

Southern Appalachian Chapter Grouse Habitat Project February 2009

As you know, last summer saw the start of the Jerry Smathers Grouse Habitat Project on the Cold Mountain Game Lands. This project is intended to establish quality grouse habitat in this area. The cost projection for the initial phase of the project, construction and maintenance of the new road, was approximately \$26,000. To date we have raised over \$16,000 toward that goal. The Winchester Model 70 raffle raised \$2500, which was matched with \$2500 from RGS. This \$5000 was matched by a grant from Sport Dog. The balance of the \$16,000 was raised through donations by individuals and businesses.

Rather than a written dialogue about what has been done, we decided to use recent pictures with captions for this update to show the work thus far.



One of the first things accomplished was to install a new gate. The new road is located just south of the old road, and is accessed from Little East Fork Road. The gate will remain locked except during logging operations.

The one mile of new road has been constructed away from the creek. The road base consists of three inch stone and a top coat of washed gravel will be maintained to ensure proper drainage. The sides have been seeded and the grass is already growing.



This is a picture of one of the white pine stands that will be clear cut to make way for new grouse habitat.



The first small creek crossing has been constructed and reinforced to ensure stability during the logging operations.

The road winds through another stand of white pines which will be clear cut to produce early successional habitat.



At the end of the new road portion of the project the second stream crossing has been completed. Silt fence was donated by Ferguson Enterprises. From this point, the existing road will be refurbished including new gravel and seeding. One new culvert has been installed up the road beyond the point pictured above.

According to the forester for the Wildlife Commission, timber harvesting will get underway sometime this summer. The harvesting will be done in stages over the next few years. Once all the white pine have been removed, hardwood stands at the upper end of the road will be harvested to create grouse habitat.

We are still accepting donations for this project. If you would like to contribute, send your donations to:

Steve Evans
1066 Murray Road
Canton, N.C. 28716

Shots from Weaver Vegas

Greetings to All,

It seemed back in October that there was a long time to hunt this winter. Now, near the middle of February, I am regretting the times that I could have or should have gone but did not. Maybe that is not so bad given the lack of birds out there to find. I have found a few and did bring two home one day, but my bird hunting has been very poor this year. I do not shoot well enough to be much of a threat to the bird population, but I am planning on limiting the amount of birds that I kill during the rest of the season. I will do that two ways. First, I plan to take no shots at any birds that are not pointed by my dog, or the dogs of whoever I may be hunting with. Second, if I should kill one more bird I am going to change guns to one of my guns that is not so good for grouse hunting. That will probably be the first gun I ever owned, a bolt action .410 that always brings back a lot of fond memories whenever I get it out. I cannot guarantee that I will not kill a grouse with it, but it is as close as I can come to shoot and release.

Let me get to the main reason for this newsletter. In December we were notified that our chapter had been awarded one of the \$5,000 conservation grants sponsored by SportDog, a manufacturer of training collars for hunting dogs and a corporate sponsor of the Ruffed Grouse Society. We received that money near the end of December and have made it available to the NC Wildlife Resource Commission for use at the Jerry Smathers Ruffed Grouse Project on the Cold Mountain Game Lands in Haywood County. This brings us up to \$15,000 that we have invested in this project. Attached is a report and pictures that show what this money has been used for. This is an ongoing project that continues to need our financial support. I hope you will consider supporting it with additional funds in the near future. My thanks go out to: Steve Evans and Steve Henson who have been spearheading the fund drive and looking after our interest in this project; and to Ellie Evans who put together the pictures and project report; and to Don Mallicoat, our regional director, who's grant writing skills made the conservation grant from SportDog possible. Thanks a bunch guys for all your hard work.

Mike Mathis came to the mountains in early January to go on my guided hunt that he purchased at last year's banquet. All though I had warned him that bird numbers were the worst that I had seen in years, he was not deterred in the least. Even with less than favorable weather, we were able to flush three birds on the first day, but were not able to get any shots. On the second day the weather was somewhat more favorable, and Mike was able to harvest a grouse. He made a very good shot on a difficult presentation to claim his first grouse in a lifetime. He came up empty from both barrels on the next opportunity that was a much easier shot, but that is grouse hunting. Mike, you were a pleasure to hunt with and I hope we can do it again sometime.

In closing I will tell a story on myself. At the end of December, my wife and I were in Charleston celebrating our first anniversary. She loves to shop, to say the least, so our first day was spent at the outlet mall. The first store we hit was a cooking supply and utensil store. She had gotten a couple of things and I had actually gotten a couple of things, so I said I was going to take our purchases to the car, which was close by. She decides she does not want to carry her purse all day and hands it to me to hide in the car. So here I am coming out of the cooking store with two bags and a ladies' purse, when I notice two guys that I am meeting giving me the EYE. Luckily I was wearing my Fowler Farms Sporting Clays and Game Preserve cap, which I pointed to and said these three words, "Guns, Shooting, and Killing." Whatever those two guys were looking for, they must have decided I did not have it as they quickly made their way in the opposite direction. Until next time.....Jerry Cody, President.