

Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative

RESTORING HABITAT TOGETHER



Coalition Midpoint Accomplishments

“I sincerely thank this initiative and all its sponsors for their support, dedication, and commitment to the people and communities of Michigan.”

- Governor Rick Snyder
from his tribute to the MPRI



THE MICHIGAN PHEASANT RESTORATION INITIATIVE

(MPRI) is a conservation initiative to restore and enhance Michigan pheasant habitat, populations and hunting opportunities on private and public lands. It will accomplish this through public-private cooperatives of 10,000 acres or more that will improve habitat for pheasants and other wildlife on a landscape level. The MPRI works by acquiring state and federal resources to assist landowners within the cooperatives in improving wildlife habitat on their property and by improving habitat on selected state game areas, recreation areas, or other public lands.

GOALS OF THE MPRI

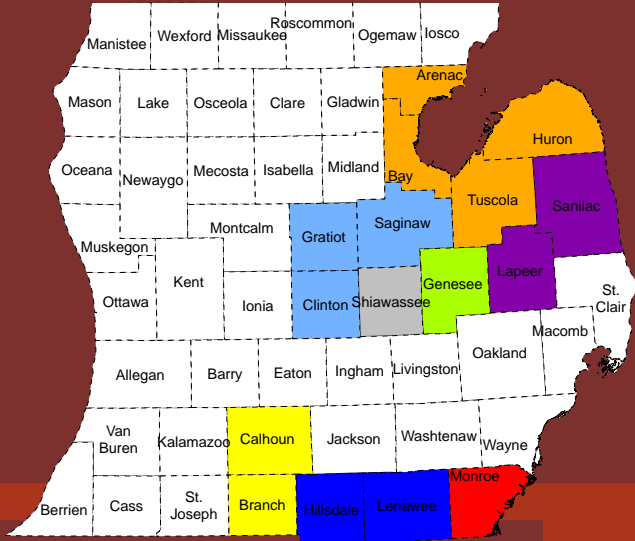
1. Impact 200,000 acres by restoring or enhancing 25,000 acres of grassland habitat
2. Increase access to quality pheasant hunting on both public and private lands
3. Increase pheasant hunter recruitment and retention by 25% by 2020
4. Develop habitat management guidelines and training
5. Develop partnerships to restore wild pheasant populations in suitable habitats in Michigan
6. Monitor populations and conduct research to ensure the best management of the pheasant resource
7. Provide sustainable funding and resources necessary to implement the initiative



“I love the opportunity to work with many wildlife habitat programs on both public and private land. What I enjoy most is building a rapport with my landowners; helping them reach their property goals; and assisting in making a difference in the habitat on their land.”

- Monique Ferris,
Farm Bill Biologist

STAFF



MPRI TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE STAFF OFFICES

- Tuscola Conservation District**
 989-673-8174, Ext. 3
- Gratiot Conservation District**
 989-875-3050
- Shiawassee Conservation District**
 989-723-8263, Ext. 3
- Genesee Conservation District**
 810-230-8766, Ext. 3
- Sanilac Conservation District**
 810-648-2998, Ext. 5
- Branch Conservation District**
 517-278-2725, Ext. 5
- Lenawee Conservation District**
 517-263-7400, Ext. 119
- Monroe Conservation District**
 734-241-7755, Ext. 5

COOPERATIVES COORDINATOR

Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC), Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA), Pheasants Forever (PF) and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have funded a Cooperatives Coordinator to increase wildlife cooperatives in the state. Housed in the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Anna Mitterling is the cooperatives coordinator for southern Michigan.



“Pheasant cooperatives are a great way for neighbors to build relationships with each other while working toward a common goal of improving habitat on their properties. I am honored and thrilled to be part of enhancing and developing these cooperatives around southern Michigan.”

- Anna Mitterling,
Wildlife Co-operative Coordinator

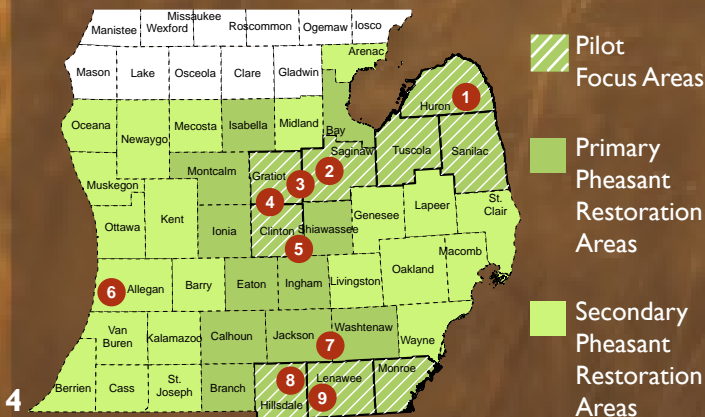
MORE BOOTS ON THE GROUND FOR MPRI

With the DNR's 2014 license restructuring, each hunter must now purchase a base license, which includes a small game license (and a contribution to conservation in the state of Michigan). With this funding, the DNR has committed to improving pheasant habitat, pheasant hunting and pheasant hunter recruitment. In addition, this license change has allowed the DNR to hire new wildlife biologists, technicians and assistants that help with habitat management activities for pheasants and other wildlife species. Eight Farm Bill Biologists/Soil Technicians have also been added to provide technical assistance and help landowners enroll in various state and federal programs.

HABITAT

ACRES IMPROVED ON STATE GAME AND RECREATION AREAS

| | Grassland Acres Enhanced or Restored | Acres of Food Plots Planted |
|---|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Verona SGA (and small SGAs in Thumb region) | 5,715 2,500 |
| 2 | Shiawassee River SGA | 742 375 |
| 3 | Gratiot Saginaw SGA | 67 80 |
| 4 | Maple River SGA | 370 175 |
| 5 | Rose Lake SWA | 110 30 |
| 6 | Allegan SGA Fennville Farm Unit | 765 2,000 |
| 7 | Sharonville SGA (and surrounding small SGAs) | 556 203 |
| 8 | Adams Township SGA | 57 0 |
| 9 | Lake Hudson SRA | 378 0 |



FEDERAL FARM BILL PROGRAMS

A number of federal programs are available to assist landowners with conservation on their lands through the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). USDA provides technical assistance to landowners that protect environmentally sensitive agricultural land by implementing conservation practices that improve environmental health, quality and restore wildlife habitat. Programs include the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), the State Acres For wildlife Enhancement (SAFE), and the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-Wetland Reserve Easement (ACEP-WRE).

| Federal Farm Bill Program | Acres Enrolled |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| CRP | 178,000 |
| CREP | 77,000 |
| SAFE | 9,000 |
| ACEP-WRE | 23,554 |





“The DNR is committed to managing habitat on both private and public lands with emphasis on the MPRI core areas. Restoring and enhancing nesting and winter cover for pheasants will help us increase both pheasant populations and pheasant hunting opportunities in Michigan.”

-Mike Parker,
DNR Conservation Partners Program Specialist

HABITAT IMPROVEMENTS

Ducks Unlimited – 58 projects including 1,456 acres of grassland habitat management

National Wild Turkey Federation – 317 acres of grassland established

Pheasants Forever – 75,161 acres of habitat = 59,247 acres food plots; 8,553 acres grassland planted; 6,709 acres grassland enhanced; 482 acres wetland restored; 170 acres woody cover planted

US Fish and Wildlife Service – 1,910 acres grassland; 559 acres wetland

WILDLIFE HABITAT GRANT PROJECTS

The 2014 license restructuring has provided the DNR an opportunity to offer Wildlife Habitat Grants. These grants are available to local, state, federal and tribal units of government, private groups, and individuals to assist the Wildlife Division with developing or improving wildlife habitat for game species. Several MPRI Coalition projects have been funded with Wildlife Habitat Grants in Gratiot, Sanilac, Lenawee, Hillsdale, Washtenaw, Jackson, Clinton, Saginaw, Huron, Lapeer, Ingham, Livingston and Isabella counties.



TOTAL -
\$1,152,710 awarded and
3,265 acres improved

Maple River State Game Area Wildlife Habitat Improvement Project

Completed by the Gratiot Conservation District

Funding for this project was provided by the 2014 Michigan Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Habitat Grant Program, which is generated from hunting and trapping license revenues.

Thank you to Michigan's hunters and trappers, and the partners below who all made this project a success.



BENEFITS FOR OTHER SPECIES

Improve the lives of more than just pheasants. White-tailed deer, wild turkeys, bobwhite quail, Monarch and numerous grassland songbirds find food, nesting habitat and bedding cover in MPRI grasslands.



“One of the biggest threats to our native grassland birds is the loss of habitat – especially large, diverse, high quality grasslands. For species like the Henslow’s sparrow and northern harrier, restoration of landscape component is vital. The MPRI helps to meet these needs and protect our natural heritage.”

- Karen Cleveland,
DNR All-Bird Specialist

PHEASANT CO-OPERATIVES

- 1 Unionville Pheasant Co-Op

- 2 Sandusky Pheasant Co-Op

- 3 Croswell Pheasant Co-Op

- 4 Mayville Co-Op

- 5 Millington Co-Op

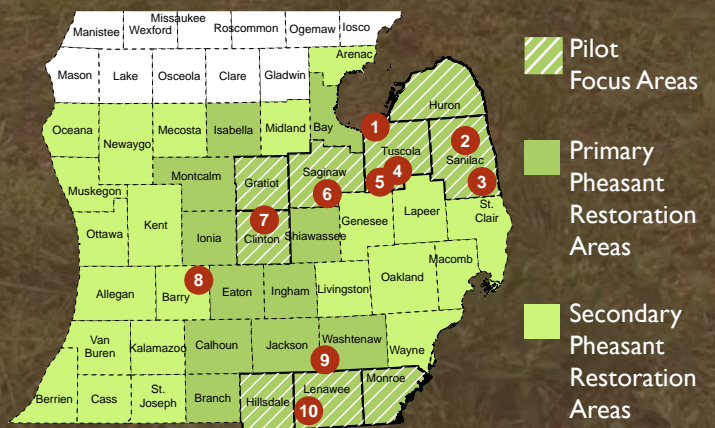
- 6 Layton Corners Co-Op

- 7 Clinton Lakes Pheasant Co-Op

- 8 Baltimore Township Co-Op

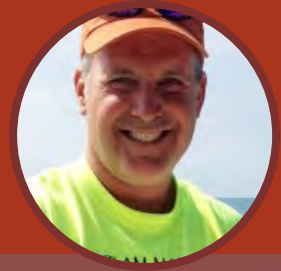
- 9 Sharonville State Game Area Co-Op

- 10 Lake Hudson Pheasant Co-Op



“The MPRI has created the kind of excitement around farmland conservation that really makes a difference. We have completed more good work in the last 15 years than the last 15. I am happy to see the changes in the landscape.”

-Steve Shine
MDARD Environmental Stewardship Division Conservation Programs Manager



REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP)

This program uses partnerships to stretch and multiply conservation investments and reach conservation goals on a regional or watershed scale. Partners participating in RCPP can use their local knowledge and networks to undertake conservation projects by joining with agricultural producers to restore or sustain natural resources such as clean and abundant water, healthy productive soils, enhanced wildlife and pollinator habitat.

HABITAT INCENTIVE PROGRAM (HIP)

The DNR Wildlife Division, in partnership with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), is providing incentives to encourage landowner participation in the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP). Participating landowners receive a Habitat Incentive Payment (HIP) of \$150/acre by agreeing to plant native species and increase the minimum width of corridor conservation practices to maximize wildlife habitat values. HIP's goal is to enroll 5,300 acres of CCRP in the Upper & Headwaters of St. Joseph River watershed.

Southcentral Lower Peninsula



HUNTER ACCESS

STATE GAME AREA LAND ACQUISITIONS

| | | | |
|----|----|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | Maple River State Game Area Two parcels totaling 43 acres | |
| 3 | 4 | Shiawassee River State Game Area Two parcels totaling 105 acres | |
| 5 | | Minden City State Game Area 40 acres | |
| 6 | | Petersburg State Game Area 58 acres | |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | Erie State Game Area Three parcels totaling 125 acres |
| 10 | | Dansville State Game Area 90 acres | |
| 11 | | Allegan State Game Area 15 acres | |
| 12 | | Cornish State Game Area 275 acres | |
| 13 | | Unadilla State Wildlife Area 136 acres | |
| 14 | 15 | Port Huron State Game Area Two parcels totaling 30 acres | |



917 total
acres purchased!

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

- DNR and PF signed a three-year cooperative agreement to cost share a position that would be responsible for assisting in the implementation of the hunter recruitment objectives contained in the MPRI.
- Organized and successfully held the Great Outdoors Youth Jamboree at Lake Hudson State Recreation Area to highlight the MPRI and hunting opportunities associated with the effort. The event was held in 2013, 2014 and 2015 with over 900 visitors each year.
- DNR, PF, National Wild Turkey Federation and the National Shooting Sports Foundation partnered to host Mentored Youth Hunt Demo days at DNR shooting ranges for the last three years.
- In 2013, two of the three pilot priority areas hosted youth pheasant hunts. One in the southeast and three in the Thumb priority area. In 2014, 16 youth pheasant hunts were held reaching more than 200 youth.



HUNTER ACCESS PROGRAM ENROLLMENT

Michigan's Hunting Access Program (HAP) provides public hunting opportunities in southern Michigan where 97 percent of the land base is privately owned. Providing access to quality hunting lands close to urban properties is a key component to offering additional hunting opportunities, as well as attracting new and retaining current hunters. The Wildlife Division has utilized funding from two USDA Voluntary Public Access – Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) grants to more than triple HAP enrollment since the MPRI began. HAP hunters took an estimated 46,419 trips to HAP farms during the 2013 hunting seasons.

VPA-HIP Grant Funds:

2011 \$935,000,

2014 \$1.2 million

Total \$2,164,299

2015 HAP Enrollment: 170 properties,
20,089 acres



EDUCATION & OUTREACH

LANDOWNER EDUCATION TOOLS

MPRI partners have developed tools to help landowners learn about the MPRI how to manage their lands for pheasants. These tools include:

- Informational brochures,
- Landowners' guide,
- Informational video,
- Website (mi.gov/pheasant),
- Door hangers,
- Petition for cooperative leaders,
- Over a dozen press releases promoting the initiative and pheasant hunting in Michigan,
- Over two dozen workshops, public meetings and forums.

FUNDING

“Critical wildlife habitat improvements are occurring right now through programs such as the MPRI, On-the-Ground, and Wildlife Habitat Grants. The development or improvement of these programs are the direct result of the 2014 license increase. Thanks to hunter enthusiasm and willingness to purchase licenses, the Wildlife Division is on track to deliver the habitat improvements promised when this license restructuring passed.”



- Russ Mason,
DNR Wildlife Division, Chief

NORTH AMERICAN WETLANDS CONSERVATION ACT GRANTS (NAWACA)

NAWACA is a federal grant administered by Ducks Unlimited that provides money for wetland and grassland habitat improvement in Southern Michigan. More than \$3 million has been provided for habitat acquisition and management.

WILDLIFE HABITAT GRANT PROJECTS

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**TOTAL - \$1,152,710 awarded and
3,265 acres improved**

STATE WILDLIE GRANTS (SWG)

Michigan's Wildlife prairies and savannas as conservation priorities due to their rarity, wildlife value and their dependence on private land management. Pheasants and other grassland birds require large blocks of grassland habitat for nesting, brood-rearing and winter thermal cover. In 2012, the DNR Wildlife Division was awarded a federal Competitive State Wildlife Grant totaling \$864,689 to restore and enhance diverse grassland complex eatest conservation need.

**Public Land: 1,093 acres, 12 projects
Private Land: 1,773 acres, 37 projects**

MONITORING



SURVEY TYPES USED TO MONITOR PHEASANTS

- Mail-Carrier Surveys
- Rooster Crowing Counts
- Breeding Bird Survey
- Pheasant Hunter Surveys
- Pheasant Cooperator Surveys
- HAP Hunter Surveys

“Since the co-op (Mayville) started the crowing surveys, we’ve seen a steady increase in crowing rooster pheasants. We plan on continuing the surveys every spring to see if our hard work of increasing grasslands on the land is paying off. ”

- Doug Graham,
Mayville Cooperative Landowner

“Three of us went to the Thumb yesterday and hunted pheasants. We hunted for about four hours in three different state land locations. We got 10 roosters and 9 hens, which was probably the best numbers I’ve seen in 15 years of hunting there. Thanks for the hard work improving the habitat! ”

- Jim Fisher
Pheasant Hunter ||

“We congratulate the MPRI Coalition, landowners, hunters, and other conservationists for all your efforts over the past several years of the MPRI. You are all making a difference. The numbers in this report are very impressive, and many of these efforts will mature over the next several years. There continues to be challenges with land use and declining landowner participation in federal habitat programs. The Coalition is committed to an even more productive next 5 years to meet these challenges head-on. We hope you will join us in this important venture.”

- Bill Vander Zouwen,
Pheasants Forever Region Representative and MPRI Co-chair

- Al Stewart,
DNR, Upland Game Bird Specialist and MPRI Co-chair



MPRI COALITION

| | |
|--|--|
| Ducks Unlimited | ducks.org/michigan |
| Local Conservation Districts | macd.org |
| Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development | michigan.gov/mdard |
| Michigan Department of Natural Resources | michigan.gov/dnr |
| Michigan State University Extension | msue.anr.msu.edu/ |
| Michigan United Conservation Clubs | mucc.org |
| National Wild Turkey Federation | nwtf.org/about/state/michigan |
| Pheasants Forever | michiganpheasantsforever.org |
| Quality Deer Management Association | qdma.com |
| US Department of Agriculture | nracs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nracs/site/mi/home/ |
| US Fish and Wildlife Service | fws.gov/midwest/news/michigan.html |

Visit mi.gov/pheasant to learn more about the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative

Photo credits:

Dave Kenyon, DNR – Cover pheasant, pg. 4 Hunter
Pheasants Forever - Pg. 2 Pheasant chicks
Bill Vander Zouwen, Pheasants Forever – Pg. 5 Brush clearing, Pg. 9 HAP sign
Jeremy Joswick – Pg. 6 Henslows Sparrow.
Dan Kennedy, DNR – Pg. 6 Monar

Chuck Nelson, Clinton Lakes Pheasant Co-op – Pg.6-7 Habitat Work
Pete Berthelsen - Pg. 7 Habitat with Pheasants Forever sign
Al Stewart – Pg. 9 Youth hunter
Roland Jordahl – Pg. 10-11 Crowing pheasant
Rachel Bush – Back cover pheasant