Resident Game Bird Working Group meeting notes

3/29/2018

Meeting Chaired by Judith Scarl, AFWA

Introductions

Nominations for Chair

Judith described the responsibilities of the Chair position, including being the Working Group’s representative on the U.S. NABCI Committee. John Morgan (KY) nominated Karen Waldrop (KY), and Al Stewart (MI) nominated Todd Bishop (IA). Tony Leif (SD) moved that we accept both nominations and allow the two candidates to decide among themselves who would serve as Chair and Vice Chair. Tony’s motion was seconded by Craig McLaughlin (CO), and then passed unanimously.

Organization and Plan Partnership Updates

National Wild Turkey Federation

Celebrated their 45th year at their convention in Nashville, which had an attendance of 56,000. They have added several staff, including R3 and Forester partnership positions in several states. Last year marked the fifth year of their Save the Habitat, Save the Hunt Initiative and they have hit several benchmarks in hunter recruitment and retention as well as habitat improvements.

Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever

Pheasant Fest in Sioux Falls, SD was a great success, with Governor Daugaard and his family in attendance all three days. They hired a new editor for Quail Forever magazine, the first whose sole responsibility is production of that publication. They continue to expand their partnerships, particularly those with other conservation NGOs in the service of meeting R3 objectives.

National Pheasant Conservation Plan and Partnerships

The National Pheasant Technical Committee met in October in Utah and agreed to start work on a guidance document on the translocation of wild pheasants. The Technical Committee is in communication with their counterparts in the Northern Bobwhite Technical Committee and the Western Quail Working Group, who are working on similar documents. The Plan Coordinator has a paper in review detailing the effects of historic cropland conversion programs on pheasants, and a summary of key pheasant literature is available on their website. He is also working with three joint ventures to synthesize their respective pheasant habitat models into a more cohesive decision support tool.

National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative

The Coordinator affirmed the notion of working cooperatively on translocation guidelines with the other quail and pheasant groups, and a review of bobwhite translocations was published in Quail 8. Regarding the Farm Bill, creating a native vegetation standard and preference remains their highest priority, and they spearheaded a sign-on letter to that effect that gained about 50 signatories. They continue promoting their focal area program and are now up to 22 such areas nationally.

North American Grouse Partnership

They continue to help implement the Grassland Conservation Plan for Prairie Grouse, and are helping facilitate the production of multi-state conservation plans for greater prairie-chicken and sharp-tailed grouse. The also recently produced a report on the status of lesser prairie-chicken and look to continue work with the Prairie Grouse Partners. Regarding policy, they are working to ensure climate-appropriate grazing guidelines in EQIP and other NRCS programs, as well as effect programs for establishment and conservation of native cool season bunchgrasses important to nesting sage grouse.

Lesser Prairie-chicken Initiative

The conservation model seems to be working well and fits the business models of the region’s industries.

Western Quail Working Group

They are also working on translocation guidelines and may have a final draft soon after their upcoming meeting. They used Kansas’ translocation policy as a model. The Working Group has gained some momentum and more states are actively participating. Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge in Arizona is revitalizing their efforts to conserve masked bobwhites.

Ruffed Grouse Society

They recently held their 36th National Ruffed Grouse and Woodcock Hunt. Michigan recently confirmed West Nile Virus in ruffed grouse and several Great Lakes states are contemplating coordinating surveillance for the disease. Habitat remains the focus for all, though. They have hired some new partnership biologists and foresters, and are currently searching for a new president and CEO. They pointed out that the wildfire funding fix in the new omnibus spending law is a great step forward. The organization also has recently received a four-star charity rating.

Other Items

Judith asked if the working group could address resident game bird translocation issues on a national scale, such as by coordinating a national guidance document, and the group agreed to discuss this issue at the next meeting.

Mark Hatfield of the National Wild Turkey Federation proposed a discussion at our September meeting regarding the potential shortage of rocket net propellant for game bird research and management purposes. The new Chair will ensure the topic is on our agenda.