



Northern Forest Woodcock Initiative

The Ruffed Grouse Society was one of 21 recipients nationwide to receive the Department of the Interior's Cooperative Conservation Award for its part in the Northern Forest Woodcock Initiative (NFWI). The NFWI was created to increase early successional habitats at a landscape level for the benefit of woodcock and other wildlife species, both hunted and non-hunted. The approach of the initiative is a linked set of strategies that includes development of best management practices, establishment of habitat demonstration areas, monitoring of woodcock populations and outreach to private landowners. NFWI is a group of New England and New York partners including 5 state fish and wildlife agencies, federal agencies, non-profit conservation groups as well as timber companies, utilities and environmental consultants. The Award recognizes the work of groups and individuals who achieve excellence in conservation through collaboration and partnerships

In a letter addressed to RGS Executive Director and CEO Michael Zagata, thanking RGS for its exemplary efforts to restore and protect important fish and wildlife resources in the Northeast, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Acting Regional Director, Marvin E. Moriarty wrote, "We were not surprised to learn that this well-organized partnership was selected to receive this competitive award, because your agency's participation in this conservation initiative is a prime example of how, together, we can achieve higher success by rallying our expertise and resources than we ever could by working as independent organizations."

Upon learning of the award, Zagata stated, "This award represents positive recognition for the work RGS and its partners do on behalf of the American woodcock. RGS would not have been in a position to be a partner, and leader, on this initiative had it not been for our team of dedicated, professional and competent biologists. On their behalf, I am proud to accept this distinguished acknowledgement. The next step is to make sure programs are put in place that will assure that something happens on the ground - that means money for wildlife agencies and incentives for landowners to manage for wildlife."

Michigan

DNR Eastern Upper Peninsula Region Wildlife Biologist Terry Minzey reports, "In 2008, 14 drumming routes were surveyed in the EUP. Two hundred and fifty-four drums were heard for an average of 1.8 drums per sample point. This is a 6% increase over the 1.7 drums per sample point heard in 2007 and a 151% increase over the 2005 level. It is fairly evident that the ruffed grouse cycle bottomed out in 2005 and is in the increasing phase in the Eastern Upper Peninsula. If historical cycles hold true, we can expect grouse numbers to continue to increase for one or two more years. Given the current levels, it is possible the peak of this cycle may even surpass that of the 2000 cycle."

In terms of woodcock, Minzey reports, "The 2008 survey produced an average of 8.0 peenting woodcock/route in the Eastern Upper Peninsula. This is the highest number of peenting woodcock heard since 1999 and represents a 7% increase over the 2007 level (7.5 peenting woodcock/route). Clearly, this index suggests that woodcock numbers may be in a continued long-term increase in the Eastern Upper Peninsula. If this is true, then woodcock are faring better in the Eastern Upper Peninsula than in other portions of Michigan and the Central Flyway which both show long-term population declines."

Flush rates for ruffed grouse reported for the 2007 early fall hunting season showed a statewide increase from the 2006 season, in 2007, 2.5 ruffed grouse were reported flushed per hour of hunting across the state while in 2006 only 2.1 ruffed grouse were flushed per hour by hunters. Individual counties with the highest flush rates for grouse were Missaukee, Houghton, Ontonagon, Oscoda, and Roscommon while Gladwin, Houghton, Lake, and Crawford Counties had the highest flush rates for woodcock.

Weather for ruffed grouse and woodcock nesting and brood rearing in the Upper Peninsula and northern Lower Michigan has been favorable this spring.

2007 Accomplishment Summary for the Western Great Lakes Region

By Gary Zimmer, WGL Biologist

Michigan's Upper Peninsula Ruffed Grouse Society Management Area Projects 1985 to 2007		
County	#Projects	Acreage
Chippewa	2	1,100
Delta	2	1,600
Gogebic	7	8,017
Iron	2	1,040
Luce	1	2,080
Mackinac	12	22,357
Marquette	1	200
Ontonagon	3	1,232
Schoolcraft	1	2,680
Totals	31	40,306

Note: An additional partnership project, completed in 2003, to inventory the aspen forest type on the Ottawa National Forest was conducted in parts of Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, and Ontonagon Counties.

Here's a summary of the 2007 Regional Biologist Accomplishments:

- Attended 20 meetings with resource agency staff/legislators and provided RGS input to 27 public land management projects.
 - Involved in 25 media contacts (includes press releases/television and radio interviews). Participate in the filming of three TV shows highlighting RGS.
 - Conducted four reviews of existing or proposed Management Area Projects.
 - Conducted 10 on-site habitat consultations on approximately 15,000 acres.
 - Participated in 8 chapter meetings, 1 youth event, and 6 field events.
 - Attended 14 chapter banquets.
 - Participated in 30 external outreach events that included about 2700 individuals as well as four youth educational events with 50 participants.
 - Responded to approximately 1,500 individual requests for information.
 - Produced five FAN Update newsletters and two e-postings on the FAN to nearly 700 members.
 - Prepared four grant applications for habitat and educational projects. Grants generated \$45,000 for habitat projects.
 - Represented RGS on Michigan and Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative Councils, Lake States Resource Alliance and Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association Board.
 - Participated in a variety of RGS fundraisers that generated approximately \$11,003 (booth events, Biologist Hunts, Marinette BQT, Leopold Bench sales, raffle ticket sales, and puppy donation).
 - Assisted with the staffing of the RGS Booth at the international SHOT Show in Orlando.
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Hiawatha National Forest – RGS established a five year Challenge Cost Share Project with the Hiawatha National Forest that will benefit wildlife species dependent on young forest habitats. Work began in the winter of 2007/2008 on the new Little Bear Ruffed Grouse and Woodcock Management Area near Rudyard. The initial RGS contribution of \$5,000 for this project is being matched with a similar amount from the US Forest Service. Settled the Ruffed Grouse Society's appeal of the Hiawatha National Forest Plan with the assistance of pro bono attorney Ryan Woody and RGS Director of Conservation Policy Dan Dessecker.

Huron/Manistee National Forest – RGS provided \$8,750 to support the non-commercial harvest of approximately 30 acres of aspen to facilitate regeneration of ruffed grouse and woodcock habitat.

Gogebic County Project - Provided \$3,000 in funds to facilitate the regeneration of approximately 100 acres of high quality aspen habitat on the Gogebic County Forest.

LeGrande Management Area Project – Continuation of a project that began in 2006 to support work on a state wildlife area near Afton, Michigan in the northern Lower Peninsula. In 2007, RGS contributed \$14,500 to date for work that included the rehabilitation of 20 acres of wildlife openings and improvements to access roads and trails.

Michigan Private Landowner Education - RGS supported three landowner education workshops in Michigan from 2005 to 2007, two in the Upper Peninsula and one in the Lower Michigan. These workshops were one-day events that included a half day seminar put on by a variety of natural resources specialists, a lunch and a half day in the field viewing ongoing management programs. These workshops introduced private landowners to ways to better manage their properties for desired wildlife species. In addition, RGS will be supporting an upcoming seminar on the importance of early successional habitats at the 2007 Michigan Ornithological Conference.

Andy Ammann Chapter – Lansing, MI - The Chapter has been working on an aspen regeneration site at Rose Lake near Bath, MI, for the past year they have been involved in clearing a several acres to help regenerate aspen. It was finally completed this spring with the help of many volunteers giving up their time on weekends. Working in conjunction with the MDNR to acquire this project, the chapter's coordinator Kenneth Sink spearheaded this project for the chapter; bring together the volunteers and coordinating the project with the MDNR.

Robert J. Lytle Chapter – Imlay City, MI - The Chapter held its second annual clean-up day within the Lapeer State Game area, a public recreation area. Armed with chainsaws, pruners, loppers, rakes and shovels and a lot of ambition, members and volunteers went to work to create and improve habitat for the ruffed grouse and woodcock. "In a nutshell, our organization works to maintain habitat," said chapter habitat chairman John Paige. "We started working in the game area after we raised money by raffling off a Browning gun safe. We took that money to Jack Melkerson, wildlife technician at the Lapeer State Game Area and explained we were looking for a project." Paige explained that with the monies, the chapter hired a forestry consultant to mark the area for aspen tree cuts and regeneration.

Jim Foote Chapter – Gaylord, MI - has funded through local chapter funds \$4000.00 directly to the Legrand MDNR project in Cheboygan County

Ruffed Grouse Society 2008 Michigan Projects (In Progress)

Hiawatha National Forest Grouse Habitat Improvements, Chippewa and Mackinac Counties, Michigan

An additional \$5,000 was provided for the ongoing Cost Share Partnership Program between the US Forest Service and the Ruffed Grouse Society. Funds contributed are being matched by the Forest Service, therefore doubling on the ground management activities. Funds in 2008 would continue the development of the Little Bear Ruffed Grouse and Woodcock Management Area on the St. Ignace Ranger District and begin habitat improvements on the Birch Farm Management Area near Rapid River.

LeGrande Management Area Project, Cheboygan County, Michigan

The project area is managed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and is located approximately six miles north of Afton, Michigan. Funds would be used to support ongoing ruffed grouse habitat work being conducted on the Pigeon River Wildlife Area. Work for 2008 includes the rehabilitation of approximately 12 acres of wildlife openings.

Michigan Private Landowner Education

RGS funds in 2008 were used to support an early successional forest educational workshop at the 2nd annual Michigan Ornithological Conference to increase the awareness of this important habitat component to local and migratory songbirds. Funds were also used to support two regional workshops for Michigan Ruffed Grouse Society Chapter representatives. Funds would be used for logistical support for these events.

Michigan Technological University Research Project

RGS provided \$6,000 for a two year research project entitled; “*Optimizing Both Habitat Quality for Conservation-Concern Bird Species and Tree Productivity in Aspen Forests in the Great Lakes Region*”. With future prospects of using forest resources for cellulosic ethanol production, additional pressure most likely will fall on this regionally declining forest resource. This research is timely and will evaluate potential tradeoffs between biomass production and wildlife habitat management objectives in aspen stands and develop recommendations for managing aspen forests to meet quality-oriented standards.

Pending Projects –

Huron/Manistee National Forest Non-Commercial Aspen Regeneration, Cadillac Ranger District, Lake and Wexford Counties, Michigan

This project is a continuation of work that was initiated in 2007. Funds would be used to regenerate non-commercial aspen habitat on sites inaccessible for commercial harvests. This important habitat management activity would not occur without outside funding support. The cost to conduct the work is estimated to be \$250/acre.

Ottawa National Forest Grouse Habitat Improvements, Gogebic and Ontonagon Counties, Michigan

An additional \$5,000 is targeted for the ongoing Cost Share Partnership Program between the US Forest Service and the Ruffed Grouse Society on the Ottawa National Forest. Any funds contributed would be matched by the Forest Service, therefore doubling the amount of management activities. These funds would support non-commercial alder and aspen regeneration harvests as well as improvements to Hunter Walking Trail Systems including the long established Harris Creek Disabled Hunting Trail System.