

Pheasant Habitat Emphasis and Development Areas as outlined by MN DNR Overview

At the 2017 Pheasant Fest Jeff Zajac our local “Go-To Guy” from the DNR regarding habitat did several presentations on how they are concentrating their efforts based on years of research and science to help build better habitat for Pheasants; Deer; and even yes, the butterflies. The following is a summary and how you can help leverage this knowledge for your benefit.

First, is what are the MN DNR goals? They are as follows:

- Target Habitat Efforts – Help increase CRP back to a national level of at least 40 Million acres and 9 Mile Development Efforts. The 9-mile development efforts are putting more land in habitat for greater concentrated Pheasant; Deer and other creatures to be able to withstand any environmental hardships. This outline was developed with input from DNR Area Wildlife Managers, Farm bill Biologists and Soil Water Conservation District (SWCD). Goal is to have 40% grassland, preferably permanently protected i.e. CRP; CREP; etc. And, evaluated with GIS surveys.
- More Habitat on Private Lands – Get CRP and CREP and other programs to help offset the row to row farming practices now seen across the landscape of the Great Plains. Take the marginal producing lands and land adjacent to water out of production to better help the environment and humans.
- Farm Bill Assistance Partnership – Help Farmers understand what assistance and programs are available to them from both state and federal levels.
- More Habitat Management – Better management of the current State owned lands so all can enjoy them.
- Buffer Strips – Cleaner Water as outlined in the Governors Pheasant Summit Initiatives (2014). Pheasant Hunting Isn't What It Used to Be. We have lost more lands from CRP in the last 3 years and it has a dramatic effect on Pheasant numbers. (See Buffer Initiative on this web page). From this input, the Pheasant Summit Action plan was created
- Better Roadside Habitat – Ditches are today an important part of the landscape. Most ditches are public land and are mowed by private individuals. They have no idea that mowing too early in the summer can not only kill but restrict wildlife from surviving. So, it is important to get the word out that ditches should NOT be mowed until at least July 15th.
- Maintain Walk-In Access (WIA) – and Partner with landowners. MN is one of the last states to have any partnership with landowners for hunters. WIA while only a year old is the first effort for farmers to get compensated so hunters may have more opportunity. A cooperation.
- Expand citizen education – Tell what the DNR is doing more vocally and get citizen involvement.
- More habitat research – Science does work and more to help prove what is working and what is not.

What is “Available” today to you as a Landowner:

We need an array of tools for habitat creation, protection and management. The following is a list of the programs that you may have entitlement to too:

CRP – Conservation Reserve Program – Federal Temporary habitat creation and protection to take marginal crop land out of production. (10 or 15-year typical contract).

CSP - Conservation Security Program – Federal for Reduced Tillage and Cover Crops

RIM – Reinvest-In-Minnesota – State Restoration and permanent habitat protection

WRE-RIM – Wetland Reserve/RIM – Federal/State Restoration and permanent habitat protection

CREP – Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Combination of CRP and RIM with enhanced funding. Habitat restoration and permanent protection

WMA – Wildlife Management Areas – State Habitat restoration and permanent protection open to public hunting

WPA – Waterfowl Production Areas – Federal Habitat restoration and permanent protection open to public hunting

Each program above comes with their own eligibility, rules, and regulations. The DNR; SWCD; or FSA agent can point you in the right direction.

Funding for Programs is Crucial

So, you want to be a partner! How can you do this and have it make economic sense? Well and number of things are available depending on the program and what your conscience can sustain.

LSOHC Funding – MN Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund Funded by state sales tax created by amendment to the State constitution. Funds acquisition, easements, habitat restoration *Green Corridor, Inc.*

Bonding Funding – State funding via sales of bonds for capital improvements. Historically and waxed and waned.

License Surcharge Funding – Portion of each small game license sold is dedicated for WMA acquisition

Pheasant Stamp Funding – Used for many spot projects to assist is better Pheasant habitat

Local PF Chapter Dollars – Used for acquisition of lands and Pheasant habitat and promotion

NAWCA grants – North American Wetland Conservation Act. Federal program dollars.

Cooperative Farming Agreements (CFAs) - Used to get local farmers to accomplish habitat work (especially food plots) on WMAs. They save public money and benefit the farmers as well.

9-Mile Development Efforts.

Science has told us Pheasants, deer and many other animals don't travel far from their birth place. Pheasants travel no more than 2-3 miles from where they were raised. It has been tested and proven that a 9-mile focus area is having great results in more birds, deer, etc. This practice

is after more than 10 years of effort are putting more land for greater concentration to benefit Pheasant; Deer and other creatures to be able to withstand any environmental hardships.

Key Goals Now for the 9 Mile Development Effort are:

Build Around an Existing Habitat Base – Get to the 9-Mile area.

Continue to Acquire and Build Good Habitat Tools

Permanently Protected Habitat – This is the Best outcome

Allow for Time – Test and prove it is working

Partnerships – This is “Vital” for all

Things You as a Landowner can do NOW!

- More diversified prairie plantings to improve cover for broods and nongame species
- Brood strips of wildflowers without grass (Consult your local DNR OR PF Representative)
- Tree removal to reduce predation on large grass tracts
- Increased prescribed burning to maintain and improve grassland quality (At least every 6-8 years)
- Maintenance and planting of brushy cover for better winter habitat (sandbar willow, plum, etc.)
- Early successional annuals (weeds)
- Sorghum food plots to enhance harvest opportunity and provide excellent winter habitat

The MN DNR is your cooperative friend in the effort to preserve our great state and make MN the best state for hunting and habitat. Feel free to reach out to them and ask for help or advice.