

MINNESOTA PHEASANT SUMMIT ACTION PLAN









2016 REPORT CARD

In 2014, Governor Mark Dayton displayed bold leadership and injected new energy into pheasant and habitat conservation efforts when he called the Pheasant Summit. His challenge was clear. Minnesotans were to develop an action plan that would increase the state's pheasant population by restoring grassland habitat.





The Pheasant Summit Action Plan turns the ideas generated at the summit into specific, measurable, and achievable steps that will restore Minnesota's pheasant hunting traditions. A key component of the plan is the development of a Report Card, which agencies and stakeholders will use each year to measure and track the progress and determine whether the plan is meeting these goals and objectives.

The legend shows the symbols used to describe how each measure was scored. These scores are based on their status at the end of each calendar year from 2015 to 2018 and on their trends. We used measurable criteria to evaluate each item and determine if we met the objectives.









LEGEND

STATUS		TREND	
	We are making progress and meeting targets		Up Improving Trends
	It is too early to assess or there is a high amount of variability		No No Change
	Progress is slower than anticipated or we are not meeting the targets		Down Declining Trends







1. Target habitat enhancement and protection in complexes at least 9 square miles in size where we can meet a goal of 40 percent permanent protection within the time frame of this plan.

	MEASURE	STATUS	TREND	DESCRIPTION
ACTION	Identify habitat complexes in each county of the pheasant range.			DNR and partners are identifying habitat complexes in the 21 southwestern counties as a pilot area. After this process is finalized, we will expand this effort to the entire pheasant range.
OUTCOME	Target actions #2-5 in these habitat complexes.			Ongoing.







2. Increase the rate of enrollment and retention in short-term conservation programs and the enrollment of permanent conservation easements by private landowners.

	MEASURE	STATUS	TREND	DESCRIPTION
ACTION	Obtain approval for CREP and enroll 100,000 acres over 5 years.			Minnesota has submitted a CREP application.
	Increase RIM funding to \$40 million per year.			There are recommendations for over \$40 million from state bonding, Clean Water Fund, and Outdoor Heritage Fund.
OUTCOME	Annually request and enroll the maximum acres for continuous CRP contracts.			Minnesota has requested the maximum allowable acres in each continuous CRP practice.
	Report General CRP acre enrollments.			General CRP acres declined 26% from 799,900 to 594,600 acres from 2014 to 2015.

3. Increase the education and marketing of private lands conservation programs through the Farm Bill Assistance Partnership (FBAP).

	MEASURE	STATUS	TREND	DESCRIPTION
ACTION	Formalize and direct the FBAP with an MOU.			Agencies are currently developing, and plan to finalize by May, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to better formalize the FBAP between the DNR, BWSR, NRCS, MASWCD, and PF.
	Ensure all counties in the pheasant range have a FBAP position.			There are currently 10 counties in the pheasant range without a FBAP position. We will address additional staffing in the MOU.
OUTCOME	Increase landowner contacts by 50%.			Contacts increased 8% with current staffing levels from 2014 to 2015. When fully staffed, this number should increase.

4. Increase management of habitat on both public and private lands.

	MEASURE	STATUS	TREND	DESCRIPTION
ACTION	Increase OHF appropriations for public grassland enhancement to \$14 million.			Allocations declined from \$10 million to \$4 million for enhancement specific proposals from 2014 to 2015.
	Increase North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant applications by 50%.			In 2015, Minnesota was funded for 10 small NAWCA grants, an increase from the 7 to 8 grants in previous years.
OUTCOME	Increase acres of nesting, brood-rearing, and winter cover managed each year by 50%.			The DNR and partners are currently working to develop a multi-agency/NGO method for tracking accomplishments.











Unless otherwise stated, the time frame for the plan covers 2015 to 2018.







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5. Accelerate acquisition of public lands open to hunting across the pheasant range including state Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) and federal Waterfowl Production Areas (WPA).

	MEASURE	STATUS	TREND	DESCRIPTION
ACTION	Annually obtain \$10 million in state bonding for acquisitions.			The Governor's bonding proposal includes \$9.5 million for WMA/AMA acquisitions.
	Increased funding from OHF for acquisitions to \$40 million annually.			OHF recommended funding declined \$24.9 million to \$19.8 million from 2014 to 2015.
	Work with Federal, state and non-governmental organization partners to increase federal acquisition funding by 20%.			The state has 4 large NAWCA grants submitted this year totaling \$5 million.
OUTCOME	Increased rate of WMA and WPA acquisitions by 40%.			Acquisition acres declined between 2014 and 2015, however a number of real estate transactions are pending.







6. Develop and implement a comprehensive riparian buffer program.

	MEASURE	STATUS	TREND	DESCRIPTION
ACTION	Implement the 2015 buffer initiative.			DNR is continuing to develop the mapping tool for the buffer program.
	Secure ongoing funding for SWCDs to enhance buffers for wildlife and clean water.			\$11 million per year has been secured for SWCDs and an additional \$2.5 million per year for the buffer program and other conservation efforts.
OUTCOME	Twenty percent of stream and ditch buffers planted with diverse native seedlings at least 100 feet on each side of the waterway.			Pending CREP III approval and buffer initiative.









7. Improve roadside management to optimize pheasant habitat.

	MEASURE	STATUS	TREND	DESCRIPTION
ACTION	Recharter the Interagency Roadside Task Force and DNR Roadsides for Wildlife Program.			The DNR is hiring a new Roadsides for Wildlife Program Coordinator and will be reconvening the Interagency Task Force.
	Promote legislation to delay annual roadside mowing until August 1st.			The DNR and DOT are working with legislators on potential legislation to prevent disturbances such as haying during the nesting season.
	Secure funding for county programs that promote and use integrated roadside management.			The Interagency Task Force will seek funding for these programs. We will actively pursue Federal funds for monarch conservation.
OUTCOME	Reduced disturbance during the nesting season.			There is still a significant amount of roadside disturbance during the second half of the nesting season.









8. Secure federal funding to sustain the Walk-In Access (WIA) program in Minnesota's pheasant range.

	MEASURE	STATUS	TREND	DESCRIPTION
ACTION	Obtain federal funding through USDA VPA-HIP program.			In fall 2015, the DNR received a \$1.7 million grant to support the WIA program for an additional 3 years.
	Seek additional funds to sustain the program.			We are currently spending the most recent grant and will seek additional funding in 2 years.
OUTCOME	Increase WIA acres to 30,000 acres over 3 years.			The DNR continues to increase acreage enrollments each year in the program. The DNR is working to bring additional counties in.

9. Expand education about grassland and pheasant conservation issues and support hunter recruitment and retention.

	MEASURE	STATUS	TREND	DESCRIPTION
ACTION	Survey public and hunters for information needs.			There are currently two surveys funded with the U of M to study the WIA program and landowner perceptions of conservation.
	Develop a communications strategy.			The DNR has developed a communication strategy and is working with partners to integrate messaging.
	Implement the Commissioner's task force recommendations for hunter recruitment and retention.			Partners are developing a recruitment summit for summer 2016. The DNR has developed hunter recruitment and retention workshops and grants.
OUTCOME	Return hunting participation to 120,000 pheasant hunters.			Pheasant stamp sales increased slightly, 4%, from 74,571 in 2014 to 77,565 in 2015.

10. Expand monitoring and research capacity for both habitat and population studies of grassland wildlife and clearly communicate these results to the public.

	MEASURE	STATUS	TREND	DESCRIPTION
ACTION	Identify a priority list of research and monitoring needs and obtain funding.			DNR researchers have identified multiple pheasant, habitat, and management priorities. Research staff have also been recommended for funding through LCCMR.
	Further partnerships between agencies and universities to conduct research which will better inform population and habitat management decisions.			There are currently multiple research projects in partnership with agency staff and the U of M to look at several aspects of grassland habitat and population management.
OUTCOME	Clearly communicate results to public.			Updates to this report card, milestones, progress, and major events will be shared with the public.
	Inform management activities with current relevant information.			Ongoing. Using adaptive management, managers are constantly integrating new research into their management.

Acronym List

AMA:	DNR Aquatic Management Area
BWSR:	Board of Water and Soil Resources
CREP:	Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
CRP:	Conservation Reserve Program
DNR:	Department of Natural Resources
DOT:	Department of Transportation
FBAP:	Farm Bill Assistance Partnership
LCCMR:	Legislative-Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources
MASWCD:	Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
MOU:	Memorandum of Understanding
NAWCA:	North American Wetland Conservation Act
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organization
NRCS:	Natural Resources Conservation Service
OHF:	Outdoor Heritage Fund
PF:	Pheasants Forever
RIM:	Reinvest in Minnesota
SWCD:	Soil and Water Conservation District
U of M:	University of Minnesota
USDA:	United States Department of Agriculture
USFWS:	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
VPA – HIP:	Voluntary Public Access – Habitat Improvement Program
WIA:	Walk-In Access
WMA:	DNR Wildlife Management Area
WPA:	USFWS Waterfowl Production Area