

Habitat Goals for a Sustainable Pheasant Population and the MPRI Design



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***Pheasant
habitat benefits
a diversity of
wildlife!***



History of Pheasants in Michigan

- 1895: 1st birds released
- 1918: Dept. Conservation releases birds
- 1925: 1st hunting season
- 1940s & 50s
 - 1 million roosters harvested annually
 - 1.4 million in 1944
- 1960s – Populations decline
- 1986-94: Sichuan pheasants released
- 2010: Low of 27,000 roosters harvested



Why Have Pheasants Populations Declined?

There are a variety of reasons...



A photograph of four pheasants in flight over a field of tall, dry grass. The birds are captured in various stages of flight, with wings spread wide. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape under a pale sky. The text 'Primary reasons for the decline:' is overlaid in yellow at the top left.

Primary reasons for the decline:

- **Habitat loss due to changing agricultural practices**
 - Loss of small grains & hay
 - Herbicides
 - Wetland loss
- **Habitat loss due to human developments**
- **Natural Succession**

Natural Succession:



Natural Succession:



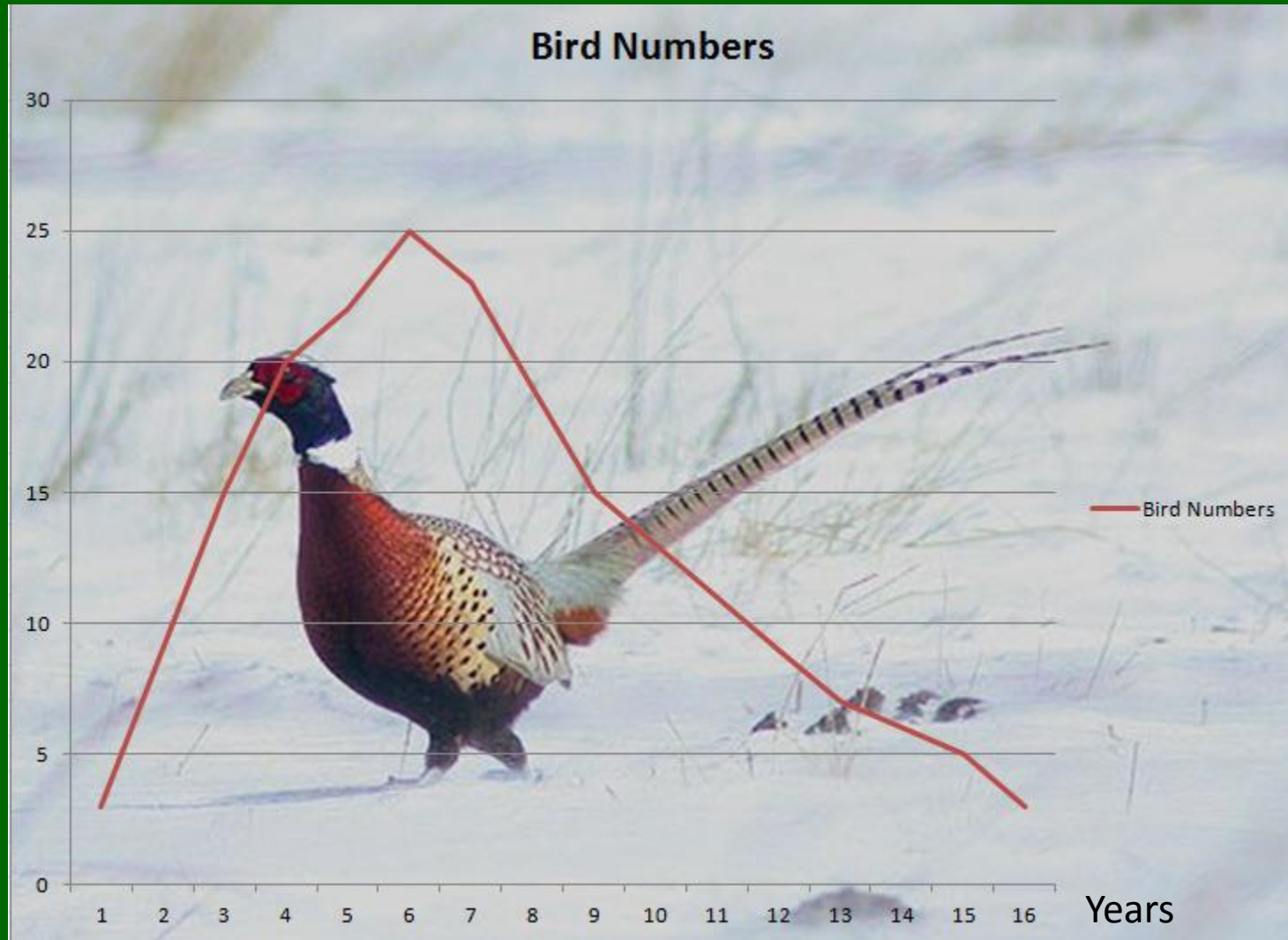
Natural Succession:



Photo was taken ~3 years ago...now a storage facility

Urban sprawl has taken much of Michigan's original pheasant habitat!

As Grass Stands Age



..... bird numbers tend to decrease

“But, but, you all had been working on habitat for years...and I still didn’t find many birds!”



Pheasant Management Needed To Change!

We couldn't continue on the same pheasant management trajectory and expect different results.



Why Didn't Previous Efforts Work?

- Lack of:
 - Cohesive plan, identified habitat priorities & focus areas
 - Cooperation between groups
 - Funding & staff
 - Habitat management



How Can We Impact Pheasants?

- Habitat is the key to building populations.
- It takes landscape scale effort to make an impact.
- Partners and a plan were needed to bring back the birds!



Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative

RESTORING HABITAT TOGETHER



Restoring Habitat... Together!

Pheasant Restoration Initiative

Starting Point:

- Use sound science to identify priority areas & ID limiting factors.
- Focus limited resources to get the biggest “Bang for the Buck.”



MPRI Goals:



- 1. Identify partners
- 2. Develop priority areas
- 3. Create a plan
- 4. Identify funding sources
- 5. Add “boots on the ground”
- 6. Increase hunting access & opportunities
- 7. Evaluate & modify as needed

Goal 1: Identify Partners



Goal 2. Identify Priority Areas

- Pheasants require an open agricultural landscape
 - Minimal forest (< 20% of a township size area)
 - Focus habitat in close proximity to other grasslands



Ideal Pheasant Landscape:



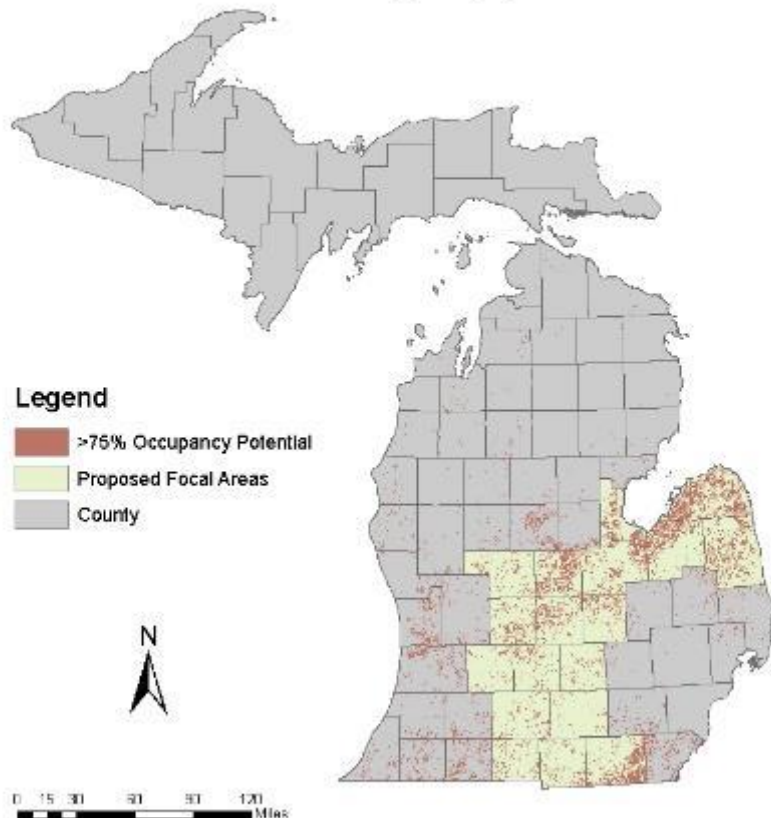
Limited Potential for Pheasants...

(Great for deer & turkey management)

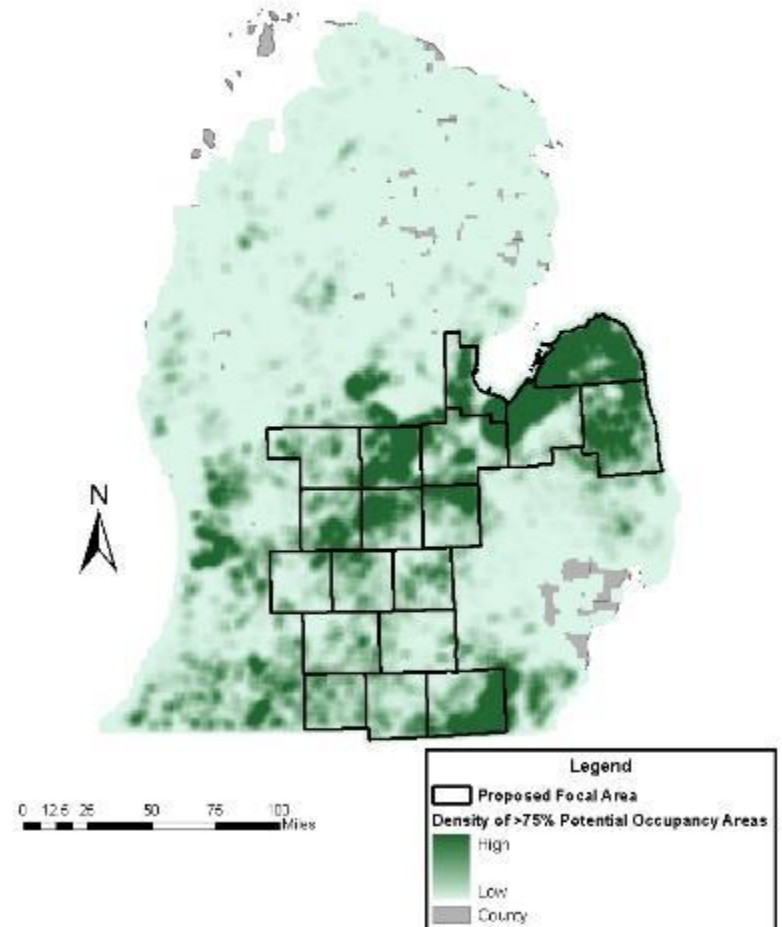


Using Technology to ID Priority Areas:

Agricultural areas with
occupancy potential of >75%



Density of >75% potential occupancy areas
for pheasants derived from focal sum



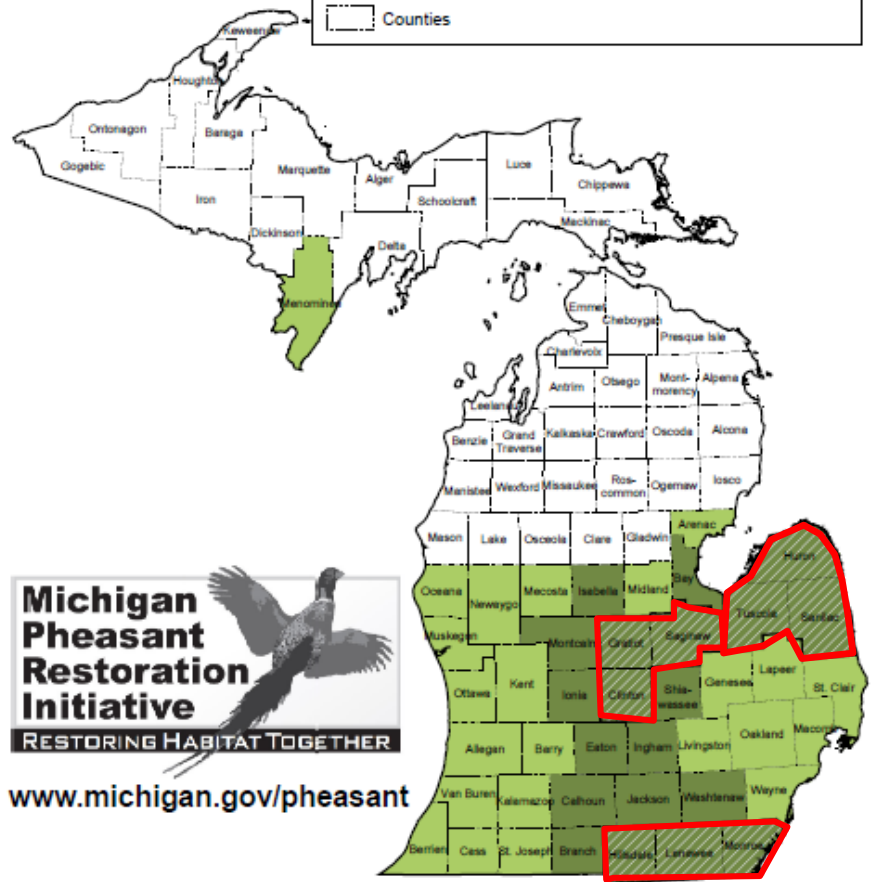
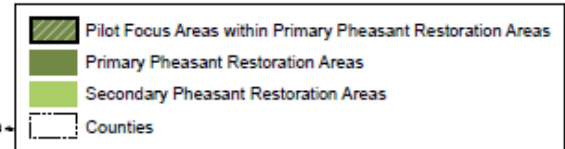
MPRI Priority Areas

Pilot Priority Counties

- Huron, Sanilac, Tuscola
- Clinton, Gratiot, Saginaw
- Hillsdale, Lenawee, Monroe

Priority State Game Areas
identified within each priority area

Priority Pheasant Restoration Areas



Goal 3. Develop a Habitat Plan to Bring Back Wild Pheasants

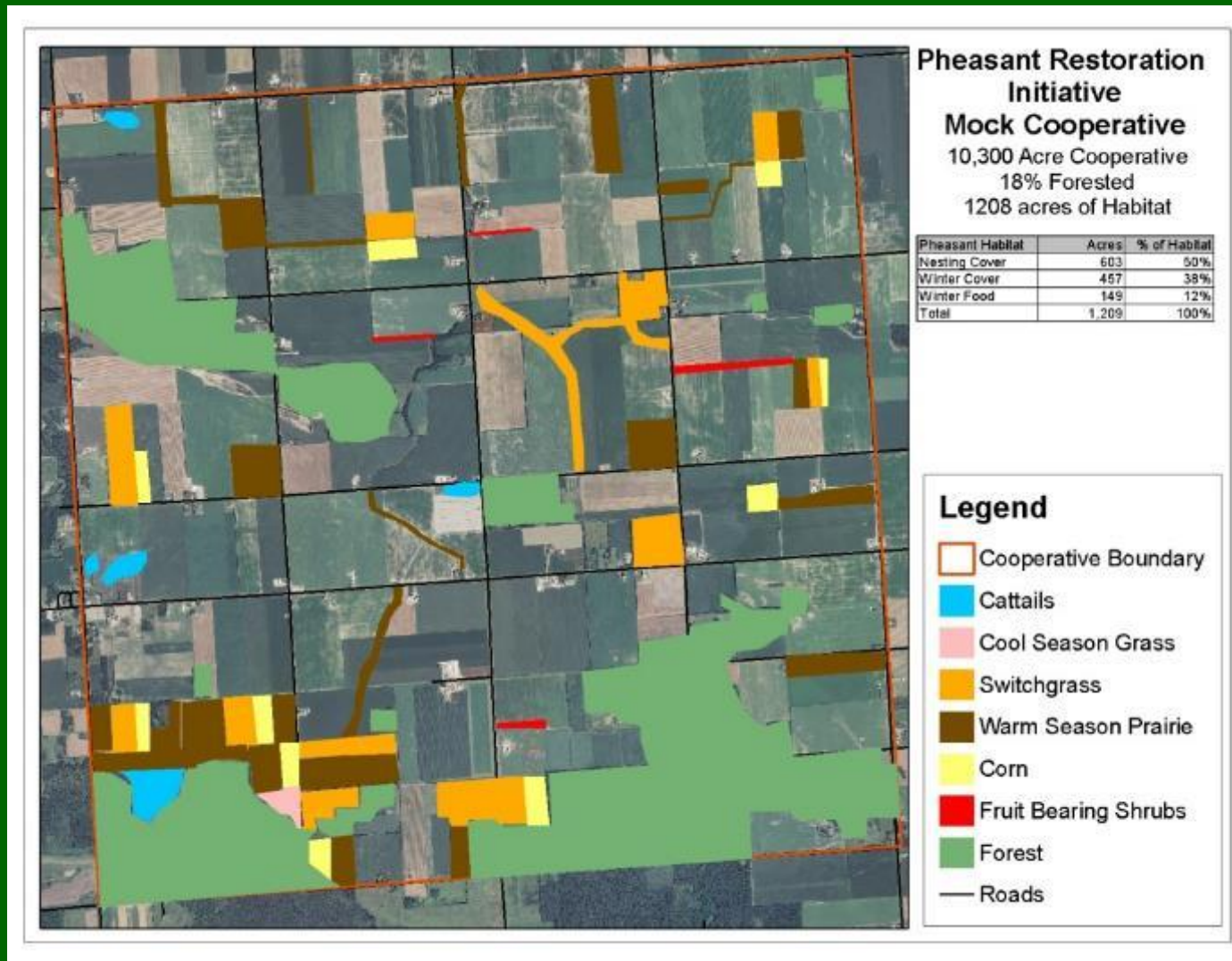
- Habitat is key to pheasant abundance:
 - Target priority areas with staff & funds
 - Avoid creating islands; consider adjacent lands
 - Develop landowner cooperatives to impact habitat on a landscape scale
 - Hub and spoke

MPRI Habitat Goals:

- Impact 200,000 acres in 10 Yrs
 - Public land: 10,000 acres
 - Private lands – the key to success!



Evaluate & Impact Habitat on a Landscape Scale



Establish Wild Pheasant Restoration Areas (WPRA)

- Landowner Cooperatives to impact landscape & minimize “habitat islands”
- **Identify 10,000+ acres focus area (16 sq/mi)**
- Monitor impact of restoration



Wild Pheasant Restoration Areas:

- **Minimum 1,200 acres habitat**
 - **35 to 70% Nesting Cover**
 - **25 to 50% Winter Cover**
 - **5 to 20% Winter Food**
- **Less than 20% forest**



Landowner Cooperative Benefits:

- **Larger impact on a targeted area**
- **Increased hunter satisfaction**
- **“Neighbors helping neighbors”**
 - **Trusted source of information**
 - **Share info about technical assistance & cost-share**
- **Strengthen ties in the local community**
 - **Recruit new volunteers & supporters**
- **Help identify potential projects for partners**
 - **Volunteer labor, equipment**

Nesting Habitat:

The key to building pheasant numbers!





Brood Rearing Habitat

Large blocks of nesting cover are key!



Nesting Cover Recommendations:

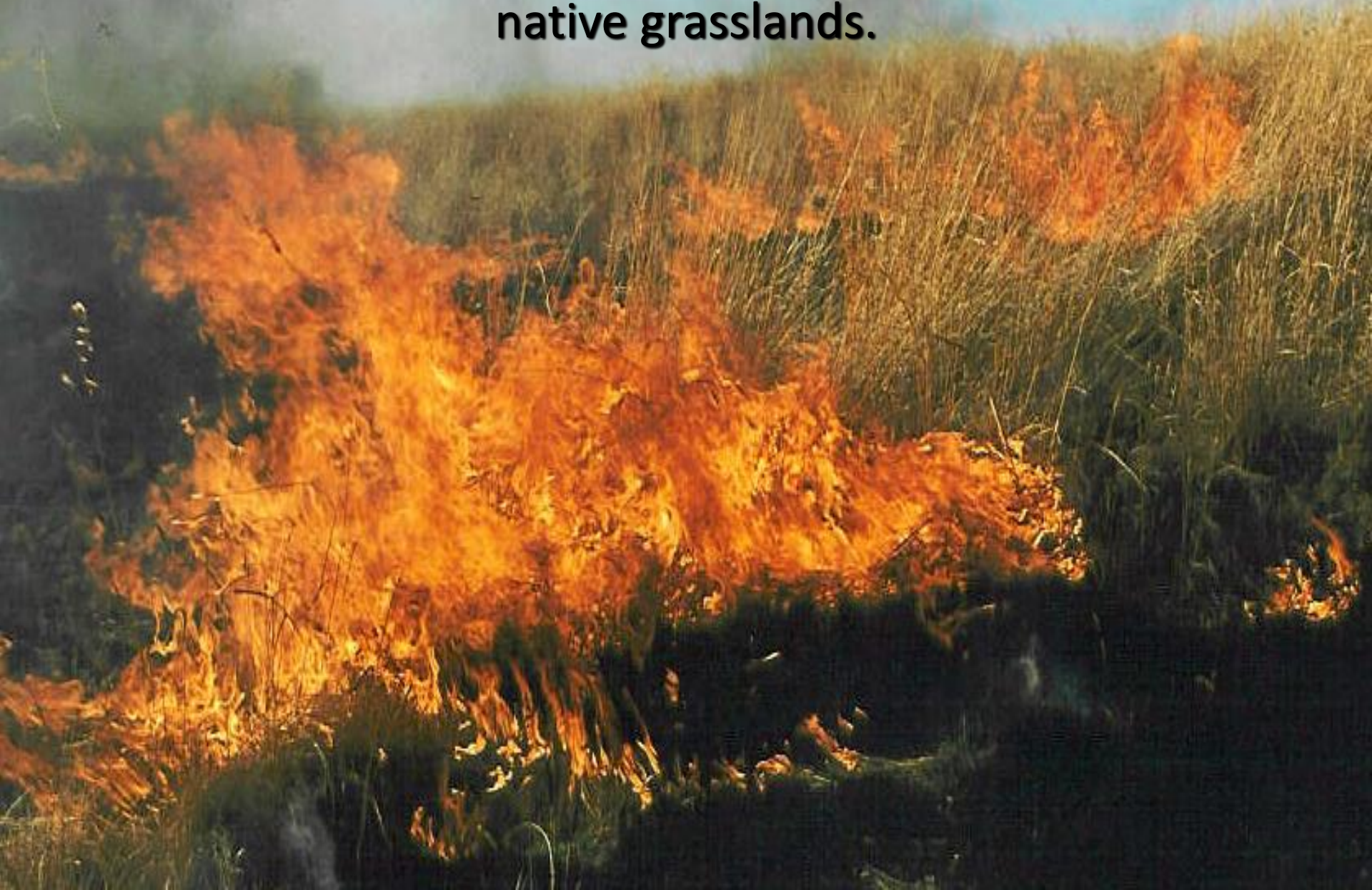
- Ideal size is 30 to 100 acres
- Minimum 5 to 10 acres
 - Small plots create predator traps!
- Plant blocks
 - Avoid linear strips
- Do not mow:
 - May 1 to July 15
 - After September 1
- Locate within one mile of quality winter cover





Natural succession changes habitat quality quickly, so we cannot plant the habitat and just walk away!

Prescribed fire every 3 to 6 years maintains healthy, diverse native grasslands.





Disking & inter-seeding set back succession & maintain diverse grasslands

Disking & Inter-seeding Results:



Winter Habitat:

Michigan's 2nd priority



Winter Cover Recommendations:

1. Switchgrass:

- *5 to 10 acre (or larger)*
- *Plant in blocks, avoid linear strips <100' wide*
 - *Wider is better!*
- *Do not plant near woodlots, fencerows, etc.*
- *Minimum of one wintering area per quarter township*

2. Restore wetlands:

3. Brushy fencerows:

- *Minimum 6 to 8 rows*
- *Remove existing tall trees (> 15' tall)*
- *Mix conifers & fruit bearing shrubs*
- *Plant a diversity of shrubs (including persistent winter fruits)*
- *Locate on edges, avoid fragmenting fields*

Winter Food:

Michigan's 3rd Priority



Food Plot Benefits:

- Reduce exposure to predators & the elements
- Attract birds to winter cover
- Supplemental food
 - Increase survival
 - Improved hen health



Food Plot Recommendations:

- Always locate food plots adjacent to winter cover
 - Reduce exposure & predation
- **Winter accessible grain**
 - **Corn, grain mixture, sorghum???**
- 2 acres food per 80 acre habitat
 - Consider deer
- **Plant one acre right instead of 2 acres wrong!**

How it all fits together:



County Drain



3368 S Sisson Hwy, Blissfield, MI 49228

Existing CREP

Switchgrass

Neighbor:
Nesting cover
Food plots

Shortgrass Prairie

**Tallgrass
Prairie
& Wildflowers**

40 acre farm

7 acres CREP + 33 acres SAFE

5 acres switchgrass

19.6 acres tallgrass

8.4 acres shortgrass

Google™

Woods

Image © 2008 DigitalGlobe
© 2008 Tele Atlas

Goal 4: Identify Funding Sources

- Existing Sources:
 - USDA Farm Bill programs, USFWS, DNR, PF, etc.
- Identify new sources:
 - New hunting license package
 - Habitat Grants, Private Lands Program, FBB's, SGA Projects
 - cSWG Grants
 - VPA-HIP Grant
 - Other grants: RCPP, GLRI
- Encourage Partners to Invest:
 - Habitat projects
 - Staff positions - Coop Coordinator, FBB's

Financial Assistance Brochure

Financial Assistance

For Developing Wildlife Habitat in Southern Michigan

The Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative (MRI) is a voluntary conservation initiative to restore essential populations and habitat in Michigan's agricultural landscape. A variety of MRI programs provide technical and financial assistance to landowners who have their land enrolled in the program and other wildlife habitat. A variety of programs MRI partners offer to assist private landowners. For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/pheasant.

Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative

RESTORING HABITAT TOGETHER



United States Department of Agriculture (USDA): Farm Bill Programs

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

A voluntary conservation program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to implement conservation practices on eligible agricultural and non-aquatic private land. EQIP provides financial assistance to plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns to improve wildlife habitat, soil, water, and air quality. Priorities include habitat material on farmland, wildlife species, reduction of nonpoint source pollution (i.e., sediment, nutrients), creating surface and groundwater, and carbon storage and sequestration. For additional information, visit www.nrc.usda.gov.

Program	Eligible Land	Length of Assistance	Private Land	Program	Program Purpose	Conservation Practice
EQIP	Private, public, and state land in agricultural production including cropland, woodland, and non-aquatic private land and land not in production but eligible for production.	7-10 years	Yes	Yes	Conservation practices that improve wildlife habitat, soil, water, and air quality.	Conservation practices that improve wildlife habitat, soil, water, and air quality.

Wildlands Habitat Incentives (WHI)

Natural Resource Conservation Service provides habitat and financial assistance to private landowners and federal lands to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands through the purchase of a wetland reserve easement. Eligible land includes farmland in converted wetlands that can be ecologically and economically restored. Applications are prioritized based on the assessment potential for protecting and enhancing habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. For additional information, visit www.nrc.usda.gov.

Program	Eligible Land	Length of Assistance	Private Land	Conservation Purpose	Required Assistance	Conservation Practices
WHI	Private or public owned land in agricultural production including cropland, woodland, and non-aquatic private land and land not in production but eligible for production.	10-year or permanent assistance 10-year or 20-year or 30-year assistance - appropriate	N/A	On-farm up-land benefits of up to 20 acres per owner or other assistance within 10-year contract	Up to 75% for restoration and conservation practices, and 10% for permanent assistance for permanent assistance	Wildlife habitat and soil conservation

Wildlife Business Program (WRP)

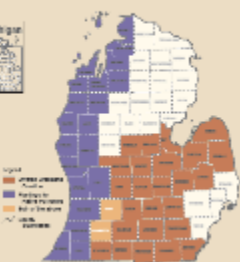
A conservation program administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in partnership with a variety of agencies, businesses, and individuals in the program agree to conserve environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. The long term of the program is to establish wildlife habitat to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and increase production of wildlife habitat. For additional information, visit www.michigan.gov/pheasant for more information, and watch the program info.

Program	Eligible Land	Location	Maximum Period	Contract Length	Annual Payment	Incidental Expenses	Cost-share Paid to landowner	Additional Types
Conservation Easement	Conservation Easements and 100% of land from 2003-2012	Conservation	Current 2003-2012 program only	10 years	Variable based on acreage	Variable based on acreage	50%	Conservation Easements
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Figure 1: Michigan WHI map.



Figure 2: Michigan WRP map.



Michigan DNR Wildlife Division

Private Lands Program (PLP)

PLP is a program that provides private landowners with resources to create and manage habitat to benefit a variety of wildlife. With additional funding from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the DNR is expanding efforts to assist farmers and wildlife on private lands. PLP staff provide technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners for habitat improvement projects. PLP staff provide technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners for habitat improvement projects. PLP staff provide technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners for habitat improvement projects.

Southern Michigan, a primary focus of the Private Lands Program is providing technical and financial assistance to landowners to establish and maintain wildlife habitat. The program is expanding efforts to assist farmers and wildlife on private lands. PLP staff provide technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners for habitat improvement projects. PLP staff provide technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners for habitat improvement projects. PLP staff provide technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners for habitat improvement projects.

Additional technical assistance may be available for landowners interested in improving habitat for deer, wild turkey, and small game species. For contact and additional information please see the Private Lands Habitat Initiative on the DNR website: www.michigan.gov/dnr.

Figure 3: DNR PLP map in Southern Michigan.



Partners:

Following MRI, Michigan can help develop and assist pheasant populations in the three MRI priority areas. It is a priority to provide a variety of habitat through the partners of the MRI.

Huron, Tuscola, & Sanilac counties: Jason Myers • 800-675-5471 ext 127, jason.myers@dnr.state.mi.us
 Ionia, Ionia, & Montcalm counties: David Tice • 517-263-7433 ext 119, david.tice@dnr.state.mi.us
 Genesee, Saginaw, & Chippewa counties: Monica Perry • 517-263-7433 ext 101, monica.perry@dnr.state.mi.us
 Shiawassee County Conservation District: 517-223-8165 ext 102
 Shiawassee County Conservation District: 517-223-8223 ext 1

Goal 5: “Boots on The Ground”

- DNR Private Land Biologists in 2011
- 3 FBB's in Priority Areas Since 2011
- 5 additional FBB's added since 2014
- New Landowner Coop Coordinator in 2015

11 new staff in 5 years...

...The BEST is Yet To Come for MPRI!

Goal 6: Increase Hunting Access & Improved Hunting Opportunity



Is Hunting Access Important?

- Lack of access causes declining hunter participation
- **Hunter recruitment & retention**
 - Small game hunting is where most hunters traditionally started
- North American Model of Conservation
 - Hunters pay for wildlife conservation!

Hunting Access Program



Hunting Access Program:

- **2011: VPA-HIP grant \$900,000**
 - Tripled enrollment 17,353 acres by 2013
 - HAP website & Mi-Hunt maps
- **2014 VPA Grant: \$1.2 million**
 - Expand to 25,000 acres
 - EUP for sharp-tailed grouse
 - Habitat restoration on HAP lands
- **2015 VPA Grant: \$1**
 - Expand to NLP
 - Full-time coordinator



HAP Maps

Available on:

- HAP website
- Mi-Hunt



Great concept, Mike, but is it really working?



2015 Results:



- MPRI partners received 10 DNR Wildlife Habitat grants totaling \$395,360
- **3,485 acres enhanced/restored on public land**
- 4,500 acres enhanced by DNR Private Lands Biologists
- **FBB's assisted 200+ landowners**
- \$1.2 Million VPA grant to continue HAP expansion.
 - Enrollment increased to 20,000 acres.
- **Landowner Co-ops having local impact; New Coordinator position organized by partners**

Planting the 1st Project:

Maple River State Game Area (2011)



Local volunteer
planting a prairie field...



***Restoring Habitat
Together!***



...DNR staff planting the
other half

Are We Having an Impact on Public Lands?



Two happy labs, a happy hunter, and a not so lucky state land rooster!

Impact on Private Lands:



MOULTRIE  28°F 29.36inHg **MOULTRIECAM** 23 JAN 2016 05:07 pm

Private Land Results!



Partners recognizing the significance of the MPRI!



MICHIGAN Outdoor News

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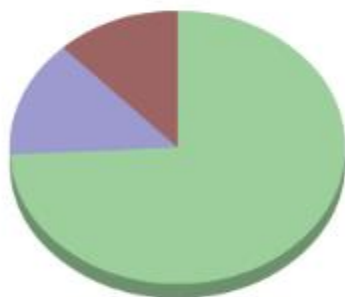
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Do you think the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative will improve pheasant hunting in the state?

chart by amCharts.com



Yes	74%
No	14%
Not sure	12%

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- 2012 Calendar
- Sub-form

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GET OUR FISHING REPORT
SENT TO YOUR INBOX

MPRI is a Model for All Species

- A unique partnership between a diversity of partners working as equals
- Target effort and dollars where they have the most impact
- Landscape impact on both public & private lands.
- With limited funding, partnerships are the future of wildlife management!

“You know what, I think the partners are on to something here!”



Questions?



www.michigan.gov/pheasant