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Subject: RGS FAN Update - Southern Apps

Forest Action Network Southern Appalachians Update Spring 2010



Picture: *The Oakland, MD chapter of RGS planted over 1,000 spruce, American chestnut and apple trees at Potomac State Forest last Saturday. Nearly 50 people turned out to help. Kudos to MD DNR's John Denning and his crew and the Chapter for being incredibly well prepared for the large group of 4th graders and Boy Scouts who did the bulk of the work.*

Most Active Spring

Maybe it was the unprecedented snows that blanketed the region in late winter that got folks motivated, but in my nearly 12 years of working for RGS, I can't recall a more active spring for chapters. Everyone was obviously in top shape after shoveling hundreds of inches of snow. Field days, sometimes more than one, were held by chapters in many states, including inaugural field events by chapters in Richmond, VA (two field days), Allentown, PA, and Oakland, MD. In many cases, it was in addition to a spring banquet and/or a shoot or dog competition of some kind. Reading, PA had over 70 people at their field day once again. This is wonderful to see – keep up the good work!! It is very much appreciated. {My 6 year-old son Luke went to his first field day last weekend in MD. He is still talking about his experience and we have two newts and a toad as souvenirs.}

Positive Developments in Ohio

There is a definite uptick in forest management in Ohio. The Ohio Division of Wildlife reports that Shawnee State Forest is very actively managing timber even after an ice storm and considerable salvage work done in the last several years contributed to

considerably to more habitat. The Cincinnati Chapter has been keeping close tabs on that project and providing help with brood habitat on logging decks and skid trails.

A new tract of Zeleski State Forest (20,000 acres) includes a timber supply agreement with the previous owners that will mean continual timber harvest until 2017, meaning a supply of grouse habitat until about 2030.

New Page is harvesting heavily for their needs on private lands throughout southcentral Ohio, meaning a landscape level contribution to grouse habitat that will likely help establish strong grouse populations to augment public lands.

The Division of Wildlife also reports that grouse management areas at Zeleski State Forest and Tar Hollow WMA established by RGS and the Division in the late 80's (when Dan Dessecker was the lone biologist for RGS) are still active and entering their 3rd cutting cycle.

RGS has renewed its contract with the Wayne National Forest to continue management of shrubs on reclaimed mine areas on the Forest. To date, 800 acres have been managed. RGS is also discussing ways to speed up the establishment of native shrublands on these areas in addition to native grasslands.

The Cincinnati Chapter will host a "Grouse Management" meeting on July 21 near Cincinnati. Anyone is welcome. This is a very recent development, so stay tuned for details.

Timber Sale Exceeds Expectations

The most recent stand of timber (approx. 130 acres) sold from the Somerset County, PA (Forbes State Forest) tract owned by RGS fetched \$357,000 from the highest bidder. Appalachian Forest Consultants, who handle the sales for RGS, reported that bidding was strong as markets begin to recover. The past two sales were worth about \$230,000 combined. To date, 280 acres of timber have been sold and 150 have been cut. The funds from the sales, after expenses, go into an endowment that supports the Society's biologist program.

Timberdoodle.org Site Growing

If you've not checked out Timberdoodle.org yet, its time. The website created by the Wildlife Management Institute and managed primarily by Chuck Fergus is constantly adding and updating habitat projects throughout the east. RGS is heavily involved in many of the projects. New information about New Jersey and Maryland have recently been added.

******National Raffle******

Baby Frame 28-Gauge Shotgun

Made Famous by Winchester

(approx. retail value \$32,000)

28 inch barrels

Improved cylinder/Modified chokes

Straight English Stock, Walnut

Beavertail fore-end

Gold RGS Logo Engraving on bottom of receiver

Visit www.ruffedgrousesociety.org to order tickets or see a picture (it's a beauty) of this one-of-a-kind shotgun or contact any RGS staff person.

Buzkirk Tract on Monongahela Still In Sights

RGS has been working with the WV DNR and Monongahela National Forest to develop a stewardship agreement for the Buzkirk Tract near White Sulphur Springs. The local chapter and RGS staff have attended a number of meetings and field tours. The agreement would be to use funds from a timber sale to do other habitat management such as brood habitat development and non-commercial cutting of young, unproductive stands too old for grouse, but not of the sufficient age or species composition for commercial sale. The process is not moving quite as rapidly as we may like, but it is still moving.

Mower Tract Management Looking for Support

The Monongahela NF is looking for partners on their habitat initiative on the Mower Tract. The tract is located on Cheat Mountain – take 92 to the top of the mountain and turn onto a dirt road heading uphill from 92. The Mower Tract features extensive surface mine reclamation, many of acres of relatively rare red spruce and other softwoods mingled with shrublands, hardwoods and grasslands. Its an extremely unusual and interesting area. The Forest is interested in managing it for grouse and many other species for the long-term. I saw several grouse on the tract last spring. Its worth visiting and is easy and very scenic hiking. RGS has agreed to cooperate fully and has toured the area with both FS and DNR personnel.

What About All the Snow?

It isn't entirely clear whether the deep snows that covered much of the region in February and early March was a positive or negative for grouse. It depends on a number of things.

Probably the most important thing is how long the surface of the snow stayed soft. All the deep snow offered potentially ideal snow roosting, meaning better protection from the elements and predators. Here in central PA, we had rains that led to a rock-hard crust in many areas, but it didn't last long. A crust can trap grouse under snow if it happens overnight and it definitely prevents them from starting a new snow roost. Grouse on top of snow stand out to predators. Grouse are unlikely to starve because they eat a wide variety of things, particularly buds that are accessible even with deep snow. Not all buds are preferable, however, especially where oak and hickory dominate and there are few maples, cherries, birches, aspen, etc. Anything green on the ground was definitely off limits for over a month. Hens that might have had trouble finding food may not reproduce as efficiently if they enter the breeding season in poor shape. On the upside, it greened up in a hurry this spring once the snows melted due to some very warm weather in early April, so that may have helped.

At any rate, there isn't much we can do about it now, so let's hope for a good late May and early June so our chicks grow up enough to be pointed or flushed by our dogs in October.

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