

# Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative Coalition Accomplishment Report: 2011-2020







The Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative is a conservation initiative to restore and enhance Michigan pheasant habitat, populations and hunting opportunities on private and public lands. The MPRI works by acquiring state and federal resources to assist landowners within cooperatives in improving wildlife habitat on their property and by improving habitat on selected state game areas, recreation areas and other public and private lands. MPRI partners work to secure adequate staffing to accomplish MPRI habitat improvement, hunter access, education and outreach, hunter recruitment, retention and reactivation and population monitoring goals.

### **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.





***“Partnerships, like the MPRI, help to expand the breadth of work that we can accomplish for wildlife and the people that enjoy wildlife. We are proud to be part of this incredible conservation story***

***– Jared Duquette, DNR Wildlife Division chief***

## **Landowner Cooperatives**

The Michigan DNR, Pheasants Forever, Michigan United Conservation Clubs and the National Deer Association (formerly the Quality Deer Management Association) have worked together over the past six years to create wildlife cooperatives on private land throughout the state. A wildlife cooperative is a group of landowners and/or hunters that work collaboratively to manage a species and its habitat. Over its lifespan, the Michigan Wildlife Cooperatives program enrolled more than 350,000 acres in cooperative habitat management, with more than 46,000 acres being improved since the start of the program. Of those acres, more than 26,000 acres of them were improved grasslands, edge/cover screens, cover crops, winter cover and wetland restoration. Additionally, these cooperatives, numbering over 6,000 members, have mentored 499 youth and 516 new adult hunters.

## **Benefits for Other Species**

Grassland habitat work benefits a suite of species other than pheasants. Pollinators like bees and butterflies seek nectar in the wildflowers and butterflies lay their eggs on milkweed, lupine and other grassland plants. Birds like Henslow's sparrows and bobolinks build their nests in the tall grasses and feast on the insects in the grasses. White-tailed deer bed down for the night and coyotes search for small mammals in the tall grass. Grasslands also provide benefits for people. They improve air and water quality and pollinators from grasslands help to pollinate the crops we depend upon.

## 10-year Reported Habitat Improvements

Property or Organization Name	Grassland Acres Created, Improved or Enhanced	Food Plot Acres Planted	Wetland Acres Created, Improved or Enhanced
Shiawassee State Game Area	1,030	2,110	1,984
Sharonville Area State Game Areas	1,221	523	0
Verona Area State Game Areas	14,366	3,341	0
Gratiot-Saginaw State Game Area	249	103	59
Maple River State Game Area	785	307	26
Rose Lake State Game Area	216	166	3
Cornish State Game Area	351	66	0
Nayanquing Point State Game Area	70	694	400
Allegan State Game Area	1,812	2,392	770
Edgar Waterfowl Production Area	30	0	0
Muskrat Lake State Game Area	41	0	0
Crow Island State Game Area	0	60	0
Gordon Guyer State Game Area	54	0	0
Pinconning State Game Area	65	0	0
Coldwater Lake State Park	62	0	0
Lake Hudson State Recreation Area	374	0	0
Pheasants Forever	35,806	109,527	725
Ducks Unlimited	494	0	5,450
National Wild Turkey Federation	5,591	5,460	0
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	4,416	0	3,333
<b>Total</b>	<b>67,033</b>	<b>124,794</b>	<b>12,750</b>





## **Seed Drills**

Seed drills were purchased beginning in 1999 as part of a partnership between the DNR and Pheasants Forever. Currently, there are 29 drills in the program in southern Michigan and the DNR works with many county conservation districts to provide private landowners access to the drills for habitat work on their land. Private landowners looking to rent a drill for habitat improvements can contact their local conservation district to get more information about renting the drill. The drills can be used to plant a wide variety of wildlife cover from native grasses to food plot mixes. Over the past 10 years, 34,800 acres of grasslands and food plots have been impacted through the DNR Seed Drill Loan Program.

## **Farm Bill Biologists**

MPRI Farm Bill Biologists (FBB) and DNR Private Lands Biologists have provided technical and financial assistance to landowners to improve grassland habitat for wildlife. In partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the DNR provided \$375,000 to conservation districts to employ five FBBs who help landowners enroll for USDA Farm Bill and other partner programs to enhance their lands for wildlife and protect soil and water quality. Over the course of the 10-year partnership, Farm Bill Biologists have helped to improve 34,469 acres of wildlife habitat.

## **U.S. Department of Agriculture**

The Michigan U.S. Department of Agriculture remains committed to the Michigan Pheasants Restoration Initiative. Several conservation programs have been offered through the U.S. Farm Bill over the last 10 years to provide enhanced habitat for pheasants and other grassland wildlife including:

- The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- Michigan Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- Conservation Reserve Program State Acres for Wildlife Habitat Enhancement (CRP-SAFE)
  - ◊ Native Pollinator Habitat SAFE
  - ◊ Southern Michigan Diverse Grasslands CRP-SAFE
  - ◊ Michigan Pheasants and Monarch Recovery CRP-SAFE



## Pheasants Forever

Pheasants Forever, also known as the “Habitat Organization”, lists its main priorities as habitat development, access to habitat, advocacy for state and national programs that provide habitat, and raising up the next generation of hunter conservationists. PF partnered with the DNR in developing the new Adopt-A-Game-Area Program to accelerate habitat improvements on state lands.

In addition, PF is teaching kids about wildlife and pollinator conservation as well as introducing them to outdoor pursuits. With their new Women on the Wing program they are also recruiting women into conservation and hunting. Over the last 10 years, 30 PF chapters were responsible for 35,806 acres of grassland projects, 109,527 acres of food plots, and 725 acres of wetland projects in Michigan.

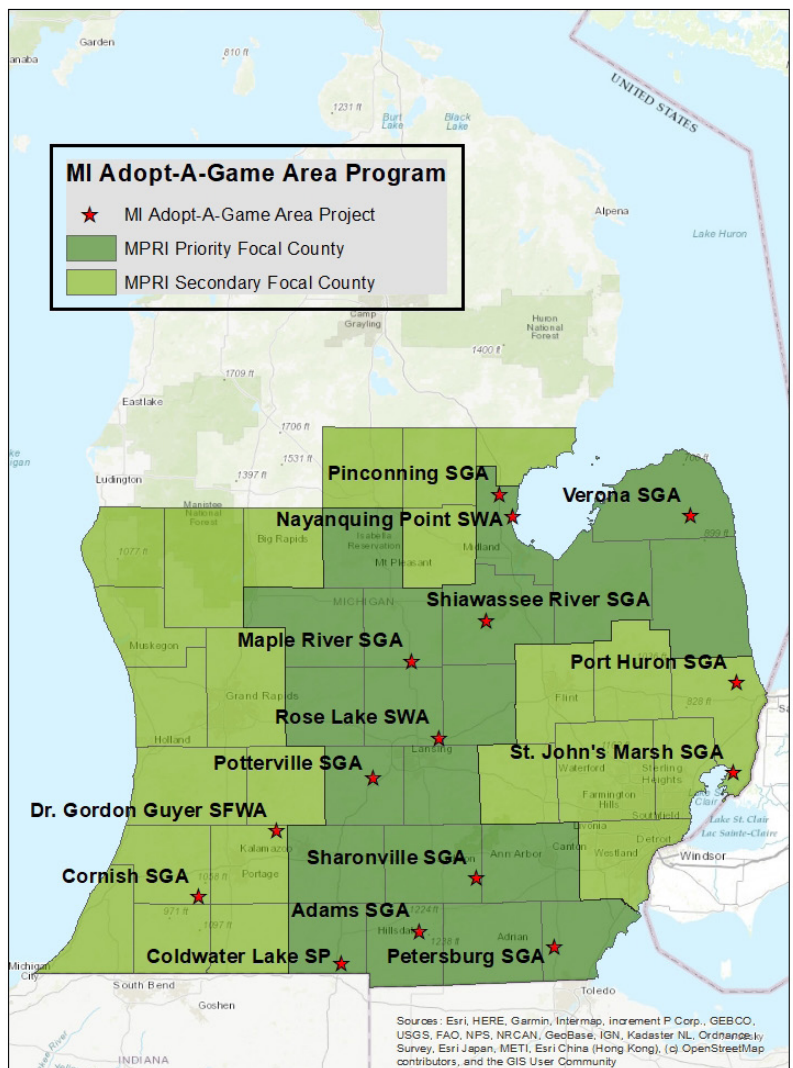






## Adopt-a-Game-Area Program

The Adopt-A-Game Area Program is a first-of-its-kind partnership between Pheasants Forever and the DNR. The program seeks to accelerate grassland restoration on priority state game and wildlife areas in southern Michigan by allowing private individuals, clubs, businesses, foundations, and corporations the opportunity to support habitat projects on public properties that they use and enjoy. The program has raised nearly \$600,000 since its launch in 2018. These funds will directly restore an estimated 2,175 acres of grassland habitat on public land.





## Ducks Unlimited

While Ducks Unlimited, Inc. is well known for our wetland work, one may be unaware of the contributions to grassland habitat that DU provides. In Michigan, DU conserved 16,760 acres of wetland and 3,007 acres of grassland from 2011-2020. Additionally, DU has provided technical assistance on 36,582 acres of wetlands and 4,418 acres of grasslands. All conservation efforts benefit migratory and breeding waterfowl, waterbirds, grassland and forest birds, herptiles, insects, and more.







## **National Wild Turkey Federation**

Over the last ten years, the National Wild Turkey Federation has actively been working with a variety of partners over the last ten years of the MPRI to help enhance, restore, and protect grassland, savanna, and other habitat types in Michigan. That includes securing over 2 million dollars in project funding to support over 1,700 acres of savanna restoration and securing over \$830,000 in Michigan DNR Wildlife Grant Program funding to enhance, restore, and protect wildlife habitat critical to wild turkeys and other species such as the ring-necked pheasant. Additionally, we have been working “hand in hand” with PF and many others to help recruit, retain, and reactivate hunters in order to advance “R3” throughout Michigan. In Michigan, we have enhanced, restored or protected 5,623 acres of grasslands and savanna ecosystems, planted 33,774 acres of food plots and created 5,968 acres of hunting access.

## **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program has been helping private landowners restore and enhance grasslands and wetlands in Michigan since 1986. Since then, the program has improved habitat on over 40,000 acres mostly in southern Michigan. The PFW restores about 800 acres of native grassland and pollinator habitat each year in the MPRI priority area benefiting habitat for the pheasant as well as migratory birds and pollinator species. Over 10 years, PFW restored 4,416 acres of native grassland and pollinator habitat and 3,333 acres of wetland habitat.



## Hunter Access

Over the 10 years of the MPRI, the DNR acquired 2,868 acres of additional land for wildlife habitat and public access to wildlife-based recreation. 1,545 of the acquired acres have the potential for excellent pheasant habitat with access to pheasant hunting.

- **Maple River SGA** – 101 total acres, 43 acres of pheasant habitat
- **Shiawassee River SGA** – 120 total acres, 105 acres of pheasant habitat
- **Minden City SGA** – 80 total acres, 40 acres of pheasant habitat
- **Petersburg SGA** – 130.9 total acres, 117 acres of pheasant habitat
- **Erie SGA** – 133.6 total acres, 126 acres of pheasant habitat
- **Dansville SGA** – 154.6 total acres, 90 acres of pheasant habitat
- **Allegan SGA** – 125 total acres, 15 acres of pheasant habitat
- **Cornish SGA** – 485 total acres, 376 acres of pheasant habitat
- **Unadilla SGA** – 224 total acres, 160 acres of pheasant habitat
- **Port Huron SGA** – 153 total acres, 30 acres of pheasant habitat
- **Pottersville SGA** – 444 total acres, 444 acres of pheasant habitat
- **Watkins Lake State Park** – 717 total acres
- **Monroe County** – 680 total acres





## Education and Outreach

Over the last 10 years, MPRI partners have developed tools to help landowners learn about the MPRI, grassland habitat management, the Adopt-a-Game-Area program and more.

These tools include:

- Informational brochures and video
- Landowner's Guide
- Door hangers
- Petition for cooperative leaders
- Website – [Michigan.gov/Pheasant](http://Michigan.gov/Pheasant)
- Adopt-a-Game-Area Marketing Materials
- Adopt-a-Game-Area Kiosk Posters
- Over five dozen press releases promoting the initiative, pheasant hunting and the benefits of grasslands in Michigan
- Over six dozen workshops, public meetings and forums.

## Hunter Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation

In the 10 years that the coalition has been in place, hundreds of R3 events have been held including seven Great Outdoors Jamborees with 6,535 people attending and hundreds of shooting sport and learn to hunt events reaching thousands of new and potential hunters. Coalition members DNR, Pheasants Forever and the National Wild Turkey Federation have been instrumental in this effort.







***“We are very proud of the diverse coalition of agencies and organizations, who contributed to MPRI accomplishments over the last 10 years. Their staff, volunteers and financial resources made a big difference for wildlife habitat and our quality of life. We look forward to seeing this coalition continue to work together in this unique conservation partnership.”***

***– Bill Vander Zouwen, Pheasants Forever Regional Representative and MPRI Co-Chair,***

***– Al Stewart, DNR Upland Game Bird Specialist and MPRI Co-Chair***

## **MPRI Coalition**

Ducks Unlimited

Local Conservation Districts

Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Michigan State University Extension

Michigan United Conservation Clubs

National Wild Turkey Federation

Pheasants Forever

National Deer Association

US Department of Agriculture

US Fish and Wildlife Service

MI Birds