and securing easements such as through the Reinvest in Minnesota Wetlands Program. Pheasants serve as an indicator species for grassland conservation, and grasslands grown out of this plan will provide habitat for waterfowl, songbirds, pollinators and hundreds of grassland-dependent wildlife species. For more detail, see http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/pheasantaction/index.html.

Buffer Initiative

The Buffer Initiative stemming from the 2015 Pheasant Summit has also been progressing. A Minnesota buffer law has been established which requires perennial vegetation buffers along rivers, streams and public ditches to help filter out phosphorus, nitrogen and sediment. The law provides flexibility and financial support for landowners to install and maintain buffers. MN DNR's role is to produce maps of public waters and public ditch systems by July 2016 for Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and SWCD use. Preliminary maps are under review now. These maps will aid landowners in identifying whether they need to create a buffer and, if so, how wide. A minimum of 30 feet or average of 50 foot is required on public waters, and 16.5 feet along public drainage ditches. Past state laws mandate vegetative buffers of 50 feet or 16.5 feet around many waterways in agricultural lands, but the laws weren't uniformly enforced, and many waters were exempt. For more information, see http://bwsr.state.mn.us/buffers/.

Governor's Water Summit

A first- ever Governor's Water Summit was held Feb. 27, 2016 to focus public attention on the serious challenges facing Minnesota's water supplies – in both rural and urban areas of the state – and find clean water solutions. It brought together about 800 stakeholders including water quality experts, farmers, legislators, regulators, the business community, members of the public, and local leaders. According to a recent Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) report, there is a vast amount of contamination in Minnesota waters. Up to 60% of the groundwater wells MPCA monitored across parts of central and eastern Minnesota were contaminated with nitrates well above safe drinking water standards.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

December, 2015, marked the 30th anniversary of the CRP program, developed as part of the 1985 Farm Bill. The 49th enrollment for General CRP ran December 1, 2015 through February 26, 2016. It was the most selective sign-up yet, with a record high Environmental Benefits Index cut-off to maximize benefits and address multiple environmental priorities. Interest in the recent enrollment was strong, due to the current lower crop prices and reduced farm profitability.

As of November 2015 in the U.S., there were over 630,000 CRP contracts on over 350,000 farms, with just over 23.4 million acres under some type of CRP contract. That acreage was down from near 27 million acres in 2013, over 31 million acres in 2009, and over 36.8 million in 2007. The 2014 Farm Bill cut the cap to 24 million acres by 2018. CRP contracts will expire on

just over 1.65 million acres in the U.S. on September 30, 2016. Nationally, slightly over 2.5 million contracted CRP acres will expire in 2017 and nearly 1.5 million acres in 2018.

Nationally, more than 800,000 acres has recently been enrolled in CRP. 411,000 acres maximum will be accepted in the General enrollment, more than 364,000 acres have been accepted for 2016 in the Continuous CRP (CCRP) enrollment (triple last year), and 101,000 acres will be accepted in the first-ever CRP Grasslands program that provides financial assistance for establishing approved grasses, trees and shrubs on pasture and rangeland which can continue to be grazed and also conserves diverse native grasslands under threat of conversion (70% of the acres). Numbers on these acres enrolled in Minnesota have not been released yet.

In Minnesota, as of November 2015, there were a total of 54,476 CRP contracts in place, with a total of just over 1.1 million acres. Just over 530,000 acres were under a General CRP, and slightly over 582,000 acres were under CCRP. The current average CRP rental rate in Minnesota is \$95 per acre, with an average of \$70 per acre on General CRP, and \$118 per acre on Continuous CRP. Most CRP annual land rental rates in southern Minnesota are considerably higher than the state average rate. (Average CRP land rental rate in the U.S. in 2015 was about \$70 per acre, with an average of \$51 per acre on General CRP and \$114 per acre on CCRP.)

Proposed Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) III

A CREP III has been proposed in Minnesota. This federal (CRP) – state (RIM) partnership, spearheaded by BWSR, collaborates with private landowners to restore grasslands and wetlands and protect them with perpetual conservation easements, creating wildlife habitat and clean water. CREP III initially proposed to enroll 100,000 acres in 54 counties over 5 years at \$800 million total (buffers on 50,000 acres along streams and waterways, restore 30,000 acres of wetlands, restore 15,000 acres of wetlands in flood plains, and protect 5,000 acres near wellheads). Currently, Governor Dayton has proposed \$30 million in state bonding to support the RIM funding needed to leverage CRP funds at 2:1 for a total of \$90 million to protect 10,800 acres of the most environmentally sensitive lands. Final negotiations between USDA and Minnesota are nearly complete. With land and commodity prices moderating, much interest is expected. This program would aid implementation of the new buffer law. For more information, see http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/crep/.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

ACEP includes the 1. Agricultural Land Easements [ALE, includes Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) and Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)] and 2. Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) programs. As of February 2016, Minnesota had 64,854 acres enrolled in permanent easements (404 contracts) and 47,748 acres in 30-year easements (536 contracts), including Wetland Reserve Program (WRP, prior to WRE), GRP (215 acres), FRPP (7,058 acres), and Emergency Wetland Protection programs (7,707 acres). Catching up on the backlog of easement applications has been a priority for Minnesota NRCS. 2,369 acres (18 offers in nine Counties) are currently being considered for Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE). A recommendation for grazing as a habitat management tool on WRE/WRP is being considered. The 1000th WRP/WRE easement will be celebrated this May.

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)

The EQIP statewide wildlife funding pool (minimum of 5% EQIP funds) continues to provide important financial assistance to landowners for wildlife habitat improvement, including brushland and forest habitats, such as sharp-tailed grouse habitat projects in east central Minnesota. Increases in payment rates for prescribed burning in brushland are being sought to entice more landowners and contractors to utilize burning as a habitat management tool. EQIP local work group meetings are currently underway in preparation for an August 19 application deadline. They are crucial to providing input to local NRCS and SWCD offices regarding natural resource priorities.

NRCS Landscape Initiatives & Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Current NRCS landscape initiatives involving Minnesota include the Driftless Area Landscape Conservation, Great Lakes Restoration, Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds, National Water Quality, Red River, Prairie Pothole Wetland and Grassland Retention Project, and Upper Mississippi Headwaters Restoration. RCPP projects awarded support in FY2016 which include Minnesota are the "Driftless Area - Habitat for the Wild and Rare" led by Trout Unlimited, "Honey Bee and Monarch Butterfly Partnership" led by Pheasants Forever, "Improving Working Lands for Monarch Butterflies" led by NFWF, and "Lower Mississippi River Feedlot Management in MN" led by MN BWSR. RCPP projects currently underway are the "Red River Basin of the North Flood Prevention Plan" led by Red River Retention Authority, "Improving Forest Health for Wildlife Resources" led by American Bird Conservancy, and "Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program National Demonstration Project" led by MN Department of Agriculture.

Walk-in Hunter Access Program

In 2015, Minnesota executed a grant agreement, 69-3A75-16-509, with USDA NRCS for \$1.6 million as part of the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Improvement Program (VPA-HIP) within the 2014 Federal Farm Bill to continue and expand the walk-in hunting access program in Minnesota. The funding will provide program support through September 2018. The program currently has approximately 22,800 acres enrolled on 200 sites located in 35 Minnesota Counties participating in the program. We are currently enrolling new sites into the program with a goal of increasing enrollments to 30,000 acres by 2018. To assist us in reaching this goal we have expanded the program to include an additional 11 counties bringing the total to 46. A new feature of the program will be to provide habitat restoration and enhancement activities on some of the parcels enrolled in the program. For more information, see http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/walkin/index.html.

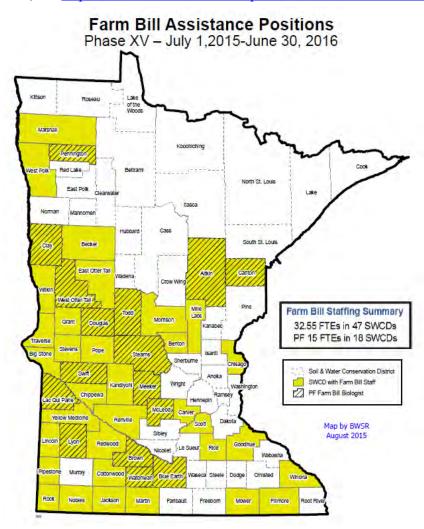
Pollinators and Monarchs

Several state and federal programs are available and in development in Minnesota to benefit pollinators, monarchs and other beneficial insects. Minnesota enacted a Pollinator Habitat statute in 2013. Efforts include the CRP's Pollinator Habitat Initiative and Honeybee Habitat Initiatives, a MN BWSR Pollinator Initiative, a state plan for pollinators in development, and an

Interstate 35 corridor for monarchs in development. Minnesota DNR has created Best Management Practices and Habitat Restoration Guidelines for pollinators, is adding pollinator information to their Native Plant Community Field Guides, and is partnering with Minnesota Department of Agriculture to create Best Management Practices for pollinators along roadsides. Studies and surveys are underway, as through the Minnesota Biological Survey. See Minnesota Pollinator Resources at http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/pollinator_resources/index.html for more information.

Farm Bill Assistance Partnership

The highly successful, fourteen-year, Farm Bill Assistance Partnership between MN Board of Water and Soil Resources, MN DNR, Pheasants Forever, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) and NRCS continues. Its primary objective is to help landowners understand their options and make the best choices for establishing conservation practices and wildlife habitat on their lands. The Partnership funds 32 positions in 45 Minnesota Counties that provide the "boots on the ground" critical to delivering assistance. The annual solicitation by SWCDs for positions is currently underway to sustain and slightly grow the initiative, specifically in the MN pheasant range in response to the Pheasant Action Plan. New efforts on the horizon, such as with clean water, a possible CREP III, CRP expirations, and buffers, will require added capacity. For more detail, see http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/practices/farm-bill/index.html



Forest Watershed Health

MN DNR Section of Fisheries has received Outdoor Heritage funds, stemming from the 2008 Legacy Amendment passed by Minnesotans, and is partnering with the MN DNR Division of Forestry, to protect private forest lands with "Forest for the Future" working conservation easements on private properties in five cisco lake watersheds in three counties of north central Minnesota. They are collaborating with lake associations and private landowners to keep their forested lands in forest. Conversion of forest lands to agriculture or development increases runoff which degrades water quality and reduces cold, highly oxygenated water for cisco. Fisheries is also partnering with BWSR and SWCDs to provide cost share for forest management plans on private forests in these watersheds. These plans are often the first step to management and protection. To date, 440 acres is enrolled in working forest easements in three of the five cisco watersheds.

Private Forest Management Delivery Model

To better serve private forest landowners and increase the number of landowners sustainably managing their forest, the NRCS State Conservationist, DNR Division of Forestry Director and USFS charged the Forest Stewardship Committee (FSC, subcommittee of the USDA Minnesota State Technical Committee) finished development of a ten-year plan and new service delivery model. MN DNR Cooperative Forest Management (CFM) positions will occur throughout the forest region to work with stewardship plan writers, consulting foresters, and partners, and assist landowners. FSC subcommittees will begin work to implement the plan. The 6.8 + million acres of family owned forest land in Minnesota (40% of Minnesota forests, 194,000 landowners) provide an enormous opportunity to positively affect healthy, diverse habitat, water quality, soils resources, forest products, and recreation through a well-orchestrated and supported Private Forest Management program. See http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/foreststewardship/index.html

North Shore Forest Collaborative (NSFC)

The NSFC is a coordinated effort along Lake Superior between local, state, and federal land management agencies, and public and private organizations and individuals. The area of interest extends from the Lake Superior shoreline to approximately three miles inland in Lake and Cook Counties. The mission is to revitalize and maintain a healthy and functioning ecosystem along the North Shore of Lake Superior with emphasis on restoring and maintaining native trees and associated forest communities. Issues including dying birch, blow-downs, invasive species, deer browse, and ice storm damage are being addressed. In 2015, Collaborative members and partners planted and/or protected trees (mostly white pine, white cedar, red oak, and red maple) from deer browse with fencing and bud caps on about 1000 acres, site prepped 78 acres for 2016 tree planting, treated invasive plants on more than 53 acres, completed two plans and two more are underway, held field trips, landowner workshops, training sessions, public meetings, and education presentations, planned for future restoration activities, assisted private landowners, and agencies hired additional foresters to assist. For more information and the full 2015 Accomplishment Report, visit the NSFC website at www.northshoreforest.org

Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape (CRSL)

In May 2015, the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape statute was unanimously approved by the Minnesota Legislature. It is the first law of its kind in the Nation. Camp Ripley is a Minnesota National Guard Training Center in central Minnesota. A Coordination Committee must identify sentinel land, including all working or natural lands will contribute to the long-term sustainability of the military missions conducted at Camp Ripley, and develop recommendations to encourage landowners within these lands to voluntarily participate in compatible uses. Fourteen agencies and organizations have partnered and will use an array of federal and state conservation tools to protect, maintain, and restore natural and cultural resources for multiple military, ecological, social, and economic benefits. The diverse landscape includes approximately 700,000 acres and was chosen due to convergence of several high quality water features, including 40 miles of the first 400 miles of the Mississippi River and four major tributaries to the river; two major continental ecological transitions zones, and thousands of acres of public and private conservation lands that can potentially be connected. It is also one of Minnesota's most important source protection areas for drinking water. Strategies are being developed to utilize NRCS, USFS, and USFWS programs and their full suite of tools from education and outreach to fee title acquisition.

#1 General Advice & Assistance Factsheets Poster / Mailers Workshops Website / Social Media	#2 Specific Advice & Assistance Site Visits Forest Stewardship Plans Project Plans	#3 Grants / Cost-share Projects Clean Water Fund EQIP CSP	Land Use Controls Stormwater Buffers BMPs County Water Plan County Zoning	#5 Incentive Programs to Enroll Land SFIA CRP Coops Forest Banks CREP III	#6 Donated, Land & Easements NGOs Public Agencies	#7 Purchased Easements LSOHC ACUB RIM FFF NGOS ACEP HFRP	#8 Fee Title Acquisitio LSOHC ACUB Public Agencies
Media	2 11120		County Zoning	CREP III	Higher Cost	ACEP HFRP	

2015 Minnesota State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP)

Minnesota's State Wildlife Action Plan has been updated and approved by the USFWS. New to the plan are an updated list of Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and identification of a Wildlife Action Network with Conservation Focus Areas. The Network includes Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan core areas and corridors. Partnering on implementation of both plans is a priority. See http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/cwcs/index.html for information on Minnesota's SWAP (not updated yet at time of this report). MN DNR has received four Competitive State Wildlife Grants (SWG) for conservation on private lands in the Driftless Area of southeast Minnesota to manage, enhance and restore bluff prairie, oak savanna, and/or oak woodland and high priority natural communities encompassing a continuum of oak woodland to dry prairie for the benefit of SGCN. Work has entailed technical support to private landowners (site visits, assessments, management plans, educational trainings and workshops), treatments such as tree and brush removal, prescribed grazing with goats, and prescribed burning, conducting targeted surveys of SGCN, and monitoring SGCN response to habitat management.



Missouri Department of Conservation Private Lands State Report 2016 Midwest Private Lands Working Group Columbia, Missouri May 10-12, 2016

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION MISSION: To protect and manage the forest, fish, and wildlife resources of the state; to facilitate and provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about these resources.

PRIVATE LAND SERVICES DIVISION

The Private Land Services Division continues to provide quality and timely assistance in helping landowners meet their land management objectives in ways that enhance fish, forest, and wildlife conservation. *The PLS Division includes 77 full-time employees.

MDC LANDOWNER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LAP) (22,017 acres)

The Department provided timely and responsive service to landowners through 39,313 rural and urban contacts, including 6,777 on-site visits. Assistance was offered to landowners who wanted help with habitat management plans resulting in 2,651 habitat management plans being written or reviewed during FY15. PLS staff also conducted over 500 landowner workshops, field days and other landowner meetings with over 35,700 attendees.

In FY 15 LAP expenditures of \$1,304,794 were utilized to assist 646 Missouri landowners with implementing conservation practices. The FY15 total includes \$268,245 (approximately 20%) spent in Conservation Opportunity Areas, Priority Focus Areas, Quail Emphasis Areas, landowner habitat cooperatives and Comprehensive Conservation Strategy (CCS) geographies. The most popular practices utilizing the majority of LAP funds in order of funds allocated include: 1) Woody vegetation management which includes forest and woodland improvement (TSI/ FSI), old field renovation, temporary forest openings, woody edge development, and glade/ savanna/ woodland restoration, 2) Herbaceous vegetation management including early successional management, grassland conversions, grass and forb establishment, invasive species control, and critical area treatment, 3) Natural resource planning, and 4) Prescribed fire. The Southeast Region Idle Land program utilized a total of \$106,798 while \$13,700 was spent implementing best management practices on private land timber sales. Over \$62,000 was utilized to establish conservation practices in urban areas.

HABITAT CHALLENGE GRANTS (HCG)

This is the eighth year the Department provided Habitat Challenge Grants. This past fiscal year, the Department awarded \$131,000 in funding to partner organizations (NWTF, QUWF, and QF). Each organization provides 1:1 matching funds to help private landowners complete habitat work. This year Habitat Challenge Grants assisted landowners in implementing nearly 1200 acres of habitat improvements. Over the last 8 years the Department has provided more than \$900,000 in funding through the grant, totaling more than \$1.8 million with partner contributions.

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP)

In response to the continued loss of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres in Missouri and due to the tremendous impact CRP has in protecting our soil, water, and wildlife habitat, the Department launched, in December 2012, financial incentives for enrolling new Continuous CRP (CCRP) and to enhance existing CRP lands in 62 counties across Missouri. For FY15 the Commission approved a PLS

budget containing a \$500,000 CRP incentive. To date, the Department has invested \$1.5 million to improve this essential wildlife habitat on the Missouri landscape.

As of August 2015, the MDC CRP Incentive helped:

- Enroll a total of 10,665 acres of CP33 Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds, CP38 State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement, and CP42 – Pollinator Habitat. In FY15, 3,128 acres were enrolled.
- Complete 169.4 acres of downed tree structures and edge feathering on and surrounding CRP fields. Funds have been obligated to complete 28.7 acres in FY15.
- Complete 3,434 acres of mid-contract management on existing CP1 and CP2 CRP fields using
 a combination of practices such as prescribed burn plus herbicide application, herbicide
 application plus legume/forb interseeding, and mowing plus disking. In FY15, funds were
 obligated to complete 393acres.
- Complete 1,692 acres of woody cover enhancement by applying herbicide along and under tree lines surrounding existing CRP fields. Funds have been obligated to complete 1,052 acres in FY15.

Missouri received an additional allocation of Conservation Reserve Program - State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) acres for the Bobwhite Quail and Sand Prairie CP38 practices. For the federal fiscal year 2015, although we requested 10,000 acres, we received 5,000 acres for the Quail SAFE and 2,500 for the Sand Prairie SAFE.

REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP)

The Department of Conservation and the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have partnered through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to provide \$739,000 to private landowners for improvement to wildlife habitat and water quality on forest and pasture lands in FY15. This funding marks the first year in an anticipated five-year project that will provide more than \$3.6 million directly to private landowners for conservation over the life of the project.

Funding is available through two separate RCPP projects: the Grassland Bird and Grazing Land Enhancement Initiative and the Restoring Glade and Woodland Communities for Threatened Species. The goal of the grazing land enhancement program is to make conservation practices available to producers that help meet both livestock production objectives and provide wildlife habitat on the same operation. Funding is also available to reimburse landowners for restorations or management of glades and woodlands through the Glade and Woodland RCPP project. The first enrollment period yielded approximately 100 applications for the Grassland Bird and Grazing Land Enhancement and 67 applications for the Restoring Glade and Woodland Communities RCPP.

2015 Grassland I	Bird RCPP Prac	ctices Pla	anned		
Practice	Acres	Feet	Count		
Access Control	15				
Brush					
Management	36				
Cover Crop	40				
Fence		3,000			
Forage and					
Biomass Planting	73				
Prescribed					
Grazing	33				
Stream Crossing			1		

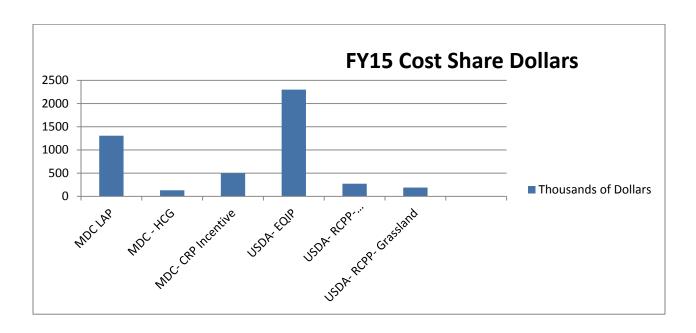
^{*576} total acres under contract.

2015 Glade and Woodland Re	-	ces Planned	and
Practice	Acres	Feet	Count
Access Control	181.2		
Brush Management	111.9		
Conservation Cover	11.8		
Cover Crop	299.6		
Critical Area Planting	3.1		
Fence		8,500.00	
Firebreak		30,000.00	
Forage and Biomass Planting	3.9		
Forest Stand Improvement	589.6		
Forest Trails and Landings	3.3		
Grassed Waterway	3.1		
Herbaceous Weed Control	51		
Mulching	3.1		
Prescribed Burning	640.6		
Structures for Wildlife			39
Underground Outlet		1,140.00	
Upland Wildlife Habitat			
Management	5		
Water and Sediment Control			
Basin			5

Total Acres under Contract is 1,537.4

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (EQIP)

Fiscal Year 2015 was the first year that 5% of state EQIP funds, administered by the NRCS, were designated specifically to address wildlife conservation practices through a designated Wildlife Funding Pool. In FY15, a total of \$955,000 of EQIP funding was available in the wildlife fund pool, or 5% of the total state EQIP allocation. Unfortunately, Missouri was only able to obligate approximately \$365,266, or 2% in wildlife practices. Approximately \$1,337,000 was also available under the forest land funding pool. Just over \$1 million was allocated to forest management practices completed on forestland.

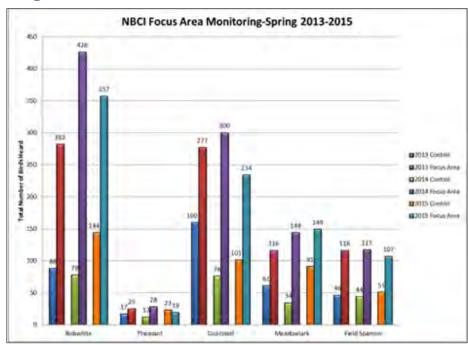


NBCI Focus Area National Monitoring

The Department volunteered to be one of 6 pilot states to test the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI) focus area national monitoring. In its third year, the spring survey results in Carroll County (MDC's national pilot survey area) showed focus area populations of all birds surveyed are still well above bird populations in the control.

Cooperative Agreements

In FY15 over \$1.5 million dollars in partnership agreements were established and/or maintained with both traditional and non-traditional partners in community conservation, agriculture, equipment, etc. Most



agreements are a 1:1 match, stretching tax dollars, while resulting in more conservation than the Department could accomplish by itself.

MONARCH BUTTERFLIES

Leaders from the Missouri Department of Conservation and other key organizations from across the state, including commodity groups, conservation NGOs, academia, and private industry, met in Columbia to begin development of a statewide strategy to restore and expand habitat for monarch butterflies and

other pollinators. This meeting was a national pilot that will set the stage for similar efforts in other states within the flyway of the monarch.

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION

Private Land Services took the lead in initiating major agreements with urban partners to address Community Conservation including:

- City of Chesterfield–Eberwein Park: to implement wildlife habitat in a high profile urban setting.
- St. Louis Audubon Society: to support the "Bring Conservation Home" program which provides onsite visits to homeowners promoting the use of native landscaping and other urban habitat conservation principles.
- Roanoke Park Conservancy: for the reconstruction of spring habitat in Kansas City.
- South Grand River Watershed Alliance: for the reconstruction of prairie and shoreline habitat around an urban community lake.

AG LIAISON

The MDC Agriculture Liaison has been successful in in forming relationships with our agriculture partners and opening the lines of communication to better address challenges, issues, and opportunities of mutual concern. This summer the Ag Liaison initiated and hosted the very first MDC CAFÉ (Conservation Agriculture Farmer Engagement) meeting at the Runge Nature Center bringing together approximately 25 agricultural leaders from across the state to discuss agriculture related "hot topics." Another MDC CAFÉ meeting is being planned for the fall.

QUAIL FOREVER PARTNERSHIP POSITIONGS

Missouri currently has 6 QF Farm Bill Biologists located in the north and southeast portions of the state and housed within NRCS field offices. In FY15, a new cooperative Grazing Lands Biologist, located in west-central Missouri, was established. The position was jointly funded by MDC, QF and NRCS. The Grazing Land Biologist will work with landowners and producers in the region to establish grazing systems on private lands that are conducive for both livestock and wildlife.

YOUTH DOVE HUNTS

As part of the National Wild Turkey Federation's (NWTF) Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. initiative, Missouri initiated a new hunter recruitment program in partnership with Quail Forever (QF), Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), Friends of the National Rifle Association (FNRA), and the United States Forest Service (USFS). In an effort to attract new hunters into the sport, 12 dove fields were initially planned for establishment in different regions throughout the state on private and public land. The MDC, NWTF, and FNRA helped pay for the seed, herbicide, fertilizer and contracted installation costs of establishing the fields. In FY15, 117 acres were planted enabling 20 hunts to be conducted involving 259 mentors and creating 105 new hunters. The total cost of the program was \$20,118.90 with \$9,815.03 spent on seed and herbicide, \$110 spent on drill rental, \$1,498.14 for contracting two of the NWTF fields, and \$8,695.73 for fertilizer. Therefore, providing this opportunity cost \$55.27/hunter and \$192/hunter created.

Conservation Equipment Program (CEP)

The CEP provides funding through a criterion based system to partnering organizations for the purchase of equipment to help landowners implement fish, forest, and wildlife habitat improvement practices on private land. Funding amounts are specified as funding options and are delivered through a Cooperative Agreement. A maximum of \$20,000 is allowed for any request. Applicants are able to apply to either reimburse the department 50% or 75% of the cost of the equipment. At the end of the agreement period, the equipment becomes the property solely under the control of the partner organization. In FY15 MDC funded 9 equipment requests totaling approximately \$141,500.



2016 Nebraska Private Lands Program State Report Midwest Private Lands Working Group Meeting May 10-12, 2016

The Habitat Partners Section of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission delivers private land habitat management activities in the state, coordinates conservation partnerships, and provides wildlife education. Our goal is to change the way people think and act in respect to the health of the land.

Initiatives

Nebraska Natural Legacy Program (NNLP)

- Actively implementing Nebraska's Natural Legacy Plan (our State Wildlife Action Plan).
- 7 coordinating biologists hired with various partners to implement the NNLP. They are
 primarily focused on working with private landowners in NNLP focus areas using a variety of
 funds (LIP, SWG, Nebraska Environmental Trust, Farm Bill).
- In 2015, 10,659 acres of habitat management was completed under the NNLP program.
 Invasive tree removal and prescribed fire were to two most popular management practices used.

Sandhills Task Force

- Locally led initiative by ranchers, local community leaders, conservation partners, and
 agencies to maintain and restore fully functional native grassland resources and wetlands in
 what may be the largest intact grassland landscape remaining in North America. Section staff
 serve on the board and assist in evaluating and implementing projects.
- In 2015, 6,625 acres were impacted, including wetland restoration and grazing management projects.

Rainwater Basin Joint Venture

- In 2015 the RWBJV partners implemented over 3,552 acres of conservation activities.
- Practices implemented included: wetland restorations, sedimentation removal, irrigation pit fills (to restore hydrology), tree removal, and fencing for prescribed grazing.

Wetland Reserve Easements

- The Wetlands Reserve Program has protected over 80,000 acres of wetlands across the state
 of Nebraska. Staff has assisted with the enrollment, restoration, or evaluation of nearly all of
 these sites.
- Our staff also provided technical assistance on many of the compatible use permit
 applications. In addition, we have hired a WRE Management Biologist, with funding provided
 by NRCS and the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture. This biologist is developing management
 plans for WRE sites and eventually will help oversee the implementation of much needed
 management actions.

Focus on Pheasants (FOP)

- In 2015 the Commission embarked on a major planning effort related to pheasant hunting, management, and research in Nebraska. The Nebraska Mega Plan is currently being reviewed by our Commissioners and will guide our pheasant work for the next 5 years.
- Efforts have shown positive results from landowners, land managers and in pheasant populations.
- Private lands habitat management incorporates CRP Mid-Contract Management activities: disking and interseeding, prescribed burning, herbicide treatments, and grazing.
- SW Nebraska FOP has completed its fifth full year with 21,972 acres impacted: 20,777 acres in Tall Wheat and mile stubble, and 1,193 acres in mid-contract management.
- The South-central Focus Area is in its third year with 5,298 acres of habitat upgrades complete.
- The Northeast FOP has completed over 560 acres of habitat upgrades and short-term setaside acres.

Quail Initiative

- NGPC is utilizing a \$100,000 Nebraska Environmental Trust and as match for a federal aid Pittman-Robertson Grant.
- In 2015, 1,092 acres of habitat management were completed on public and private areas within the focus area. Habitat management included edge feathering, grassland upgrades, shrub plantings, and prescribed fire.

RCPP- Regional Conservation Partnership Program

- Our Grassland Bird Initiative is part of a multi-state application with Missouri, Iowa, and Kansas. We just finished our first sign-up and have approved 15 EQIP projects totaling over \$220,000.
- We also have a Cropland Cover for Soil Health and Wildlife RCPP project that was approved in 2015. We are currently negotiating that agreement with NRCS to implement stubble management practices on wheat and milo acres in the southwest and panhandle areas of Nebraska.

Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist Partnership

- We currently have 12 partnership positions with Pheasants Forever and the NRCS. Eight of
 the positions are cost-shared between all three partners, the other four are cost-shared
 between PF and NGPC. The cost share rate is 75% NRCS and 25% PF/NGPC. All positions
 are reporting their accomplishments by hour (not acre).
- One Farm Bill Biologist partnership position is held by Ducks Unlimited and focuses completely on WRE projects on the Missouri River.
- In 2015 a total of 59,711 acres of land was impacted by technical assistance planning, 3,318 landowners were provided one-on-one technical assistance.

Prairie Grouse Initiative

- We are focusing the efforts on 7 Biologically Unique Landscapes (based on our Statewide Action Plan) in eastern and central Nebraska using strategies identified in, A Grassland Conservation Plan for Prairie Grouse (Vodehnal and Haufler 2007) and a decision support tool that identified areas with large blocks of grassland, known grouse leks, and percentage of trees in the area.
- In 2015, 13,251 acres were impacted as part of this initiative.

General and Continuous CRP Sign-ups

- In total Nebraska has approximately 773,203 acres enrolled in CRP (includes CCRP), the lowest total since the inception of CRP. 63,709 acres are set to expire on October 1, 2016.
- With commodity prices remaining relatively low we have seen an uptick in interest. NGPC, along with PF and FSA, sent over 41,000 letters encouraging landowners to sign-up or reenroll in CRP and inviting them to participate in one of 56 public meetings. Over 1,500 landowners attended.
- NGPC has recently completed a survey of landowner attitudes pertaining to CRP. The survey
 results will help Biologists working with landowners understand their motivations for
 enrolling/not enrolling in CRP. Overall, landowners want a simpler program with more cost
 share for MCM.

CRP SAFE

- SAFE continues to be popular with landowners because it offers the best return of any CRP practice.
- With commodity prices remaining at a relatively low price we have seen an uptick in interest.
 Nebraska is currently out of acres in our two SAFE projects, enrolling 91,900 acres.

Field Borders for Upland Game Birds (CP33)

- Nebraska has approximately 6,100 acres of CP33 enrolled in the program.
- We anticipate utilizing more of these acres due to the lack of SAFE available as well as continued low commodity prices.

Prescribed Fire in Nebraska

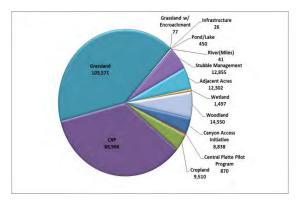
- The Nebraska Prescribed Fire Council continued its progress addressing issues related to prescribed fire in Nebraska.
- There are currently nine prescribed burn associations and eleven mobile prescribed fire units in the state through a partnership with Pheasants Forever, Inc. The associations have burned a total of 8,394 acres in 2015.
- In December we hosted our third Landowner Prescribed Fire Conference. We had speakers on various topics including: creating burn units, fire and grazing, and growing season burns. There were 145 attendees, with about ¼ of them representing private landowners.

Wildlife Education

- We currently have 2 full-time educator positions (Lincoln) and one full-time temporary assistant (Norfolk), and one cooperative position with the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (Scottsbluff).
- 46 Educator workshops were held certifying 832 educators
- The most popular workshop is the "Growing Up WILD" workshop designed for educators, daycare providers, and parents of young children (24 workshops for 412 educators).
- Advanced workshops focused on topics including predators, pollinators, place-based education and outdoor classrooms.
- Program staff conducted educational programs across the state, reaching 11,000 adults and youth.

Access - Open Fields and Waters Program

- We are currently conducting a study of our public access sites. The study will help us determine the usage on these areas, species pursued, hunting party dynamics, etc.
- * 253,572 Total Acres
- * 744 Contracts
- * 588 Landowners Enrolled
- * 253,547 Huntable Acres
- * 450 Acres of Ponds/Lakes
- * 41 Miles of River



Private Waters Program

- The Private Waters Specialist (PWS) responded to 504 requests for assistance from owners
 of private waters in 2015. The PWS issued Private Waterbody Management Authorizations
 for 3 renovations, 18 selective fish removals, and 8 fish samplings by consultants, sandpit/lake
 association representatives, and private owners.
- During 2015, there were 22 ponds (188 surface acres) approved for initial stockings by NGPC with 28,399 bluegills, 500 rainbow trout, and 11,531 largemouth bass.
- 600 copies of the Nebraska Pond Management book distributed and 1,821 internet page views (1,596 unique page views) on Google Analytics.
- In addition, four workshops in eastern Nebraska for private pond management drew 333
 participants and included information on: pond construction and stocking, adding structure and
 habitat, what permits are needed to construct a pond, aquatic vegetation control (what
 herbicides to use and effectiveness of grass carp), use of alum/herbicides to control algae,
 aeration, and nuisance animals.

Crop Stubble Management- Wildlife and Water Conservation Program-

- 64,553 Acres were enrolled in the Crop Stubble Management, Wildlife and Water Conservation Program in 2015, the third year of the expanded program.
- This private lands program offers producers incentive payments for having tall wheat and/or mile stubble, and leaving it in place through April 1st of the following year.
- We are currently evaluating this program conducting mail surveys and 5 focus groups.
 Preliminary results show that most people were already leaving their stubble tall prior to enrolling in our program.

Cool Water Stream Management Planning

 The CWSMP is ready for approval. There is one project on Long Pine Creek and 3 others in the planning stages.



NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

Private Lands Report - Spring 2016

Private Land Access Program Overview:

CRP Access Program. This program provides cost-sharing assistance and incentives to landowners enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). In exchange for the cost-sharing assistance and incentives, producers sign an agreement with the Department allowing access for walk-in hunting for all legal hunting seasons for the term of their CRP contract.

Habitat Plot Program. The Habitat Plot Program is a short-term and multi-year rental of private land providing nesting, wintering, and other key wildlife habitat in addition to public walk-in access. The habitat plot can be newly established cover (cropland planted to grass), existing cover, or a combination of both. Landowners are compensated based on soil classification based rental rates. Landowners opting for the short-term feature of the program are paid an annual lease payment during a rental period of 3 to 6 years. Producers opting for the long-term feature of the program choose from a 10, 15, or 20-year conservation easement.

Working Lands Program. The Working Lands Program is a short-term program designed to evaluate the wildlife and hunting value, and public access opportunities on lands that are actively being farmed or ranched. Land offered for the program is evaluated and must meet certain ranking criteria. Biologists take into consideration land stewardship, wildlife production, hunting habitat, access to quality habitat, location, habitat diversity and habitat improvement. Producers can enhance their land, and increase their payment, by developing or enhancing habitat.

CREP/CoverLocks Program. CREP/CoverLocks is a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) partnership with landowners, FSA, NRCS, SCD's, NDGFD and Pheasants Forever developed to create wildlife habitat, hunter access, and improve water quality on private lands. Producers agree to establish 20-acre habitat complex (10 acres grass, 5 acres trees, and 5 acre food plots) and provide public walk-in access to the quarter section encompassing the 20-acre complex for a period of 30 years. Producers are not required to alter management of the 140 acres outside the 20-acre habitat complex. Seed, trees and fabric, and most installation costs are paid by FSA and NDGFD. Producers also receive 15 years of continuous CRP payments on the 20-acre habitat complex and an up-front soil classification based rental payment from NDGFD. The Department is developing a new CREP II project; once CREP II is being implemented, there will be no more enrollments into the original CREP.

Private Forest Conservation Program. The Private Forest Conservation Program is a multi-year rental program that provides protection and enhancement in unique forested ecosystems and also provides public walk-in access. Producers are compensated annually for 3 to 6 year contracts or for 10 to 30-year conservation easements.

Wetland Reserve Program/Easement Incentive. This partnership between NRCS and the Department that provides additional financial incentives to producers currently enrolled or enrolling their land in the Wetlands Reserve Program/Easement (WRP/E). Producers are compensated for allowing public walk-in access to the tract for the 30-year term.

Tree Planting Cost-sharing Program. This program provides cost-share assistance for the establishment of tree and shrub plantings on private lands. Producers must provide 10 years of public walk-in access to at least 80 acres that includes the planting and associated or detached legal subdivisions. Producers who do not wish to allow public access receive less cost-share. The Department will not cost share trees planted on native prairie or recently broken native prairie. The Department will not cost share on Russian olive.

Food Plot Program. The Food Plot Program is an annual, short-term program that provides producers with establishment cost-share and soil classification based rental rate payments for developing a wildlife food source that is accessible to walk-in hunters.

Partnerships:

Farm Bill Specialists

The Department is participating in a cooperative agreement with a diverse group of conservation and agricultural interests to fund a portion of the costs associated with the ND Association of Conservation Districts (NDASCD) Farm Bill Specialists (FBS). The Department, along with NRCS, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Delta Waterfowl and the ND Natural Resources Trust have partnered with ND Farm Bureau, ND Grain Growers, US Durum Growers, Northern Canola Growers and the ND Soybean Growers to fund seven FBS across the state. This agreement replaces the prior agreements the Department had with Ducks Unlimited and Pheasants Forever to fund Farm Bill Biologists located within USDA county service centers.

Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF).

North Dakota Pheasant Habitat Initiative: The North Dakota Game and Fish Department received an OHF grant totaling \$3M in 2015. This grant will be matched with an additional Department funds and leveraged with a new CREP being developed for the southwest and southcentral portions of the state. The CREP will focus on riparian buffers and filter strips and will also have a pollinator component. Several other practices including grass/forb plantings, shrub/winter cover plantings, food plots, cover crops and others will also be implemented in targeted focus areas. Walk-in public access for hunting will be allowed on these acres.

Farm Bill Activity in North Dakota:

USDA - CRP - Expiring CRP acres will continue to be a concern for North Dakota. Nearly 2 million acres have expired in ND since the peak of 3.4 million acres in 2007, bringing the statewide total to 1.5 million acres. As quickly as additional CCRP are allocated, they are fully subscribed. Backlogs remain and there is renewed interest in CRP, particularly CCRP.

Project	Allocation	Enrollment	Balance
Coteau-Drift	75,081	75,076	5
Pheasant	47,500	47,377	123
Tallgrass	8,990	8,988	2
Sagebrush	2,000	1,742	258
FWP	150,000	128,501	21,499
CP37 (Duck)	180,000	167,479	12,521
CP23A	69,956	56,798	13,158

ND currently has two additional SAFE proposals pending with FSA – Declining Grassland Birds (tied directly to the ND State Wildlife Action Plan and our state bird, Western Meadowlark) and SAFE Habitat for Honeybees.

USDA - WRP/WRE and ALE - In FY15 NRCS entered into 11 new easements, totaling 2,886 acres and over \$3.8M in funding. Over 145 applications totaling over 20,000 acres were offered for the program; interest and backlogs remain. ND did not receive any funding for ALE.

USDA - HONEY BEE POLLINATOR (HBP) PROJECT - \$88K totaling over 662 acres. Interest has dropped in FY15 due to changes in forgone income payments.

USDA - PRAIRIE POTHOLE WETLAND AND GRASSLAND RETENTION PROJECT (PPWGRP) – \$1.7M funds totaling over 15,000 acres were enrolled in FY15.

USDA – VOLUNTARY PUBLIC ACCESS AND HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (VPA-HIP) North Dakota submitted a VPA-HIP proposal in 2014 which was unsuccessful. North Dakota has not submitted additional VPA-HIP proposals.

HABITAT PAYS

In December 2013, Governor Daugaard hosted a Pheasant Habitat Summit. More than 400 stakeholders gathered in Huron to learn more about the condition of South Dakota's habitat through presentations and discussions from key leaders throughout the state. Following the summit, Governor Daugaard formed a habitat work group comprised of sportsmen and women, landowners, leading conservation and agriculture academics, legislators and government officials. He charged members with developing recommendations focused on practical solutions for maintaining and improving pheasant habitat compatible with agriculture production. The 13-member group reviewed survey results, scientific data, letters and suggestions, and released a report in September 2014. This report is available at habitat.sd.gov.

One of the group's recommendations was to create an awareness campaign

to connect landowners with the many resources available for establishing habitat on their land. Another recommendation was to implement a website specific to habitat management with information on federal, state, local and non-government programs for landowners to learn about habitat and hunter access programs. Together these recommendations became Habitat Pays.

The Habitat Pays initiative is a collaborative effort between the South Dakota Departments of Game, Fish and Parks and South Dakota Department of Agriculture. The two departments have been working together to meet with agribusinesses, commodity organizations, cooperatives and producers to discuss ways to foster collaboration, improve communication and achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

The newly developed Habitat Pays website (habitat.sd.gov) is a great

resource for the farmers and ranchers of South Dakota. Videos on the site feature stories of landowners in various parts of the state who have taken advantage of programs to maintain or establish habitat. The site also includes a comprehensive list of resources, along with a list of habitat advisors who are experts in conservation programs and habitat planning. These advisors possess the knowledge of federal, state and local programs to assist landowners in finding the right program or programs to meet their personal habitat and land use goals. Habitat advisors are available to assist landowners in designing, developing and funding habitat improvements on private lands. Background information, images and contact information for each of the habitat advisors is available on the website so landowners can put a name and a face together.



BUILDING HABITAT WITH LANDOWNER COOPERATORS

More than 80 percent of South Dakota is privately owned, making private landowners the most influential over wildlife habitat in the state. Since the 1970s, GFP has offered voluntary private land habitat programs to landowners. The Department works with numerous private landowners to cost-share projects every year. Projects include providing winter cover and food, developing nesting habitat, and protecting vital areas for wildlife benefit.

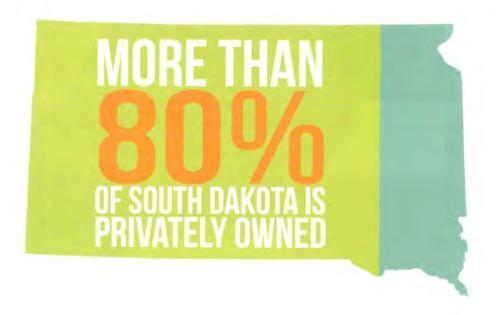
Every year, the wildlife food plot program is the most utilized habitat program offered by GFP in South Dakota. It provides supplemental food sources for wildlife during times when food is otherwise scarce. New in 2015, GFP expanded the food plot program offerings to include an annual mix of flowering plants (including radish, buckwheat, sunflower, flax, canola, etc.) to provide habitat for pollinating insects, which in turn provide foraging opportunities for young birds, especially pheasants. In 2015, 10,127 acres of food plots were enrolled in the GFP food plot program and payments to the 896 landowner partners totaled approximately \$207,954.

Severe winters in South Dakota play a major role in wildlife survival rates. Ground-level cover can often help increase wildlife survival during storms and throughout the cold months. In 2015, GFP established partnerships with 31 private landowners to create roughly 115 new acres of woody habitat at a cost-share of \$217,099.

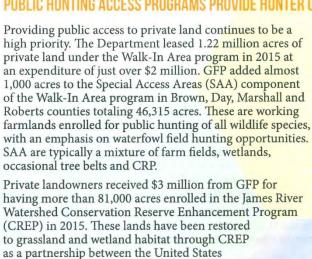
Without question, undisturbed nesting cover is the most vital piece of habitat for most South Dakota wildlife, especially when it comes to ground nesting birds such as pheasants, grouse and waterfowl. Through the Wildlife Partners Program, GFP worked with 14 landowner partners to establish more than 249.6 acres of new nesting cover so far, at a cost-share of \$30,760.

Whether habitat consists of grass, trees or wetlands it is important to protect habitat from destruction by cattle or other agricultural uses. Through the Wildlife Partners Program, GFP funded eight habitat fencing agreements with private landowners to protect more than 58 acres of land, at a cost of \$18,546.

The Wetland and Grassland Program specializes in working with landowners interested in developing or restoring wetland and associated uplands for waterfowl, upland game birds and other wildlife. In most cases, it also enhances livestock and grazing land management. In 2015, 184 projects were completed with 141 cooperating landowners through this program, affecting a total of 35,334 acres. Thirty-seven wetland projects restored, enhanced or created 228 acres of wetland habitat and 147 upland projects restored or enhanced 35,106 acres of grassland and riparian areas. The total cost of the projects was \$1,550,645 with a cost-share of \$774,187 provided to landowners by GFP. Landowner partners contributed \$772,058 and other conservation partners provided \$4,400 toward the projects.



PUBLIC HUNTING ACCESS PROGRAMS PROVIDE HUNTER OPPORTUNITIES



Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm

Service Agency (FSA) and GFP. Lands

hunting and fishing access and provide

enrolled in CREP are open to public

Seventeen cooperators enrolled 20,822 acres in the Controlled Hunting Access Program (CHAP). These acres are private land leased for public hunting opportunities, primarily big game, where landowners are compensated based on the number of hunters who use their land. Hunters are required to complete a check-in form. There are seven new CHAP areas in 2015, which has provided Canada goose field hunting opportunities around Sioux

The Lower Oahe Waterfowl Access Hunting Program (LOWAA) included 41,434 acres from six cooperating landowners in the central part of the state, near the Missouri River. These lands are leased primarily to provide waterfowl hunting opportunities, however much of the land is also

utilized by upland game and big game hunters. There are 40 decoy-only registration fields and numerous pits available for pass-shooting hunting opportunities.



WISCONSIN DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES

MAFWA Private Lands Meeting State Report – Wisconsin

CRP

- 2,000 acres accepted out of 18,000 acres offered in general sign-up, 8,400 continuous acres, 30 acres for grassland option
- Total CRP acres went from 230,000 acres to 234,000 acres, first net gain since 2007
- Authorized approximately 10,000 additional SAFE acres early in fiscal year, primarily in the SW grasslands, which brought the total authorized SAFE acres to 23,750 for fives SAFE areas
- FSA recently took 2,000 acres from SW grasslands SAFE, have approximately 5,000 acres left
- Awaiting word from FSA on Monarch SAFE

EQIP

- 2016 allocation: \$19.36M
- 11% of allocation spent on wildlife core practices

VPA

- Original proposal was broken into two agreements, one for leases and habitat incentives, one for technical assistance to historically underserved landowners
- Awarded \$1.3M for leases and habitat incentives
- Still awaiting details on \$80,000 for technical assistance
- Currently 214 agreements for 38,000 acres
- Anticipate approximately 284 agreements for 48,000 acres
- Hired VPA coordinator and three public access liaisons
- Starting outreach efforts, including mailings to CRP and MFL landowners

Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) - Implemented in 2014

- 2016 enrollment: 95 landowners will receive management plan for 32,000 acres
 - o Increase in Level 2 & 3 enrollments (these levels receive management plans)
- Hiring two regional deer biologists to work largely on DMAP
- Three counties and one city has enrolled their public lands to deal with urban deer issues
- Been a great public relations program
 - o 93% of participants were satisfied with the program
 - o 85% of participants were satisfied with DNR site visit and plan
- Helping improve private lands
 - o 78% of participants said they'd implement all or some of the habitat recommendations
- Benefitting more than just deer
 - The second most important objective for participants is improving habitat for other spp.
- Holding five landowner workshops this year, last workshop had 55 attendees

State Reports Public Lands Working Group Meeting Missouri 2016



2016 Midwest Public Lands' Working Group Meeting Columbia, Missouri

Illinois

By Mike Wefer IDNR – Division of Wildlife Resources

Illinois Budget Impasse

Illinois has not passed a budget for our 2016 fiscal year (July 2015-June 2016). The courts have directed the State to continue paying employees. However, in most cases the State is unable to pay its accumulating bills. Many of our grants are frozen. Needless to say, this has had an impact on our operations.

Staffing

We had 2 more retirements last year and expect a few more in 2016. This brings us down to a total of 46 full time employees in the Wildlife Resources Division (down from 80 in 2000). We have several positions moving through the posting process (mostly habitat team, project, and program jobs).

Public Information

IDNR worked with University of Illinois Extension to roll out the new Living with White-tailed Deer in Illinois (http://web.extension.illinois.edu/deer/) in 2012.

IDNR Wildlife is still working with University of Illinois Extension in developing a website for private landowners interested in managing wildlife habitat on their property.

We are also working on hiring a Hunting Heritage Program Manager to provide more direction to our outreach efforts.

Technology

The Wildlife Habitat Planning and Tracking System is up and running. The system will allow us to develop and track plans on both private and public lands. We are squarely in the data collection stage. We have conducted training with district staff and have them mapping their burn plans and fields in the system.

Hunter Effort and Harvest

The online windshield card system was expanded to encompass more sites during the 2012-13 hunting system. We continue to debug the system. We have a grant with the Illinois Natural History Survey – Human Dimensions Program to evaluate our various methods for collecting hunter effort and harvest on state sites and make recommendations.

Habitat Teams

Lack of proper management on our import grassland sites is a major concern. We are working on establishing a habitat team to provide proper management on select grassland sites in the eastern Grand Prairie with plans to establish 3 more teams (1 in the western Grand Prairie and 2 in the Southern Till Plain) if we are successful and resources remain available.

Wildlife Invasives

IDNR has been working with USDA APHIS Wildlife Services to work on controlling feral swine. Trapping and aerial gunning efforts appear to have been quite successful. We are guardedly optimistic that feral swine populations have been successfully eradicated in the state with USDA Wildlife Services snaring the last remaining boar in early 2016. We continue to monitor and investigate reports of feral swine just in case.

Wildlife Diseases

We just completed our fourteenth year of managing for Chronic Wasting disease in northern Illinois. We have found the disease in 14 counties. Researchers from the University of Illinois published "The importance of localized culling in stabilizing chronic wasting disease prevalence in white-tailed deer populations" in 2013 that found that our sharpshooting activities maintained low disease prevalence while minimizing impacts on recreational deer harvest. The full article can be found at

http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167587713002894.

With the disease now in 14 counties, our sharpshooters are spread pretty thin. More information on CWD in Illinois can be found at: http://dnr.state.il.us/cwd/.

Indiana State Report for 2016 Public Lands Working Group Prepared by: James Kershaw, Public Lands Program Manager

Top 3 Issues in Department or Public Lands:

- 1. Staffing –Public lands saw a significant transition from long term veterans to talented but extremely "Green" managers. There has been an unofficial hiring slow down for the last several years which has left some properties without managers for a period of time and others with brand new managers that are faced with a steep learning curve. This is occurring at the same time we are faced with historic increases in our land base and growing responsibilities.
- 2. Conflicting Objectives-Public Land management is getting harder and harder these days. Public Land works hard to manage properties for their intended purpose while also balancing that with what makes the most sense on a particular property. More and more our management efforts are being hamstringed by endangered and threatened species or public perception. As a result, we are going to start to see a decline in habitat quality for a variety of game species on our Fish and Wildlife Areas. It seems more and more, there is a misconception that we can manage for everything on the same parcel.
- 3. Expanding program with dwindling resources —Over the last several years, thousands of acres have been purchased. This land is in a variety of areas and in some cases spread out over the landscape. Land acquisition is a plus although with stagnant and declining resources it is presenting some challenges from a logistical standpoint.

In addition, Public lands is upgrading or constructing a couple new state of the art shooting ranges in response to the recent increase in shooters and the Pittman Robertson bump. This will bring us up to 5 state of the art shooting ranges which include baffles, merchant areas, etc. The two new ranges will cost approximately \$2.7 million dollars apiece. Hopefully, the division can get a concessionaire to operate the new ranges or it will put a substantial burden on our limited resources.

Land Acquisition (past year)

Lands have been protected for future generations through a combination of fee simple acquisitions from willing sellers. Last year, approximately 2700 acres was acquired through fee simple acquisition from willing sellers. Allowable activities at this time include: hunting, fishing, trapping, bird watching, photography and mushroom hunting.

Land Operation & Management, Strategic Planning, Diversity

Public Land continues to spend several hundred thousand dollars a year trying to combat succession control using contracts. This is accomplished through herbicide application, Tree removal work using Fecons, prescribed fire and a variety of other methods. In addition, Farm contracts are being utilize to help maintain habitat in a desirable state. We are under pressure to integrate cover crops into our farm contracts which has mixed results.

There also seems to be growing pressure from leadership to engage in pollinator habitat on a larger scale, or at least point out the pollinator work that we have already been doing.

Budgets

Budgets have not been a major issue since we have been operating with diminished staff and an increase in federal funding. There is a looming crisis though if we get back to full staff and do not get a fee increase soon. We have been treading water because the State Budget agency has not been allowing us to transfer money from the Fish and Wildlife Fund to our profile accounts like the Gamebird Stamp, Water fowl Stamp and other accounts. As a result, those accounts are owed a great deal of money but by not transferring funds, it makes the Fish and Wildlife Fund appear more solvent than it actually is.

Staffing

We are finding that for whatever reason, the quality of our applicant pool is not what it once was and it is having a major impact on operations. We are also finding that a lot of the new applicants have different values than our traditional employees and do not seem to have a strong attachment to hunting and fishing. This along with prolonged delays in hiring are presenting challenges for Public lands.

Federal Aid Issues & Utilization

Indiana is facing a large wave of federal funding that needs obligated with limited up front funding. As a result, we have turned to land banking to obligate and acquire additional lands. By utilizing land bank, we have been able to keep up with the wave while acquiring critical parcels to the long term success of the program. A particular focus has been placed on gamebirds since this habitat and these populations seem to be at the greatest risk. This continues to work well for Indiana.

Public lands is also upgrading or constructing @ shooting ranges into a state of the art shooting complex for a total of over \$5 million.

Partnerships (PF, NAWCA, JV, LCCs, other grants)

Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever continue to be strong partners purchasing much needed seed, helping with recruitment and retention events, and making other contributions.

National Wild Turkey Federation and Ducks Unlimited also continue to be strong partners.

The Nature Conservancy is involved in all kinds of activities.

NAWCA-Completed a large NAWCA grant in SW Indiana that resulted in approximately 3700 acres of land over 5 years. Fish and Wildlife also entered into another NAWCA grant in NE Indiana with a variety of partners.

Information & Technological applications/ strategies

Indiana has just entered into a contract with Isportsman and will be working towards implementing property check in/out and user management statewide through Isportsman.

<u>Invasive Species on Public Lands</u>

Invasive species are dealt with on a case by case basis, although this year several aerial herbicide applications are planned to impact invasive species on a larger scale.

Legislation - new/pending

Nothing as it relates to public lands

Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies Meeting-May 2016 State Report to the Midwest Public Lands Working Group Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Overview

Iowa DNR-Wildlife Bureau manages approximately **375,120** acres which is comprised of **479** Wildlife Management Areas (WMA's) in **87** of the **99** counties in Iowa. Of these acres, **136,624** are owned by another entity (USFWS, ACOE, CCB) but managed by the DNR through agreements. An additional **9,399** acres are owned by the DNR but managed by another entity, typically the CCB.

Top 4 Issues In Department or Public Lands

- 1) Highly Agricultural State with extreme pressure on natural resources because of corn and beans demand
- 2) Fish & Wildlife Trust Fund Budget The Law of Diminishing Returns: Money from sale of licenses is the primary source funding outdoor recreation in lowa. License fees are set by the lowa Legislature and not adjusted for inflation. In IA we have Averaged 7 to 11 years between fee increases. The last hunting license fee increase was in 2001. We have found over \$7.2M in efficiencies in the last five years but with that we cannot sustain current operations beyond the next 2-4 years. By FY2025, in about ten years, we will be able to afford about 1/2 to 2/3 the programming we currently sustain.
- 3) Two wild deer harvested in Allamakee County during the 2015 hunting season have been confirmed positive CWD, marking the third year in a row the disease has been confirmed in a wild Iowa deer, all in Allamakee County. This region was a focal point for increased surveillance and thanks to hunters in the area we exceeded our goal of 400 samples. The surveillance zone covered a 140 square mile area in eastern Allamakee and northeast Clayton County. The two recent CWD positive deer were harvested within two miles of where the previous positive deer were taken. Three cases of CWD were detected December 2014 and were within five miles of each other, in southeast Allamakee County; and not far from where the first positive sample from a wild deer was found, in December 2013. Iowa has tested nearly 60,000 wild deer from across the state, since 2002.
- 4) Invasive Species Management

Land Acquisition -2015 Totals

- 42 tracts (41 fee title; 1 Conservation Easement)
- **4,351** acres
- Total appraised value: \$10,521,383
 - o Federal cash contribution= \$4,713,609 (45%)
 - Migratory Bird Fund (MBF) = \$0
 - Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) = \$0
 - Federal Aid (PR) = \$2,448,210
 - NAWCA Grants = \$1,529,439
 - Primary State Match from Wildlife Habitat/State Duck Stamp: \$1,082,999
 - 6 other state funding sources partnered on projects: \$3,245,326
 - NGO's provided cash contributions of: \$375,861
 - 19 tracts included Donated land value: \$1,019,362

Land Operation & Management, Strategic Planning

In **FY 2015**, the Wildlife Bureau entered about **411 leases totaling 35,821 acres** of habitat leases generating over **\$1.4** in program income. Over the past **10** years, the forest stewardship initiative generated approximately **\$825,919** income and has expended **\$592,457** in timber stand improvement.

In the last year, IDNR and its partners initiated 5 shallow lake/large wetland renovation projects, totaling 1865 acres and are planning in the near-future, 3 additional projects totaling over 1,200 acres. Since this program began in 2006, partners have completed or have underway, 37 projects totaling over 14,000 shallow-water acres.

In **FY 2016**, the Prairie Resource Unit (PRU) provided seed for **1,624** acres. Note only 57 acres of seed orders are Switchgrass, everything else is native local ecotype mixed grasses and forbs or forbs only. The PRU has provided seed for over **30,000** acres of prairie reconstruction on DNR managed land since 2000. This equates to approximately 2000 acres per year and over 46 square miles of habitat planted to natives.

Realty Services reimburses counties the full consolidated levy of property taxes for any lands acquired with REAP and Habitat Stamp funds. In 2015, the state paid \$894,516 taxes.

Wildlife Bureau controlled noxious weeds on 2,403 acres and completed brush control on 1,087 acres.

Strategic Planning –Public lands management, Private lands management, and Research have completed and are implementing Strategic Plans.

Budgets

Management operational budget in FY 2015 was approximately \$10.3 million

Staffing

Unit Management staff totals 95.6 FTE's, which includes seasonal.

Federal Aid Issues & Utilization

Wildlife Restoration apportionment for FY16 (non hunter-ed) is \$8,763,376. This is down from \$10,495,510 in FY15. This funding will continue to be used to cost share our Wildlife Management staff and operations, Wildlife Research staff as well as for land acquisition.

Iowa hosted a very successful Federal Aid Coordinator meeting October 5-9, 2015 in Dubuque. All eight states in Region 3 were represented.

USFWS Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration staff came to Iowa in December to "hand off" TRACS (Tracking & Reporting on Actions for Conservation of Species) entry for future grant submissions and performance reports.

Partnerships (PF,NAWCA, PPJV, other grants)

Iowa State University

- 3-year graduate study investigating the value of restored shallow lakes (compared to unrestored) to migrant and resident water birds.
- Retrospective studies of prairie reconstruction success.
- Cover crop experiment with a new proposed cover crop (tillage radish), some traditionally used cover crops that are non-native (Winter wheat, oats), and three native species (Canada wildrye, Primrose and Black-eyed Susan).
- Iowa Antler Project (see Other Initiatives for details)

Agreement between Private Lands Program and NRCS in partnership with Conservation Districts of Iowa to hire 4 Wetland Easement Team Specialists and 4 Wildlife Specialists.

PF partnership for 4 positions on Units

Fund ½ the salary of USFWS staff person

2-3 NAWCA grants for \$3M to \$4M/ year

\$2M in funding annually from FWS for WPA acquisition (This program has been eliminated despite the fact that USFWS is investing more than \$50 Million per year in the Prairie Pothole Region in combination of MBF, LWCF, and NAWCA)

DU partnership for lake restoration

Information & Technological applications/strategies

The Hunting Atlas continues to be a popular way for the public to locate lands to hunt in Iowa. Since its deployment in March of 2013, it has been viewed in either its desktop or mobile version nearly 285,000 times. We also published a Google Earth file of the boundaries of the public hunting areas depicted in the Atlas and have received good feedback on providing that file format to our constituents.

The Wildlife Bureau continues to use GIS for tracking, planning and record keeping and we continue to explore new ways to utilize ArcGIS Online and the Collector app for mobile data collection on smartphones and tablets.

Wildlife diseases, Invasive Species on Public Lands

- High Path Avian Influenza (HPAI) In 2015 in lowa, there were a total of 77 premises in 17 counties and 31.5 million domestic poultry affected with HPAI. This included 35 commercial turkey flocks, 22 commercial egg production flocks, 13 pullet flocks, 1 mail order hatchery and 6 backyard flocks.
 - Peridomestic sampling of wildlife was conducted by USDA-WS around infected premises. A total of 899 avian samples from 18 different species were collected along with 782 mammalian samples from 3 different species. Samples were collected between the dates of 14 May 2015 and 8 June 2015. Although sequencing was unsuccessful and no virus was isolated, RNA was detected by 3 assays targeting 2 different genes including the H5 (icA) molecular assay, which is specific for the Eurasian H5 clade 2.3.4.4 viruses first detected in the US in December 2014, in one European starling collected near an infected lowa farm in Sioux county. All other samples were negative for HPAI.

- Additionally, USDA-WS collected 127 samples and IDNR wildlife staff collected 348 samples from dabbling ducks for HPAI testing throughout the year from 4 major watersheds. IDNR staff also submitted samples for testing from 14 trumpeter swans, 6 American White Pelicans, 127 wild turkeys and 1 American Robin. Low pathogenic avian influenza was detected in 27 dabbling duck samples but no HPAI was detected in any species sampled.
- White-nose syndrome (WNS) was confirmed in lowa in 2015 in Jackson and Clayton counties. Pseudogymnoascus destructans (P.d.) was first detected in Jackson County in 2011. This was the first time sampling has been done in Clayton County. P.d. was also confirmed in Jasper and Webster counties in 2015. This is the first P.d. detection at the Jasper County site which has been monitored for three years. The Webster County case was from a single carcass found on the landscape (not a hibernacula), final analysis and report are pending. WNS was confirmed in two species of bats, little brown (Myotis lucifugus; n=6) and eastern pipistrelle or tri-color (Perimyotis subflavus; n=1). In addition, 4 little brown bats, 6 tri-color, and 1 big brown bat (Eptesicus fuscus) were considered WNS suspect based on field signs and detection of P.d. and P.d. was detected in a single northern long-eared bat (Myotis septentrionalis) with no apparent signs of the disease. In all, 42 bats were collected and submitted to the USGS-National Wildlife Health Center in Madison for testing.
- Rabies In 2015, 1389 animals in lowa were tested for rabies and 12 (0.87%) were confirmed positive. The percent positive varies greatly by species but the data is greatly influenced by the number of animals tested. Rabies was identified most frequently in wildlife species including 7 bats and 1 skunk. The most common bat species submitted in lowa for testing are the Big Brown bat and Little Brown bat; however other bat species are occasionally tested. Rabies cases were distributed across the state.
- West Nile Virus (WNV) Fourteen human cases of WNV and five presumptive viremic blood donors were reported in Iowa in 2015. Seventeen mosquito pools and three horses also tested positive for WNV in 2015. West Nile Virus is endemic in Iowa and surveillance is conducted by cooperators across the state using mosquito collections.
- **Bovine Tuberculosis** No suspect medial retropharyngeal lymph node samples were identified from wild whitetail deer for Bovine Tuberculosis testing in 2015.
- **Hemorrhagic Disease** In 2015 there were 499 reported suspect cases of hemorrhagic disease in 25 lowa Counties. Tissue samples were collected from 1 deer in Marion County that had been dead for less than 24 hours and submitted to the lowa State Veterinary Diagnostics Lab in Ames, lowa for virus isolation EHDV-2 was isolated in the sample.
- Feral Hogs The feral swine issue has been minimized in lowa due to the quick response of wildlife and law enforcement staff. Field staff has done an excellent job responding, investigating and documenting all sightings on public and private land. This past year, 5 hogs were eradicated in 4 counties 3 of these were of unknown origin and 2 were probably domestic escapees. Since fall 2004, 235 feral swine have been eradicated. Of those, 117 were

- tested for swine brucellosis and pseudorabies with no positive test results found. While hogs have been observed in numerous counties since 2003, the aggressive effort has resulted in no established populations in the state.
- Invasive Species Many plant species documented, minimal effort spent to control them.

Legislation-new/pending

- **Signed by Governor HF 2357:** Relating to turtle harvesting in the state and including effective date provisions . Section 1. Section 481A.67, Code 2016, is amended to read as follows: **481A.67 Seasons and limits** <u>turtle harvesting</u>.
 - <u>1.</u> It is unlawful for a person, except as otherwise expressly provided, to take, capture, or kill fish, frogs, or turtles except during the open season established by the commission. It is unlawful during open season to take in any one day an amount in excess of the daily catch limit designated for each variety or each locality, or have in possession any variety of fish, frog, or turtle in excess of the possession limit, or have in possession any frog, fish, or turtle at any time under the minimum length or weight. The open season, possession limit, daily catch limit, and the minimum length or weight for each variety of fish, frog, or turtle shall be established by rule of the department or commission under the authority of sections 456A.24, 481A.38, 481A.39, and 482.1.
 - 2. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the natural resource commission shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter 17A establishing seasons and daily catch limits for the noncommercial harvest of turtles in any waters of the state pursuant to section 483A.28. Seasons established pursuant to this subsection shall not apply to the noncommercial harvest of snapping turtles.
 - 3. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the natural resource commission shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter 17A establishing seasons and daily catch limits for the commercial harvest of turtles in any waters of the state.
 - 4. Beginning no later than January 1, 2017, and ending no earlier than January 1, 2021, the commission shall conduct a review of the status of the turtle population in the state by region, in cooperation with appropriate organizations and in accordance with sound fish and wildlife management principles, and shall report its recommendations to the general assembly on whether restrictions on noncommercial and commercial turtle harvesting in the state should be revised no later than June 30, 2021. This subsection is repealed effective July 1, 2021.
- Signed by Governor HF 2343: Relating to possession and storage of game or fur-bearing animals and their pelts and including penalties. Section 1. Section 481A.57, Code 2016, is amended to read as follows: 481A.57 Possession and storage.
 A person having lawful possession of game or fur-bearing animals or their pelts, except deer venison, may hold them for not to exceed thirty days after the close of the open season for such game or furbearers. A person having lawful possession of deer venison which is lawfully taken by that person with a valid deer hunting or trapping license, may hold, possess, or store the deer

venison game or fur-bearing animals or their pelts in an amount that does not exceed the possession limit for the game or fur-bearing animal, from the date of taking until the following September 1 day before the first day of the next open season for that game or fur-bearing animal. From September 1 until the first day of the next deer open season for which the person holds a valid deer hunting license, the person shall not possess more than twenty-five pounds of deer venison. Any person may possess up to twenty-five pounds of deer venison if the deer was obtained from a lawful source. A permit to hold for a longer period may be granted by the department.

Other Initiatives:

- 1) Safety Initiative Various safety policies continue to be developed by our Department's Environmental, Health, & Safety program. Permitted Confined Space Training is a one example of a policy staff are currently investing time in and adjusting to.
- 2) A committee is updating our old management section field manual: The updated field manual will be a document containing policies related to Wildlife Management Unit/Wildlife Management Area operations. This document will provide consistency and a statewide standard to topics such as signage, boundary surveys, parking lots, access lanes, cable gates, firewood collecting, antlers found by employees, geocaching, non-ambulatory permits, drones, bikes, target shooting, viewing platforms, panels, memorials etc.
- 3) A committee consisting of our Wildlife, Parks, & Forestry Bureaus is tasked with evaluating our Habitat/Ag Leases looking at Best Management Practices for state lands reviewing what we are currently doing and discussing options for additional standards. What will come out of this is a Habit Lease Guidance Document that all our state land managers can utilize to make the best decisions with the current science/data we have.
- 4) A review committee is working on updating our Department's Prescribed Fire Policy following an escape that occurred April 11th 2014.
- 5) Iowa Antler Project in partnership with Iowa State University and in conjunction with our statewide CWD surveillance efforts to collect data from hunter harvested deer. Objective: Antler size is determined by genetics, age, and nutrition. As a result, antler size is a good indicator of male quality and deer herd condition. The aim of this project is to investigate deer herd condition across Iowa by examining antler size. We will identify whether factors such as vegetation type, soil type, land use, deer density, and landownership are related to variation in antler size across Iowa. We will conduct this study statewide over the next 2-3 hunting seasons. Covering the entirety of the state will more clearly serve all hunters in Iowa compared to selecting a smaller number of study sites. Collection of a minimum of 25 deer per the 5 districts per year is the goal. In addition to having staff collect data we will develop a plan to recruit participation of hunters by working with sportsman's groups such as Whitetails Unlimited, Iowa Bow Hunters Association, and Izaac Walton League and attending events like the Iowa Deer Classic. We will consider using some kind of reward (like a raffle or some other small token) to encourage hunter participation. Road kill deer are also a potential option. ISU plans to work with taxidermists to incorporate some older deer

into the study (something some hunters will be very interested in). With that being said, the project will focus on yearling and/or 2.5 year old deer in order to control for the differences across the state in access to/harvest rates of older deer and problems associated with accurately aging older deer. Staff will be asked extract a tooth for aging purposes.

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism

State Report for Midwest Public Lands Working Group

May 2016

Overview

KDWPT – Public Lands Section in the Fisheries and Wildlife Division is responsible for the management of over 390,000 acres. These acres include 40 state fishing lakes, 80 wildlife areas, 10 public access area, as well as a number of other areas under agreements, including 16 USACE and 6 BOR reservoirs managed under license agreements.

Budget

- FY 16 0&M \$2.3 million Wildlife Fee Fund, \$1.8 million Federal Ag Funds, and \$725,000 State Ag Funds
- Salaries \$2.4 million Wildlife Fee Fund and \$428,500 ag fund
- PR Grant \$5.5 million
- Sport Fish Grant \$1.2 million

Land Acquisition

FY16 land acquisition budget - \$100,000 total.

Land acquisition has come to a screeching halt.

Operation and Management

- Agricultural Production approximately 250 permits are issued to farm more than 46,041 acres. In addition, 13,580 acres are planted by Public Lands staff.
- Grazing 4,379 acres are under grazing management plans.
- Haying 16,719 acres were hayed in CY15.
- All agricultural/grazing/haying income exceeds \$2.6 million. Current Ag fund balances exceed \$5.2 million.
- Noxious Weed Control 28,680 acres
- Prescribed burns -50,000 acres
- Food plots 5,000 acres
- Invasive species control > 12,800 acres
- Water level (pumped) 15,639 acre feet

- Managed Dove Fields 134 fields on 2,078 acres, most require non-toxic shot.
- Bison Management Three herds comprising 274 head on 7,785 acres
- Law enforcement 37 certified PL LEO's completed 8,000 license checks
- Cabin program- Public Land Section operates 7 cabins on State Fishing Lakes and Wildlife areas.

Partnerships/Projects

- North American Wetlands Conservation grants (NAWCA) working in cooperation with Ducks Unlimited continues to add new projects.
- Kansas Forest Service \$20,000 reimbursement for fuel reduction program on public Lands in Northeast KS. Primarily used to create firebreaks and removal of eastern red cedar.
- Kansas Forest Service Received a \$300,000 grant to apply landscape forest stewardship practices across public and private boundaries in eastern KS. Foresters will develop forest inventories, forest management plans, and cover habitat work on public lands. In addition, they will host demonstration days and workshops for landowners. Forester has completed phase one and phase two totaling 230 acres of TSI on State WMAs.
- Pheasants Forever Agreement renewed in 2013 for 4 habitat specialist positions on public lands; currently have 4 employed: Cedar Bluff, Perry, Tuttle, and Grand Osage WA's. Agreement expires Dec 31, 2016.
- Missouri River mitigation work continues in northeast Kansas, including land acquisition, restoration, and public access.
- \$3M PR grant secured for restoration of Neosho Wildlife Area, a wetland complex in Southeast KS. Includes new pumping infrastructure, levees, and water control structures.
- A contract was signed with iSportsman, April 2014, to develop a daily check-in/check-out system electronically via computer, smartphone or phone in methods. Implementation started September 2014 on areas that are currently using paper system. Overall, we are getting good response; however we are trying to figure out how to remove the paper system. Currently, KS iSportsman now has 16,000 individual accounts and on the 23 KS iSportsman properties there have been 53,500 check-ins with less than 3% not checking out. The labor savings is substantial, the real-time and complete data is invaluable, and MOST of the hunters have found it simple and convenient.
- 914 special hunts were held in fall 2015/Winter 2016 hunting seasons, with over 1,500 hunters participating.

Personnel

- 1 Public Lands Division Director
- 4 Regional Supervisors
- 32 Area Managers

- 1 NRDA Coordinator
- 10 Assistant Managers
- 1 Biologist Technician
- 4 Pheasants Forever Habitat Specialists
- 150 Temporary/seasonal laborers

Loss of 5 FTE's as a result of Voluntary Retirement Incentive, still lingers.

Federal aid issues

- Program income from agricultural production
- Loss of Public Lands federal aid grant coordinator

Top Issues facing our Division

- 1. Retention of Employees and Staffing
 - 2. Land Acquisition
 - 3. Law Enforcement

Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Meeting May 2016

Overview

To some of those that may be new:

KDFWR – Public Lands Section of the Wildlife Division has available to public hunting access 110 areas of over 1,561,718 acres. These acres include 82 wildlife management areas of 576,692 acres, 3 hunter access areas for 28,387 acres, as well as a number of other areas federal areas including military reservations, the Daniel Boone National Forest and the Land Between the Lakes Recreation Area owned and managed by the USFS. The Department only maintains ownership of 146,003 acres. Some of these acreages have increased slightly due to some recent purchases.

Top Three Issues

- 1. Establishment of Teams to focus on issues: Neonics, Land acquisition, Farm Contracts, Burn Policy, WMA renaming criteria, etc.
- 2. Collaboration between Program Coordinators (Deer, Turkey, Bear, Small Game, etc) and field staff (Regional Coordinators, Private Lands Biologists)
- 3. New staff, attrition, turnover.

Land Acquisition

A prioritizing system for land acquisition is currently being worked on to place weight on properties lying adjacent to existing wildlife management areas, or have T&E species located on the property, or has existing threatened habitat.

Land Operation & Management, Strategic Planning

With talk of non-Neonic, non-GMO's looming in the not-so-distant future we reached out to inquire about how that affected other agencies. Some of whom are our Midwest partners. We quickly realized the transition isn't too bad but still has Pros/Cons. We are still in discussion about when we will pull the trigger for going Neonic/GMO free with seed. Our first realization is was with some of the Non-governmental partners. We usually get an allotment of sunflower seed(Clearfield) for our dove fields. If we were to lose this FREE donation it would cost us approximately \$100K to replenish. With some agencies that are going Neonic/GMO free they have noticed reductions of yield (kind of to be expected) but have also noticed an increase in pesticide usage due to weed competition, etc.

We have also been working on our Agricultral use policies and contracts. As it is stated sometimes "it only takes one bad apple"...... Most of the time we have good tenant farmers but we have had a couple issues that made us look at our contracts and noticed we don't have enough backbone to them to stand up to some things. So we have started taking steps to build a few

more restrictions into the contracts as far as time of planting, yield expected, time of harvest and definite Do's and Don't's.

We are gradually breaking into the timber management with logging in select areas to improve timber stands, whether it is plantation cuts or TSI. We are also trying to establish Forestry positions within the agency. These staff will cruise timber, compose timber bid packages, monitor logging operations and basically take the process from start to finish. Since the agency isn't concerned with making money off the operations and more concerned about increasing needed habitat we have built in best management practices of the vendor replanting bottomland hardwoods after the cut or stump treatment for unwanted trees.

Hot Topics

- -In the last year we have worked on addressing the Cougar/Mt.Lion movements. Since Tennessee has had the several instances of a female and an Unknown M/F Mt. Lion documented in West Tennessee we have been looking at ways we would need to address the situation should it arise in Kentucky.
- -We completed the National Bobwhite Conservation Iniatitive Habitat Assessment training for 12 states. We were happy to see that many states attend.
- -We started a new system for collecting HIP (Harvest Information Program) data for migratory bird hunters. Through an informal survey done by Law Enforcement it was determined that compliance was greater than 90%.
- -We also completed a Landowner Attitude toward Land Management and Hunter Access survey that had some surprising results. If interested, email me and I may be able to get copies.

Personnel

Assistant Director

- 5- Regional Coordinators
- 14- Public Lands Biologists
- 3- Wildlife Biologists
- 20 Game Management Foreman
- 21– Fish and Wildlife Technicians
- 50- Temporary/seasonal technicians/laborers

Federal aid issues

- Secondary uses of WMA's



Michigan Wildlife Division State Report- Midwest Public Lands Working Group Michigan - May 2016

Overview

The public land base in the state of Michigan includes both state and federal lands and totals 8 million acres. These include 3.6 acres of federal lands including 3 national forests, 4 million acres of state forest (co-managed by Forest Resources Division, Wildlife Division, and Fisheries Division), 400,000 acres within 111 state game and wildlife areas managed by Wildlife Division, and over 100 parks and recreation areas covering 285,000 acres managed by Parks and Recreation Division.

Top 3 Issues for Public Lands

• **Guiding Principles and Strategies** – **The GPS:** The Wildlife Division updated the strategic plan (The GPS) in 2016, which will guide the management of Michigan's wildlife resources over the next 5 years. The GPS was created by facilitating substantial public engagement opportunities with DNR staff, the public, our stakeholders and our partners – all this information helped us to build the platform of the plan.

www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10370-232589--,00.html

• Blue Ribbon Advisory Group for Southern Michigan State Game Areas: This group of outdoor enthusiasts has agreed to come together and think strategically about Michigan's southern Michigan state games areas. The group will examine: (1) overall use and intensity of state game areas, (2) funds and agreements used to acquire these lands, (3) current timing and diversity of uses, (3) vision for the future of state game areas, (4) potential habitat or strategic management changes that could enhance high-quality hunting, trapping or angling experiences, and (5) potential for expanding compatible recreational uses and management activities

www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153--354347--rss,00.html

• Here. For Generations: The 2014 hunting and fishing license restructuring included a \$1 surcharge on all Michigan base hunting and fishing licenses. These funds (\$1.6 million annually) are placed into a Michigan Wildlife Management Public Education Fund, which is managed by the Michigan Wildlife Council (MWC). The mission of the MWC is to promote the essential role sportsmen and sportswomen play in furthering wildlife conservation and to educate the public about hunting, fishing and trapping. After almost 2 years of planning, research and creative development, the MWC's inaugural campaign "Here. For Generations." officially launched on April 14, 2016. The campaign represents the start of a multi-year statewide education effort designed to promote awareness of the importance of wildlife conservation in Michigan. The campaign features television ads, billboards, content marketing, radio, social and digital ads that highlight how people can learn about wildlife management.

www.HereForMiOutdoors.org

Land Acquisition (October, 2014 to September 2015)

Wildlife Division: 12 parcels, 1,115 acres, \$3,627,800

Department including Wildlife Division: 30 parcels, 2,663 acres, \$10,168,000

Land Operation & Management

Land management efforts that required significant investments in time included reviews of trail proposals across land purchased with multiple funding sources, land exchanges/disposals, easement reviews, leases and a backlog of trespass cases.

In 2015, the DNR designated a 600-acre unit of the Sharonville State Game Area as a restricted access hunt area to provide special hunt opportunities. The unit remained open to the public for hunting and recreational activities, except during posted dedicated hunting days. This gave hunters with disabilities the opportunity to hunt deer on state land with reduced competition from other hunters.

GEMS (Grouse Enhanced Management Sites), Turkey Tracts, and Trout Trails: these areas are managed and publicized to: provide unique hunting/fishing opportunities, promote recruitment and retention, highlight intensive habitat management, expand local economies through partnerships with local business that provide discounts, and provide a destination point for the travelling recreationists.

The Department revised its policy and procedure on non-timber trespass resolution on January 6, 2015. The Department determined the previous procedure regarding trespass resolution needed revision in order to expedite the resolution of trespass cases and ensure compliance with existing state laws and federal regulations.

Budgets

The total 2014-15 Wildlife Division budget was about \$37.8 million.

Staffing

Wildlife Division had 217 FTE's in the last pay period of FY 2014-15, up 40 from FY 2012-13.

Federal Aid Issues

- Resolution of the 2012 FWS audit corrective action plans (CAP) for trespass (55 of 69 in CAP are closed, 48 of 109 new cases since CAP are closed). Wildlife Division has a 3 person survey crew that constantly identifies new trespass cases.
- Michigan's next Federal Aid Program Audit begins in May, 2016.
- Disposal of 3 acres of land acquired with Pittman-Robertson funds for a private cemetery has been completed.

Wildlife Diseases

In May 2015, Michigan's first case of CWD in free-ranging deer was confirmed in Meridian Township in Ingham County. Since that time, over 5,100 deer have been tested for CWD. Of those tested, 6 additional (seven total) have been confirmed positive for the disease in Clinton and Ingham Counties.

In early June 2015, the state's first case of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), subtype H5N2, was confirmed in 3 Canada goose goslings from Macomb County.

Legislation

- The Straits of Mackinac Crossing and Enbridge Line 5: The 645-mile Enbridge Line 5 pipeline transports 23 million gallons of crude oil and liquid natural gas daily. It runs from Superior, Wisconsin through Michigan, to Sarnia, Ontario and crosses beneath the Straits of Mackinac where Lake Michigan and Lake Huron converge. Michigan Senate Bill 880 (introduced April 13, 2016) proposes to prohibit the issuing of easements for pipelines shipping crude oil or other liquid petroleum products on Great Lakes bottomlands, review a risk analysis for these existing pipelines on bottomlands, and possibly order a shutdown of the pipeline if the public trust is impaired or substantially adversely affected. U. S. Representative Candice Miller on April 27, 2016 introduced the Great Lakes Pipeline Safety Act of 2016. It requires that, within 18 months, the Department of Transportation complete comprehensive studies on both the environmental and economic impact of a rupture. It also requires the Department, in collaboration with Enbridge, to evaluate the condition and structural integrity of the pipeline. Furthermore, it requires shut down of the pipeline, if these studies find that continued operation poses a significant risk.
- Forest Roads, Pack & Saddle and ORV Use: Senate Bill 839 (introduced March 2, 2016) seeks to allow pack and saddle animals and ORVs to be used to retrieve legally harvested large game, to require that an inventory of forest roads be created, and to require that forest roads be open to motorized use by the public unless designated otherwise.
- **Hunting Drones:** Senate Bill 54 signed April 14, 2015 prohibits use of unmanned aerial vehicles to interfere with or harass another individual who is hunting. Senate Bill 55 signed April 14, 2015 prohibits use of unmanned aerial vehicles for taking game.
- **Hunting:** House Bill 4329 signed November 12, 2015 allows small game hunting from a personal assistive mobility device.
- **Illegal Hunting:** Senate Bill 244 signed November 16, 2015 increases restitution for the illegal killing or possessing of certain game (elk, moose, bear, eagle, hawk, deer, owl, wild turkey, waterfowl, etc.). Senate Bill 245 signed November 16, 2015 increases penalties for illegally taking or possessing certain game.

State of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Division of Fish and Wildlife **State Report**



DATE: May 10-12, 2016

SUBJECT: Minnesota State Report to Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

(MAFWA) - Public Lands Working Group

LOCATION: Columbia, Missouri

OVERVIEW:

▶ Minnesota DNR, Division of Fish and Wildlife, Section of Wildlife – Statistics

Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area (WMA) system was started in 1951. Currently there are about 1,440 public WMAs providing nearly 1.3 million acres of wildlife habitat. Wildlife management areas (WMAs) are part of Minnesota's outdoor recreation system and are established to protect those lands and waters that have a high potential for wildlife production, public hunting, trapping, fishing, and other compatible recreational uses. They are the backbone to DNR's wildlife management efforts in Minnesota and are key to:

- protecting wildlife habitat for future generations,
- providing citizens with opportunities for hunting, fishing and wildlife watching, and
- promoting important wildlife-based tourism in the state.

TOP 3 ISSUES:

1. Farming Reform on State Wildlife Management Areas

In recent years, farming on state lands has come under increasing scrutiny as such things as soil erosion, plight of pollinators, and Gulf hypoxia gain a stronger hold on the attention of our citizens. So, as with all of our management techniques, we should be constantly vigilant to assure that we are using the latest and best science and techniques to manage our lands for wildlife.

Farming on State lands is done primarily for the benefit of wildlife and enhanced public hunting opportunity. The primary purpose of WMA farming reform is to avoid the damage to soil or water associated with some farming practices, while still maintaining the ability to add food to the landscape to support and strengthen farmland wildlife populations where needed.

The vision of leadership is to look to prairies as a good model. We are striving to move away from the crop monocultures and design our farming, similar to the original prairies, to produce a diversity of food resources for wildlife and that rivals the productivity of modern agriculture. We are striving for diverse species and growth forms, and a range of emergence, flowering and

seed-set, thereby providing food for a large variety of animals while requiring little if any human-induced maintenance. We are challenging ourselves to dispense with much of the machinery, energy, and chemicals that are mainstays of modern agriculture. That, in turn, will have secondary benefits in environmental remediation, biodiversity, and energy savings.

This vision departs from today's annual monoculture approach, and moves us toward polyculture systems that address many of the environmental problems associated with typical modern agriculture.

Reforms will not happen overnight, but we are getting started. We have assigned a multidivisional review team that is developing farming practices revisions with the following guidelines that will be phased in over time:

- Move away from traditional monoculture farming. These crops (corn, beans, wheat) can still be used, but need to be planted in mixes, not as monocultures.
- Move toward multi-species cropping mixes that hold and cover the soil, provide pollen/nectar resources throughout the growing season for pollinators/invertebrates, and provide food resources for wildlife.
- Eliminate insecticides and dramatically minimize herbicide and fungicide use.
- Move towards tillage practices that are the most conservative possible and reflect the move towards polycultures involving cover crops.
- Reduce or eliminate chemical fertilizer inputs and rely on cropping practices for soil health.
- Develop procedures that embrace these guidelines for habitat restoration projects when farming for a short period of time.
- Express support and cooperate with researchers at the University of Minnesota and other colleges and universities who are developing perennial grain crops.

2. Non-toxic Shot on Farmland Zone WMAs

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources took public comment on proposed rules that would require hunters to use non-toxic shot on wildlife management areas in the farmland zone (see map). The requirement is part of an ongoing effort to reduce the amount of lead deposited on public hunting land, particularly on parcels that contain wetlands. Discussions of a non-toxic requirement began in 2008, with the formation of the Non-toxic Shot Advisory Committee and subsequent report.

The new rules would affect those who use shotguns



to hunt for all small game on wildlife management areas in the farmland zone. The rule would not affect those wildlife management areas in the forested north east portion of the state, nor would it affect private land, state forest land or walk-in access areas. The new rules would not apply to deer hunters or any other hunters using single-projectile ammunition, such as rifles or shotguns with slugs. Deer hunters are encouraged to consider using non-toxic alternatives. Using non-toxic loads eliminates the potential risk of ingesting lead in game consumed by hunters and their families and protects scavengers like eagles from ingesting lead. If adopted, the proposed rules would take effect in September of 2018, allowing adequate time for hunters and manufacturers to adjust their lead shot inventory.

The proposed rules are being considered because of lead toxicity, the use of lead shot for waterfowl hunting has been illegal in Minnesota since 1987 and nationally since 1991. State wildlife management areas contain abundant wetlands and lead shot continues to be deposited in these wetlands as a result of upland game bird hunting. When ingested, lead can affect wildlife and human health and reproduction, and at higher levels, is fatal.

The DNR has taken public comments. Of 3,740 comments received during the 60 day comment period, 2,220 (59%) support the restriction of lead shot and 1,520 (41%) opposed.

Current legislation has been introduced and is being debated as of the writing of this report to prohibit DNR from adopting rules restricting the use of lead shot.

3. Deer Management Audit

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is responsible for managing Minnesota's deer population. To manage competing interests, DNR sets deer population goals using input from stakeholders. Deer population data come from DNR's deer population statistical model, deer harvest data, and information from aerial and land surveys. DNR manages populations towards goal by regulating antlerless deer harvest.

From 1970 through 2000, deer population strategies generally aimed to increase populations. Since the early 2000s, deer goals and management have often sought to reduce deer populations. Since then, the annual number of deer harvested has followed a decreasing trend with a high of 290,525 in 2003 and a low of 139,442 in 2014.

Hunters have raised concerns over the low number of deer harvested in recent years and the accuracy of DNR's deer population estimates. They have also expressed dissatisfaction with the availability of information on DNR's deer management activities. To address these concerns, DNR set hunting regulations for the 2014 and 2015 seasons that were meant to increase deer populations in many regions of the state. The State Office of the Legislative Auditor has been examining deer management at DNR. They are evaluating:

- 1. How much does DNR spend on deer population management? How are these activities funded?
- 2. How does DNR estimate and monitor Minnesota's deer population? How do these methods compare with recommended practices?
- 3. How does DNR establish the state's deer population goals and hunting permit strategies? To what extent do DNR's deer population goals reflect various stakeholders' interests?

The auditor's report is expected to be released in the coming weeks at the writing of this document.

OTHER ISSUES:

► New Fish & Wildlife Director

After a nationwide search, we have selected a new director for the Division of Fish and Wildlife; **Jim Leach,** the former refuge supervisor for the US Fish and Wildlife Service covering MN, WI and IA. Jim has 35 years of natural resources experience, including the last 16 as a high-level administrator in the USFWS Regional Office in the Twin Cities where he oversaw activities of 18 field offices. He started as a field biologist in NW MN in the 1980s, and served as the FWS Joint Venture Coordinator from 1993 to 2000.

We are very pleased to have Jim in this important leadership position. He is already getting rapidly up to speed and involved in legislative issues since the legislature is currently in session.

► Wildlife & Aquatic Habitat Management Application (WAHMA)

After decades of piecemealing a GIS system and standards with which to track management of WMAs, we were finally able to secure grant funds to fully design and develop a web-based fully integrated Enterprise system. WAHMAGIS Components, WAHMAGIS-Desktop and WAHMA-Mobile applications, allow managers to record information about inventory and work activities relating to the maintenance of facilities and habitat work carried out on lands administered by the Division of Fish & Wildlife, primarily Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) and Aquatic Management Areas (AMA). The WAHMA database is the authoritative source for this data. All data entry for these datasets is done through the WAHMAGIS components.

The WAHMA application allows data entry through a PC – windows based application (aka Desktop), and a mobile application that can be used both online and offline. The Desktop and Mobile applications are built with the same base functionality including ability to:

- Search on WMA/AMA name or PLS
- Edit attributes of existing facilities and land cover

- Add new facilities by GPS or on screen digitizing
- Edit existing geometry of facilities and land cover
- Add attachments (Audio, Document, or Image)
- Report conditions of facilities
- Capture Field Notes for field staff use

► Trust Fund Lands within WMAs

When Minnesota became a state in 1858, the federal government granted sections 16 and 36 of every township, or their equivalent, to the State for the use of schools. The Minnesota Constitution established the Permanent School Fund (PSF) to ensure a long-term source of funds for public education in the state. The PSF consists of the accumulated revenues generated from the land.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is responsible for managing the school trust land, which currently totals about 2.5 million acres, plus an additional 1 million acres of severed mineral rights.

Recent administrations renewed emphasis on the fiduciary responsibility in the trust. For many years, Trust Fund lands were simply managed as State Lands according to the Land Units with which they were associated. Therefore, Trust Fund lands within wildlife management areas were simply managed as wildlife management areas. With renewed emphasis, particular attention has been paid to timber management and farming leases. Much debate has revolved around management of Trust Fund lands consistent with Forest Certification standards and around farming leases associated with farming practice review on wildlife management areas.

Northern Long-Eared Bat Update

DNR staff continued to work closely with MAFWA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the northern long-eared bat and its federal listing under the ESA. The bat is being heavily impacted by White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) around the nation. The bat was listed as threatened with an Interim 4(d) rule on April 2, 2015, with a Final 4(d) Rule effective February 16, 2016. DNR initiated research to better understand the distribution, abundance, and roosting habits of this species in the state, and is working with other Lake States to develop a Habitat Conservation Plan in the event NLEB status changes to Endangered, or additional bat species are listed. Unfortunately, WNS was confirmed in MN for the first time.

MISSOURI

Missouri Department of Conservation State Report 2016

Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies Public Lands Working Group

Overview

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) administers more than one million acres of conservation land for public use on some 1,200 conservation areas across the state, in all 114 Missouri Counties. The Department owns 889,650 acres and manages another 205,133 acres owned by other conservation partners.

Top 3 Issues on Public Lands

- 1) Chronic wasting disease has been confirmed in samples of hunter-harvested freeranging deer from locations outside of the original containment zone in north-central Missouri. Samples were obtained last fall from taxidermy partners and from voluntary hunter-submitted samples. The Department is initiating a mandatory sampling effort for opening weekend of the 2016 fall firearm deer season in management zones surrounding the locations of the positive samples.
- 2) Feral hogs continue to receive considerable focus. An expanded partnership with USDA Wildlife Services, including dedicated feral hog staff, has ramped up eradication efforts on both public and private ground. The comment period has just ended for new regulations that would prohibit the hunting of feral hogs on public lands, as a way to decrease the likelihood of illegal releases and to increase trapping success on public lands.
- 3) Newly-revised guidelines for management of habitats important to federally listed bats has required managers to adopt more stringent avoidance and minimization strategies in management plans. The development of a new biological assessment for the USFWS required a significant effort to review all proposed management activities and spurred the development of new information transfer procedures and GIS-based applications.

Land Acquisition

In FY15, fee title acquisitions totaling about 1,434 acres were purchased for \sim \$3.3M as new or expanded conservation areas. Another 88 acres were donated.

Land Operation & Management

In fiscal year 2015, MDC conducted habitat management on more than 209,300 acres of public land. Practices included prescribed burns, woodland management, timber stand improvement, timber harvest, tree planting, invasive species control, and agricultural production. These activities benefitted a variety of habitats to include:

- 40,250 acres of wetland
- 40,700 acres of woodland/forest/savanna
- 75,000 acres of cropland (64,000 acres by permittee farmers)

- 33,500 acres of grassland/prairie
- 17,300 acres of old field
- 653 acres of glade
- 3,450 acres of grazing
- County assistance payments (in lieu of real estate taxes, levee and drainage district taxes, forest cropland payments, and county aid road trust payments) totaled over \$1.68M in FY15.
- Research into Missouri's black bear population in FY14 focused on dispersal behavior and habitat suitability, and currently, sows fitted with transmitters are providing data about reproduction and other population metrics.
- A large-scale northern bobwhite quail study that originated in 2014 has already provided intriguing data about quail habitat use, movement patterns, and survival, suggesting that natural community management yields better results than 'traditional' quail management. A predator study component has been added this year.
- The fourth (of five) year of pheasant translocation efforts have been completed, adding pheasants to the reintroduced populations in northern Missouri and southern Iowa's Grand River Grasslands.
- Missouri completed and submitted the updated State Wildlife Action Plan, and is currently incorporating Forestry and Fisheries Divisions' strategic action plans into the Wildlife Division SWAP to create a Department-wide Comprehensive Conservation Strategy.

Budget

The Wildlife Division's FY15 budget was \$9,366,400.

Staffing

MDC currently has 1,381 salaried employees and 478 hourly employees. Wildlife Division has 206 salaried positions.

Federal Aid Issues

A new set of guidelines for habitat management related to bats and a biological assessment submitted to the USFWS for listed bats has been an emphasis, and plans are being made to begin the process of creating an HCP for listed bats. Additionally, several applications for municipal utilities on federal interest (P-R) MDC lands are being processed for clearance.

Partnerships

- Continued partnerships with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to manage 159,000 acres of leased lands under a cooperative agreement and over 16,000 acres of the Missouri River Recovery Program mitigation lands under annual contract.
- Through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Upper Mississippi River Restoration-Environmental Management Program, the conversion of wetland pumps from diesel to electric is still being completed.

- MDC teams up with AmeriCorps every year and puts crews to work around the state with prescribed fire and invasive species control projects.
- Ducks Unlimited continues to provide engineering services for public wetlands on the Missouri River and the Confluence.
- A new conservation area in Perry County, owned by the Leo A. Drey Foundation and managed under a lease agreement by the Department was opened to the public earlier this year.
- The Missouri River Bird Observatory is conducts baseline bird surveys on public lands for PIF and LMVJV priority species
- The Nature Conservancy, The National Park Service, and the U.S. Forest Service are all partners in cooperative wildland fire suppression and prescribed fire.

Information Technology

MDC has upgraded to ArcGIS 10.2.2 (as ESRI moves towards version 10.4). A new, web-based Conservation Atlas is being developed that will provide current spatial and business data to public users and several mobile apps. A Department-wide GIS system utilizing SDE databases is closer to completion.

Legislation

A variety of issues at the Missouri state capital are being monitored, including legislation designed to change the structure of the Conservation Commission, increase penalties for poaching, eliminate the dedicated sales tax that funds MDC, and other bills intended to give legislators control over items currently under the Commission's authority.

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission State Report - Midwest Public Lands Working Group Location: Missouri May 2016

Overview

Wildlife Division owns and manages 289 Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) totaling approximately 191,423 acres. WMA's range in size from 1.5 to 9052 acres. The average size of WMA's is 669 acres.

Staffing

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission employ's 433 permanent employees. The Wildlife Division employs 71 permanent positions in three sections: private lands, public lands, research. The public lands sections employs 33 permanent employees and approximately 40 seasonal employees.

Top Issues Related to Wildlife Division

- 1. Create Comprehensive Mountain Lion Management Strategies & Plan
- 2. Developed New pheasant management plan
- 3. Created Prescribed Fire Operating Standards

Budget

- The Wildlife Division budget is \$12,911,000.
- in-lieu-of- tax payments \$900,000 on land purchased since 1977
- Game Fund (hunt/trap/fish license income) is declining.

Land Acquisition - Issues

- 2 tracts
- 115 acres
- Two acquisitions were additions to existing wildlife areas.

Land Operation and Management

- Leases: 193 leases for haying, grazing, or agricultural production on WMA's, generating \$503,800 in program income or trade-for-labor operations in 2014.
- Shooting Range: Building first contained shooting range on a WMA in 2016.
- Pheasant Plan: New Pheasant Plan just approved
 - o 17 WMA's targeted for intensified management

- o no neonic seeds on WMA plantings
- o focus on habitat and access
- o multi-faceted: predators, genetics, legislation
- WMA survey conducted by Cooperative Research Unit to determine hunter choices and preferences
- Habitat management is focused on invasive plant control and early successional management:
 - o Invasive species control eastern red cedar, smooth brome
 - Early Successional Initiative funds are budgeted to establish early successional habitat on WMA's

Wildlife Disease, Invasive Species

- Epizootic hemorrhagic disease few reported cases in 2015 compared to 6 cases in 2014; 162 in 2013: 6100 in 2012.
- Chronic wasting disease sampled northeast Nebraska; 3 positives
- Feral hogs two reports of pot-bellied type pigs, resolved.

Partnerships on WMA's

- National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) shared forester position
- USDA Wildlife Services shared nuisance animal response position
- Pheasants Forever shared WMA biologist position
- Pheasants Forever shared Prescribed Burning Coordinator
- Pheasants Forever & NWTF provide funds to match PR funds to establish habitat on wildlife management areas.
- Other partners include: Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Wild Sheep Foundation, lowa/Minnesota Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, Nebraska Forest Service.

Legislation

- Authority to increase all permit fee by 18% successful
- Eliminate authority to hold mountain lion hunting season unsuccessful

ND GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

PUBLIC LANDS WORKING GROUP REPORT

May 2016 Missouri

Overview

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department manages 220 Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) throughout the state totaling approximately 214,563 acres. Approximately half of this acreage is leased from other agencies such as the US Army Corps of Engineers and the US Bureau of Reclamation and the other half are Department owned. These lands are developed and managed for maximum wildlife production and hunting and fishing opportunities while allowing for other compatible wildlife based recreational and educational opportunities. Management duties are distributed among 6 management districts throughout the state with each manager responsible for an average of 9 counties each.

Top 3 Issues

- 1) Increased in oil and gas activity in western North Dakota and on WMAs. Although things have slowed with the drop in oil prices, there is still active drilling and production.
- 2) Conforming to federal Prescribed Burning Training Guidelines for USBR lands (NWCG Standards).
- 3) Large loss of habitat (CRP, wetlands/tile drainage, large scale tree removal).

Land Acquisition

The state legislature has approved a land acquisition budget for the Department for the last four biennium's (\$800k 15-17). This money was used in the current biennium to partner up with several other funding partners for the purchase of some very nice Wetland Reserve Program tracts and some round-outs to existing WMA's. In addition, the Department just received an 1,120 acre donation for a new WMA. However, because of current public sentiment, land acquisition by the Department gets more challenging each Biennium (HB1322).

Land Operation & Management, Strategic Planning, Diversity

For the most part, management activities on WMAs in North Dakota are accomplished either by ND Game and Fish Department (Department) personnel, by contracting for the work to be done, or by using cooperators to accomplish this work.

In terms of planning, we do not have a "Master Plan" for our WMAs but we do draft a specific management plan for each WMA that we own or manage. These documents are important to us especially in helping to fend off any uses or user groups that we deem not to be compatible with WMA objectives. It is helpful to pull out a document and demonstrate to the user public that we

do have specific management objectives for each of our WMAs and they are not intended to be managed as multi-purpose lands.

WMA's vary in land management objectives. Some are managed as fishery lakes and have public amenities, while others are managed with limited or no vehicular access and only walking access with emphasis on wildlife production and hunting opportunities. As the population of North Dakota increases, so does the demand for outdoor recreation. The Department has recently had to defend WMA's from those wanting hiking, biking, ATV trails as well as additional developments.

Budgets

Our Section's annual operation and maintenance budget generally ranges from 1.2-1.6 million federal aid dollars. Non-federal aid funding of various sources will usually bring the total budgeted amount to nearly \$2.8 million. In addition, the 15-17 biennial budget includes \$800,000 for acquisition purposes. A recent addition to our Section's budget includes mitigation payments from Oil and Gas Companies. These are not mineral royalty payments and currently amount to less than \$100k/biennium.

Staffing

Our Wildlife Division, which is comprised of three separate Sections, consists of about 50 FTEs. In the Public Lands Section, we manage our WMAs utilizing approximately 17 FTEs which include District Resource Supervisors, Resource Biologists and Wildlife Technicians. We have also been able to take advantage of several full time temporary positions to fill gaps in our FTEs.

Partners

The Department utilizes several partners within the state to accomplish different projects. The partner list includes: NRCS, Pheasant Forever, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Mule Deer Assoc., DU, ND Natural Resources Trust, American Foundation for Wildlife, National Wild Turkey Federation, North American Foundation for Wild Sheep, Northern Great Plains Joint Venture, Prairie Pothole Joint Venture, NAWCA, and possibly a few others that I've failed to mention.

Invasive Species on Public Lands

A very large portion of our biennial O&M budget goes toward noxious weed control and invasive species efforts statewide. In excess of \$500,000 has been spent in each of the last two bienniums on noxious weed control activities alone and this amount has been increased by at least \$100,000 for the 15-17 biennium. From an FTE standpoint, it is estimated that we annually utilize approximately 4 FTEs in dealing with invasive species management. Our most problematic weeds continue to be Leafy Spurge, Canada Thistle, Wormwood, and as of late, Salt Cedar. We are finally seeing some very positive results utilizing biological control on Leafy Spurge but chemical control will likely remain one of our primary control measures. Other invasive species issues involve the on-going battle against invasion of our native grasslands by species such as smooth brome, Kentucky bluegrass and Russian Olive. Efforts to combat this invasion include grazing, burning and haying but for the most part, we are losing the war. It may

also be interesting to note though that noxious weed control is one of our most widely accepted and supported efforts by the State Legislature.

Legislation

House Bill 1322 was recently passed by the ND Legislative Assembly. This bill relates to land acquisition by the Department and requires the Department to conduct an appraisal prior to acquisition, give notice to every landowner within one mile of the boundary, notify the Board of County Commissioners, and publish a notice in the official county newspaper.

House Bill 1278 was also recently passed by the ND Legislative Assembly creating a ND Outdoor Heritage Fund which would provide access to private and public lands and develop fish and wildlife habitat in 2013. This fund is capped at \$15mil/year or \$30mil/biennium. The Program continues to evolve but has been underfunded and likely not making the impact we were hoping.

An effort was made to put the Clean Water, Wildlife, and Parks to an Initiated Measure (No.5) requiring 5% of the existing oil tax be directed to the fund. Unfortunately, it was defeated. The 2015 Legislature did increase the amount in the Outdoor Heritage Fund for \$20 million/year or \$40 million/biennium.

MIDWEST PUBLIC LANDS' WORKING GROUP MEETING Columbia, Missouri ● May 10-12, 2016 OHIO REPORT FOR 2015-2016 Ohio Division of Wildlife

Mission: To conserve and improve fish and wildlife resources and their habitats for sustainable use and appreciation by all.

OVERVIEW:

The ODNR Division of Wildlife has 6 sections: Admin., Wildlife Management, Fish Management, Information & Education, Business Operations, and Law Enforcement. The Divisions annual budget is approximately \$60-65 million, with ~410 full-time staff in 5 districts. Much of the Division's budget is covered by Federal funds from the USFWS – PR, DJ, and SWG grants – as well as hunting & fishing license, license plates, Legacy and wetland stamps, and tax checkoff donations. The Division owns and manages approximately 203,000 acres, with an additional ~300,000 acres in agreement/leased.

TOP THREE PUBLIC LANDS ISSUES:

- Slow, cumbersome, complex, outdated work flow processes and communication.
- Constant desire to buy more land, constant frustration with buying land, and constant pressure for staff to do things other than manage land.
- Access both temporally and spatially.

LAND ACQUISITION and LAND MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS:

Completed:

- Gilmore 21.4 acres of Wooded Wetland at Grand River WA
- Wammes/Belle Adv. 54 acres of grassland & wetland at Big Island WA
- Moxely 190 acres of Lake Erie wetland, Erie Co.

Pending:

- Howard 233 ac. of grassland and woodland in Preble County
- FCL **21.7 ac.** of woodland at O'Dowd WA PR acquisition
- Pence 72 ac. of riparian corridor along Scioto River at Mackey Ford WA
- Hawkins 623.79 ac. Of woodland and open land at Berlin WA
- Perrin Tract 3,000 ac. of forestland in Brown Co.
- Humphery 35 ac. of woodland at Zeppernick WA
- Mulac 57.5 ac. of wooded wetland at Grand River WA
- Thompson 5.0 ac. of woodland & open land at Grand River WA
- Gilmore 74.8 ac. of wooded wetland at Grand River WA
- McNichols 2.5 ac. of old RR bed at Woodbury WA
- Kovach 1.29 ac. woodland at Wellston WA
- Hackworth 40 ac. woodland at Liberty WA
- Adams 42.74 ac. of wetland at Grand River WA

- Bands 64.26 ac of woodland and open land at Killbuck WA
- AEP 7,000 8,000 ac. of strip mined grasslands in Muskingum County

LAND OPERATION & MANAGEMENT, STRATEGIC PLANNING, and DIVERSITY:

- Completed a forest inventory in partnership with NWTF and F4 Tech consulting. We now have stand level inventory data for most of our land base in southeast Ohio. The data are being input into Silvah software to generate management prescriptions for oak-hickory management.\
- Working with Ohio Field Office on land management experiment for mass. Snakes....3 year experiment with three treatments...do nothing, follow BMPs, do whatever.
- Cooperative management procedure revising the Division's procedure for cooperative management on wildlife areas (farming, timber harvest, firewood sales, grazing, trapping).
 Recent internal restrictions have been placed on us to only receive cash instead of cash or services.

BUDGET:

The Division's budget is relatively stable, although the Wildlife Fund is decreasing due to declines in license sales. Ohio's allocation of SWG funds from the USFWS was greatly reduced, however PR funds continue to increase and our agency has made strides in finding matching funds through co-operative agreements with NGOs, the use of land banking, and other forms of non-federal match.

STAFFING:

Due to our lack of ability to pass a license fee increase, our agency has placed a self-imposed employee cap of 425 staff. We're currently at ~410 staff. However, our hiring process remains cumbersome and vacancies are often not filled for >1 year from the time they become vacant. It seems as if attrition is outpacing our internal ability to fill positions.

FEDERAL AID ISSUES:

- Oil and gas activities we have worked with Region 3 ES staff to establish a value for the loss of habitat to recover additional mitigation dollars for habitat conservation.
- Land acquisitions internal problems with how long it takes to get appraisals complete. Often not able to move fast enough for sellers, unless they really want to sell to us. Working to contract appraisals to private companies to expedite the process.
- PR grant funds internally we've placed lots of emphasis on utilizing PR dollars to attempt to
 avoid reverting PR funds. These efforts have helped us to better discern eligibility and assign
 federal aid to ongoing activities. These efforts have also been extended to partner projects
 where their contribution to the project has been included in the project deliverables which has
 allowed us to capture their contribution as match.

PARTNERSHIPS:

- Continued to push staff to look for partnership opportunities where NGOs provide 25% nonfederal match to PR funds.
 - PF, NWTF, TNC, NWI have been good examples. Exploring partnerships with metro parks, soil and water conservation districts, etc.

INFORMATION and TECHNOLOGY:

- Selected a new licensing system vendor to start service in the 2017 licensing year, S3.
- Continue to add web based functionality to many of our work flow processes which has greatly increased our ability to provide quick customer service and meet records retention laws. Recent updates include web based submission of goose and deer damage complaints and permitting. Future plans include web based cooperative farming agreements and prescribed fire plans.
- Launched our ODNR Lands and Facilities map viewer for public use. Displays our property boundaries, statewide parcel data, roads, etc. on an interactive map which allows the user to customize maps. We will continue to add data layers specific to wildlife areas (i.e. parking lots, dove fields, boat ramps, etc.) as the spatial data are developed and compiled.
- Completed a remote sensing project of our forest habitats in SE Ohio with NWTF and F4 Tech, in contract to complete a wetland inventory with Ducks Unlimited, need to start working on a grassland inventory.

WILDLIFE DISEASES and INVASIVE SPECIES:

- The Division is working with APHIS to control feral hogs and mute swans in Ohio, as well as monitor for HPAI.
 - From October 1, 2014 through May 2016, APHIS successfully euthanized 433 feral hogs through the use of firearms, trapping, and aerial operations.
 - In Calendar Year 2015, nearly 100 mute swans (27 by APHIS personnel) were removed throughout the state. The program will continue through 2016, although the population of mute swans has been dramatically reduced.
 - Avian influenza swabs were collected from 610 dabbling ducks through live bird trapping and hunter harvest from June 2015 through March of 2016. No cases of HPAI were detected through monitoring efforts in Ohio.
- Two cases of CWD were confirmed in Ohio in 2014-15 in captive herds in Holmes Co. in northeast Ohio. Between road-kill, taxidermy, hunter-harvested, suspect, and escaped captive deer there have been 1,061 samples collected by the close of the 2015 statewide gun season in the surrounding area. Additionally 839 samples were collected through statewide road kill sampling. All samples were negative, and no wild samples collected in Ohio have tested positive for CWD to date.
- The Division conducts statewide surveillance for white-nose syndrome (WNS) in bat populations, including known hibernacula. Since 2011, WNS was confirmed in Ohio and is now throughout the state. Winter (hibernating) bat populations have declined 85-99%.

LEGISLATION & OTHER PENDING ISSUES:

- One bill relating to wildlife management in the past year which included an unfunded mandate
 for our agency to spend \$50k each to research Canada goose and zebra mussel contributions to
 water quality pollution in the western Lake Erie basin. Other pending legislation includes
 reduced cost licenses for active and discharged veterans; and 'pet deer' legislation.
- Dam maintenance issues are on-going. Numerous dams have been identified, designs to remedy safety issues have been completed by consulting engineers, and cost estimates obtained. Cost estimates are absurdly high and funding all the required repairs will take decades.

• The demand for shooting range use and staffing continues to increase. Two new shooting ranges are in the planning stage at present for Delaware and Spring Valley WA, however recent requirements from the Army Corp of Engineers have placed construction plans on hold pending voluntary action plans for lead removal.



DEPARTMENT OF GAME, FISH, AND PARKS

Foss Building 523 East Capitol Pierre, South Dakota 57501-3182

South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks - Wildlife Division Land Acquisition and Management Report to the Midwest Public Lands Working Group - May 2016

Overview

SDGFP - Wildlife Division owns and manages 717 individual Game Production Areas (GPA) and Water Access Areas (WAA) in 57 of 65 counties covering approximately 282,072 acres.

Top 5 Issues on SDGFP - Wildlife Division Lands

- 1. The politics of wildlife habitat conservation using fee and easement acquisitions
- 2. Stagnant operation, maintenance, and development budget authority
- Compatible uses
- 4. Access to isolated GPAs and WAAs
- 5. Lack of funding for capital assets (i.e. equipment)

Land Acquisition - 2015 Totals

While agricultural land markets in South Dakota experienced their greatest percent gain in history during the previous 3 years, land prices have recently stabilized. Despite this leveling off, the Wildlife Division still finds itself up against record high land prices and a still very active market. In 2015, the Division acquired 3 additional GPA tracts totaling 360 acres.

Land Acquisition Priorities

During 2015, a public input process was undertaken to evaluate Wildlife Division land acquisition priorities. Through this process, the following priorities were identified:

Additions to existing Game Production Areas and Water Access Areas

- Parcels that improve public use on and access to existing Wildlife Division lands.
- In-holding and round-out parcels that consolidate or connect existing Wildlife Division lands or other public lands open to hunting and fishing related recreation.
- Parcels that facilitate more efficient and effective wildlife habitat management and development activities on existing Wildlife Division lands.
- Parcels that provide buffers or are necessary for maintaining or enhancing the integrity of existing Wildlife Division lands.

Lake and river access

- Parcels providing access to public waters for fishing, boating, and hunting.
- Parcels necessary to address public access needs to newly developed fisheries.

Important habitat types, landscapes, and recreational opportunities:

Parcels necessary to expand existing or develop new administrative facilities.

- Parcels containing significant habitat and hunting opportunities for pheasants.
- Parcels containing significant wetland habitat complexes and intact native prairie systems.
- Parcels of undeveloped lakeshores and riparian corridors.
- Parcels associated with planned and coordinated flood mitigation buyout projects.
- Parcels that provide hunting, fishing, and related wildlife recreation opportunities near population centers.
- Parcels with containing rare, unique, or significant plant or animal species or their habitats.

Land Bank

In 2015, utilizing non-federal value in previously acquired GPAs, the Wildlife Division established a \$15.4 million land bank to more fully utilize an increase in available P-R funds.

Land Operation and Management

Budget - \$4 million (75% WSFR Grant (PR) / 25% State License Dollars) Staffing - 35 FTE

The Wildlife Division enters into between 250 and 300 annual leases for haying, grazing, or agricultural production on GPAs, generating over \$300,000 of program income. The Division continues to utilize and expand various means of minimizing program income (e.g. barter arrangements), while still using agricultural operations to achieve habitat management objectives.

The Wildlife Division is obligated by both State Constitution and Codified Law to pay full assessed property taxes on GPAs. For tax valuation purposes GPAs are classified as agricultural lands. In 2015, the Division paid \$1.4 million in property taxes.

Interactive and GPS Map Applications

The Wildlife Division currently supports a variety of web and mobile applications to assist public land and water users with locating hunting and fishing areas. Interactive public hunting lands map are available at: http://gfp.sd.gov/hunting/areas/default.aspx

MAFWA Ad Hoc Feral Swine Committee

Proposed NCN for the 2017 Multistate Conservation Grant Program

Title:

Improve benefits for fish, wildlife, and their habitats through evaluation of efficacious management strategies for feral swine.

Statement of Need:

The spread of invasive feral swine throughout the United States has been exacerbated by their illicit translocation and release for the purpose of establishing recreational hunting opportunities. Efficacious management strategies used to counter the spread of feral swine and control their abundance are only as effective as the public support they garner. In general, the public understands that feral swine pose multi-faceted threats to natural resources, but there is a critical lack of effective outreach describing their anthropogenic spread and how presumptive support of possibly ineffective management strategies may contribute more to the issue than to a solution.

Desired Proposals:

Grant proposals should address this NCN through research that will evaluate efficacious management strategies for feral swine, prioritizing human dimensions of public support for control schemes and regulatory frameworks. Such research would foster economical implementation and efficacy in reducing existing populations and preventing the continuing spread of invasive feral swine to new areas.

Desired Outcomes / Expected Benefits:

Multistate Conservation Grant Program research on invasive feral swine will provide state, federal, and private resource managers with empirical documentation revealing strengths and weaknesses of varying management strategies as they relate to public sentiment and dissimilar levels of invasion by state, and provide science-based recommendations for unifying economical and efficacious management strategies as they apply locally, regionally, and nationally.

Proposed NCN for the 2017 Multistate Conservation Grant Program

Title:

Integration of Taxa-specific Bird Plans to Create Comprehensive Bird Habitat Goals

Statement of Need:

The North American bird conservation community has recently produced and/or revised a number of taxa-specific bird planning documents (e.g., North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Partners in Flight North American Landbird Conservation Plan, North American Waterbird Conservation Plan, Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative, National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan, etc.). State fish and wildlife agencies, federal resource management agencies, and non-governmental organizations all partnered to varying degrees in creating these plans with the hope the population and habitat goals they contained would form the foundation for bird conservation actions by the all participating partners.

One drawback of using this taxa-specific approach to bird planning is that state agencies (and many other partners) have responsibilities for all bird taxa, thus states must try to implement several plans simultaneously with limited resources. This creates a complex multivariate problem in deciding where and what types of habitat projects best address bird conservation priorities in the aggregate. States have obviously continued to complete habitat projects without fully solving this problem, but it remains difficult to relate those projects back to all the specific planning goals that now exist. This in turn makes it difficult to measure our progress and define remaining needs relative to those aggregated goals.

This NCN addresses all states and provinces included in more than one bird planning document. It also addresses several goals in AFWA's strategic plan, including Goal 2: Policy and Legislative Advocacy (i.e., better defined comprehensive habitat needs lead to better defined legislative requests), Goal 3: Partnerships (i.e., better defined habitat needs will allow partners work more effectively toward the many planning goals we have collectively agreed upon), and Goal 4: Member Support and Coordination (i.e., decision support tools for habitat planning will help each state with their bird conservation efforts and help foster coordination among states to meet regional and continental goals).

Desired Proposals:

The development of decision support tools that help state agencies and other partners answer: 1) What amount, condition, and spatial distribution of habitats are needed in a state, region, or continentally to meet the goals enumerated in all the relevant bird planning documents?; and 2) How can state agencies and their partners use their resources to best address priority bird habitat needs in the aggregate, given that each state will likely have slightly different priorities?

Desired Outcomes / Expected Benefits:

Habitat delivery plans and programs that 1) take all priority bird conservation needs into account, and 2) are targeted to efficiently deliver bird conservation priorities in the aggregate.

Buffers as Pheasant Habitat: A link between wildlife habitat, clean water, fisheries, and pollinator travel corridors

Statement of Need: Grassland dependent wildlife and pollinators continues to decline as does water quality in many states. The two factors are directly linked through the loss of grasslands that provide habitat for wildlife and filtration and retention for surface and groundwater before these waters enter streams, rivers, lakes, or aquifers.

Desired Proposals: By its very nature, water flows and often crosses political boundaries. The Mississippi River has a watershed that covers all or part of 31 states. Gulf Hypoxia and inland water quality issues cannot be address effectively unless there is a coordinated regional effort involving multiple states. It has been demonstrated that much of the chemicals responsible for the Hypoxic Zone originate in the agriculturally dominated Upper Midwest, the Corn Belt. Inland wetlands also suffer from sedimentation and agricultural chemical run-off which decreases habitat quality and carrying capacity for migratory and breeding waterfowl. Multiple projects (STRIPs in Iowa, Worthington Wells in Minnesota, etc.) have shown how grasslands can improve and protect water quality while providing nesting habitat for grassland birds as well as habitat for monarchs, honeybees, and hundreds of native pollinating insects. These same studies have shown that grassland habitat can be strategically placed on the landscape with very little impacts to production agriculture. What hasn't been done is determining the restoration goals (diversity of grasses and forbs in seed mix) and best management practices for these grasslands to maximize their benefits to game and non-game wildlife as well as pollinators. Grassland habitat restoration can increase grassland wildlife populations, increase pollinator habitat, improve water quality and fisheries, and prevent human health issues such as toxic algal blooms and unsafe drinking water (blue baby syndrome, etc).

Desired Outcomes/Expected Benefits:

- 1) Development and refinement of BMPs for designing and managing buffers to maximize both water filtration capacity and wildlife productivity.
- 2) Implement pilot areas and monitoring of effects to water quality and wildlife responses
- 3) Decreased sedimentation and agricultural chemical contamination of inland streams, rivers, and lakes leading to a healthier fishery
- 4) Decreased size of the Gulf Hypoxia Zone in Louisiana and increases in the fisheries economy
- 5) Increased food resources and use of inland waters by breeding and migratory waterfowl
- 6) Increased habitat base for breeding and overwintering populations of grassland dependent gamebirds, waterfowl, and songbirds
- 7) Increased diversity and abundance of pollinating insects, including monarch butterflies, other native pollinating invertebrates, and honeybees.

NCN: Submitted (Previously) by the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Science and Research Committee

<u>Subject:</u> State Fish and Wildlife Agencies Scientific Capacity Assessment and Enhancement of Scientific Information Access

Statement of Need: Practicing sound, science-based management has long been a foundation of natural resource management for state fish and wildlife agencies. With an ever increasing number of stressors weighing in on fish and wildlife populations, the need to practice science-based management is crucial but at the same time difficult to achieve. Impacts from disease, habitat fragmentation, invasive species, encroaching development, climate change, energy development and other stressors challenge managers to determine the best course of action. In addition to direct impacts, diminishing budgets and workforce restrict agency research capacity. In order to practice science-based management, state fish and wildlife agencies need to have the ability to engage in relevant scientific research as well as access scientific findings that relate to management questions in their state or region. A comprehensive gap analysis will help to determine the state of scientific research within each agency's structure.

With the advent of the internet there has been a transformation in scientific information exchange. The best example of this new era is the E-library which allows members full access to search engines, abstracts, and complete scientific publications. With electronic access to scientific publications, natural resource managers could have easy access to the latest scientific findings. Unfortunately, Natural Resource Agencies have for the most part little to no access to E-libraries. Providing E-library access to natural resource publications will revolutionize how natural resource professionals access information and will significantly enhance their ability to practice science-based management and better protect fish and wildlife populations for future generations.

This NCN is applicable to all 50 states and addresses several strategies identified in the Association's Strategic Plan including: Goal 2: Policy and Legislative Advocacy-Promote policies, legislation, laws, regulations and legal strategies that enhance and protect the states' ability to conserve and manage fish and wildlife resources and their habitats consistent with the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation-Initiative 1.)Enhance Conservation Action. Goal 4: Member Support and Coordination-Support and facilitate education, participation, communication and leadership capacity among state, provincial and territorial agencies to enhance fish and wildlife conservation-Initiative 3.) Support Organizational Development and Management.

<u>Desired Proposals:</u> 1.) The development of a comprehensive gap analysis of state capacity to conduct research and access research with suggestions for increasing capacity, or 2.) Assist state fish and wildlife agencies with access to current scientific journal publications from relevant fish and wildlife scientific journals.

<u>Desired Outcomes/ Expected Benefits:</u> Well informed state fish and wildlife agencies who have access to current scientific information as well as the capacity to engage in research (both internally and with partners) that is relevant to the issues currently faced by their managers.