



Eastern Great Lakes Region FAN UPDATE

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It's Time to Go Hunting!!

It is hard to believe that the Michigan grouse hunting begins already the end of this week. I am mentally ready, but there are many projects that need to be finished before I can totally focus on bird hunting. Even if everything is not finished, I will be out in the woods with my dogs on the 15th. The hot weather has made it difficult to work the dogs and do much scouting; however, the forecast of cooler temperatures by the middle of the month adds to my growing excitement about the opening of grouse and woodcock hunting. I am sure that by the time prime hunting conditions arrive, both my dogs and I will be in great shape. I hope that you all have an excellent and safe bird hunting season.

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Early Grouse Scouting Reports Are Encouraging

The Michigan early season ruffed grouse forecasts based on drumming surveys were somewhat discouraging. There was a 16% decrease in drumming activity statewide. In the Upper Peninsula the number of drummers per route decreased from 20.8 in 2011 to 16.6 in 2012, a 20.0% decrease. In the Lower Peninsula the drummers decreased from 11.1 in 2011 to 9.6 in 2012, a 10% decrease.

Despite this decrease in drumming activity, summer reports have been very positive. Warm, dry conditions during the nesting and early brood rearing period were favorable for grouse. Both the number of flushes and brood numbers and size are reported to be as good as or better than the previous two summers. These summer reports have been consistently positive from dog trainers, foresters and biologists. These individuals are very optimistic about the upcoming season.

These individual also stress that you need to continuously be looking for new and better cover. You need to get your dogs in shape and you need to be in shape yourself. If you and your dogs are in shape and you look for the right cover and water, you will find birds.

Michigan DNR Upgrades MI-Hunt Internet Tool

Mi-HUNT, originally released in 2010, is a cutting-edge internet application that displays multiple layers of information, which can be customized to fit specific outdoor interests and trip planning needs. This sophisticated application allows

hunters and outdoor enthusiasts to view, print, measure, and create custom routing to their desired destinations.

Improvements to Mi-HUNT were important in order to address the need for increased functionality, which provides additional information for hunt planning. This upgrade simplifies the experience while simultaneously increasing the amount of information and tools available to the user. Additionally, there is interactive help for the user through video tutorials.

New or enhanced features to Mi-HUNT now make it possible to:

- View 7 million acres of DNR and United States Forest Service (USFS) lands and printable hunting maps highlighting the vegetation of most interest to hunters;
- View detailed information on Hunter Access Program (HAP) lands and view or print downloadable maps for all HAP lands;
- View detailed information on State Game and Wildlife Areas, including information on wildlife species and Wildlife Division management activities, and view or print detailed maps;
- Target specific types of habitat, create waypoints and load this information directly into your personal GPS;
- Use simplified and enhanced legends as well as complete instructional videos where you can watch and learn how to use all of the Mi-HUNT application features.

For more information on MI-Hunt go to http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10371_14793_55471-231810--,00.html.

MUCC Resolutions Encourage Young Forests

At their 75th Anniversary, annual meeting on June 22-23, Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) passed 2 resolutions that support management for young forests. One resolution states that, ***The MUCC resolved that the Michigan United Conservation Clubs staff should contact and meet with State and Federal legislators, and officials of the U.S. Forest Service, to present sportsmen's interests in bringing actual timber harvests on National Forests in line with the management plan's allowable harvest.*** Reasons for this resolution are that the Michigan federal forests are offering less than 50% of the allowable harvest for sale which is negatively impacting the economy, wildlife habitat and health of the forest.

The second resolution states that, ***MUCC resolves to strongly support forest planning and management efforts that promote a healthy mix of old and new growth in our forests, including the preservation and creation of meadows and forest openings***

within lowlands and riparian zones as well as uplands. The reasons for this resolution specifically mention the loss of young aspen stands, openings and productive forest edges. They also stress the benefits to both game and non-game species and the need to address these issues on both public and private lands.

These resolutions were passed by 325 voting delegates representing over 42,000 members. RGS members need to remind public land managers and private land owners of these issues and the level of support for them from conservationists when they communicate about the need for more young forests.

Michigan Governor Appoints New DNR Director

In July, Gov. Rick Snyder appointed Keith Creagh as director of the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Director Creagh was formerly the director of the state Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. The new director has extensive experience in policy development, strategic planning and operational leadership. He holds a degree in forestry and is an avid outdoorsman. He stated, "Hunting, fishing, camping, hiking and other outdoor pursuits are not just hobbies in this state. They are a defining part of who we are as Michiganders."

In an interview with John Pepin of *The Mining Journal* in Marquette the new director stressed the need to comprehensively analyze the resources that the state owns and use them in a sustainable manner that benefits regional economies. Other priorities that Creagh mentioned were improved customer service and decentralized decision making. These priorities will help continue the good working relationship that RGS has maintained with the Michigan DNR. These priorities will also allow us to accomplish our mission of promoting young forest habitat to benefit wildlife and sustain our sport hunting tradition.

Drummer Fund Projects Continue In Ohio

In 2011 two Drummer Fund Projects were approved in Ohio. The first project was on the Shawnee State Forest in south-central Ohio. This forest has had timber harvest, wildfires and winter storm damage that have combined to produce a significant amount of young forest habitat. This area supports one of the better grouse populations in the state of Ohio. In summer of 2011 Ohio Drummer Funds were used to purchase **RGS Trail & Food Plot Mix** to seed the trails and landing areas (<http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org/shoppingcart/magento/seed/rgs-trail-food->

[plot-mix-5271.html](#)). The addition of quality herbaceous forage will further benefit the grouse in the area. Drummer Funds are also being used to fund the production and printing of maps to highlight these regeneration areas.

The second project is on the Tranquility Wildlife Area in northern Adams County. This is a productive wildlife area, but some of its productivity is being lost to invasive thickets of Eastern red-cedar. A partnership plan was developed between RGS, the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) and Ohio Division of Wildlife (OH DOW) to begin removing these cedar thickets using an RGS mulching machine. Treatment of these areas began in March of 2012 and will continue in late winter of 2013.

Another partnership project involving Ohio Drummer Funds is being planned for 2013. This project will involve establishing young forest habitat on mine reclamation areas on the Vinton Furnace Wildlife Area located in Vinton County. American chestnuts will be used to expand young forest conditions in areas that currently support ruffed grouse. This project will involve a partnership between RGS, NWTf, OH DOW and the American Chestnut Foundation.

Drummer Funds are currently available for one additional project in Ohio. We are currently looking for a public land project in central, southeastern Ohio. Project proposals will be reviewed by a leadership team of RGS staff and volunteers. This new project may also begin in 2013.

RGS Files Brief in Case Before the US Supreme Court

In what it considers a vast error in judgment, the Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) has filed an amicus curiae brief with the Supreme Court, regarding a 2011 ruling by the 9th Circuit Court in California in which the court ruled that rainwater runoff from forest roads that is caused by timber harvest activity is an “industrial pollutant”.

As is noted in the brief, this ruling applies to all landowners, including private individuals, who typically have little knowledge of, or expertise with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) permitting processes. If required to go through an EPA permitting process, the cost and complexity of this process would greatly discourage private individuals from implementing a timber harvest on their lands – this would drastically reduce habitat availability for ruffed grouse, woodcock and the other wildlife that depend on young forests habitats today created only through timber harvest.

“This decision overturned 35 years of regulatory interpretation. Prior to this ruling, the “silvicultural exemption” in the Clean Water Act allowed this type of runoff to be treated as a “nonindustrial source,” said John B. Eichinger, RGS President and CEO.

“The 9th Circuit’s ruling places an absurd regulatory burden on individual private landowners that would lead to drastic reductions in wildlife habitat development on private forest lands. Millions of acres of important young forest habitats will be lost over time if this ruling is allowed to stand. We certainly hope that the Supreme Court will overturn this ill-advised regulatory mandate,” said Dan Dessecker, RGS Director of Conservation Policy.

The Ruffed Grouse Society filed its brief on August 28, 2012, The Supreme Court will review the RGS brief, as well as those filed by other interests, and hear oral arguments in early December. The Court is expected to release a ruling early in 2013.

Timber Management in Indiana - Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment (HEE)

The Issue - Forest management in the eastern United States is faced with many modern challenges. Professional foresters have an innovative set of management options for the maintenance of healthy forest ecosystems. But some options raise public objections when applied to public lands (e.g., types of timber harvest, prescribed fire) and the effects of some management options on forests and their native inhabitants are poorly understood. Moreover, forest lands in the Eastern and Midwestern United States primarily are in small privately-owned parcels that change ownership relatively frequently. These lands are often managed for short-term financial gains rather than long-term sustainability.

As populations of some forest organisms decline, restrictions on landowners may increase because species become classified as endangered or threatened (e.g., the Indiana bat), while increasing populations of other species (white-tailed deer, invasive plants) create economical and ecological challenges. These problems are compounded by the lack of scientifically rigorous research on the overall impacts of forest management options on the effected ecosystems and their components. Without this research, land managers often are unable to inform a skeptical public regarding the importance of proposed management strategies. To address this set of issues, the HEE, a long-term, large-scale experimental study of forest management and its impacts, was initiated in 2006.

Research Goals and Objectives - The primary research goal and objectives of the HEE are as follows:

What are the ecological and social impacts of long-term forest management on public and private lands in Indiana and the Central Hardwoods Region?

The specific goals of this research are diverse, because the information will be of use to a broad array of potential users. Our research objectives include efforts to:

1. Develop a proven system of forest management prescriptions to maintain desired populations of native plant and animal species and important communities such as those dominated by oak species;
2. Understand the response of targeted native wildlife and plant species to forest management, in order to identify the positive effects and mitigate the potential negative effects on species of conservation concern;
3. Assess public attitudes towards forest management to develop new approaches for education of the general public and private landowners; and to engage various interest groups in a discussion of proper land management;
4. Identify direct and indirect benefits of specific forest management practices to local and regional communities, and understand the impact of forest management practices in community development.

Project Outcomes - The HEE is in its initial stages and is planned as a 100-year project. Currently, pre-harvest data collection has been completed and the project is in its second year of post-harvest data collection. We will be able to quantify the responses of plants and animals to timber harvesting. However, ultimately that information will result in management prescriptions allowing sustainability of all forest resources and improved quality of life for Indiana residents.

For more information and regular updates on HEE go to:

<http://www.heeforeststudy.org/>

Upcoming RGS Events in the Region

September 13 – Mid U.P. Chapter Sportsman Banquet, Marquette Mountain Ski Resort. Contact Erik Strazzinski at 906-869-4029 for info.

September 15 – Southern Ohio Youth Field Day, Indian Creek Wildlife Area, Fayetteville, OH. Contact Jeff Rhinock at 513-324-1334 for info.

September 29 – 2nd Annual Highlands Chapter Sportsmen's Banquet, Eldorado Golf Club, Cadillac, MI. Contact Larry Visser at 412-228-9472 for info.

October 4 – 8th Annual North Woods Chapter Sportsmen's Banquet, Pine Mountain Golf and Ski Resort, Iron Mountain, MI. Contact Russ Hagberg at 906-774-5915 for info.

October 5 – Al Litzenburger Chapter Sportsmen's Banquet, Boyne Highlands Ski Lodge, Harbor Springs, MI. Contact Jim Bayak at 231-622-8356 for info.

October 6 – 8th Annual Ohio Hills Chapter Fun Shoot, Hidden Haven Shooting Preserve & Sporting Clays, Sugar Grove, OH. Contact Terry Borah, Sr. for info.

Reminder

To insure that you receive timely FAN updates, please notify me of your current email address.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions:

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