

Pheasant News and Notes

March 2018



Trivia Question

In what famous work of literature does the following passage appear? (Hint: it's set in 1959.)

Mr. Clutter seldom encountered trespassers on his property; a mile from the highway, and arrived at by obscure roads, it was not a place that strangers came upon by chance. Now, suddenly, a whole party of them appeared and Teddy rushed forward roaring out a challenge. But it was odd about Teddy. Though he was a good sentry, alert, ever ready to raise Cain, his valor had one flaw: let him glimpse a gun, as he did now—for the intruders were armed—and his head dropped, his tail turned in. No one understood why, for no one knew his history, other than that he was a vagabond that Kenyon had adopted years ago. The visitors proved to be five pheasant hunters from Oklahoma. The pheasant season in Kansas, a famed November event, lures hordes of sportsmen from adjoining states, and during the past week plaid-hatted regiments had paraded across the autumnal expanses flushing and felling with rounds of bird shot great coppery flights of the grain-fattened birds. By custom, the hunters, if they are not invited guests, are supposed to pay the landowner a fee for letting them pursue their quarry on his premises, but when the Oklahomans offered to hire hunting rights, Mr. Clutter was amused. "I'm not as poor as I look. Go ahead, get all you can," he said. Then, touching the brim of his cap, he headed for home and the day's work, unaware that it would be his last.

Farm Bill and USDA News

Although we are still awaiting the House's draft Farm Bill to be released, ranking Ag Committee member Collin Peterson (D-MN) has now said publicly he expects the bill to include a CRP cap increase of 6 million acres. Peterson told Politico "We're still working on the scoring, but it looks like we'll be able to go to 30 million acres." According to Dave Nomsen of PF, House markup this spring is still possible, and Senate Ag Committee leadership is starting to meet with individual members about their priorities.

There was some potentially good news and bad news included in the passage of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 in early February. The good news is the Act added some new programmatic options for cotton and dairy producers outside the current Farm Bill's baseline funding, which means lawmakers do not have to defund current farm programs to pay for them in the new Bill. The bad news is the Act increases the federal deficit by a CBO-estimated \$342 billion over ten years, which increases the political pressure to cut spending even further in the Farm Bill and elsewhere. A 30-million-acre CRP cap may be a pretty rosy outcome under these circumstances.

Some of that budget pressure likely resulted in the administration's proposed reform of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which gained a lot of media attention the last couple of weeks. As you probably heard, the USDA floated the idea of replacing some of SNAP recipients' monetary credits with packages of shelf-stable foods called "America's Harvest Boxes." This has not gone over well with anti-hunger advocates, which in turn threatens to intensify a partisan debate over the Farm Bill and complicates its chances of timely passage. Reacting to the food box issue, Jim McGovern (D-MA), ranking member of the House Subcommittee on Nutrition, said "we'll be in a

position to write a better Farm Bill after November,” suggesting Democrats may wait until after the mid-term elections to support a final bill if the SNAP controversy lingers. Then again, it may be that Congress simply ignores the administration’s budget proposals (as they routinely do) and soldiers on with their own funding agendas.

Representative Roger Marshall (R-KS) introduced the [Voluntary Public Access Improvement Act of 2018](#) in February, which would fund the VPA-HIP at \$150 million over five years. This matches Senator Steve Daines’ (R-MT) marker bill in the other chamber, and sets funding levels at the point AFWA, PF, and our partnership requested. As with other favorable marker bills, we can only hope they make it into the final product.

Iowa Department of Agriculture Secretary Bill Northey was finally confirmed as the USDA’s first Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation, which will soon encompass the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, and Risk Management Agency after administrative restructuring. Northey’s confirmation was delayed for months by Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) in a dispute over the Renewable Fuel Standard, and he apparently acquiesced on Northey’s nomination without gaining immediate concessions on the issue.

Notes from Around the Pheasant Range

By all accounts the 2018 Pheasant Fest and Quail Classic was a rousing success. With Sioux Falls as a first-time venue, attendance was an impressive 28,868 over three days and Pheasants Forever made a commitment to add SF to their future show rotation. The show floor seemed packed whenever I made a swing through the 357 (literally) vendor displays.

A couple of Pheasant Fest-related workshops were particularly noteworthy. Pheasants Forever, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, and several other partners put on a well-attended “Community-based Habitat Access Initiative” workshop designed to help local communities explore the economic benefits of opening more private land to public access. They had an excellent slate of speakers from all levels of government as well as NGO representatives; you can find the agenda [here](#).

The Precision Ag Workshop we mentioned last month sold out with over 200 attendees. Again, [a good mix of speakers](#) from academia, PF, and industry covered a lot of ground over four hours. South Dakota State University is betting big on precision ag by offering a first-of-its-kind [Bachelor of Science degree](#) in the subject and is planning some large capital improvement projects associated with the major. I don’t think it’s a stretch to say that spatial data-driven “decision agriculture” is only going to become more common and powerful, and that [conservationists trained to use these tools](#) will have more opportunities to use the data to our and the producer’s mutual advantage. Thanks to PF’s Ryan Heiniger for putting the workshop together!

For those who like to plan ahead, Pheasant Fest 2019 will be February 22-24 in Schaumburg, Illinois.

If you are curious about what’s going on in the captive pheasant industry, the 11th International Pheasant Management Seminar is being held from March 4-7, 2018 in Janesville, WI. You can check out the agenda [here](#).

Also, there is a new partnership aimed at addressing monarch population declines called “[Farmers for Monarchs](#).” As the name implies, its current membership is led by a number of national agriculture groups; you can find a Farm Bureau news release that includes the list [here](#). There doesn’t appear to be

any new money for habitat being committed, but they seem to have a unique mix of messengers that rank-and-file producers might listen to when considering enrollment in current programs.

Pheasants in the Media

[UK motorcyclist killed by pheasant that struck his helmet at 60mph](#)

In Turbotax's "[The Dark](#)" commercial, the fictitious homeowner has good taste in end table art:



Recent Literature

[Curland, N. \(et al.\). 2018. Investigation into diseases in free-ranging ring-necked pheasants \(*Phasianus colchicus*\) in northwestern Germany during population decline with special reference to infectious pathogens. European Journal of Wildlife Research 64:12.](#)

[Sage, R. B. \(et al.\) 2018. Predation of released pheasants *Phasianus colchicus* on lowland farmland in the UK and the effect of predator control. European Journal of Wildlife Research 64:14.](#)

Trivia answer

In Cold Blood, by Truman Capote. First published in 1966, this “non-fiction novel” details the 1959 murders of four members of the Herbert Clutter family in the small farming community of Holcomb, Kansas. “Great coppersy flights of the grain-fattened birds” is quite the phrase.

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 www.nationalpheasantplan.org.