

# RUFF Country News for the Eastern Great Lakes Region

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## Away We Go!

Upland bird seasons are open or will open very soon across my three state region of Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio. It is the time that hunters prepare for and look forward to all year round. My great uncle, Tom Ellis, was the one who got me hooked on grouse and woodcock hunting, fly fishing, and having good English setters. He once told me during the middle of a perfect U.P. day in the grouse woods that if there is a heaven it must be October all the time. As I walk through the woods during the next month I'll remember my times with him, look down at the setter he gave me and her young pup and nod in agreement.

If the opportunity arises take a friend or family member that hasn't experienced the joy of a good dog point or rush of adrenaline at a grouse flush into the woods this fall. Introduce them to young forest habitat and the wildlife that require it and teach them safe and productive hunting methods. You'll be glad you did.

I hope all of you that hunt have an enjoyable season. If you would like to get these newsletters directly, be removed from the list, or refer a friend please send me an email at [erice@ruffedgrousesociety.org](mailto:erice@ruffedgrousesociety.org). Please note that I have moved to Ann Arbor and have a new mailing address.

Regards

Eric

## **New Mill in Northern Michigan Means More Habitat.**

**Below is a September 14, 2015 press release that should bring smiles to grouse and woodcock hunter's faces. ARAUCO, an international sustainable forest products company, announced plans to build a new mill in Grayling, Michigan that by 2016 will produce particle board to the tune of 424 million ft<sup>2</sup> annually. This will undoubtedly result in many thousands of acres of young forest habitat creation on both public and private lands. Another benefit will be the economic boost for local logging/forestry companies and the rural Michigan communities they reside in.**

**Eric**

### **ARAUCO ANNOUNCES \$325 MILLION INVESTMENT FOR NEW PARTICLE BOARD MILL**

**Atlanta, GA** - Today, ARAUCO North America announced plans to build a new particle board mill located in Grayling, Michigan, to produce 424 million ft<sup>2</sup> (750,000m<sup>3</sup>)/year of panels, along with full lamination capabilities to support the Prism TFL decorative surfacing program.



This \$325 million investment will be the single largest continuous particle board press in North America, and one of the highest capacity presses in the world. Ground-breaking is estimated for late 2016, with the roll-out of the first panel during the latter part of 2018.

This investment will generate approximately 250 direct permanent jobs, and is expected to yield important economic and community development benefits to the Crawford County region. The addition of panel capacity to this geographical area will improve customer access to a stable, cost-efficient supply of high quality particleboard and decorative panel products. The location of this plant will also complement the supply of MDF from our neighboring mill in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.

Together with the ARAUCO North American Executive Management Team, Kelly Shotbolt remarks, "There is no better way to signal the commitment we have to the renewal and modernization of the North American composite panel industry. Our objective with this investment," Mr. Shotbolt adds, "is to improve the logistics of our entire manufacturing footprint, and support the growth of our customers in the Mid-Western Region."

ARAUCO North America offers unparalleled access to a wide range of sustainable forest products including mouldings, plywood, lumber, pulp, particleboard, MDF and thermally fused laminate panels produced in nine mills in North America, and 29 mills in South America.

This project is subject to approval of incentives and permits by both state and local agencies as well as final approval by the Arauco Board of Directors.

The company gratefully acknowledges the collaborative efforts of the State of Michigan, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Crawford County, and Grayling Charter Township. ARAUCO is looking forward to a mutually beneficial relationship for many years to come.

Further information: [www.arauco-na.com](http://www.arauco-na.com)

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## Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment Examines Young Forest Habitat in Indiana



This year is the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment in Indiana. In the words of a U.S. Forest Service Technical Report the “HEE is a 100-year study begun in 2006 in Morgan-Monroe and Yellowwood State Forests to improve the

sustainability of forest resources and quality of life of Indiana residents by understanding ecosystem and human responses to forest management.” A total of 26 research projects have been conducted at the site to-date with many more planned for the future. A good number of these projects have focused on the impacts of clearcutting in the central hardwoods ecosystem. Two new projects will be assessing the use of clearcut sites/young forests by post fledgling migratory songbirds. The Indiana Chapter of RGS has provided financial support for this project for several years. Of note, this year was the first year since the initial clearcutting 8 years ago that a brood of ruffed grouse was found in the research location, evidence that these birds have the ability to find suitable habitat if it is created within a large forested ecosystem. You can read more about the study and look at some of the results in detail at their website [HERE](#).

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## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners Program Benefits Young Forest Species

**Below is information on a program that may be able to assist private landowners who are managing for American woodcock habitat. RGS and AWS have partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on a number of habitat projects on private lands that benefit young forest species through management of alder habitat. I have assisted with management planning on a couple of Partners projects and other landowners have rented our Habitat Machine to use to complete additional projects. The biologists in this program are very easy to work with and may be able to help you partially fund management activities that will benefit American woodcock and the suite of species that use early successional habitat.**

Eric



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Partners for Fish and Wildlife (Partners) Program assists private landowners in a voluntary pro-active manner to restore and enhance fish and wildlife habitat. It’s about sharing resources of time, labor, and funds to help ensure that elements of our common heritage—wildlife, fish, and a healthy ecosystem—will be there for our kids, and their kids.

The Partners Program focuses on improving habitat for federal trust resources: migratory birds, federally-listed endangered or threatened species, and interjurisdictional fish. In Michigan, restoration of wetlands has been, and remains, the primary focus for the Partners Program. The program also includes restoration of grasslands, streams (both in the channel and within the riparian corridor), and specific habitats used by federally-listed endangered or threatened species. Since this program began in Michigan in 1988, more than 1,500 projects have been completed.

### Wetland Restoration

Wetland restorations are generally focused where previous agricultural drainage provides an opportunity to restore hydrology, or put the “wet” back into altered wetlands. Projects often involve breaking or plugging a portion of a tile line, blocking a ditch, or building a low dike or embankment. Restorations are designed to re-establish shallow-water wetlands (depth of three feet or less)

containing a mixture of open water and vegetated areas. The program does not create farm ponds or “pushouts”, and does not alter existing natural, undisturbed wetlands.

### **Stream Habitat Improvements**

Efforts are underway to stabilize streambanks and improve road crossings in northern Michigan watersheds that support resident species such as brook trout and Great Lakes migratory species. The objective is to reduce sediment entering rivers and streams by stopping it at its source. Sediment smothers fish eggs and fills in pools that fish use for feeding and shelter. Projects also focus on removing obstacles such as dams and culverts that block fish passage. Stream improvement projects in Michigan are considered on a case-by-case basis.

### **Grassland Projects**

Grassland habitat provides a buffer around wetland areas and nesting cover for some waterfowl and a number of declining grassland birds such as bobolinks. The Partners Program is working with others in Michigan’s agricultural counties to promote the establishment of mixed stands of warm-season grasses and native wildflowers. Grasslands 20 to 40 acres in size, and larger, help provide adequate cover and food throughout the year for a variety of migratory birds, pheasants, and other wildlife.

### **Habitat for Endangered Species**

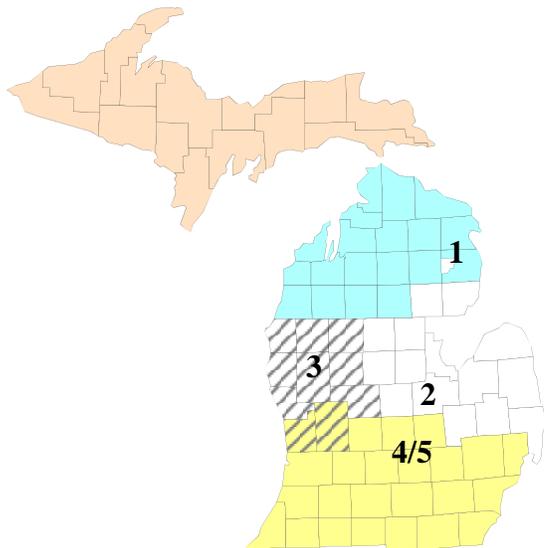
Partners efforts are expanding to remove invasive species in sensitive habitats supporting threatened or endangered species. For example, glossy buckthorn is being removed from wetland fens to benefit the Mitchell’s satyr butterfly. These projects are considered on a case-by-case basis.

### **Cost and Commitment**

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service funds projects with cost-share assistance provided by Ducks Unlimited, other conservation organizations and government agencies, and landowners. Project construction is often completed with little or no cost to the landowner. Many landowners do contribute funds for permits or construction and in-kind services such as labor to prepare seedbeds and seed disturbed areas. Landowners are required to sign an agreement to preserve the project on their property for a minimum of 10 years. Longer agreements are encouraged. Landowners are also responsible for project maintenance.



The biologists for Michigan are listed below:



1. Heather Rawlings (989) 356-5102 x 1011  
Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office
2. Michelle Vander Haar (989) 777-5930 x 12  
Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge
3. Gib King (517) 351-224, East Lansing Private Lands Office
4. Tom Eitniear (517) 351-6283, East Lansing Field Office
5. Jim Hazelman (517) 351-6235, East Lansing Private Lands Office  
Assistant State Private Lands Coordinator

For information on the Partners Program in Indiana go to this [LINK](#). For Ohio go [HERE](#) and contact the regional office.

## New Michigan GEMS Now Open

**This year the MDNR launched an additional seven Grouse Enhanced Management Sites (GEMS) announced in the press release below. RGS and AWS have been very supportive of this initiative that has promoted upland hunting and sustainable forest management throughout the state and region. RGS and the Le Grand Traverse Chapter paid for the installation of informational kiosks at six of the new GEMS. We are currently completing habitat improvement projects at two GEMS, the Little Betsie and LeeGrande, and look forward to future projects in these special areas.**

### Eric

September brings many things, but for bird hunters, it's the month they've been waiting for since last year. Sept. 15 marks the opening day of ruffed grouse season in Michigan, the time when trucks hit public land two-tracks in search of prime hunting spots.

"Opening day of grouse season is a real treat – the woods are just coming alive with color, and you can smell fall in the air," said Department of Natural Resources upland game bird specialist Al Stewart. "With woodcock season opening on Sept. 19 this year, we have two openers only a few days apart! This is going to be a really exciting fall!"

The DNR and various partners have worked together to develop and maintain Grouse Enhanced Management Sites (GEMS) to give bird hunters places to target their hunt, help other hunters give bird hunting a try, and give seasoned hunters new locations to explore. GEMS are normally remote areas and vary in size from several hundred to several thousand acres. An intensive timber harvest schedule, closely monitored by DNR staff, helps to provide great wildlife habitat, and old logging roads are converted to walking trails that offer minimal terrain challenges and provide comfort to hunters who may not be familiar with the area.

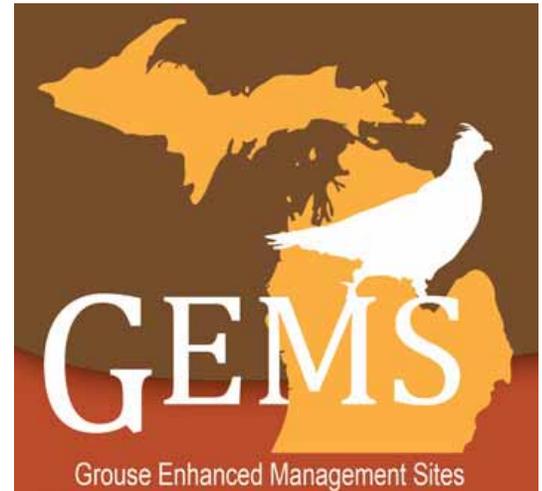
"GEMS provide a unique experience for many people, including seniors and those with mobility challenges," said Eric Ellis, regional wildlife biologist with Ruffed Grouse Society and American Woodcock Society. "This year, we are providing financial support for the installation of kiosks at six GEMS locations. We also have successfully acquired grant funding and allocated Drummer Funds to further improve wildlife habitat at numerous GEMS locations."

"We are proud to be part of this program, which highlights upland hunting to the nation and provides great habitat for ruffed grouse, American woodcock, and a host of other species dependent on young forests, including neotropical songbirds and white-tailed deer."

This fall, [seven additional GEMS will be available](#), two in the Lower Peninsula and five in the Upper Peninsula, including two private property locations. The GEMS program originally debuted in 2014 with seven locations. Gov. Rick Snyder participated in a habitat work day at the Ralph GEMS, and the Drummond Island GEMS hosted a kickoff celebration, in 2014.

Upper Peninsula GEMS include:

- Blue Bill Creek (Gogebic County, Marenisco Township)
- Cedar River (Menominee County, Cedar River Township)
- Drummond Island (Chippewa County, Drummond Township)
- Gold Mine (Iron County, Iron River Township)
- Halifax (Luce County, McMillan Township)
- Hazel Swamp (Houghton County, North East Laird Township)
- Mosinee (Gogebic County, Bessemer Township)
- Ralph (Dickinson County, West Branch Township)
- South Marquette (Marquette County, Forsyth Township)
- Strickler (Mackinac County, Hudson Township)



Lower Peninsula GEMS include:

- Greasy Creek (Montmorency County, Loud Township)
- LeeGrande Ranch (Cheboygan County, Koehler Township)
- Lame Duck Foot Access Area (Gladwin County, Bourret Township)
- Little Betsie (Benzie County, Colfax Township)

Information stations will be located at all GEMS, where hunters can find out where to park and access walking trails, learn about timber management and grouse and woodcock habitat, and discover great discounts that local businesses offer to hunters.

“We see hunters from all over the United States making their way to northern Michigan to hunt birds,” said Stewart. “All of those hunters provide a great boom to local communities in the fall – they’ll need supplies, food, gas and lodging.”

To see examples of the [discounts local businesses are offering GEMS hunters](#) and [maps of individual GEMS locations](#), visit the [GEMS website](#).

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## Forest Health Warnings

Two recent Michigan DNR press releases have highlighted a new threat to our state’s forests and a scam that some are using to take advantage of the prevalence of invasive forest diseases.



The state has confirmed that hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) has been found in Ottawa and Muskegon Counties. These are the first instances of this invasive pest in native hemlock stands. Earlier infestations were found in nurseries and landscaping and were successfully treated. Landowners would be wise to learn how to identify hemlocks and HWA and report any suspected infestations to the Michigan Department of Agricultural and Rural Development (MDARD). MDARD has had a quarantine on the transport of hemlock into

Michigan since 2002, it can be read here: [“Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Quarantine”](#). Information on how to identify hemlocks can be found [here](#). Information on HWA with pictures can be found at this link: [www.michigan.gov/exoticpests](http://www.michigan.gov/exoticpests). Signs to look for include many dead and dying twigs, a grayish color of the normally green hemlock canopy, and small cotton-like masses on the underside of hemlock branches (never on the needles). Digging up and transplanting hemlocks is discouraged as is having birdfeeders near hemlocks as songbirds can facilitate spread of HWA. To report a possible HWA detection, contact MDARD at 800-292-3939 or [MDA-info@michigan.gov](mailto:MDA-info@michigan.gov).

Landowners are also being warned about scam artists asking to buy black walnut trees because Thousand Cankers Disease (TCD) has been found in Michigan. This disease has not been found in Michigan and these people are using fear to line their pockets. TCD is a threat to Michigan forests but it is a slow spreading disease unlike Emerald Ash Borer and has had limited impacts on walnuts, primarily in western states, Tennessee, and Pennsylvania. Any infestation in Michigan would be widely announced and impact only the infested area. TCD is a fatal combination of a small beetle and fungus that can be moved around via logs, firewood, and woodworking material. You can learn more at the [MDARD Exotic Pests Website](#) and [www.thousandcankers.com](http://www.thousandcankers.com).

This scam highlights the importance of working with a reputable company, such as Weyerhaeuser, or a certified consulting forester when managing any trees on your land. I can provide references to landowners for foresters who have gone through our young forest

workshops and can help people interested in managing their land for ruffed grouse and American woodcock. Loggers who prey upon unsuspecting landowners for their own benefit give the entire industry a black eye and make it more difficult to reach our goals of healthy forests for abundant wildlife.

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## State Wildlife Action Plans Benefit Young Forests

Ruffed Grouse Society staff has been providing comments to the Michigan DNR, as well as Indiana and Ohio, on their State Wildlife Action Plan which is updated every 10 years. State Wildlife Action Plans are submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for approval and are required in order for state wildlife agencies to receive many types of federal financial assistance for implementing wildlife management projects. When the initial Michigan plan was released for stakeholder review many young forest species that were previously listed as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) had been unjustifiably removed, including the American woodcock and golden-winged warbler (pictured at right, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service photo). I worked with partners to draft comments regarding the lack of young forest species on the wildlife action plan and the importance of young forest habitat to game and non-game species. Amber Roth from Michigan Tech University was one of those partners and was a strong voice for young forest wildlife during this process.



Since the submission of comments, Amber and I have been working closely with the Michigan DNR Wildlife Division and partners to update the plan to ensure that young forest wildlife species and their habitat needs are represented. This is another example of how the Ruffed Grouse Society and partners continue to advocate for the management of young forest habitats and the species dependent upon them. The current draft of the plan now includes several young forest dependent species listed as SGCN as well as listing young forests as a priority habitat for the state. The final draft of the State Wildlife Action Plan is currently available online. Take a moment to review the plan and feel free to provide input to me if you like: [www.michigan.gov/dnrwildlifeactionplan](http://www.michigan.gov/dnrwildlifeactionplan).

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## Upcoming RGS Events in the Region

For detailed information on these events go to the [RGS events page](#) on our website.

10/6-9/2015	Grand Rapids	MN	34 <sup>th</sup> Annual National Grouse and Woodcock Hunt
10/14/2015	Alpena	MI	Annual Banquet
10/15/2015	Novelty	OH	Inaugural American Woodcock Society Northern Ohio Banquet
10/16/2015	Petoskey	MI	38 <sup>th</sup> Annual Al Litzenburger Chapter Banquet
10/22-25/2015	Gaylord	MI	American Woodcock Society's 2 <sup>nd</sup> Annual Woodcock Celebration Challenge

11/19/2015

Athens

OH

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Hocking River Valley Chapter  
Banquet

**Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions and notify me of any email address changes. I also welcome any ideas for future FAN or RGS magazine articles:**

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The Ruffed Grouse Society is North America's foremost conservation organization dedicated to preserving our sporting traditions by creating healthy forest habitat for ruffed grouse, American woodcock and other wildlife. For information on the Ruffed Grouse Society/American Woodcock Society, please call 888-564-6747 or check out the RGS website at [www.ruffedgrousesociety.org](http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org).