

**Progress Report to the Minnesota State Legislature on the
Feasibility Study for the Restoration of Wild Northern Bobwhite in Minnesota**

January 15, 2015

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

MN statutes Sec. 67, Chapter 312

\$9,000 in 2015 is from the game and fish fund for the commissioner, in consultation with interested parties, agencies, and other states, to develop a detailed restoration plan to recover the historical native population of bobwhite quail in Minnesota for its ecological and recreational benefits to the citizens of the state. The commissioner shall conduct public meetings in developing the plan. No later than January 15, 2015, the commissioner must report on the plan's progress to the legislative committees with jurisdiction over environment and natural resources policy and finance. This is a onetime appropriation.

And Section 67, Chapter 290 H.F. No 2852

QUAIL RECOVERY PLAN; REPORT.

The commissioner of natural resources, in consultation with interested parties, must develop a detailed feasibility study for the restoration of a wild population of quail in Minnesota. No later than January 15, 2015, the commissioner must report on the study's progress to the legislative committees with jurisdiction over environment and natural resources policy and finance.

This document is the report to the Minnesota State Legislature referenced in Minnesota Statutes Section 67, Chapter 312 and Section 67 Chapter 290 of H.F. No. 2852. It reports on the progress made on the feasibility study and plan to restore wild northern bobwhites to Minnesota.

Progress

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) has produced a working draft of the Bobwhite Feasibility and Restoration Plan. The enabling legislation requires the MNDNR to conduct public meetings in developing the plan. These public meetings have not been held to date, but the MNDNR does plan to conduct some form of public meeting in Houston County in 2015. Information gathered from these meetings will inform the Plan.

The MNDNR has engaged in conversations with Minnesota Quail Forever and authors of the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI), a national bobwhite conservation plan, and has extensively reviewed bobwhite information from Iowa and Wisconsin.

The current draft plan is attached to this progress report.

Plan Contents

Currently, the draft plan discusses the history and status of the bobwhite in Minnesota, cites habitat needs, and discusses restoration opportunities and challenges. It also discusses actual land management practices beneficial to quail and suggests a likely core restoration area.

The MNDNR is concerned that wild bobwhite quail have been extirpated from Minnesota, and that source populations of wild quail in northern Iowa and southwest Wisconsin are insufficient or too isolated to naturally reestablish in Minnesota. Habitat conditions are also currently not favorable for sustaining a wild quail population.

Techniques for translocating wild bobwhites from states with more abundant quail populations are not well developed. Few, if any, successful translocations can be documented.

On-the-other hand, Quail Forever reports a wild quail population in SE Minnesota, principally in Houston and Winona Counties, of "less than 1000 quail". Quail habitat work conducted on lands here will benefit several other Minnesota game species and species of wildlife in conservation need, and improve water quality. If wild quail are present, this habitat work will benefit the species.

Next Steps

Within the next few months, the MNDNR plans on holding a public meeting in Houston County in order to engage the local community, and determine interest from landowners in conducting habitat work that could benefit the bobwhite. While there are some state-owned parcels in state forest, state park, wildlife management areas, and aquatic management areas, much of this land is closed canopy forest with limited quail restoration potential. After holding public meetings the MNDNR will finalize the draft plan.