

MINNESOTA PRAIRIE CHICKEN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Spring 2007 Vol. 33, No. 2

www.prairiechicken.org

**COME JOIN US FOR THE
34th ANNUAL MPCS MEETING
SATURDAY, APRIL 21, 2007**

**Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management
Area Headquarters**

ROOSTING

Country Inn & Suites, East Hwy. 7, Montevideo
(320) 269-8000
Camping, LQP State Park (320) 734-4450
Viking Motel, East Hwy. 7, Montevideo (320) 269-
6545



Saturday, April 21 - MEETING AGENDA

Booming Ground & Habitat Field Trip – Meet at Lac qui Parle WMA Headquarters

5:30 Depart from the Lac qui Parle WMA HQ for an early morning field trip to view booming grounds and prairies of the Upper MN River Valley (Call Dave to reserve your place at 320-734-4451 We need to arrange transportation so an accurate count is needed.)

Let The Cackling Begin

9:30 Registration & Coffee
10:00 Welcome & Call to Order—Brian Winter
10:15 History of the MN Prairie Chicken Society & status of chickens in northwestern Minnesota – Terry Wolfe
10:45 Reintroduction of greater prairie chickens into west central MN
Project Update & Future Outlook – David Trauba
11:30 Status of prairie chickens in northeastern South Dakota – Will Morlock

Foraging & Loafing

12:00 Lunch (catered)

More Cackling

1:15 History of the Upper MN River Valley – Mission Site & Ft. Renville – June Lynne
1:45 The Future of Cellulosic Ethanol in Minnesota – Greg Cuomo

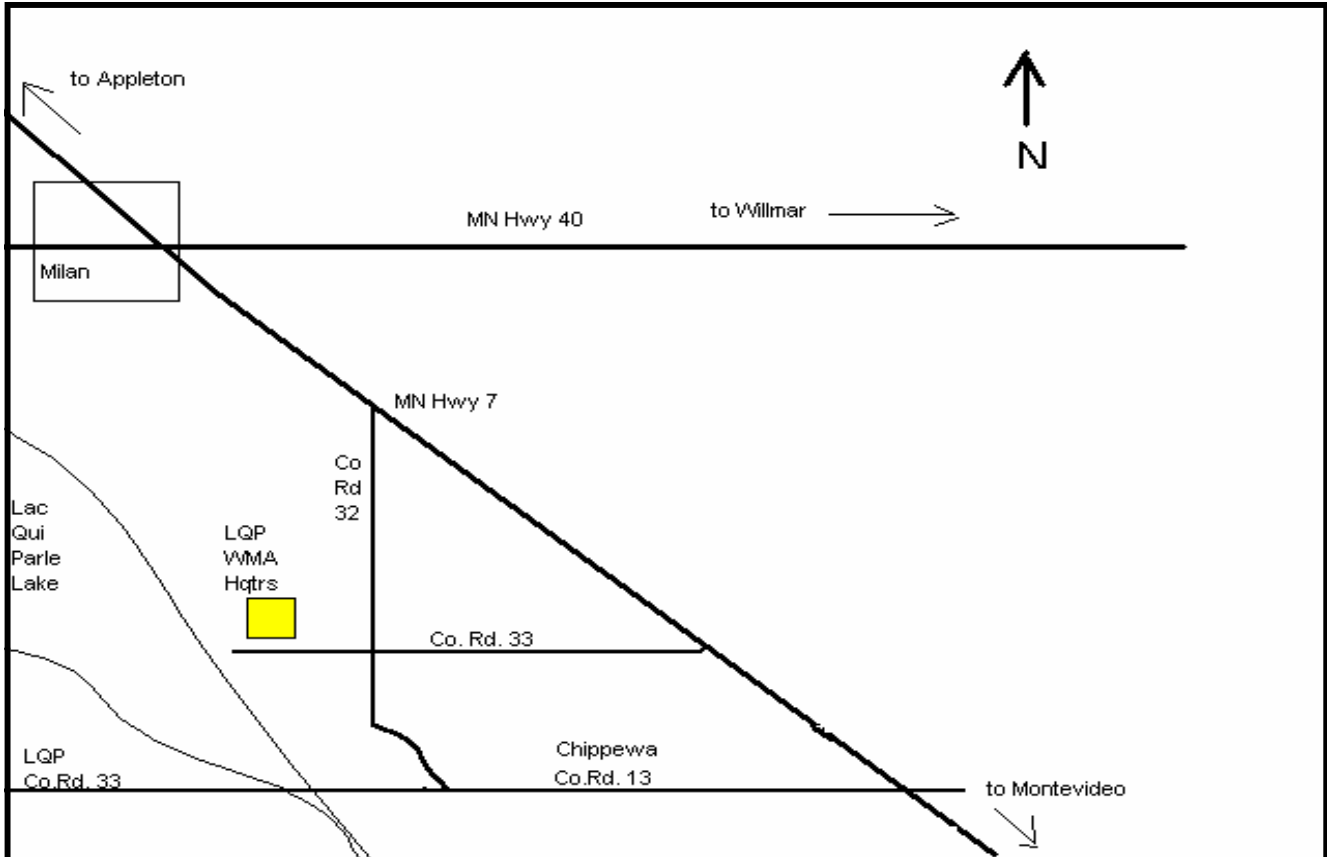
Our Business is BOOMING

2:15 MPCS Annual Business Meeting
3:00 Door Prizes – MEMBERS ENCOURAGED to Bring/Solicit items (original art, hunting/fishing items, etc.)

Dispersal

3:30 Adjourn

**See map and directions on p. 2, registration form on p.3.*



Directions to Lac qui Parle WMA HQ:

From Montevideo - Take Hwy 7 and 59 heading NW toward Watson. One mile past Watson left turn (west) onto Chippewa Co. Rd 13. Go 2.5 miles and take a right turn (north) onto Co. Rd 32. This turn is before the LQP dam. On Co. Rd. 32 go north 2 miles and take a left turn (west) onto Co. Rd. 33. The Lac qui Parle WMA HQ is 0.5 miles on the right side of the road; DNR shop complex is on the left.

From Milan - Take Hwy. 7 and 59 heading SE toward Watson & Montevideo. Two miles from Milan take a right turn onto Chippewa Co. Rd. 32. Go 2 miles and take a right turn onto Co. Rd. 33. Lac qui Parle WMA HQ is 0.5 miles on the right side of the road.



New CRP initiative to restore Species of Concern and their Habitats

The USDA Farm Service Agency announced a new 500,000 acre Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) practice to improve habitat for high priority wildlife species throughout the United States. The new practice is entitled State Areas for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) and targets Species of Concern and their Habitats. SAFE will enable the public, producers, state and federal agencies, non-profit conservation organizations and others to propose areas where new CRP acreage may be established to address the habitat needs of endangered, threatened or high priority fish and other wildlife species. Successful proposals must comply with CRP eligibility requirements and utilize existing CRP programs which can be fine tuned to connect habitat in areas essential to effective species management. FSA state offices will accept proposals beginning August 2007.

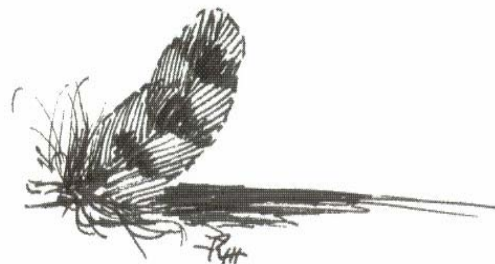
FSA will consider SAFE proposals through a review process that includes FSA and the USDA state technical committees.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service, Habitat and Population Evaluation Team, has recently created a draft prairie chicken model that indicates areas in the Minnesota prairie pothole region which should be favorable for supporting prairie chicken booming grounds. This work could be extremely useful in locating areas where grassland is needed or missing in the landscape. Adding grassland in areas with the highest potential of creating new booming grounds would greatly benefit the greater prairie chicken.

Recent CRP News...

**87% of 2007 CRP expiring
Contracts were extended
(334,000 of 382,000 acres)**

**An estimated 70-75% of
2008 – 2010 contracts
Will be extended.
(Over 500,00 of 725,000 acres)**



Pre-Registration encouraged by April 18: includes lunch, MPCS annual membership and eligibility for early bird drawing. Lunch is catered so we need an accurate count – please register now!

Name: _____

Registration _____ **\$20.00**

Address: _____

Additional Donation _____

Phone #: _____

Total Enclosed _____

Email: _____

Going on early morning field trip? If yes, please call David Trauba @ 320-734-4451

Return to: David Trauba, 14047 20th ST NW, Watson, MN 56295

Momentum Growing for Sodsaver Provision in 2007 Farm Bill

Submitted by Ducks Unlimited / Great Plains Regional Office

BISMARCK, N.D., Jan. 25, 2007 – A proposal to disallow federal farm program benefits on newly broken land received an important endorsement from the livestock community. According to Ducks Unlimited (DU), the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association's (SDCA) support for a "Sodsaver" provision in the 2007 Farm Bill sends a powerful message to Congress about the need to maintain native grasslands. The SDCA membership recently approved a resolution in favor of Sodsaver as a measure that would help protect South Dakota's grazing land.

"Current federal farm policy has placed ranchers at a significant economic disadvantage with crop producers," said Scott McLeod, regional biologist for DU's Great Plains Regional Office, "and inclusion of the Sodsaver provision in the 2007 Farm Bill is critical to preserving the ranching lifestyle."

The provision, initially crafted by DU and other conservation organizations, would not allow federal farm program benefits on newly tilled acres without a previous cropping history. A similar provision nearly passed in the 2002 Farm Bill with an estimated 10-year savings of \$1.4 billion to American taxpayers due to the marginal nature of this land.

"I was glad to see the Cattlemen take such a bold stance," said Jim Faulstich, a Hyde County rancher and SDCA member. "As a rancher, we're very concerned about the conversion of grass to crops. I'm afraid we're overdoing it and getting things lopsided, conservation-wise. You just can't beat properly managed native grass to be environmentally friendly." Hyde County is part of the Missouri Couteau region of the eastern Dakotas, which is a critical area for native prairie conversion. This area contains some of the best waterfowl-nesting habitat remaining in North America. Highlighted by vast expanses of native prairie interspersed with millions of wetland basins, portions of this region attract more than 100 breeding pairs of ducks per square mile. Likewise, these complexes of native grasslands and wetlands are the backbone of the ranching lifestyle and the ranching community is the glue that holds this prairie jewel together.

The SDCA resolution says the loss of grazing land has resulted in loss of pasture, increased cost of livestock production, increased fuel consumption, and excessive grazing on the remaining grazing land. Grass and wetlands are vital resources for both cattle and ducks," McLeod said, "Grassland and wetland conversion threatens the ranching lifestyle as well as continental duck populations. Without a strong ranching economy in the Prairie Pothole Region, there is little hope for breeding ducks and many other grassland and wetland dependent wildlife."

Many conservation groups, including Pheasants Forever, The Nature Conservancy, The National Wildlife Federation, the Izaak Walton League, the South Dakota Conservation Alliance and Northern Great Plains Working Group, have backed the Sodsaver provision.

In addition, some agricultural leaders are beginning to voice early support. House Agricultural Committee Chairman Collin Peterson has also indicated support for removing incentives for the conversion of native prairie to cropland. South Dakota Farm Bureau President Scott VanderWal was quoted in the Sioux Falls Argus Leader as saying he does not see any immediate red flags to adding a Sodsaver provision, "If land hasn't been farmed to this point, there's a reason it hasn't been farmed," VanderWal said. The national Sustainable Agricultural Coalition has also added Sodsaver to its Farm Bill priority list.

"It's heartening to see a prominent group, like the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association, also taking a stand against grassland conversion," McLeod said. "Support from both agricultural organizations and the conservation community, coupled with fiscal savings, should make Sodsaver a very attractive component for the 2007 Farm Bill."

The current Farm Bill provides substantial price supports and risk protection to crop producers, which has fueled the conversion of native grasslands in the eastern Dakotas and Montana. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) estimates that over 300,000 acres of native prairie have been converted to cropland since 2002 in the eastern Dakotas.

With more than a million supporters, Ducks Unlimited is the world's largest and most effective wetland and waterfowl conservation organization. The United States alone has lost more than half of its original wetlands -- nature's most productive ecosystem - and continues to lose more than 80,000 wetland acres each year.



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A Tale Of Two Grasses by Ross H. Hier

One's mind cannot help but have a sense of impending déjà vu as one drives around the prairie landscape this spring. The returning birds bring us great joy as does the melancholy "boooming" of greater prairie chickens. The prairie will soon bring forth another wondrous year of reproduction ... everything from short-eared owls to regal fritillaries. These creatures rise from the First Grass. The First Grass is a collective of all the myriad of native grasses and forbs intertwined with the tame grasses and forbs of hayfields, "waste areas", and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) vegetation. Land managers have been thrilled to see many of our prairie obligates spill over into former, marginal cropland now covered with CRP grasses. Purely from observation, there is little doubt that bobolinks, western meadowlarks, northern harriers, greater prairie chickens and other grass-nurtured species have expanded because of CRP cover in the past 10+ years. The spring run-off sparkles as it moves through the First Grass; erosion is greatly reduced and the future for our prairie landscapes is made brighter for all.

Looming on the horizon is corn, the Second Grass. The Second Grass, a longtime critical economic component of the prairie landscape, has generally shared the better croplands on the prairie landscape in rotation with other green creatures like wheat, sunflowers, and soybeans. Now, riding a political and social tidal wave of ethanol, the Second Grass may "flood-out" much of the First Grass. Many of us are old enough to have seen it all before ... there is a chance we will come out with less First Grass in the near future than we had going into the CRP program. The price paid in terms of environmental protection to our wildlife, waters and soils will be high IF we do not strike a balance between the First Grass and the Second Grass. This is what many in the natural resources and agricultural worlds are striving for ... wish them luck and show your support.

THE ADVENTURES OF TYMPIE NUCHUS

By ROSS HIER



From the Archives

Submitted by Ross Heir

Winter 2000, Vol. 26 No. 1

Prairie chicken restoration project continues – booming grounds established

By David Trauba: from LCMR Program Update, Dr. John Toepfer, 9-30-00.

In 1999, 55 greater prairie chickens (48 cocks, 7 hens) were released into the Minnesota River Prairie Landscape to restore a native bird to its former range. The Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management Area, Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge, Hegland Waterfowl Production Area, and the Chippewa and Plover Prairie Nature Conservancy Preserves, located in southwestern Minnesota, were the core areas for this restoration effort. The Winter 2000 newsletter provided information on the number of birds released at each site, general movements and survival. This update summarizes booming ground activity and the number of prairie chickens released in summer 2000.

I am pleased to report the ‘boom’ of the prairie chicken once again echoed across the Minnesota River Valley as two booming grounds were located in spring 2000. Six cocks were located at the Chippewa Prairie Nature Conservancy Preserve and another booming ground at Plover Prairie Nature Conservancy Preserve has 3-4 cocks. No booming grounds were located near the Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge and Hegland Waterfowl Production Area release sites. Movements of radio-marked birds indicated that at least one cock released at Big Stone moved to the Plover Prairie during September. A hen also moved from the Plover Prairie to the Hegland area during March.

One of the four radio-marked hens that survived to April 2000 nested at Plover Prairie. This nest was located within a quarter mile of the release site and all 13 eggs hatched. A prairie chicken hen with a brood of at least three chicks was observed in this area in July. Unfortunately, this radio-marked hen was checked several times during August and no chicks were found.

In 2000, 60 greater prairie chickens (25 cocks, 26 hens, and 6 young of the year) were translocated from four western Minnesota counties (Polk-7, Norman-8, Clay-18, and Wilken-27). These birds were originally captured on booming grounds during April-June using walk in funnel traps, radio-marked and released.

They were recaptured during night-lighting during the period 6 August to 8 September, translocated, and released at one of five release sites in the Minnesota Prairie Landscape area. Birds were captured translocated from the areas surrounding 20 different booming grounds. All birds were color leg banded and radio-marked to document general movements, survival, and productivity. Birds were transported by truck in dark boxes and released within 24 hours of capture.

Eighteen birds were released at Chippewa Prairie (5 cocks, 11 hens, 2 young of the year) and sixteen at Plover Prairie (4 cocks, 9 hens, 3 young of the year) to supplement existing numbers. Four birds, three hens and one young of the year were released at Hegland Waterfowl Production Area. Releases were also made at two new areas, 15 birds (10 cocks, 5 hens) were released at Sleeping Bison (private grasslands) and 7 birds (6 cocks, 1 hen) at the Victory State Wildlife Management Area. The two new release sites were selected for their large amount of grassland habitat, open space and position relative to the two established booming grounds. The purpose of multiple release sites is to spread birds out over as much of the available habitat as possible to establish booming grounds away from the existing ones.

This brings the total number of greater prairie chickens released in 1999 and 2000 to 115 (73 cocks, 36 hens, 6 young of the year). The plans for 2001 are to release 50-75 birds to supplement existing numbers. The ultimate goal is to have at least 5 independent booming grounds 3-5 miles apart by March 2002. This work was made possible by a 2 year \$60,000 grant awarded to the Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society from the Legislative Committee on Minnesota Resources (LCMR). Dr. John Toepfer is the principal investigator and provided the data for this summary. I would like to personally thank Dr. Toepfer and staff for their hard work and dedication.

In closing, I believe it is important to point out that the key ingredient to all successful prairie grouse reintroduction projects is a long term commitment. As this restoration project approaches the third year of field work, we find ourselves at a crossroads. LCMR funding ends on 30 June and to date only partial funding has been secured to continue this project. In the coming months MPCS personnel will be working hard to secure additional funding and we may be asking for your support.

Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society Membership

Your gift membership will help! Any tax deductible contribution or donation will bring you the MPCS Newsletter and supports the Society's efforts to save Minnesota's prairie chickens and their habitats. The number in the upper right hand corner of your mailing label shows the year of your most recent membership. Renew your membership today!

The Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society is a non-profit wildlife conservation organization exempt from Federal Income tax as described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions made to the Society are deductible by donors as provided in Section 170 of the Code. The Society's Federal Identification number is #41-1327954.

_____ I would like to make a membership contribution.
 _____ I would like to contribute to the Prairie Chicken Restoration Project.

MPCS	T-Shirt	Natural ONLY	MED-XXL	\$10	Size_____	_____
Shirts	Henley	Black ONLY	L-XL	\$20	Size_____	_____
	Button Down	Natural ONLY	L-XL	\$25	Size_____	_____
Hats	Tan or Orange		One size	\$15		_____
				Add \$5.00 Shipping & Handling		_____
				Total		_____

**Changing addresses?
 Please keep in touch!
 Send your new address to:
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