



PRESS RELEASE

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Sportsmen's Organizations Partner around Grasslands and Prairie Grouse

Partners Aim to Restore 60 Million Acres of the Continent's Grasslands

Arlington, Va. – March 17, 2009 – Today, the [North American Grouse Partnership](#) joined with [Pheasants Forever](#), the [Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership](#), and the [Mule Deer Foundation](#) to launch the Prairie Grouse Partners, a new conservation partnership with an aggressive goal of restoring 20 percent of North America's native grasslands. This effort would result in 60 million acres of improved habitat for a wide range of wildlife, including three species of prairie grouse. The announcement was made at the 74th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, a gathering of the nation's top state, federal, and nonprofit wildlife and natural resource professionals.

Only 10 percent of North America's 585 million acres of native grasslands remain today, and its associated wildlife species are in a state of rapid decline. The conservation work of the Prairie Grouse Partners will be guided by the Grassland Conservation Plan for Prairie Grouse, a landscape-scale, ecologically based plan developed in cooperation with state natural resource agencies and adopted by the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies. The plan is centered on three major grouse species (sharp-tailed grouse, greater prairie chicken and lesser prairie chicken), considered primary indicators of healthy grassland ecosystems.

Delivering the Grassland Plan to the Ground

The Prairie Grouse Partners target three focus areas: 1) grant funding for grassland habitat projects, 2) legislative engagement in grassland conservation programs, and 3) media advocacy for grasslands, prairie grouse, and associated wildlife.

NAGP Executive Director Ralph Rogers stressed the cultural role of grouse species along with the environmental value of grasslands and prairie grouse. "Native grouse have been honored and imitated by Native Americans in their dances," Rogers said. "One hundred years ago, millions of acres of grasslands brushed up against the bellies of wagons carrying our pioneers westward. The wildlife in those grasslands nurtured settlers and fed their children. Watching these critically important lands and their wildlife disappear is simply not an option. We welcome other groups to join our partnership and our vision."

Collaboration of Leading Conservation Organizations

The Prairie Grouse Partners has been established under the leadership of the Montana-based [North American Grouse Partnership](#), formed in 1999 to address the habitat declines and population losses of America's prairie grouse species. The NAGP was responsible for completion of the Grassland Conservation Plan for Prairie Grouse and is guiding the partnership to fuel the plan's implementation.

"The Grassland Plan tells us how many acres we need and where they should be located to maximize benefits for grouse," continued Rogers. "We have the road map for success, and through this partnership with Pheasants Forever, the TRCP, and the Mule Deer Foundation, we've added critical resources to help us achieve our goals and sustain our grouse populations."

There are 740 [Pheasants Forever](#) and [Quail Forever](#) (PF's quail division) chapters, along with nearly 130,000 members across the continent. PF has improved more than 5 million acres nationwide for wildlife since its 1982 beginning. Those acres have been accomplished through the organization's unique financial model in which all local chapters retain 100 percent control of their locally raised fundraising dollars. Through this partnership, chapters will be encouraged to complete habitat projects that benefit a wide variety of wildlife, including pheasants, quail, and prairie grouse, while the national organization will provide operational support, including marketing, bookkeeping, and membership services.

"All of today's conservation issues are critical, but when it comes to grasslands - specifically the large expanses needed for America's prairie grouse populations - we are almost out of time," explained Howard Vincent, PF's president and CEO. "Through our unique model, this partnership opens up a new opportunity for our chapters to complete habitat projects beneficial to prairie grouse, which will benefit other wildlife species, including pheasants and quail at the same time."

Formed in 2002 to preserve America's hunting and angling traditions, the [TRCP](#) works with its partners to build consensus positions on issues tied to increased sportsmen's access, better fish and wildlife habitat management and increased funding for conservation. By doing so, the TRCP enables its partners to speak with a more unified voice on those consensus positions. Jim Range, who recently passed away, was a co-founder and chairman of the TRCP. He was an ardent sportsman and conservationist and possessed an intense passion for sharp-tailed grouse. With the TRCP and other groups, he often championed conservation initiatives affecting the grassland habitats important to sharp-tails. Range channeled his vision for grouse conservation to unite the groups now forming the Prairie Grouse Partners.

"One hundred years ago, Theodore Roosevelt fell in love with grasslands and with hunting the animals he found in North Dakota," said George Cooper, TRCP president and CEO. "More recently, TRCP founder Jim Range helped organize the Prairie Grouse Partners out of his love for prairie grouse. We are engaged in this effort not only due to the inherent merit of its underlying cause but from our deep and abiding respect for these two great American sportsmen and conservationists."

The [Mule Deer Foundation](#) formed in 1988 and has 110 chapters and 14,000 members working on habitat projects throughout the American West. Mule deer populations have been on the decline and their habitat in many areas overlaps the same habitat as several prairie grouse species.

"The Grassland Conservation Plan for Prairie Grouse focuses on grasslands and works under the premise that healthy native grasslands result in healthy wildlife populations," added Miles Moretti, MDF president and CEO. "The Prairie Grouse Partners doesn't focus on the logo on your membership card. What matters is how much habitat we conserve. Together, we can accomplish more than we ever could alone."