

[Graphic: Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative Logo.]

Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative

2018 Annual Report

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What is the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative?

The MPRI 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.

[Graphic: A grassland dotted with wildflowers.]

Pheasant Cooperatives

At the end of 2018, 12 cooperatives were actively working to expand and improve pheasant habitat. With a focus on private lands, pheasant co-ops serve as a way to connect neighboring landowners and hunters on a number of conservation efforts to help restore wild pheasant populations. Many original co-ops are still active since their start in 2013. Co-ops have engaged in habitat projects and received financial assistance for plantings and maintenance.

The Cooperatives Coordinator remained active in co-op meetings and assisting the Farm Bill Biologists in promoting, implementing and expanding co-ops in their coverage areas. Together, they also hosted the Pheasant Rendezvous, an educational and networking event for co-op and chapter leaders and hosted the first annual Habitat Series. These events focused on why grasslands are important, how to find financial assistance programs, explained the significance of MPRI and how individuals could contribute to the restoration of grassland habitat. These events engaged approximately 500 individuals.

Grassland and Wetland Habitat Improvement

The MPRI Coalition works cooperatively to improve grassland and wetland habitat for pheasant nesting, brood rearing and wintering. This work is completed on both private and public lands.

State Game Area	Grassland Acres Enhanced	Grassland Acres Restored	Food Plot Acres Planted	Wetland Acres Enhanced
Shiawassee River	30	20	770	209
Sharonville, Grass Lake and Goose Lake	199	36	91	0
Cornish	61	15	7	0
Muskrat Lake	16	13	0	0
Thumb Area (Verona, Gagetown, Thumb Mini SGAs)	1400	294	200	0

Crow Island	0	0	20	0
Gratiot-Saginaw	23	0	0	59
Maple River	69	0	19	0
Rose Lake	9	11	26	0
Nayanquing Point	0	0	337	160
Allegan	531	0	50	620
Quanicassee	0	0	20	0
Totals	2,338	389	1,540	1,048

Coalition Organization	Grassland Acres Enhanced	Grassland Acres Restored	Food Plot Acres Planted	Wetland Acres Enhanced	Wetland Acres Restored
Pheasants Forever	0	3,853	9,989	131	0
Ducks Unlimited	74	68	0	1,176	28
US Fish and Wildlife Service	37	485	0	0	409
Totals	111	4,406	9,989	1,307	437

Seed Drill Planting

In 2018, seed drills were used to plant 4,231 acres of new habitat for wildlife, surpassing the goal of 4,000 acres! Of those 4,231 acres, 3,079 acres were planted to warm season grasses with wildflowers, which is a 300-acre increase from last year! In addition, 416 acres (10%) were planted to cool season grass mixes, and 736 (17%) acres were planted to food plots or pastures.

Landowner Assistance

MPRI Farm Bill Biologists (FBB) and DNR Private Lands Biologists provide technical and financial assistance to landowners to improve grassland habitat for wildlife. In 2018, the DNR provided \$357,000 to conservation districts to employ seven FBBs. Additional support for the FBB program is provided by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. FBBs provided technical and financial assistance to 441 landowners to improve 8,096 acres of habitat. They also helped 340 landowners enroll in USDA programs, including 4,776 acres of Conservation Reserve Program habitat and 604 acres of

Environmental Quality Incentives Program habitat. DNR private lands staff provided technical assistance on 725 acres of grassland habitat.

Hunter Access Program

Budget reductions this year led to a decrease in hunter access acres available through the Hunting Access Program (HAP) in the southern lower peninsula. However, all HAP properties within MPRI counties and with pheasant hunting potential remained in the program. Based on the DNR's commitment to the MPRI, HAP continues to support MPRI by maintaining hunter access to pheasant hunting opportunities. With the recent signing of the new farm bill, the DNR plans to apply for renewed VPA-HIP funds to support HAP expansion in coming years.

[Graphic: A ring-necked pheasant standing in a field of grass.]

Wildlife Habitat Grants

Through the DNR's Wildlife Habitat Grant (WHG) program, nearly \$300,000 was awarded to various habitat projects in Gratiot, Barry, and Clinton counties. These projects focused primarily on grassland habitat improvement for pheasants and other grassland dependent wildlife. 387 acres of grassland will be restored through the 2018 WHGs.

New Funding Sources

The DNR received a \$675,972 Competitive State Wildlife Grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service for long-term monitoring of grassland and savanna species in response to management actions and history. Approximately 500 acres of grasslands and savanna habitat will be impacted by this grant.

CRP SAFE

The MPRI Coalition applied for and received approval for 40,000 acres of CRP SAFE (State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement) and \$61 million for incentive payments to landowners to benefit pheasants, mallards, monarchs and other grassland wildlife. During the first sign up, a total of 16,082 qualifying acres were offered by landowners, of which 10,123 acres were contracted for establishment in 2019. With the recent passage of the new Farm Bill we expect that we will be able to continue enrollment under this effort in 2019.

Recruiting a New Generation of Hunters

The MPRI Coalition offered a number of education and recruitment events in 2018. Pheasants Forever offered 20 Learn to Hunt events, 58 Shooting Sports events, 4 Pollinator Projects, 3 field days and 7 State Park Pheasant Fridays. Attendees numbered 5,490 youth and 916 adults at these events.

The National Wild Turkey Federation offered 20 Mentored Hunt events, 16 State Park Turkey Thursdays, a Shoot-off Competition, 4 Wing-shooting 101 events, a Conservation Field Day, 39 JAKES youth events, 3 skeet shoots, 6 Wheelin' Sportsmen Hunts and 3 women in the outdoors events. These events reached 3,600 participants, and 425 new hunters were inspired to purchase licenses.

The coalition also hosted the Great Outdoors Jamboree with 480 participants and 10 youth chukar hunters in September.

Adopt-a-Game-Area

Ben Beaman of Michigan Pheasants Forever, was hired to develop and coordinate the Adopt-A-Game-Area Program. Ben has been working with DNR wildlife staff to identify habitat projects on 20 properties, soliciting funds for those projects, and contracting the habitat developments with vendors. He worked with DNR outreach staff to lay the program groundwork including bronze, silver and gold donor levels and recognition programs. The official kickoff event for the program was held at Maple River SGA in early December. Funding for educational kiosks has been obtained and additional kiosks are being built. Many habitat projects have been accomplished with funds provided by Enbridge Inc.

Adopt-a-Game-Area Property	Grassland Acres Enhanced	Grassland Acres Restored
Coldwater Lake State Park	0	21
Cornish SGA	62	0
Dr. Gordon Guyer SFWA	14	23
Lake Hudson State Recreation Area	23	0
Maple River SGA	54	0
Oliver Township SGA	9	0
Sharonville SGA	0	72
Verona SGA	45	0
Totals	207	116

[Graphic: People standing in front of Adopt-a-Game Area Kiosk at Maple River State Game Area.]

Grasslands are GREAT!

In 2017, the MPRI began a communication strategy aimed at highlighting grasslands and their benefits to wildlife and people. In 2018, 13 “Grasslands are Great” email blast stories were sent to approximately 250,000 people per story. About 16 percent of the 250,000 people opened and read our stories, for a total of about 40,000 readers. Grasslands are Great Kiosk signage was created for 16 Adopt-a-Game Area properties throughout Southern Michigan and marketing material was designed to promote the Adopt-a-Game-Area program. The MPRI coalition has also joined forces with MI Birds, a cooperative partnership between the DNR and Audubon Great Lakes to help promote bird conservation. Together our MPRI and AAGA messages will reach an even broader audience and we can work together to bridge

bird conservation challenges.

Contact Information

For a full list of MPRI Coalition partners and to learn more about MPRI, visit mi.gov/pheasant.