

Pheasant News and Notes

May 2022



Trivia Question

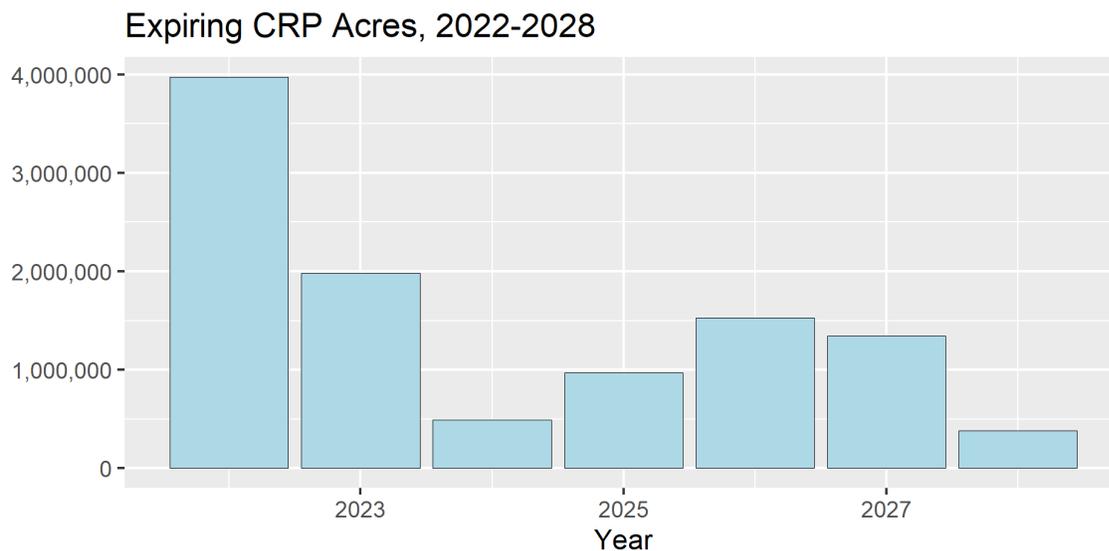
The following passage was published recently in a scientific journal article. Which upland game species is the author talking about?

“These findings could help landscape and wildlife managers to plan habitat improvement actions useful to maintain self-sustaining populations of this species, by increasing cover of woodlands, meadows, and tree plantations.”

Farm Bill and USDA News

USDA [announced](#) they had accepted just over two million acres offered for enrollment in this year’s general CRP sign-up. A total of 2.3 million acres (about 1.9 million expiring CRP acres and 400,000 acres not previously enrolled) were offered by landowners, and USDA accepted about 87% of the acres offered. Through the first seven months of this fiscal year they have also received offers for 260,000 acres in continuous practices. Not all accepted acres will be turned into signed contracts because landowners can still change their minds, and some probably will.

Jim Inglis (Management Board, Pheasants Forever) pulled the latest USDA numbers for expiring CRP acres of all types for the coming few years. Here’s how those look:



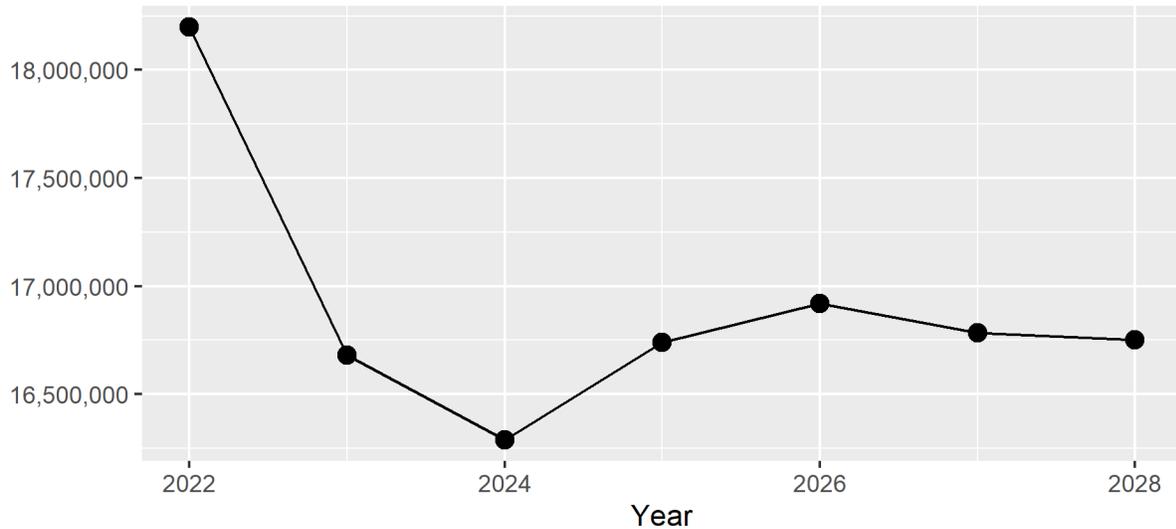
I took a shot at projecting general and continuous enrollments in the coming years if 2022’s figures persist into the future. I used the following assumptions:

- According to USDA’s March CRP report there are currently 18,199,702 acres of general and continuous sign-up acres under contract, so that is the starting point.

- In the past two general signups about 50% of the expiring acres have been offered for reenrollment, so assume that remains stable and applies to continuous expiring acres as well.
- 400,000 continuous acres offered per year with a 95% acceptance rate.
- 400,000 “new” acres offered (i.e., not reenrolled offers) in annual general signups.
- An 87% acceptance rate on both new and reenrolled general acres offered.
- Contracts are signed on 100% of the accepted acres.

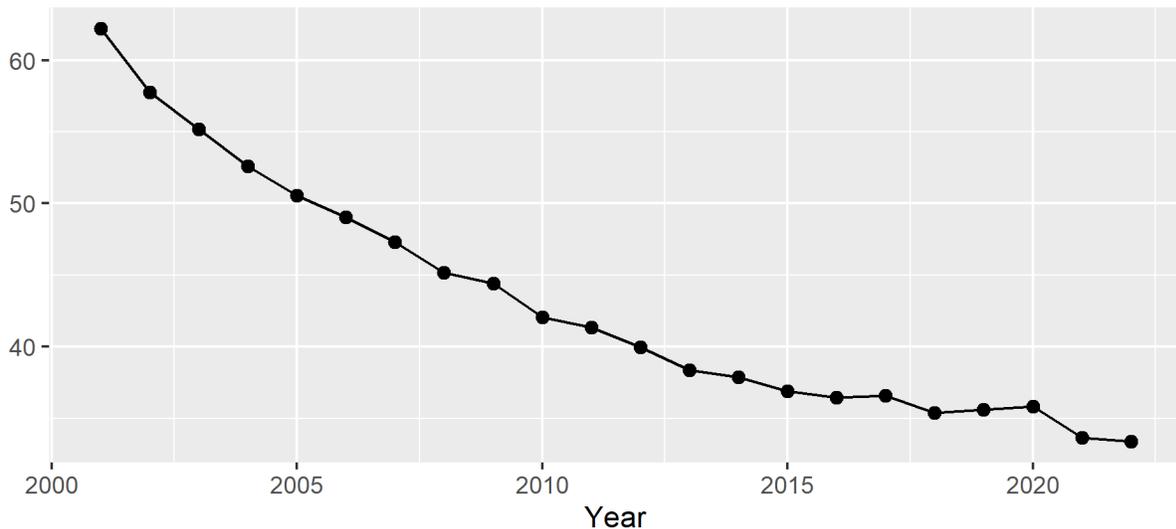
If those assumptions hold, here is the projected trend:

Projected General and Continuous CRP Acres, 2022-2028

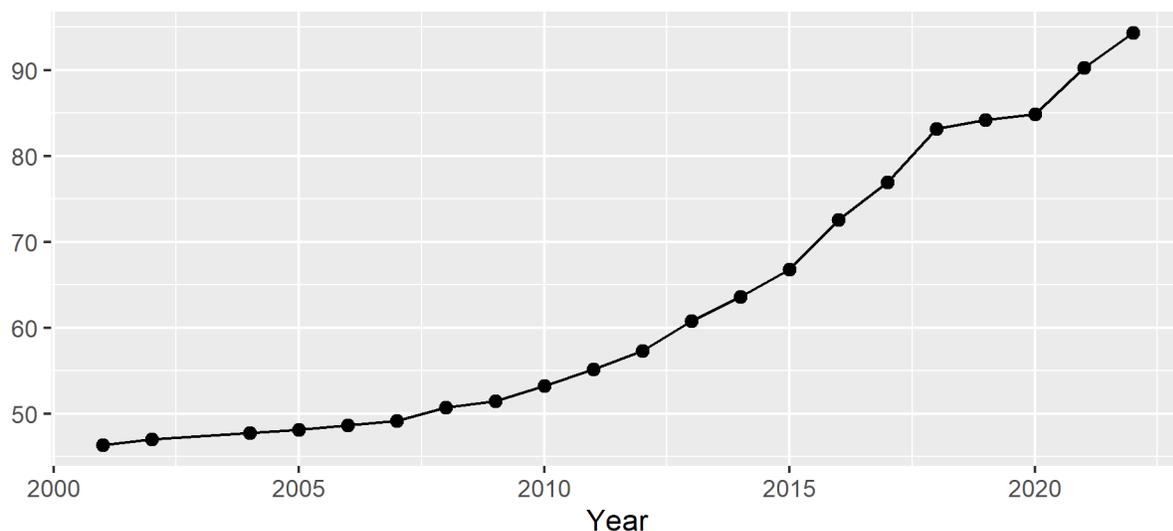


Of course, by the time the 2024 signups happen we should be working under a new Farm Bill, so these estimates should be taken with a huge grain of salt. But they do show where we might be headed under the current set of conditions. Here are a couple more graphs relevant to the general and continuous acre discussion:

U.S. - General and Continuous CRP Acres Per Contract



U.S. - General and Continuous CRP Rent Per Acre (unadjusted US\$)



So if the past is any guide, we can expect fewer total acres, smaller tracts, and higher costs per acre. Grasslands CRP will likely keep filling the void under the statutory cap, and according to figures shared by Todd Bogenschutz (Technical Committee, Iowa), only 3% of Grassland CRP acres are expired general or continuous CRP. More evidence that CRP is becoming less a program that “retires” marginal cropland and more one that temporarily “protects” pasture and rangeland while not changing its primary use.

In happier news, USDA [announced](#) some additional flexibility for states that would like to incorporate early successional management practices and annual covers as part of their SAFE projects. I assume that was in response to a concerted effort led by Todd Bogenschutz and others with AFWA’s CRP Working Group – good work!

Notes from Around the Pheasant Range

I attended the virtual [MAFWA](#) Private Lands Working Group meeting last week. Folks are doing lots of good work, but the most consequential information probably came from Kurt Thiede, AFWA’s Government Affairs Director. He reported on a briefing delivered to the [Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership](#) by staffers for the Senate and House Agriculture Committee leaders. Unfortunately, it appears we are headed for no increase in funding for the conservation title of the 2023 Farm Bill. This is disappointing given last year’s conversation about substantial increases to promote climate solutions through CRP and other voluntary conservation programs. A lot can happen between now and next year’s bill writing, but this appears to be a bad early signal.

I also had an initial meeting with Kelley Myers, Coordinator for the [Midwest Landscape Initiative](#), a collaboration among MAFWA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey. Both our partnership and MLI are working toward large-scale tools to help target conservation efforts, so we agreed to look for areas of cooperation going forward. I will be giving a presentation to their Technical Committee about the National Pheasant Plan and our high priority work items later this month. Thanks to Management Board chair Russ Mason for facilitating that connection.

On our monthly Technical Committee call we discussed the timing of our annual meeting this fall. Looks like we will again be meeting back-to-back with the Western Quail Working Group, this time in Idaho in October. Jeff Knetter will send along date and location details soon.

For the first time in several months there was a bona fide U.S. pheasant [research paper](#) published, courtesy of Hilary Kauth, Travis Runia (Technical Committee, South Dakota), and their co-authors in the *Journal of Wildlife Management*. The paper illustrates the importance of emergent wetlands and other perennial cover features to winter pheasant survival. Well done!

Regular readers know I try to list as many of the new resident game bird publications as I can find (see below), but it was a bit overwhelming this month – there is a special section on wild turkeys in the early online *Wildlife Society Bulletin* available as of last week. There are too many papers to list them all, but I picked out a few authored by our Technical Committee members, past or present – namely Casey Cardinal (New Mexico) and Alaina Gerrits (Wisconsin). Michael Schiavone (New York) also has a new human dimensions publication out this month in the *Bulletin*. Congrats to all.

Finally, the Private Lands Staff Forum co-hosted by [NABCI](#) and the Missouri Department of Conservation has been rescheduled for July 12-13 in Kansas City. The original meeting was supposed to be in March 2020 but was nixed by the shutdown. The conference is aimed at field-level private lands staff, an online registration should be available soon.

Pheasant-relevant Media

[Some traditional hunters feel sidelined by South Dakota's pheasant tourism efforts](#)

[Wyoming Game and Fish kills 1,200 pheasants at Sheridan bird farm to prevent avian flu spread](#)

[Montana to spend \\$1 million per year on pheasant farming instead of habitat](#)

[The USDA accepted 2 million acres into the CRP program, but we could still see a net loss in pheasant country this year](#)

[FSA's Ducheneaux hopes for 27 million CRP acres, praises White House initiative](#)

[High commodity prices shift conservation lands to crop fields](#)

[Report: the majority of farmers applying to USDA conservation programs are being rejected](#)

[White House announces U.S. National Nature Assessment, Natural Capital Account, other initiatives](#)

[CBS Saturday Morning Show segment on hunters and conservation](#)

[Northern Bobwhite, Grasslands and Savanna Framework for Conservation Action released](#)

[Agri-Pulse Newsmakers: April 8, 2022: FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux on CRP acreage \(at 7:45\)](#)

[Steep increase in land prices and volatile agricultural markets challenge wildlife conservation efforts](#)

[The big idea: should we get rid of the scientific paper?](#)

Recent Literature

[Kauth, H. R., A. J. Gregory, A. J. Kauth, S. Harsh, T. J. Runia, and R. C. Lonsinger. 2022. Snow and land use alter pheasant survival in South Dakota. *Journal of Wildlife Management* \(early online version\).](#)

[Chiatante, G., and A. Meriggi. 2022. Habitat selection and density of common pheasant \(*Phasianus colchicus*\) in Northern Italy: effects of land use cover and landscape configuration. *European Journal of Wildlife Research* \(early online version\).](#)

- [Swan, G. J. F., et al. 2022. Associations between abundances of free-roaming gamebirds and common buzzards *Buteo buteo* are not driven by consumption of gamebirds in the buzzard breeding season. *Ecology and Evolution* 12:e8877.](#)
- [Kunkel, M. R., D. G. Mead, M. G. Ruder, and N. M. Nemeth. 2022. Our current understanding of West Nile virus in upland game birds. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* \(early online version\).](#)
- [Reeves, J. T., S. D. Fuhlendorf, C. A. Davis, and S. M. Wilder. 2022. Temporal variation and habitat management influence arthropod prey for northern bobwhites \(*Colinus virginianus*\). *Rangeland Ecology and Management* 83:69-80.](#)
- [Wakeling, B. F., J. M. Sandrini, S. P. Lerich, and C. Cardinal. 2022. A review of harvest and population monitoring methods for western wild turkeys. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* \(early online version\).](#)
- [Lerich, S. P., and C. J. Cardinal. 2022. Historical and potential growth of Gould's wild turkey populations in New Mexico. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* \(early online edition\).](#)
- [Moscicki, D. J., A. P. Gerrits, J. R. Cantrell, J. B. Hardin, M. J. Chamberlain, and B. A. Collier. 2022. Hurricane effects on wild turkey survival, daily movements, and roost fidelity. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* \(early online version\).](#)
- [Lehman, C. P., et al. 2022. Factors influencing rate of decline in a Merriam's wild turkey population. *Journal of Wildlife Management* \(early online version\).](#)
- [Nelson, S. D., et al. 2022. Fine-scale resource selection and behavioral tradeoffs of eastern wild turkey broods. *Journal of Wildlife Management* \(early online version\).](#)
- [Siemer, W. F., M. S. Baumer, E. F. Pomeranz, D. J. Decker, A. B. Forstchen, S. J. Riley, M. V. Schiavone, C. A. Smith, and P. E. Lederle. 2020. Accelerating development of fish and wildlife professionals will take more than training. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* \(early online version\).](#)
- [Riley, S., C. Wightman, K. Erdman, and L. Morris. 2022. Conservation practice use survey for private lands conservationists working in the NGPJV. *Northern Great Plains Joint Venture Technical Bulletin* 1.](#)
- [Wildlife Management Institute and Responsive Management, Inc. 2021. Words matter: determining how to engage the American public through the language of conservation. Unpublished report.](#)

Trivia Answer:

Common pheasants (*Phasianus colchicus*) in Italy – see Chiatante and Meriggi (2022) above. Pheasants are largely considered a woodland transition species in Europe. Are their birds somehow different genetically than ours, or are they just flexible in their responses to different sets of habitat-associated risks?

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>.