2015 PHEASANT BROOD SURVEY INDICATES PHEASANT NUMBERS ARE UP 42 PERCENT

The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) has completed the annual pheasant brood survey and the results show a 42 percent increase in the statewide pheasants-per-mile (PPM) index from 2014. The 2015 statewide PPM index of 3.80 is up from 2.68 last year and 1.52 in 2013. The statewide PPM index is similar to 2011 when hunters harvested 1.56 million roosters.

“The favorable winter and spring weather conditions for the second consecutive year contributed strongly to another large increase in pheasants-per-mile,” stated Kelly Hepler, GFP Secretary. “This year’s population index is more than double the 2013 level when hunters harvested just under one million pheasants. Although the index continues to lag behind the 10-year average due to the extremely high counts from 2005 through 2010, a second straight year of substantial gains in the index is great news for our hunting community.”

From late July through mid-August, GFP surveyed 109, thirty-mile routes across the state to estimate pheasant production and calculate the PPM index. The survey is not a population estimate, but rather compares the number of pheasants observed on the routes and establishes trend information. Survey routes are grouped into 13 areas, based on a local city, and the index value of each local city area is then compared to index values of the previous year and the 10-year average.

Survey results indicate that pheasant numbers will again be highest along the Missouri River corridor in the broad regions around Winner, Chamberlain, Pierre and Mobridge. Great pheasant abundance also exists in the James River Valley in the regions near Mitchell, Huron and Aberdeen. Fewer pheasants will be available farther east in the I-29 corridor, but ample opportunity for quality hunts still exist. Great populations of pheasants occur in western South Dakota where favorable habitat exists. “Habitat continues to be at the forefront of the conversation and is a crucial factor in pheasant numbers,” stated Hepler. “Bird numbers are higher in parts of the state where quality habitat conditions still exist, primarily on grasslands including those enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program as well as fields of cereal crops such as winter wheat. We continue to work in cooperation with the Governor’s Habitat Work Group, landowners, partner organizations and agencies to provide an improved future for wildlife habitat in our state.”

Public hunting opportunities are abundant in South Dakota. Over 1 million acres of publicly owned and private land leased through GFP’s Walk-In Area Program and the James River Watershed Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program is available in the primary pheasant range of South Dakota. The 2015 public hunting atlas and a web-based interactive map of public lands and private lands leased for public hunting can be found online at http://gfp.sd.gov/hunting/areas.

“Each year, the results of this survey are highly anticipated by those with a strong interest in South Dakota’s hunting heritage. The availability of pheasants and pheasant hunting opportunities across the state this fall should serve to enhance that tradition,” concluded Hepler. "See more at: http://gfp.sd.gov/news/news/august/27.aspx#shash.5aotOUef.dpuf"
PIERRE, S.D. - Hunters, anglers and trappers in South Dakota will notice now when logging into their account through the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) on-line licensing system that their small game, fishing or trapping license has a bar code in the upper right-hand corner. This bar code allows GFP conservation officers to electronically scan the license on smartphone devices (Android, iPhone, etc.) while in the field in a paper copy.

Before heading into the field this fall, hunters, anglers and trappers can log into their GFP account from their device to view their small game, fishing or trapping license and take a picture or screenshot of it with their device (Android, iPhone, etc.). This electronic version is an acceptable method of carrying a small game, fishing or trapping license. If a hunter, angler or trapper chooses to print and carry a paper copy of their small game, fishing or trapping license, that continues to be an allowed practice.

This does not apply to federal waterfowl stamps, tags and licenses mailed from the GFP licensing office. As technology evolves, GFP is committed to actively engaging with hunters, anglers and trappers across the state to provide them with the digital services that make it easier to do business with us.

President's Column  by Rich Widman

This year's SDWF convention was outstanding. A great big thank you to the Beadle County Sportsmen for being a great host, with great food and great people! It was our 70th Annual Convention and we were honored to have the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) CEO on hand to help us celebrate. The crowd found out that night at the banquet that Collin O’Marra, although fairly young, is an intelligent, enthusiastic leader, and the right guy to take NWF and all the state affiliates forward in our mission of protecting our air, water, land, wildlife and the people who need those things to live and enjoy life.

We all know we have great people from our local affiliates too - those that are doing great things right now, and have been over our 70-year history. Our award winners each and every year are proof of that, and this year was no exception. Erick Wienetjes is not with us anymore, but made such an impact with his love of the outdoors, that his club nominated him and he won the SD Conservationist of the Year. State Senator Reid Holien has been our ally in Pierre during session and was awarded Legislative Conservationist of the Year. Arlie Bender knows how important it is to get kids outside and sets aside hunting land that only kids can hunt! That got him the Youth Conservationist of the Year award. And Watertown Division of the GF&P took home the Wildlife Conservationist of the Year for partnering with the Dakota Sportsmen Club and Buffalo Shoot. The winners’ names are on the front page. Thank you to all of you who financially support your wildlife federation by buying tickets and donating your hard-earned money. SDWF has been asked by GF&P to help staff and other interested groups to redraft the current Goose Management and Turkey Management plans. These Plans are coming to their end and need to be rewritten and readministered into management of these species on the ground.

We’ve also held two of our three Hunting Film Tour movie nights for SDWF Camo Coalition fundraising. Both events were last week, one in Sioux Falls, the other in Pierre. The final movie night is October 14th at the Elks Theatre. The people attending had some great chances on raffle prizes and the opportunity to watch some very good movies on hunting trips that most of us only dream about.

Executive Director's Update  by Chris Hesla

I’ve had a very busy month since the SDWF’s 70th Annual Convention in Huron. Our local Affiliate, the Beadle Co. Sportsmen and all of their members made our 70th Convention a huge success. THANK YOU for the great weekend. SDWF President Rich Widman wrote a great summary of our 70th Annual Convention in his column for this month’s Out-of-DOors.

We also drew the winners of the 2015 Pheasant Hunt and Buffalo Shoot. The winners’ names are on the front page. Thank you to all of you who financially support your wildlife federation by buying tickets and donating your hard-earned money.

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I know many of you can relate to my recent decision to put down my companion of 16 years, my Weimaraner Moose. Moose was faithful by my side, always there to greet me, give me a lick, and look at me with those eyes when begging for a treat. Wow! What a hard decision and what memories you remember after they’re gone. I was Moose’s 3rd father by 7 months old due to behavioral issues from abuse by a local kennel/breeder. Soon after getting him, he latched onto me and were best friends ever since. I miss him tremendously and know he’s now running pain-free and outside and sets aside hunting land that only kids can hunt! That got him the Youth Conservationist of the Year award. And Watertown Division of the GF&P took home the Wildlife Conservationist of the Year for partnering with the Dakota Sportsmen Club and Buffalo Shoot. The winners’ names are on the front page. Thank you to all of you who financially support your wildlife federation by buying tickets and donating your hard-earned money. SDWF has been asked by GF&P to help staff and other interested groups to redraft the current Goose Management and Turkey Management plans. These Plans are coming to their end and need to be rewritten and readministered into management of these species on the ground.

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need to be recognized for all they do, and have done for conservation in South Dakota. Each year before the convention, SDWF asks for nominations and I hope to see more of these deserving folks get these awards in the future.

Hunting season is here and we have 3 cities this year showing the Hunting Film Tour movie. Sioux Falls, Pierre and Rapid City. We have the exclusive rights to the film and we’re using it as a chance to get people excited about hunting and as a fundraiser so SDWF Camo Coalition can keep protecting our hunting right here in South Dakota.

SDWF and the Camo Coalition need your help. We have 3300 members, but represent over 150,000 sportsmen/women in South Dakota, not to mention the thousands of sportsmen/women in other states that want South Dakota’s outdoor paradise protected for them to enjoy also. Without SDWF working for us over the last 70 years, none of us would be hunting or fishing as we know it today. So why isn’t every single sportsman/woman a SDWF member? One reason is because they don’t know about us, and that’s where you come in. If each of us asks “JUST ONE” buddy to join and we can double our membership overnight. We shouldn’t be shouldering all the responsibility of protecting the outdoors that each of us loves. Everyone needs to do their part. So don’t put it off - “Ask Just One” today!

As always, be safe, be ethical, be a sportsman/woman and have a great hunt!
New Poll: Hunters and Anglers Nationwide Support the EPA’s Clean Water Rule

Sportsmen and women across the political spectrum support protecting smaller streams and wetlands.

A new nationwide, bipartisan survey found broad support among hunters and anglers for applying Clean Water Act protections to smaller streams and wetlands.

“As every hunter or angler knows, ducks need healthy wetlands and fish need clean water—it’s that simple,” said Collin O’Mara, president and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation, which commissioned the poll. “Everyone on Capitol Hill should take note: clean water has the bipartisan support of millions of sportsmen and women across our nation—and these men and women vote.”

One of the poll’s key findings is that more than 8 in 10 of the hunters and anglers (83 percent) surveyed thought that the Environmental Protection Agency should apply the rules and standards of the Clean Water Act to smaller, headwater streams and wetlands. Support for this policy was strong across the political spectrum with 77 percent of Republicans, 79 percent of Independents and 97 percent of Democrats in favor.

“The results of this poll are unambiguous: America’s hunters and anglers care very deeply about water quality,” said Al Quinlan, the president of Democratic polling firm Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research. “It is unusual to see such intense levels of public support for any issue.”

The issue of protecting smaller streams and wetlands adjacent to those streams has been politically contentious in recent years. The Clean Water Act protected all of the nation’s streams and wetlands from its passage in 1972 until two split Supreme Court decisions in 2001 and 2006 left it unclear exactly which streams and wetlands could be covered by the law.

The bipartisan research team of Public Opinion Strategies (R) and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research (D) partnered on the survey of 1000 registered voters who also hunt or fish. The sample leaned conservative—38 percent of those polled were Republicans, while just 28 percent were Democrats. Almost half of those surveyed (49 percent) said they considered themselves a supporter of the Tea Party.

“It would be hard to find a more conservative group than the hunters and anglers we polled,” said Lori Weigel, a partner at the Republican polling firm Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research. “And yet their support of this policy is broad-based and wide-spread, cutting across partisan and ideological divisions. And it endures after hearing the arguments against it.”

* More than 8 in 10 sportsmen (82 percent) agree with the statement: “We can protect our water quality and have a strong economy with good jobs for Americans at the same time, without having to choose one over the other.”
* Three-quarters (75 percent) of hunters and anglers see applying the Clean Water Act to smaller streams and wetlands is more of a safeguard, rather than a burdensome regulation.
* Almost half of those surveyed (47 percent) say that water quality and fish and wildlife habitat issues are of primary importance to their voting decisions. Nearly all sportsmen say these issues are at least somewhat significant in their voting decisions (92 percent).
* Two-thirds (67 percent) say they would have a more favorable opinion if their Senator upheld this application of the Clean Water Act. Only one-in-ten would feel less favorably (11 percent).
* “Hunters and anglers were the original conservationists and their support for this policy comes as no surprise,” said Jim Martin, conservation director at the Berkeley Conservation Institute, a branch of Pure Fishing, one of the largest tackle manufacturers in the sportfishing industry. “Restoring Clean Water Act protections to smaller streams and wetlands will help the economy, protect our drinking water and allow us to pass the great sport of fishing down to future generations. Congress should allow this common-sense rule to take effect without delay.”

About the methodology

From June 23–July 4, 2015, Public Opinion Strategies and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research completed 1000 interviews with registered voters who also identify as hunters, anglers or both. Half of the interviews were conducted on landline and cell phones, with the other half conducted via internet panels. Respondents are from throughout the United States and the sample was compared to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service surveys of adults who hunt or fish for demographic representation.

-GFP- South Dakota Wildlife Action Plan Approved PIERRE, S.D.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently approved a revised version of the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks’ (GFP) wildlife action plan. This plan has been part of a national effort for the past ten years to plan for the needs of all fish and wildlife species. The plan is a requirement for GFP to be eligible for state wildlife grant funding provided by the federal government. The planning effort considered the health of fish and wildlife, conservation challenges in the present and future as well as potential ways to conserve species and habitats for the long term. South Dakota’s plan encourages voluntary partnerships to help prevent future endangered species listings and provide for the needs of the full array of species and associated habitats. In addition to the plan, GFP has launched an interactive website in which the content of the plan can be explored. The site features information on unique regions and landscapes, drivers of changes and potential solutions, information on South Dakota’s lands, water and wildlife and more. The website also features project summaries and products from South Dakota’s state wildlife grant funds to allow the public, students and other resource entities to see what has resulted from this important funding source. For more information on the wildlife action plan and to learn more about the educational features of the new site associated with - See more at: http://gfp.sd.gov/news/news/august24.aspx#fhzhash.BmxX3IleZe.dpuf
GFP Conservation Officer Bryce McVicker (L) Dakota Sportsmen President Dean Siems 2nd (L), SDWF President Rich and GFP Resource Biologist Owen McElroy (R) receiving an award for their Conservation work in SD.

Eric Wentjes’ wife and daughter accepting his “Conservationist of the Year” award from Dakota Sportsmen President Dean Siems (L) and SDWF President Rich Widman (R).

NWF President and CEO Collin O’Mara is shown talking to the Convention attendees at our Action Auction and Conservation Awards Dinner.

This was the soil demonstration showing us about different types of soils and how the cover on them affects run-off and soil erosion and water quality presented by NRCS.

George Flanery (L), SDWF President Rich Widman, Arlie Bender, Brian Freeman (R) Marshall County Sportsman.
The Legacy Council consists of five different donation levels. These donation levels were revised October 2011 to:

- LEVEL I PHEASANT
- LEVEL II DEER
- LEVEL III ELK
- LEVEL IV BUFFALO
- LEVEL V EAGLE

No legacy donations for this month.

Out of Doors 6 September 2015

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The SDWF has approximately 3,000 members. We are constantly fighting to keep our outdoor heritage and to conserve our natural resources. We can’t continue without our members and we can’t keep fighting unless we grow our membership. Encourage your friends that enjoy the outdoors to join the SDWF directly or through a local affiliate club. “JUST ONE” new member can make a world of difference!

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TIPS

To continue our conservation efforts - we need your help! Please donate generously.

Name:
Address:
City: State: Zip
Phone:
email:
SDWF $20/Month Membership Fee $
SDWF Camo-Coalition lobbying donation $

Send Donation and Membership Application to:
SDWF
P.O. Box 7075
Pierre, SD 57501-0952

☐ Check - make checks payable to SDWF

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Just One
Declining Monarch Butterfly Finds Hope for Recovery in St. Louis

By Patrick Fitzgerald

About this time last year, the National Weather Service spotted a cloud stretching from the St. Louis area east into Illinois. Meteorologists watching the radar noted that its shape was irregular and it was changing shapes. Turns out, it was a 250 mile wide mass of monarch butterflies headed south for the winter!

Despite this hopeful event over St. Louis last year, monarch butterfly populations are declining. Twenty years ago more than one billion monarch butterflies made the epic, 3,000 mile voyage from America’s backyards and grasslands to their wintering grounds in Mexico. Last year, the wintering population numbered only about 56 million.

While the monarch butterfly continues to wane, the efforts of the City of St. Louis are bringing people together to raise awareness about the monarch’s decline and to create more monarch habitat in the city.

Milkweeds for Monarchs

A little over a year ago, on Earth Day 2014, St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay launched Milkweeds for Monarchs: The St. Louis Butterfly Project. The initial challenge was to create 250 monarch gardens in the city to mark the 250th anniversary of the city’s founding. Mayor Slay led the effort by directing the city to plant 50 gardens, including several at fire stations, city parks and City Hall. The mayor, himself, created two monarch gardens at his personal residence, and regularly shares images of his monarch caterpillars and butterflies, as well as the other pollinators and species associated with monarch gardens.

Monarch caterpillar from St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay’s home. Photo by Mayor Slay

To track the number of gardens created, the City of St. Louis devised a map and a registration system. Once a garden is registered, a small monarch icon appears on the map and the registrant is entitled to a free Milkweeds for Monarchs garden sign. All of the gardens must include both nectar sources and different types of native milkweed, the ONLY plant that female monarchs will lay eggs on, because they are the ONLY plant that monarch caterpillars eat.

Dozens of partners are working closely with the City of St. Louis, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the St. Louis Zoo and the Missouri Botanical Garden. The project was covered as a best practice in the U.S. Conference of Mayors magazine and recently received a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Region to expand the program and evaluate the existing monarch gardens.

Monarch butterfly from St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay’s home. Photo by Mayor Slay

In addition to new gardens at homes, the 2015 Milkweeds for Monarchs expansion has resulted in 30 monarch schoolyard gardens with associated monarch curriculum, training and support for teachers in city schools. Another aspect is to reach further into the community by working with city’s Neighborhood Improvement Specialists and community groups to create another 28 monarch gardens in each of the city wards. Because of its emphasis on fostering connections between people and urban nature, the St. Louis Milkweeds for Monarchs project will evaluate not just pollinators and vegetation, but also eco-literacy and social acceptance of monarch gardens and urban prairie patches.

Through the Mayor’s Office and the City’s Sustainability Director, Catharine Werner, St. Louis leads by example and also provides residents with critical local resources to make their monarch garden a success. Among other things, the city provides a recommended plant list, a guide on where to find the right plants and tips for caring for the plants to ensure their success.

Neighborhood and School Monarch Gardens

Monarch caterpillar in front of St. Louis City Hall. Photo by Kathy Tenorio

“Oh Beautiful for smoggy skies, insecticided grain,
For strip-mined mountain’s majesty above the asphalt plain.
America, America, man sheds his waste on thee,
And hides the pines with billboard signs, from sea to oily sea.”

George Carlin
Sage Grouse Update;

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s decision to give state and federal conservation efforts an opportunity to save the greater sage grouse and its habitat is the right decision for the grouse, the hundreds of other species of the sagebrush steppe and the sportsmen, wildlife enthusiasts, ranchers and local economies that depend on this Western landscape.

Collin O’Mara, president and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation, attended Tuesday’s announcement at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge near Denver during which federal officials said the greater sage grouse won’t need the protections of the Endangered Species Act because of the safeguards in state and federal conservation plans and work by private landowners.

“What’s good for the bird is good for the herd—and today’s decision will help rebuild greater sage grouse populations and conserve sagebrush habitat that supports more than 300 species, including pronghorn, mule deer, and elk. This decision illustrates what the Endangered Species Act is supposed to be all about: galvanizing collaborative efforts to save wildlife species before they’re on the brink of extinction,” O’Mara said. “It follows years of work by private landowners, ranchers, sportsmen, conservationists, industry, and state and federal agencies to develop achievable conservation plans based upon sound science, which, when implemented with sufficient resources and adjusted as needed, provide a blueprint for sustaining healthy wildlife populations and habitats across the West. It’s a good day for all sportsmen and outdoor enthusiasts.

“The campaign to save the greater sage grouse is an unprecedented collaboration in its geographic scope – 11 Western states – and the diverse parties involved, including governors from both parties, federal and state agencies, sportsmen and women, private landowners, ranchers, conservationists, industry groups, and outdoor recreationists,” O’Mara added. “The National Wildlife Federation, with its 6 million members and supporters and its state affiliates, will push to ensure this crucial work is implemented effectively and will oppose attempts in Congress to derail these efforts to save an iconic species and landscape.”

Here is what NWF affiliates in the West are saying about the Fish and Wildlife Service’s decision:

“After the decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service not to list greater sage grouse, maybe we can take some time to appreciate the efforts that enabled the agency to reach this point. Private landowners, ranchers, sportsmen, state and federal officials, outdoor enthusiasts and wildlife advocates have been part of the endeavor to save the bird and its habitat,” said Janet Marschner, Wyoming Wildlife Federation board member. “We in Wyoming, with all the work by the state and many stakeholders, helped blaze a trail for the many steps to come in the conservation journey ahead.”

“The last several years, we’ve seen people across the political and social spectrum working together to save sage grouse and the Western sagebrush lands that are important to ranchers, sportsmen and women and the people who recreate there. Now comes the hard part: making sure the state and federal sage grouse conservation plans are carried out so we can save greater sage grouse, the habitat and see that the work done so far pays off,” said Michael Gibson, Idaho Wildlife Federation executive director.

“The current debates about who should control Western public lands have played up the region’s divisions. The campaign to save two Western icons – the greater sage grouse and the sagebrush steppe – has shown collaboration is possible even when the Endangered Species Act, private property, the economy and different layers of government are involved,” said Suzanne O’Neill, Colorado Wildlife Federation Executive Director. “If we stay on track and sage grouse populations rebound, maybe a chicken-sized bird known for its flashy mating dance will become a symbol of what’s possible when we search for common ground.”

“Over the last few years, Montanans from all walks of life have worked together to protect sage-grouse habitat on public and private land. Today’s decision demonstrates that when we roll up our sleeves and put aside politics, we can preserve both Montana’s wildlife and our working farms and ranches. Now we need to dedicate ourselves to fully implementing these protections and recovering this important species for future generations,” said Dave Chadwick, Montana Wildlife Federation director.

“The Nevada Wildlife Federation has known for over 15 years that the greater sage grouse is struggling and that its home, the sagebrush steppe, is under imminent threat from wildfires, invasive species and commercial development. It’s the same habitat that’s home to elk, deer, pronghorns and other critters. The Nevada Wildlife Federation hopes the state and federal sage grouse conservation plans that received a vote of confidence today from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will point the way to conserving sage grouse and all the other Nevada species,” said Robert Gaudet, Nevada Wildlife Federation president.

“Out of Doors 8 September 2015

Sportsmen/women- Want to help fund SDWF and the Youth Conservation Camp plus reduce your taxes this year? Donate stocks and land to the SDWF. You not only won’t have to pay taxes on those assets, you will pay less tax because of your generosity!

JUST ONE

“The outstanding scientific discovery of the twentieth century is not television, or radio, but rather the complexity of the land organism. Only those who know the most about it can appreciate how little is known about it. The last word in ignorance is the man who says of an animal or plant: ‘What good is it?’ If the land mechanism as a whole is good, then every part is good, whether we understand it or not. If the biota, in the course of eons, has build something we like but do not understand, then who but a fool would discard seemingly useless parts: To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering” From A Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold