Preview of Berggren Plan 2.0

John Laux, NGPC Upland Game Program Manager

- History of Pheasants in Nebraska
- What Drives Pheasant Populations
- Berggren Plan Accomplishments
- Preview of the Updated Plan
- Questions/Feedback
Nebraska’s Long-Term Pheasant Population Trends
Habitat Loss Caused by Agricultural Land-Use Changes

**Hiller et al. (2009)**

**↑ Farm Size**  
**↑ Field Size**  
**↑ Row Crops**  
**↑ Weed Control**

**↓ Farms (#)**  
**↓ Crop Diversity**  
**↓ Small Grains**  
**↓ Idle Areas**
Undisturbed Grasslands (CRP)

Small Grains (Winter Wheat)

Crop Stubble (Tall Wheat/Milo)

Thickets/Woody Cover

Idle/Weedy Areas

Cover Crops

Unfarmed draws/pasture

Wetlands
Undisturbed grasslands (CRP)

- Most Highly Preferred Cover Type
- Can Restore Habitat at Landscape Scale

2009 to 2019 = 3.3M acres of grasslands converted to cropland

(World Wildlife Fund 2020)
Is all CRP equal in value?
Does the surrounding landscape matter?

Jorgensen et al. (2014)
CRP enrollment increases pheasant abundance and is magnified by the small grains in the landscape.

Pheasant abundance

Proportion of CRP (1km radius)

0% small grains in 5km radius

Jorgensen et al. (2014)
CRP enrollment increases pheasant abundance and is magnified by the small grains in the landscape

Jorgensen et al. (2014)
CRP enrollment increases pheasant abundance and is magnified by the small grains in the landscape.
CRP enrollment increases pheasant abundance; however the benefits of CRP are inhibited by trees.

Proportion of CRP (1km radius)

Pheasant abundance

0% trees in 5km radius

Jorgensen et al. (2014)
CRP enrollment increases pheasant abundance; however, the benefits of CRP are inhibited by trees.

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CRP enrollment increases pheasant abundance; however the benefits of CRP are inhibited by trees. Jorgensen et al. (2014)
CRP enrollment increases pheasant abundance; however the benefits of CRP are inhibited by trees.

Twidwell et al., in prep
Economic Impact of Pheasant Hunting (2015-2019)

$23.5 million/year

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Census Bureau (2016)
PRIVATE PROPERTY

NO HUNTING NEXT 20 MILES

DON'T ASK
DON'T STOP
3/5 upland hunters utilize public lands.

Availability of public lands is a top factor influencing nonresidents’ decision to hunt in Nebraska (Hunter Success Survey Data).

Lack of publicly accessible lands was #1 barrier to waterfowl hunting participation in central U.S. (Hinrichs, 2019).

Access to land was the #1 barrier to upland and big game hunting participation in Nebraska (Grams, 2018).
- Annual, Per-Acre Payments
- Liability Protection
- Incentives for Habitat Improvements
Thank you to all our valued partners who have helped provide public access opportunities in Nebraska.

Learn more at OutdoorNebraska.org
OUR MISSION:
Produce the best pheasant hunting experiences for the largest number of people possible over the next five years

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

• We will consider all manageable aspects of the pheasant hunting experience, with habitat and hunter access remaining our cornerstone activities.

• We will concentrate work where it will be most effective (i.e., where habitat, hunter access, and community support come together) based on sound science.

• We will set realistic management targets and expectations, and use our financial and human resources as efficiently as possible to meet them.

• We will foster strong partnerships with other public entities, private conservation organizations, and local communities in reaching our shared goals.
A Targeted Approach...

Nebraska Pheasant Suitability Model and Berggren Plan Priority Areas

Citation: Adapted from Jorgensen et al. 2014
Berggren Plan 1.0 (2016-2020):

Completed 2,434 projects with private landowners, impacting over 216,500 acres of pheasant habitat.
Over The Past 5 Years...

- Increased Public Access in 7 of 8 Priority Areas
- Enrolled Additional >108K Acres Within Priority Areas (105% Increase)

Current Statewide OFW Enrollment (>382K acres) is at All-Time High
A Targeted Approach...

Berggren Plan

Berggren Plan 2.0

Citation: Adapted from Jorgensen et al. 2014

Increasing Habitat Value

□ Berggren Plan Priority Areas

NEBRASKA GAME PARKS
Rainwater Basins

Eastern Saline Wetlands
FUTURE EFFORTS IN THE RAINWATER BASINS (IN PROGRESS)

- Combine efforts of partners, public land managers, and private lands biologists
- Focus efforts within existing habitat complexes – based on culture, opportunity, and capacity
- Incentivize habitat establishment/management on private lands adjacent to public lands (i.e., WMAs, WPAs, DU Revolving Lands) and privately-owned WRE properties
  - pivot corners/waterways, cover crops/precision agriculture, wetland restoration options, etc.
FUTURE EFFORTS IN THE EASTERN SALINE WETLANDS

- Jack Sinn WMA
- Little Salt Creek WMA
- Little Salt Creek West WMA
- Little Salt Springs WMA
- Little Salt Fork Marsh Preserve WMA
- Helmhuth Marsh Public Access Area
- Saline Meadows Public Access Area

(PRIVATE LANDOWNERS) (IN PROGRESS)
What’s the best way to restore pheasants “in the blue”?

- High demand for pheasant hunting opportunities near our state’s population centers
- Habitat restoration is more costly in eastern Nebraska due to higher land values/cash rental rates

FUTURE EFFORTS MUST BE STRATEGIC!!!

OBJECTIVES:

- Determine “minimum habitat thresholds”
  - habitat density vs. pheasant abundance
- Estimate “scale of effect”
  - how does distance between patches affect pheasant abundance (and response)
  - determine value of individual habitat patches
- Model population responses under varying levels of available habitat

= TARGETED CONSERVATION DELIVERY
UPDATES TO STRATEGIES & TACTICS

- Funding and Policy Environment

Influence USDA Programs and Implementation
Incentives Associated with Ecosystem Services
New Partnerships & Alternative Funding Sources
Funding and Policy Environment

Manageable Factors Affecting:
  ▪ Pheasant Abundance

Incentivize CRP & Pheasant-Friendly Practices
Maintain & Expand Partnerships
Enhance Habitat & Management Capacity on High-Priority WMAs

Pivot Corner Initiative
(Central & N. Panhandle POAs)
UPDATES TO STRATEGIES & TACTICS

- Funding and Policy Environment

- Manageable Factors Affecting:
  - Pheasant Abundance
  - Hunter Access to Land

Increase Public Access on Private Lands (OFW)
Strategic Plan for Public Access
Facilitate Additional Access on Partner Lands
Promote Public Hunting Opportunities
Updates to Strategies & Tactics

- Funding and Policy Environment

- Manageable Factors Affecting:
  - Pheasant Abundance
  - Hunter Access to Land
  - Pheasant Hunter Numbers

R3 Programs & Partnerships
Opportunities for Youth & Novice Hunters
Funding and Policy Environment

Manageable Factors Affecting:
- Pheasant Abundance
- Hunter Access to Land
- Pheasant Hunter Numbers
- Hunter Expectations

Upland Forecast
Promotion & Outreach
Resources for Hunters
**Updates to Strategies & Tactics**

- **Funding and Policy Environment**

- **Manageable Factors Affecting:**
  - Pheasant Abundance
  - Hunter Access to Land
  - Pheasant Hunter Numbers
  - Hunter Expectations

- **Habitat/Access Goals**

- **Research & Priority Information Needs**

- **Pheasant Communication Action Plan**

- **Completed Tactics from Berggren Plan 1.0 (NEW)**

- **Peer-Reviewed Publications Derived from Commission-Funded Pheasant Research (NEW)**

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Table A3. Habitat and access goals (2021-2025) for the South-Central Focus on Pheasants (SCFOP) Area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>5-year Goals (Acres)</th>
<th>Annual Goals (Acres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New CRP a</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRP Re-Enrollment b</td>
<td>11,520</td>
<td>2,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRP Mid-Contract Management c</td>
<td>8,563.5</td>
<td>1,712.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Successional Habitat Management</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree Removal/Edge-Feathering</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescribed Fire</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-Term Set-Aside</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrub Plantings (non-CRP)</td>
<td>n=125</td>
<td>n=25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Habitat</td>
<td>31,583.5</td>
<td>6,316.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Represents 15.5% increase compared to current (2020) CRP enrollment (32,306 ac)
b Represents 100% retention of general/continuous CRP acres scheduled to expire from 2021-2025
c Represents 50% of total CRP acres due for Mid-Contract Management from 2021-2025 (17,127 ac)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Available CRP (Acres)</th>
<th>CRP Acres Enrolled in OFW (2020-21)</th>
<th>5-year Goal (Acres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Access (CRP) d</td>
<td>32,306</td>
<td>7,790.8 (24.1%)</td>
<td>30% of available d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Access (Stubble) e</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4,000 e</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

d Represents a “moving goal” based on available general/continuous CRP acreage
e Represents a 8.3% increase compared to current (2020-21) enrollment in OFW (3,695.2 ac)
OutdoorNebraska.org/PheasantPlan

- Draft of Updated Plan
- Slides of Presentation
- Public Comment (Dec 15th)