

Pheasant News and Notes

November 2018



Trivia Question (Election Day Edition)

In “honor” of all the political ads we’ve had to endure these last few weeks, I’ve embedded one bald-faced lie in this month’s edition. Can you spot it without the aid of Google?

Farm Bill and USDA News

It has been a pretty quiet month on the Farm Bill front. Both chambers of Congress have been in recess for weeks, and although it’s likely the Senate and House Ag Committees’ staff members are still communicating during the break, not much is likely to get resolved until after the election. The chairs and ranking members of the two committees met frequently before the recess, and it was reported that they didn’t make enough progress on other issues to even broach the subject of SNAP (i.e., “food stamp”) work requirements, which was expected to be a key area of disagreement. Apparently they found plenty to disagree about elsewhere, particularly in the commodity title (House Chairman Conaway wanted to change some provisions that would help Southern Plains producers at the expense of those elsewhere, which didn’t go over very well). Bottom line, it doesn’t look like we’re anywhere close to a done deal when the lame duck session starts.

Your Plan Coordinator was in Washington, D.C. in mid-October and met with USDA staff on a variety of topics. First, you’ll recall that I and our Technical Committee have been working with our counterparts at the [National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative](#) (NBCI) for more than a year to come up with a joint recommendation for a national early successional habitat CRP practice. A draft practice was completed a couple of months ago, and Tom Franklin (NBCI’s Agriculture Liaison) set up a meeting with Misty Jones, who is USDA-FSA’s Director of Conservation and Environmental Programs, to discuss the issue.

At the meeting, Tom and I explained the pheasant and quail management communities’ concurrence on the need for more early successional habitats offered by CRP, particularly in the eastern half of the country. Ms. Jones and her staff seemed sympathetic to that need, but were concerned about any additional costs the new practice might generate (our draft practice calls for cost-shared soil disturbance 2-3 times during a 10-year contract in lieu of a single mid-contract management treatment). We agreed to continue our conversation after a new Farm Bill is passed, as there might be new provisions (e.g., Senator Thune’s proposed Soil Health and Income Protection Program) available to help address the early successional habitat need. This would be beneficial to know before we go forward.

Tom and I also met with USDA-NRCS’s Diane Gelburd (Acting Deputy Chief of Science and Technology), John Englert (National Plant Materials Program Leader), and Danielle Flynn (National Biologist, Ecological Services Division) to discuss NBCI’s [“Natives First”](#) plant policy proposal. This is NBCI’s highest policy priority (our pheasant partnership is neutral on the matter), and Tom has had several previous meetings with NRCS on the issue. NRCS has been reluctant to adopt the Natives First approach because some introduced species perform well in addressing a few of their officially enumerated “resource concerns,” and wildlife habitat is only one of the 43 concerns on their list. To counter this, NBCI has started a literature review to demonstrate that native species can be used to effectively address each of the other

listed concerns. The NRCS folks agreed to put some training materials on native grass establishment and management developed by NBCI on their Science and Technology Training Library website, and also to continue to work with NBCI on the issue.

Finally, I met with Rich Iovanna, the economist with FSA who is interested in helping fund our multi-Joint Venture pheasant habitat modeling project, and we discussed the draft proposal and budget I and the JVs put together. Rich is still very interested in helping fund the project, but we'll need to make some budget adjustments before he can pull the trigger. I'll be working with the JVs and others over the next few weeks to get us over the hump.

A big thanks to Tom Franklin for setting up several of the meetings (all on the same day no less, which reduced travel costs) and inviting the pheasant partnership to participate. No doubt we'll get more of what we want by presenting a united front as an upland game bird conservation community, and it's good to have NBCI as such a solid partner in that effort.

Notes from Around the Pheasant Range

Happily, pheasant season is now open in a number of northern states. I've only seen [one report](#) of a pheasant hunting accident so far, and hopefully that will be the last of them. Travis Runia (Technical Committee, South Dakota GF&P) said hunting reports from the opening weekend were good despite a lot of crops still standing. The bad news is their nonresident hunting permit numbers are running about even with last year despite much improved populations and a rosier forecast. This is atypical because historically, their nonresidents have responded quickly to news of improved bird numbers. Similarly, Nicole Davros (Technical Committee, Minnesota DNR) said their pheasant stamp sales are slightly behind last year's pace despite a favorable fall hunting forecast. If this pattern holds, it doesn't bode well for flattening out the national decline in pheasant hunter participation anytime soon.

Speaking of the Gopher State, a team affiliated with the University of Minnesota has come up with an interesting approach to identify the relative value of land parcels in meeting several wildlife (including pheasant), soil, water, and recreation objectives simultaneously (their primary documentation is [here](#), but they've also made a more [detailed description](#) available, as well as an [online benefit estimation tool](#)). It's intended for prioritizing parcels for enrollment in conservation easements, but could also serve as a model approach for any conservation organization (say, USDA-FSA) trying to spend its money (say, CRP funding) most efficiently in addressing a variety of competing resource concerns (say, soil, water, and wildlife objectives). I would envision the range-wide pheasant habitat model our partnership is pursuing as being a key input if a similar conservation delivery tool was developed nationally. I think it's only a matter of time before these multi-objective, model-based spatial prioritization approaches begin to assist policy decisions in a more prominent way, and it's in our best interest to be prepared if and when they do.

I recently came across [the results of a survey of upland game hunters](#) performed for [Project Upland](#) by [Northwoods Collective](#). The caveats first – it's not a scientific survey (e.g., the sampling frame is not random) and the omission of some basic details (e.g., no reporting of sample size) is frustrating. (You have to randomly read [another article](#) to find out their sample size was around 1,500, which is nothing to sneeze at). That said, it's an interesting read. One passage in the objectives caught my eye: "*The upland hunting community was chosen as the token focus of the survey due to the long-standing perception of elitism within this market and the exclusions felt by newcomers as a result of that perception.*" Really? Are upland game hunters perceived as elitists? I hadn't really heard that before,

but I don't have proof that it's false. I had the same reaction to several other statements the authors made in the Conclusion/Discussion section. Correct or not, it does make you think, and I applaud them for tackling the subject. See what *you* think.

Finally, I don't know how I missed this one, but October 14th was (and will be again, next year) National Roast Pheasant Day. According to the website that keeps track of such things, other holidays "related to" National Roast Pheasant Day include American Redneck Day, National Slap Your Irritating Co-Worker Day, and Dog Farting Awareness Day. Not sure what that says about those of us who enjoy a good roast pheasant, but please mark your calendars accordingly. Hardcore NRPD observers will of course want to spend next October 14th at Disneyland, where for \$15,000 you can enjoy a nice roast pheasant atop the Pirates of the Caribbean ride.

Pheasants in the Media

[Pheasant Country needs support to stay on rise](#)

[Fence-sitting on Farm Bill puts conservation programs in limbo](#)

[Splendor in Michigan grasslands](#)

[Pheasants Forever in North Dakota encourages women to sign up for upland hunting opportunities](#)

[Pheasant hunters should be prepared to encounter grizzly bears](#)

[Pheasant hunters asked to report Palmer amaranth weeds](#)

[Pheasant shooting is 'massive waste of life'](#)

[What happens when humans fall in love with an invasive species?](#)

And this isn't new, but it's new to me...

[Mother Pheasant Plucker by Hank Green and the Perfect Strangers](#)

Recent Literature

[Ashoori, A., A. Kafash, H. Varasteh Moradi, M. Yousefi, H. Kamyab, N. Behdarvand, and S. Mohammadi. 2018. Habitat modeling of the common pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* \(Galliformes: Phasianidae\) in a highly modified landscape: application of species distribution models in the study of a poorly documented bird in Iran. *The European Zoological Journal* 85\(1\).](#)

[Whiteside, M. A., J. O. van Horik, E. J. G. Langley, C. E. Beardsworth, and J. R. Madden. 2018. Size dimorphism and sexual segregation in pheasants: tests of three competing hypotheses. *PeerJ* 6: e5674.](#)

[Ertl, H. M., M. A. Mora, D. E. Boellstorff, D. Brightsmith, and K. Carson. 2018. Potential effects of neonicotinoid insecticides on northern bobwhites. *Wildlife Society Bulletin*. \(Early e-version\)](#)

And the full citation of this one is now available; it's in the November issue:

[Williamson, L. T., W. D. Walter, S. R. Klinger, and D. R. Diefenbach. 2018. Incorporating detection probability to estimate pheasant density. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 82:1680-1688.](#)

Trivia Answer

National Roast Pheasant Day is October 15th, not October 14th. Everything else in that paragraph (and elsewhere, hopefully) is true. [National Roast Pheasant Day](#) is actually a thing; Checkiday.com's algorithm says [American Redneck Day](#), [National Slap Your Irritating Co-Worker Day](#), and [Dog Farting Awareness Day](#) are all actual holidays "related" to National Roast Pheasant Day; and for \$15,000 [you really can eat roast pheasant atop of the Pirates of the Caribbean ride](#). Cue [the scene from Raising Arizona](#).

Vote early and often, everyone!

This update is brought to you by the National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan and Partnerships. Our mission is to foster science-based, socially-supported policies and programs that enhance wild pheasant populations, provide recreational opportunities to pheasant hunters, and support the economics and social values of communities. You can find us on the web at <http://nationalpheasantplan.org>.