



# Western Great Lakes Newsletter

February 2009

*Inside this Issue:*

## 1 National News

RUFF Capital Campaign Update  
*Tail Feathers* Membership Drive

## 2

Minnesota Court Favors  
Conservationists

## 3

Alaskan Conservation Plan Omits  
Hunting as Priority

## 4 Regional News

WI, IL, NE IA, SE MN, Western U.P.  
MI Update

## 5

Contact Info

## National News

### **RUFF Capital Campaign Nears Halfway Mark**

RUFF, or Restoring Upland Forests' Future, is a capital campaign aiming to raise \$5 million dollars in the next two years. The money will be used to fully endow our team of biologists and to reduce overhead by purchasing a building for headquarters.

To date a total of \$2.1 million dollars has been raised – placing us just shy of the halfway mark.

Make a donation today by calling 1-888-564-6747, or on our website [www.ruffedgrousesociety.org](http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org).

### **Tail Feathers Membership Drive**

*Will you be our 2009 Super Recruiter?*

A new membership recruitment program will allow members, and their chapters, to compete for the title of Super Recruiter 2009.

When you introduce a new member to the Ruffed Grouse Society, let us know and we will track your credits. Top recruiters will be posted, along with a running tally of credits, on our website. We'll also keep you posted of your standing during the course of the year.

Rules:

Each member will receive one individual credit, and one credit for their chapter every time they sign up a new member through the end of 2009. In January, 2010 a tally will be taken to determine the top individual recruiter and the top chapter recruiter.

The individual will receive a special edition Tail Feather Super Recruiter Grouse Display from headquarters, as well as recognition on the website, magazine and at their banquet.

The chapter with the most credits will get their

chapter name engraved on a plaque to be displayed at headquarters and presented by their Regional Director at the 2010 chapter banquet.

**To receive credit for the contest you must do one of the following:**

1. Fill out a recruitment form, (which is posted on the website) and send the completed form to: Membership Department, 451 McCormick Road, Coraopolis, PA 15108,
2. Send an email with your new member information to: [membership@ruffedgrousesociety.org](mailto:membership@ruffedgrousesociety.org), or
3. Write your name on the back of the banquet stub, and specify that you are a super recruiter.

*Note: If you have already signed up new members this year, let us know and you will receive credit accordingly.*

A new member is anyone brand new to the organization, or someone who has not renewed their membership in the past 365 days. Any level of new membership/sponsorship counts for one credit toward the program.

**Contact the Membership Department with questions: 1-888-564-6747.**

### **Minnesota Court Sides with Conservationists in Superior National Forest Lawsuit** *US Forest Service to Proceed with Habitat Management Projects*

An important legal victory was won recently in a case regarding the Superior National Forest (SNF) in northern Minnesota. The Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) joined with others - including Minnesota Forest Industries, Inc., Minnesota Timber Producers Association, All Terrain Vehicle Association of Minnesota, Blue Ribbon Coalition, Lake County and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - to defend important habitat management projects being proposed by the US Forest Service in the area. These projects were part of the recently revised Forest Plan.

In 2008 the Sierra Club and other preservationists had filed suit to halt the implementation of the Forest Plan, on the grounds that the Plan allowed habitat management projects adjacent to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). They argued that these projects would affect the wilderness character of the BWCAW itself, and should be prohibited.

Last November the United States District Court for the District of Minnesota granted RGS its request to appear as amicus curiae in support of the US Forest Service (USFS) and US Department of Agriculture (USDA) in their defense against the litigation.

Preservationists argued that aspen clear-cutting and other logging – despite the fact that it will benefit ruffed grouse, American woodcock and other species of wildlife in the SNF - will negatively impact not only the forest itself, but the adjacent BWCAW as well.

Speaking on behalf of RGS, attorney Ryan Woody of Hartford, Wisconsin, provided arguments to the contrary of the preservationists' claims. In late January of this year the court ruled in favor of the defense on all counts.

“The win on the SNF case is important because it involved the newly revised Forest Plan, which governs all future management and projects on the SNF for at least the next 15 years. In addition, I think the court’s decision is important for future projects, because the court showed its respect for the Forest Service’s expertise and reviewed the Plan under a very deferential

approach ... As far as RGS is concerned the newly affirmed plan should provide for important opportunities to actively manage forest conditions to improve early successional habitat for ruffed grouse and other species,” Woody said.

RGS Senior Regional Wildlife Biologist Gary Zimmer agreed with Woody’s assessment, adding that “The Court decision supports the many years of planning conducted by the Forest Service when it revised the Superior National Forest Plan. After years of delays, it is now time to implement that revised Plan in this area.”

### **Conservation Plan of Alaskan Wildlife Refuge Omits Hunting as Priority Objective** *RGS Disappointed at Absence*

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s Draft Revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge does not list enhancing game wildlife habitat and populations or hunting opportunities in the listed goals of the Plan to enhance wildlife-oriented recreation.

At nearly two million acres in size, the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge - located about two and a half hours from Anchorage in south-central Alaska - is characterized by its diverse habitats and wildlife. Created in 1941 to protect the Kenai moose, 65 percent of refuge lands are designated wilderness.

In a letter to US Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) Planning Team Leader Rob Campellone, Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) Director of Conservation, Dan Dessecker wrote: “This is especially disconcerting given that public comments provided during the development of the Draft demonstrate that hunting is tied with hiking as the second most popular form of public recreation on the refuge. In addition, this conspicuous absence of hunting from the list of priority objectives for the refuge runs counter to clear direction provided by President George W. Bush in his Executive Order 13443, the stated purpose of which is to facilitate the expansion of hunting opportunities and the management of game species and their habitats.” Dessecker added that if implemented, the current Draft will lead to reductions in habitats essential for game wildlife and, therefore, hunting opportunities.

RGS respectfully urges the US Fish & Wildlife Service to modify and select an alternative for implementation that will aid in meeting public expectations for recreation on the refuge and help to secure the future of our hunting heritage.

# REGIONAL NEWS

## Wisconsin, Illinois, NE Iowa, SE Minnesota, Western U.P. Michigan Update

### *Job Intro*

My first two months on the job were a lot like I expected them to be... and so much more. In one week I travelled from my new home in River Falls, WI to my first committee meeting in Muscoda, WI (4½ hrs) on Monday. That night after the meeting I drove to Madison (1½ hrs) and spent the night. Tuesday morning was spent in a meeting, after which I left for an evening meeting with the Milwaukee committee (1½ hrs), at a local supper club.

With a winter storm warning posted, and needing to get to Cedar Rapids by noon the next day (4 hrs), I left and headed down the road. Heavy snow caught me enroute and soon changed over to heavy freezing rain. Somewhere in Illinois it became impossible to drive, so I grabbed a sandwich and a room and lived to drive another day. Up early the next day with all snow now, I headed west and met the dedicated guys of the NE Iowa committee at the Cedar Rapids K of C Hall, for a noon lunch and discussion. After a lengthy lesson about the reason God meant for us to shoot a double barrel and not an over/under, (think about the way your eyes are laid out in your head) I headed east toward Chicago (4 hrs).

Thursday morning found me hunkered down in a motel room doing computer work and biding my time 'till that night's meeting with the Chicago committee. By the time I was into the Windy City, the storm was once again upon me. Only the meeting host and wife, along with their dogs were able to attend that nights get together. Because of the heavy snow, I wanted to get away from the metro area and back into my element with just snow and driving to deal with. I bunked that

night in Rockford (2 hrs), and hoped for better weather in the morning. No such luck!!

Next morning early (6), I left in 10-12" of fresh snow, heading for a late morning meeting with the Stevens Point, WI (4 hrs) committee. The storm was less severe the farther north I got, and found only 6" in the "Point" area. After meeting with the committee there and getting a series of meetings set up for their upcoming March banquet, I turned toward the west and home (4 hrs).

### *Initial Expectations*

My initial expectations for this job have been met and exceeded in so many ways. First, is the quality and enthusiasm of the dedicated volunteers who have given so many hours and dollars for the game birds we all hold in such high esteem. Coming from the U.P. as I do, I had a bit of an elitist attitude regarding ruffed grouse. What I've found after meeting with most of the committees in my territory, is that the passion for hunting and habitat runs through all of us and binds us together in a way I'm only now coming to fathom.

Secondly, is the incredible beauty of these areas. From the driftless areas, to the dense forests and lakes, and rivers and plains, I'm stunned by the variety of landscapes and people that inhabit them.

For the committees I've met with so far, to those only spoken to by phone or e-mail, and those as yet unformed committees, thank you for your patience with me and also for your dedication to the king of game birds. I am looking forward to years of working with you and this common goal of habitat and hunting.

My contact information:

Dave Johnson  
RGS Regional Director  
WI; Far West UP MI; Twin Cities, MN; IA; and IL  
N7789 State Road 65  
River Falls WI 54022  
715-426-1000  
[uptrek@gmail.com](mailto:uptrek@gmail.com)