

Forest Action Network (supplement)
07/11/11

Comments Requested For:
Pennsylvania Ruffed Grouse Management
Plan

E-mail comments to: GrouseComments@pa.gov

Send written submissions to: Pennsylvania Game Commission
2001 Elmerton Ave.
Harrisburg PA, 17110-9797

Submission Deadline: September 01, 2011

The following are points of emphasis to consider for inclusion in comments on the Pennsylvania Ruffed Grouse Management Plan. Many of you may have submitted your own comments already and the Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) thanks you for actively participating. These are merely suggestions to assist you in developing your own thoughts. You should also be sure to thank the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) for the opportunity to comment on, and in their recognition of the need for an increase in the percentage of early successional habitat (ESH) within the Pennsylvania landscape to benefit the ruffed grouse, American woodcock and multiple wildlife populations dependent upon young forest habitat. I would also expand upon the personal importance of grouse and the grouse hunting experience for you and perhaps your family in Pennsylvania.

Points of Emphasis

- Pennsylvania is one of the few states to develop such an individualized plan to implement the National Plan of 2008. This is a highly commendable point.
- Question the tracking of the yearly creation of ESH throughout PA.
 - How is the PGC going to determine if the Plan is being successfully implemented on the ground?
 - What role in the acreage of ESH to be created each year will the PGC be responsible in creating?
 - How much of the total acreage to be created each year will be dependent on federal, private, and private forest industry timber/land management?

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- **Ruffed grouse hunting in Pennsylvania is a source of both social and economic significance in this state.**
 - **Hunting contributes to approximately \$79 million of direct spending each year to the Pennsylvania economy. Much of this is directed towards small businesses.**
 - **Continual decline in optimal habitat will adversely affect these businesses, and the social and cultural tradition of the grouse hunting heritage of both the Pennsylvania residents and those traveling to PA for the hunting experience.**

- **Emphasize the need for PGC to establish a scientific based method to determine ruffed grouse population status in Pennsylvania rather than relying on Breeding Bird Surveys (BBS), Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) and other 'trend' analysis data.**
 - **Fault in using the current hunter flush rates is hunters go to the best covers and overestimation of population becomes a problem in attaining accurate representation population goal success progress.**
 - **PGC field crew summer sight surveys are strictly observational and chance happenings limited in usefulness in determining population estimations. The PGC recognizes the limitations of these surveys and utilizes these encounters as opportunities to formulate a fall hunting prediction sought by hunters.**

- **Currently there are programs in place that offer incentives to private landowners whom manage their forest stands for timber and native grasslands but NOT in a scrub-shrub or young forest mosaic within their property ownership scale.**
 - **What about developing incentives for maintaining their lands in ESH state in a rotation incentive program? This would depend on the total acreage of forestland vs. scrub-shrub land. Even-aged management on no less than 7 acres of timber land every 10-15 years incentive programs and maintaining the low clumped woody shrub habitat in native species which will also benefit American woodcock among other wildlife species like white-tail deer.**
 - **In association with this point, much of the private forestland in PA is not of a high quality timber of the past. As such, developing a market for the lower quality, wood fiber, industry, or promoting use of woody biomass as a carbon neutral energy source would be of economic benefit to the landowner and logging industry.**

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- **Potential impacts of continual decline in percentage in ESH in the Pennsylvania landscape.**
 - Possible Federal and State listing of hunted and non-hunted species of birds and mammals could restrict the use and access of both private and public lands. This illustrates the need for the creation of ESH through responsible silviculture (timber management) methods available.
 - Recognizing there are differences in habitat characteristics between the naturally occurring scrub-shrub ESH and those of the young regenerating forest created by timber management but realizing many species of wildlife will utilize both types of ESH.

- **The benefits of ESH to other wildlife species during all seasons and multiple phases of their life stages.**
 - Benefit to other small and large hunted species important to license sales and the social aspect of the hunting tradition in Pennsylvania. This type of habitat provides not only cover but increased multiple food resources. Eastern cottontail, red fox, grey fox, Eastern coyote, black bear, bobcat, white-tail deer, and wild turkey.
 - Forest interior bird (those which nest in big timber) fledglings follow their parents into ESH shortly after leaving the nest due to the high number of insects, mast, and cover available in this type of habitat.
 - Fall migratory songbirds utilize these habitats for the same reasons as stopover areas to refuel or find cover during their journey south.

- **ESH provides wildlife viewing areas for both the hunter and non-hunter users of Pennsylvania rural areas.**
 - Pennsylvania is known for its wildlife, and reviving the balance of ESH within the landscape affords PA the opportunity to showcase one of its greatest resources and increase tourism within the rural areas.

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Contact me for any questions or concerns and *thank you* for your support!



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