

Pheasant News and Notes

February 2020



Trivia Question

The 16th Pheasant Fest will be held this month in Minneapolis. When and where was the first Pheasant Fest held?

Farm Bill and USDA News

The CRP general signup period draws to a close at the end of this month. The few informal contacts I've had with state agency staff around the pheasant range suggest landowner demand has not been overwhelming, but everyone is taking a wait-and-see attitude about predicting signup success. USDA-NRCS put out another [press release](#) in late January to remind folks about the signup, within which they also mention an "early 2020" SHIPP signup and a CRP Grasslands signup running from March 16 to May 15.

The states that applied for USDA's Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) funds expect to hear how much they were granted this month. As you'll recall, the 2018 Farm Bill authorized \$50 million for the VPA-HIP, and grant funds are distributed competitively among the states and tribes. Grantees have up to three years to spend the funds and may use up to 25% on habitat improvement incentives. Good luck to those who applied.

You may also recall that USDA staff presented their concept of a new Conservation Assistance Ranking Tool (CART) to the wildlife community at the AFWA conference last fall. The tool is meant to help producers better choose among all available USDA programs, help provide similar payments for similar actions regardless of program, and better estimate the benefits of conservation actions. The tool was rolled out recently and then unceremoniously panned by House Ag Committee Chairman Collin Peterson at a recent hearing (you can watch it [here](#)). On a happier note, pheasants and Farm Bill Biologists also came up at the hearing; watch the exchange starting [here](#). Thanks to Dave Nomsen for the heads up.

Finally, the Center for American Progress recently came out in favor of doubling USDA working lands programs and restoring CRP to 36 million acres to help combat climate change and support rural communities. You can read their report [here](#).

Notes from Around the Pheasant Range

I mentioned a few months ago that South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks had commissioned Responsive Management to do some human dimensions surveys involving their 2019 nest predator bounty program. The [final report](#) is now available. There are a lot of results to pick apart and digest, but the bottom line is that a strong majority (83%) of South Dakota residents approved of the bounty program as it was explained to them in the survey. Also, 70% of program participants (i.e., those who turned in predator tails for payment) believed the program had enhanced populations of pheasants and ducks. Interestingly, the survey instruments explained the purpose of the program differently to random residents (it helps protect pheasants and ducks) versus program participants (it helps promote participation in trapping and outdoor recreation); not sure why. For context, according to the latest [America's Wildlife Values](#) survey, South Dakota is among the states with the highest percentage of

“traditionalist”-valued citizens, i.e., those who are “most extreme in their beliefs that wildlife should be used and managed for the benefit of people.” [SDGFP has now said](#) it wants to continue the program in 2020 but with half of last year’s budget. As always, we wish our friends in South Dakota well in negotiating this challenging issue.

I had the pleasure of meeting with agency staff in both Kansas and Nebraska last month to discuss pheasant-related issues. The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism convened its Small Game Committee (a group of about 20 public lands managers, private lands biologists, research staff, and administrators) to review their operations regarding this species group. Discussion topics included potential regulation changes, how to present annual survey results in hunting forecasts, and research needs.

Across the border in Nebraska, Game and Parks Commission private lands staff (all 80 or so of them, including partner positions) met to discuss improvements to their public access program, as well as potential changes to their state pheasant plan. The primary changes that came up involved trying to find more relevant measures of success than just numbers of acres managed or opened to hunting. Hunter satisfaction, success, or participation are obvious candidates, but how to measure them at a less-than-statewide scale is still an open question.

The meetings had some common themes, namely in the way R3 objectives were being put front-and-center in the discussions. This is well in line with the challenges we listed during our joint Management Board / Technical Committee meeting last fall. I hope to get a review document out soon to the MB and TC that packages all that material in a useable form for the National Plan revision; stay tuned. Thanks again to the folks in Kansas and Nebraska for inviting me to participate in their respective gatherings.

Pheasant-relevant Media

[South Dakota Game and Fish wants to continue bounty program for nest predators](#)
[South Dakota Habitat Stamp bill passes with ease through Senate committee](#)
[Sacrifice, determination brought pheasants to South Dakota, is needed to keep them](#)
[Pheasants Forever works to keep the base fired up](#)
[Can bird dogs help save the future of hunting?](#)
[Iowa hunter shares photo of 27.5" pheasant tail feather](#)
[Pheasant hunting on meth? Just say no.](#)
[Hunting’s decline spells trouble for endangered species](#)
[Roundup ruled the farm, now its maker has a challenger](#)

Recent Literature

[Wszola, L. S., L. F. Gruber, E. F. Stuber, L. N. Messinger, C. J. Chizinski, and J. J. Fontaine. 2020. Use and expenditures on public access hunting lands. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism* 29.](#)

[Gruntorad, M. P., J. J. Lusk, M. P. Vrtiska, and C. J. Chizinski. 2020. Identifying factors influencing hunter satisfaction across hunting activities in Nebraska. *Human Dimensions of Wildlife*. \(Early online view\).](#)

[Poudyal, N. C., C. Watkins, and O. Joshi. 2020. Economic contribution of wildlife management areas to local and state economies. Human Dimensions of Wildlife. \(Early online view\).](#)

[Madden, J. R., F. Santilli, M. A. Whiteside. 2020. The welfare of game birds destined for release into the wild: a balance between early life care and preparation for future natural hazards. Animal Welfare 29:1-18.](#)

[Feber, R. E., P. J. Johnson, and D. W. Macdonald. 2020. Shooting pheasants for sport: what does the death of Cecil tell us? People and Nature. \(Early online view\).](#)

Trivia Answer

The first Pheasant Fest was held in 2003 in Bloomington, Minnesota. Until 2008, Pheasants Forever held Pheasant Fest every other year.

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>.