

# Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative

RESTORING HABITAT TOGETHER



The Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative is a conservation initiative of diverse partners working together to focus on the restoration of pheasants and habitat in Michigan. This initiative will benefit a suite of migratory birds and other grassland species. Primary partners include Pheasants Forever, Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE), Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan United Conservation Clubs, local Conservation Districts, U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The group of partners is expected to expand as the initiative moves forward.

The initiative is based on restoring habitat in areas that have the potential to support pheasant populations on a large landscape level. The beginning emphasis will focus on 3 pilot areas. Within these focus areas, project sites will be established where people are willing to work together through a grass-roots community approach to get habitat on the ground. What's needed to make this Initiative successful is for people to work together in a cooperative fashion and provide 1,200 - 2,000 acres of pheasant habitat within a 10,000 acre area. These habitat acres can be public or private though most of the effort will focus on private lands. The goal is to establish 10 cooperative areas by 2015. This would result in 15,000 - 20,000 acres of quality habitat for pheasants.

Professional staff from local conservation districts and DNRE wildlife biologists will provide technical assistance and advice to cooperatives on habitats and habitat improvement. Staff will also assist cooperatives in identifying federal, state, and private assistance for funding or implementing habitat projects.

As cooperatives achieve the desired habitat goals, wild bird releases in cooperative areas may occur to jump-start pheasant recovery and initiate natural population growth. Project success will be evaluated through population monitoring and assessment in the cooperative.

As part of the initiative, DNRE will also be expanding opportunities for public hunting on private lands through the Hunting Access Program (HAP). Through new federal grant funds, HAP will be expanded through increased payment schedules, and increased marketing and outreach. Reaching out to youth about pheasant hunting is also a priority within this initiative. Conservation partners will promote youth events that teach pheasant biology and habitat needs and provide an opportunity to share the pheasant hunting heritage with others.

If you are interested in participating in the Pheasant Restoration Initiative, form your own Neighborhood Cooperative, or find out where you can join a Cooperative please contact your local wildlife biologist or visit [www.michigan.gov/pheasant](http://www.michigan.gov/pheasant).

## How to Create a Pheasant Restoration Neighborhood Cooperative\*?

So you are interested in seeing more pheasants on your property and would like to join the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative but you're not quite sure what do next — here are some steps that may help you create a Neighborhood Cooperative.

1. Gather interested individuals to discuss the initiative. Or, walk door to door and speak to your neighbors or landowners to share the initiative idea. Bring along the letter of interest for them to fill-out. Someone needs to take the leadership role in keeping the Cooperative together. You may wish to review a Plat book for your area to see what parcels are near each other.
2. Build trust with your neighbors. Get to know the individuals that are interested in participating. What are their goals and what are their expectations, you want everyone on the same page. Communicate frequently with neighbors and invite them to Cooperative meetings or social gatherings to develop relationships and establish trust.
3. Involve a biologist. Contact your local biologist or Conservation District and get them involved. A biologist can help identify limiting factors on the Cooperative property, help the Cooperative set realistic goals, and develop the best operating guidelines based on your goals and local conditions. Work with the biologist to create a detailed Cooperative Management Plan. Keep the biologist up-to-date on habitat enhancements.
4. Enhance the relationship. Once the Cooperative is up and running, maintain and enhance the relationship among the members. Schedule at least one meeting each year to review the previous year's results, to discuss issues and opportunities, and to have fun. Include a potluck meal with the meeting having a meal helps ensure everyone can make the meeting, and it livens up the occasion.
5. Be Patient. Build it and they will come. Habitat enhancements take time. Continue to have Cooperative meetings and be supportive of one another. Provide assistance on each other's properties.
6. Find out more. Additional information can be found on-line at [www.michigan.gov/pheasant](http://www.michigan.gov/pheasant).

\* *Cooperative – Involving the joint activity of two or more in “a concerted action”; done in cooperation with others: a cooperative effort.*