

Private Landowner Outreach through the Farm Bill Biologist Program

Local Biologist Working On Local Habitat

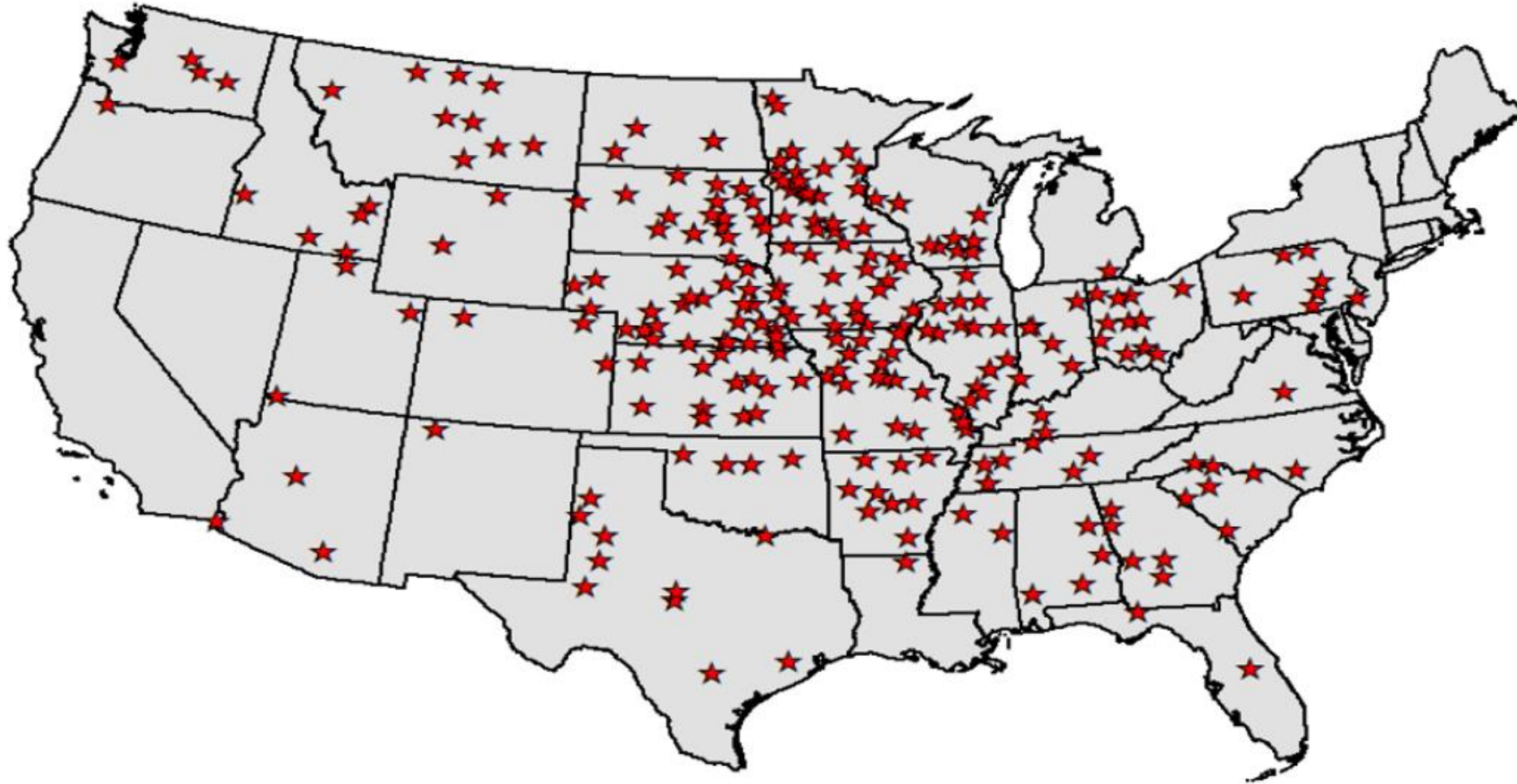
Jake Granfors

Pheasants Forever





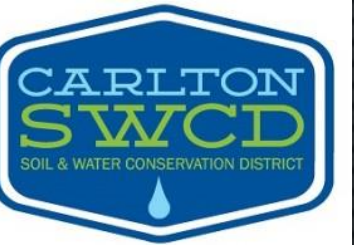
Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever Footprint



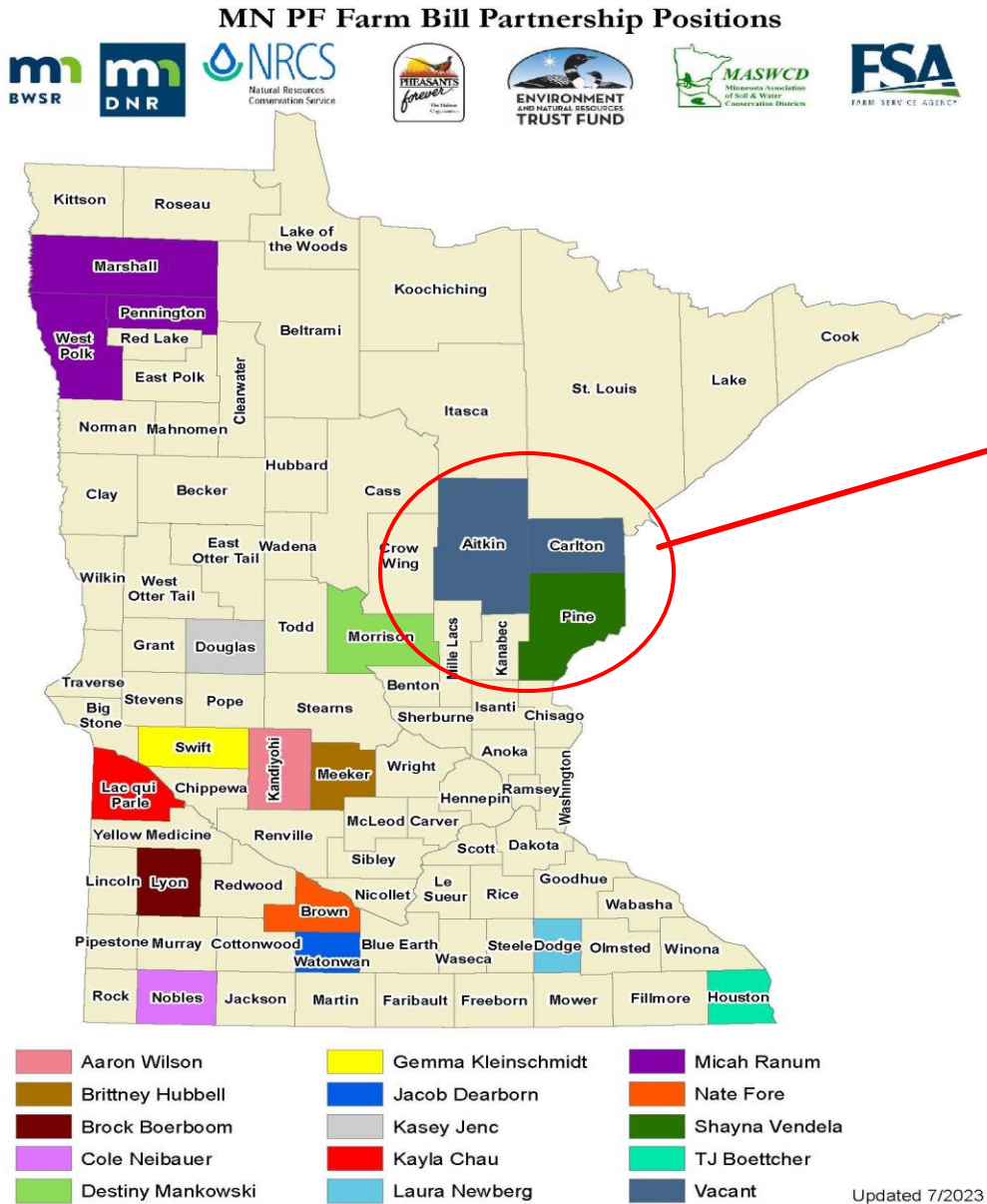


My Position

- Funding provided by the Natural Resource Conservation Service, LCCMR and many other partners.
- 15-20 PF biologist throughout the state but I was the first to work in the forest.
- We are “The Habitat Organization”



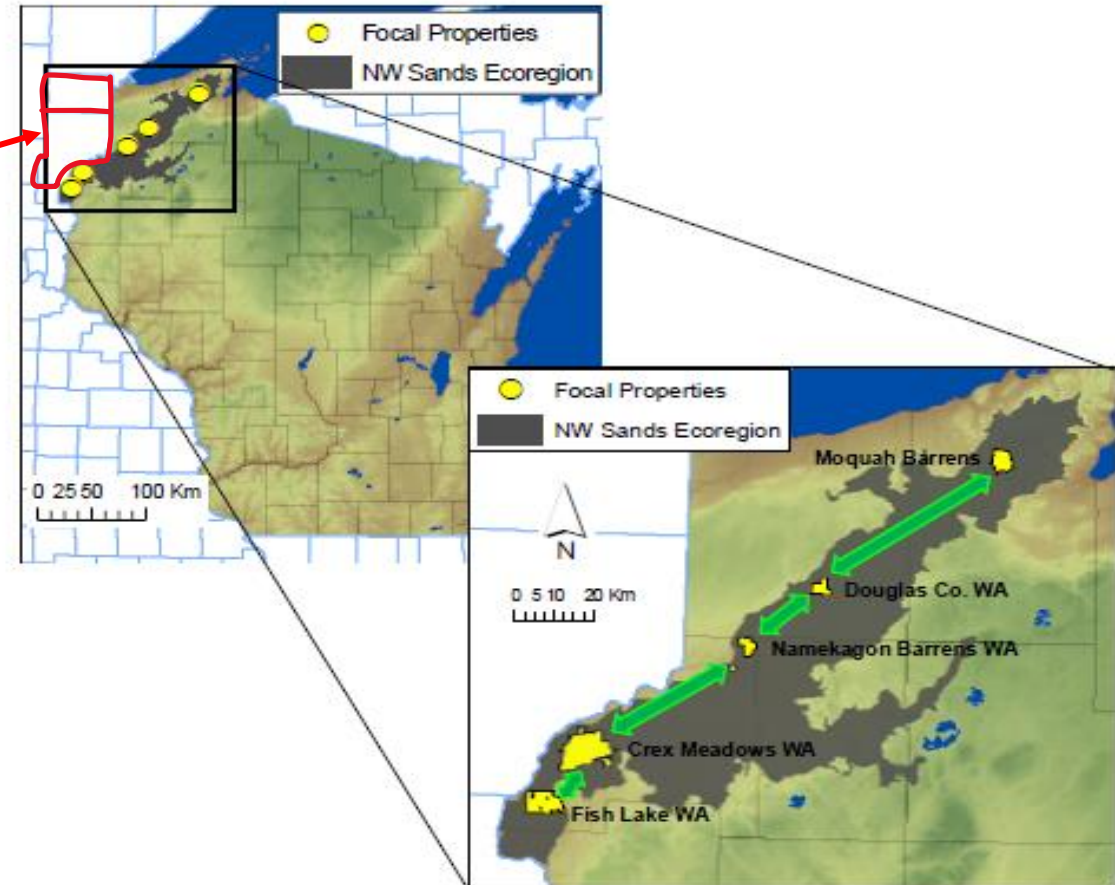
Why A Position in Aitkin, Carlton, & Pine



Northwest Sands Habitat Corridor Plan

Matt Reetz¹, Scott Hull², Sharon Fandel³, Scott Lutz¹

3 January 2012



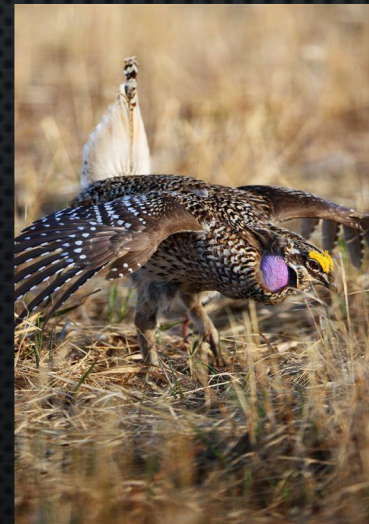
¹Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology, UW-Madison, ²Bureau of Science Services, WDNR, ³Bureau of Wildlife Management, WDNR

What Do I Do?

- I work with private landowners promoting wildlife habitat.
- Focus is on brushland management in priority areas to improve habitat for wildlife, especially for sharp-tailed grouse or woodcock.
- I also promote permanent conservation easements administered through the BWSR RIM program to protect forestland from development.



Chris Bennett



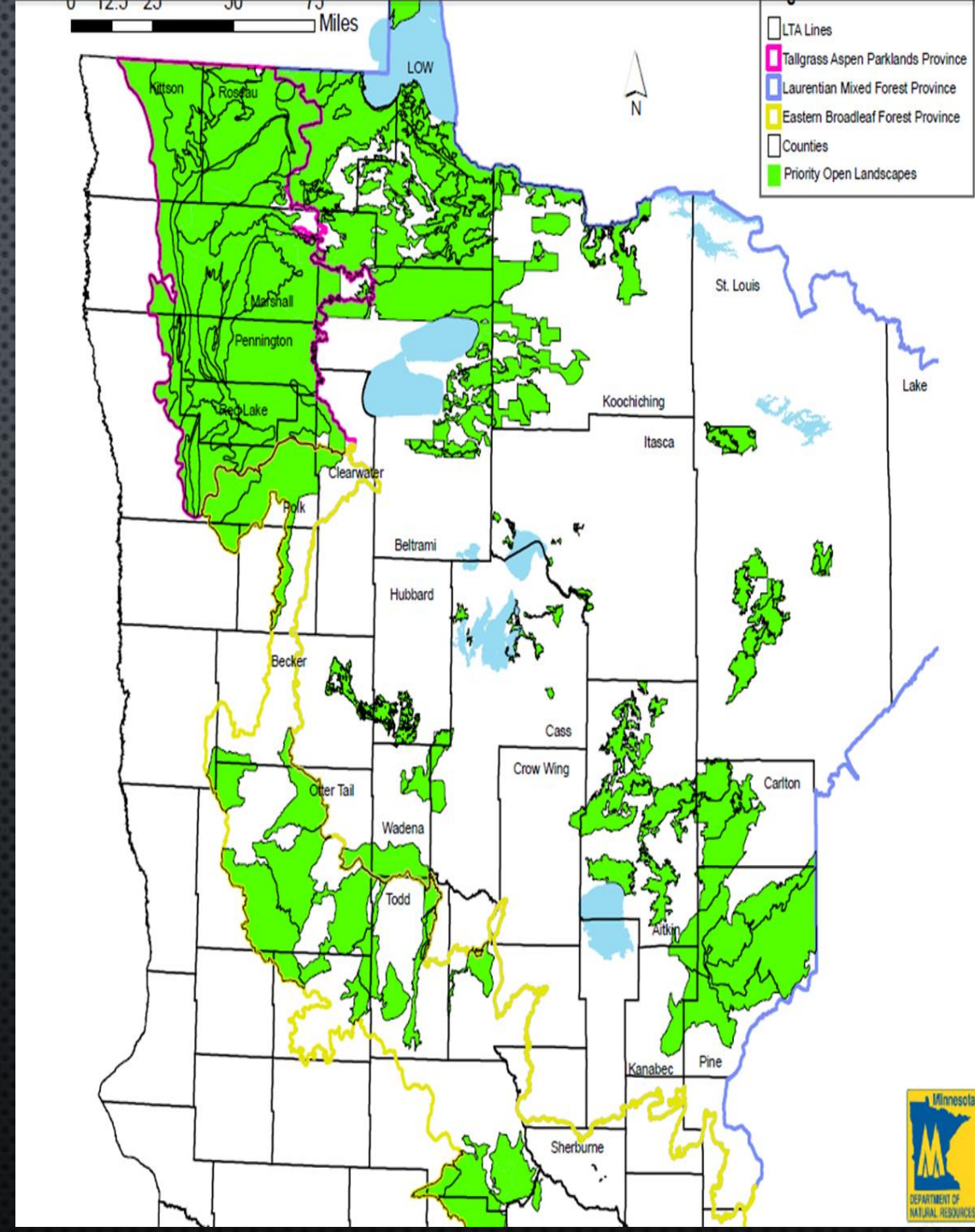
Outreach

- Targeted letters with a proposal map
 - Brochures
- Phone calls- follow up to letters and cold calls
- Site visits
- Office walk-ins
- Neighbors, friends/family
- Workshops- Key was follow up.
- Tours
- Newspaper
- Booths

****All free services****

How I target landowners?

- Distance from lek (dancing ground).
 - High priority if within 2 miles of lek or provides connection between subpopulations.
- Located in a DNR priority open landscape.
- Compatibility with existing brushland mgt. blocks.
- Number of willing landowners in the area.
- Size of possible project site.



Outreach

- Targeted letters with a proposal map
 - Brochures
- Phone calls- follow up to letters and cold calls
- Site visits
- Office walk-ins
- Neighbors, friends/family
- Workshops- Key was follow up.
- Tours
- Newspaper
- Booths

****All free services****



Greetings! Your help is needed...

The sharp-tailed grouse is a native game bird that makes its home in the prairies, parklands and brushlands of Minnesota. For much of the year the sharp-tailed grouse is a quiet, well-camouflaged bird, however, its spring spectacles are undoubtedly one of the most impressive sights in Minnesota springs.

Unfortunately sharp-tailed grouse numbers are declining in Minnesota. This is primarily due to habitat loss from open landscapes to decadent brushlands and forests. This habitat maturation causes great concern for the future of sharptails in Minnesota because once the woody vegetation becomes established and matures, the habitat is of little value to sharptails.

With your help, we hope to reverse this trend so you and future generations can continue to appreciate and enjoy this fascinating species.



Excellent brushland habitat with a mix of undisturbed grasslands and shrubby areas

For Further Information

Jake Granfors, Pheasants Forever
130 Southgate Drive
Aitkin, Minnesota 56431
Phone 218.927.2413 ~ Extension 3

Helping People Help the Land
An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer



Brushland Habitat Management and Enhancement



An Invitation

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Pheasants Forever (PF) have joined forces. This partnership is helping private landowners plan, implement, and pay for young forest and brushland projects to create sharptail habitat on high priority openlands. Many wildlife species benefit from this project such as Ruffed Grouse, American Woodcock, White-tailed Deer, sand hill cranes, and moose.

NRCS will work with landowners to determine eligibility, identify management activities for your specific property, oversee project execution and answer any questions you may have about this program. Your participation in this program can help meet conservation objectives for this species of greatest conservation need by creating healthy wildlife habitat. For more information on NRCS programs that can benefit you and wildlife please call (218) 927-2413 X107 with questions.

Brushland Initiative Area



Providing and Improving Habitat

1. Develop and implement a stewardship plan
2. Maintain existing natural grasslands, brushlands and wetlands
3. Prevent & control invasive plant species
4. Remove excess woody cover & don't plant trees in open habitats
5. Use rotational grazing
6. Adjust haying practices
7. Plant small grains in crop rotations & avoid fall tillage
8. Plant cover crops
9. Limit use of chemicals in agricultural practices
10. Encourage your neighbors to do the same!

If your property qualifies for this program, we will work with you to implement Brushland enhancement on your property. To learn more about the sharp-tailed grouse please visit www.sharptails.org

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a federal agency that works with private landowners to help them conserve, maintain and improve their natural resources. The Agency emphasizes voluntary, science-based conservation; technical assistance; partnerships; incentive-based programs; and cooperative problem solving at the community level. For more information on NRCS programs, please visit www.nrcs.usda.gov

Top 10 Sharp-tailed Grouse Habitat Management Tips:

Sharp-tailed grouse are a unique, native grouse of Minnesota that require extensive, open landscapes. Due to a long term population decline from habitat loss, they are considered a species of greatest conservation need. Large patches of natural habitat, such as sedge meadow, shrub swamp, open bog, or old fields, are critical. They can be complemented by hay land, pasture, and crop lands. Landowners are encouraged to maintain, enhance and restore these habitats. Here's how you can help:



- 1) **Develop and implement a stewardship plan** – Thoughtful, long term planning for habitats and wildlife in your neighborhood and on your land will increase your success. Map and plan which habitats need management, when they need it and what techniques to use.
- 2) **Maintain existing natural grasslands, brushlands and wetlands** – Adequate quality, native habitat is key. Techniques such as mowing, shearing, timber harvest, hand cutting and prescribed fire help maintain and enhance open habitats. The larger and more diverse the open habitats, the better!
- 3) **Prevent & control invasive plant species** – Invasive plants (such as buckthorn, common tansy, and reed canary grass) negatively impact habitats by reducing the quantity and diversity of native plants. The key to successful control is early detection of new infestations and prevention of spreading. Ensure all equipment such as ATVs, mowers, dozers, and logging equipment is thoroughly clean before it arrives at or leaves your land.
- 4) **Remove excess woody cover & don't plant trees** – Sharptail generally need open habitats with scattered clumps of young shrubs and trees such as bog birch, willow, alder, aspen and birch. Don't plant trees, especially conifers, within ½ mile of leks (dancing grounds). Blocks and rows of trees fragment open habitat patches and provide raptor perches and predator denning sites and travel lanes.
- 5) **Adjust haying practices** – Reduce nest, hen and chick loss by using a flushing bar, haying from inside to outside of fields, and delay haying until after the prime nesting season (Aug. 1).
- 6) **Use rotational grazing** – Light to moderately grazed pastures with at least six inches of cover can provide quality habitat. Lek areas can be grazed more heavily to remain attractive to males in spring. Switch up grazing periods to promote plant diversity.
- 7) **Use small grains in crop rotations & avoid fall tillage** – Small grains (such as wheat, oats, flax, buckwheat and rye), crop residue, and waste grain can provide brood rearing and winter cover, and valuable winter food for sharptail and other wildlife.
- 8) **Plant cover crops** – They not only promote soil health, but provide cover, plant food, and insects for sharptail (especially important to young chicks) and other wildlife. The more diverse the cover crops, the better.
- 9) **Limit use of chemicals in agricultural practices** - Evidence is growing that some chemicals (pesticides and herbicides) are harmful to wildlife, bees, other insects, and aquatic systems. They can negatively impact reproduction, poison or kill birds.
- 10) **Encourage your neighbors to do the same!** It is critical to look at the neighborhood as a whole and collaborate to manage large, open habitat complexes of at least two square miles, and preferably more.



Habitat Management Plan



Prepared by

Jacob Granfors | **Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist**
Pheasants Forever, Inc. and Quail Forever
Aitkin & Carlton Counties
130 Southgate Drive | Aitkin, MN 56431
Mobile (218) 434-0929



October, 2014

Sharp-tailed Grouse Habitat Management Plan

Project Name: Awesome Brushland Project

Landowner Contact: John Doe
44444 123th Ave.
Tamarack, MN 55787
123-123-1234- (Cell)



Location: Aitkin County, Sec. 8 T48N R22W (Clark Twp.)

Project Type: Private Brushland Management

Total Acres: 56.8 Acres

Estimated Total Cost: \$7,221 = Mow 56.8 acres brush and trees @ \$127.12/acre (flat rate in 2015 EQIP docket, could change) in Jan. 2015 – April 2016.

Project Intent / Justification: This project is designed to manage for brushland habitat and sharp-tailed grouse, a DNR species in greatest conservation need near Tamarack, Minnesota. It lies within the Tamarack Lowlands Subsection of N. Minnesota Drift & Lake Plains Section and within the Moose-Willow Peatlands Land Type Association. An active lek (dancing ground) exist .25 miles west of the property. Enhanced open habitat will help sustain the local population, providing improved habitat for foraging and nesting sharp-tailed grouse. Other brushland wildlife will also benefit, such as sandhill cranes, shrikes, common snipe, northern harriers, great gray owls, many songbirds and snowshoe hare.

Project Plan: A contractor will mow up to 56.8 acres of alder, willow, and small trees between January-April of 2015 or 2016 when ground conditions are adequately frozen or dry. See the attached map. The site can then be maintained with periodic disturbance such as mowing, or prescribed burning once every several years. See other habitat recommendations on the next page.

Project Funding: The USDA, NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) will pay mowing costs up to \$7,221 (56.8 ac x \$127.12/ac (flat rate in 2015 EQIP docket, could change)). All EQIP payments are reported to the IRS on form 1099-G as taxable income. For tax liability information, landowners should consult their tax advisors and/or refer to IRS publication 225, Farmers Tax Guide. This plan must be followed in order for the completed project to be eligible for cost-share.

Project Contract: This EQIP contract will end when the project is completed. Please contact your NRCS conservationist or contract appendix for details on contract length and requirement

Outreach

- Targeted letters with a proposal map
 - Brochures
- Phone calls- follow up to letters and cold calls
- Site visits
- Office walk-ins
- Neighbors, friends/family
- Workshops- Key was follow up.
- Tours
- Newspaper
- Booths

****All free services****

Common Interests with private landowners

- Wildlife habitat
- Trails & recreation
- Food plots & wildlife openings
- Tree planting
- Harvesting timber
- Taxes
- Land protection
- “I want dig a pond”
- Money is limited

Programs Available

- Federal Government:
 - Natural Resources Conservation Service
 - Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)*
 - Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
 - Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)
 - Partners for Fish and Wildlife program*
 - Farm Service Agency
 - Conservation Reserve Program
- State Government:
 - MN Department of Natural Resources
 - Board of Water and Soil Resources
 - Reinvest in Minnesota RIM easements
 - MN Department of Revenue
 - Sustainable Forest Incentive Act

Make it easy for the customer

- Help the landowner pick a program that best fits their needs
- Assist with application paperwork
 - Application
 - Establish FSA farm records
 - Wetland conservation certification
 - Adjusted gross income
 - Direct deposit form
- Create management plans
- Complete the Conservation plan for NRCS
- Write the Contract
- Send contract documents for signature
- Help line up contractor to do the work

PLAN EX

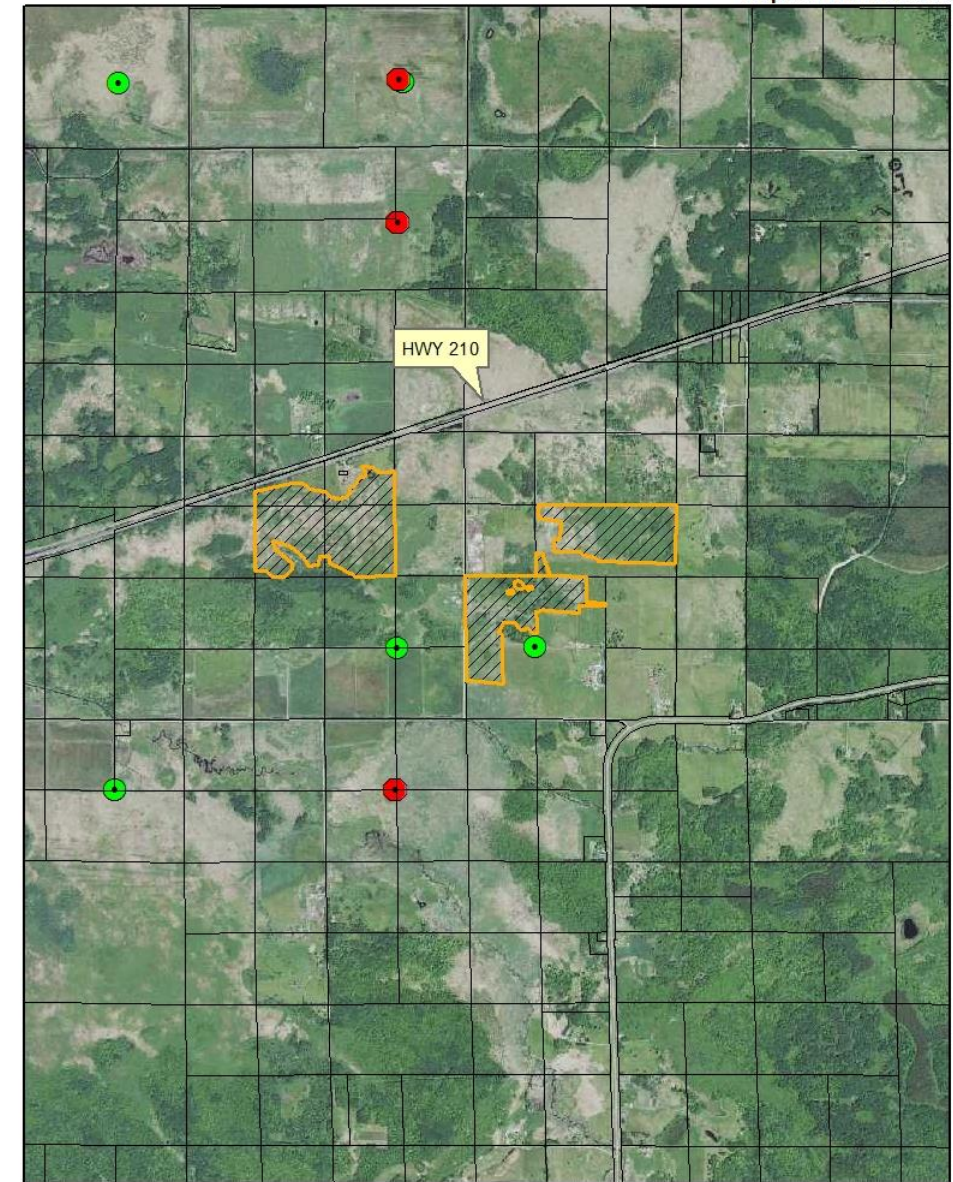


Making Connections

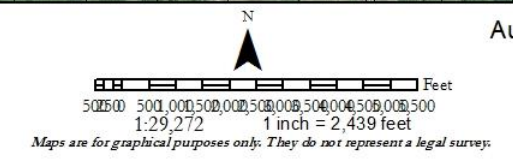
- Other Professionals in the Field
 - Federal
 - State
 - County
 - SWCD
 - Private Consultants
 - Others

Working with Partners

- Work with Partners to get projects completed when other programs don't fit.
- Coordinate with DNR/USFWS to stretch their dollars.
- 253 acres completed due to this partnership
 - USFWS
 - DNR
 - Aitkin SWCD



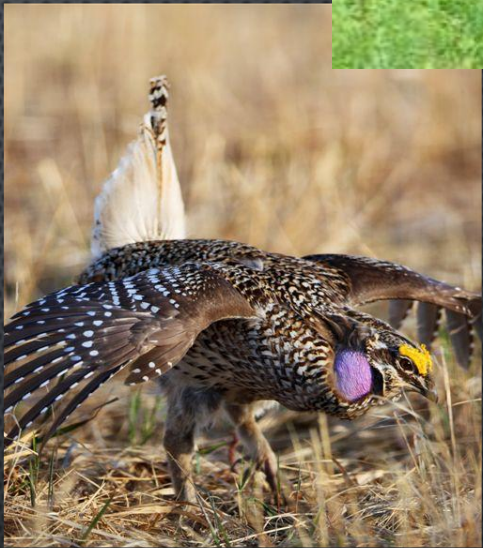
Author: Jake Granfors



Keys for Better engagement?

- One of the biggest limitations for landowners is the knowledge of what programs and resources are available.
- Being present, familiar, and known – This takes time
 - Do the outreach!
- Pushing outside the comfort zone- cold calls? Workshops? Nights/Weekends?
- Listen to the landowner's goals (dreams)- Meet their goals and yours, find the win-win
- Don't be a jerk – they know if you care
- Share and listen to a hunting/fishing story now and then
- Walk the property with the landowner

WHO BENEFITS?



Questions?

Jacob Granfors

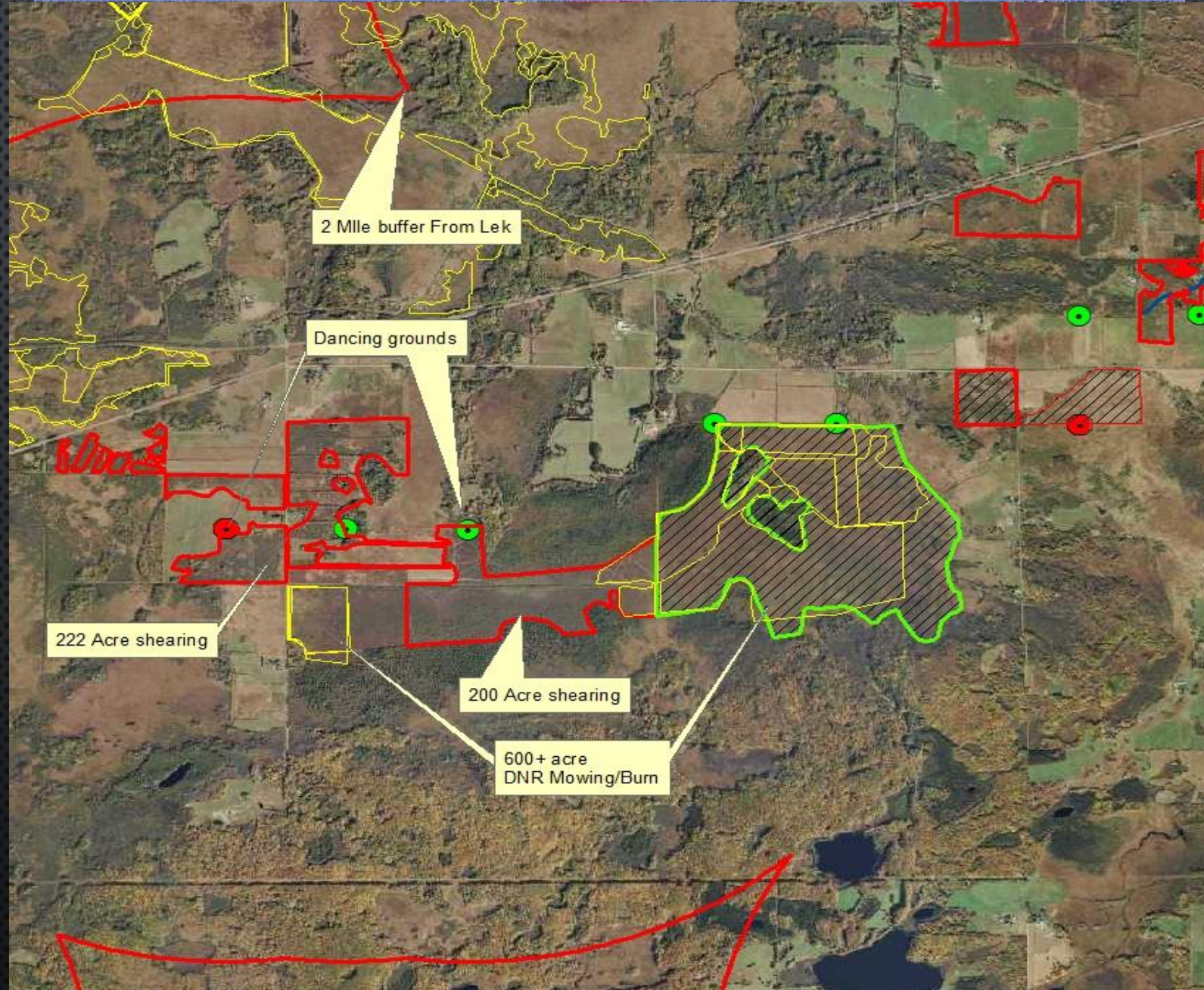
MN Public Land Specialist

Pheasants Forever, Inc.

Mobile (218) 434-0929

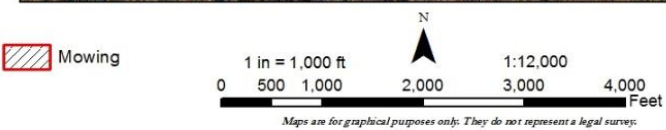
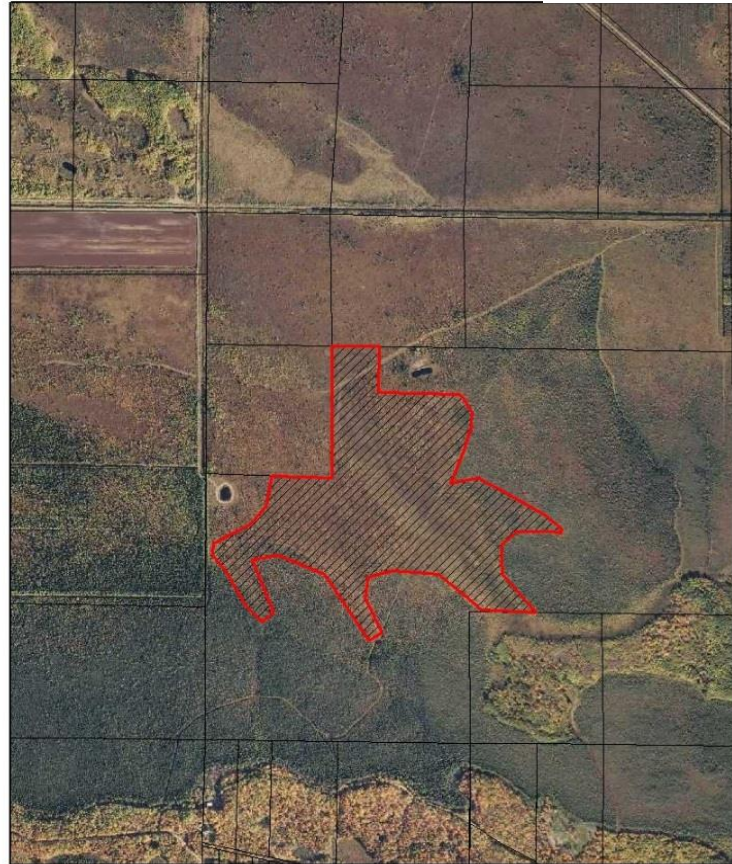
jgranfors@pheasantsforever.org

Brushland Management is a neighborhood effort



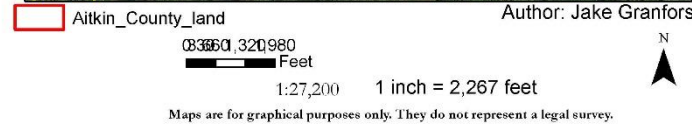
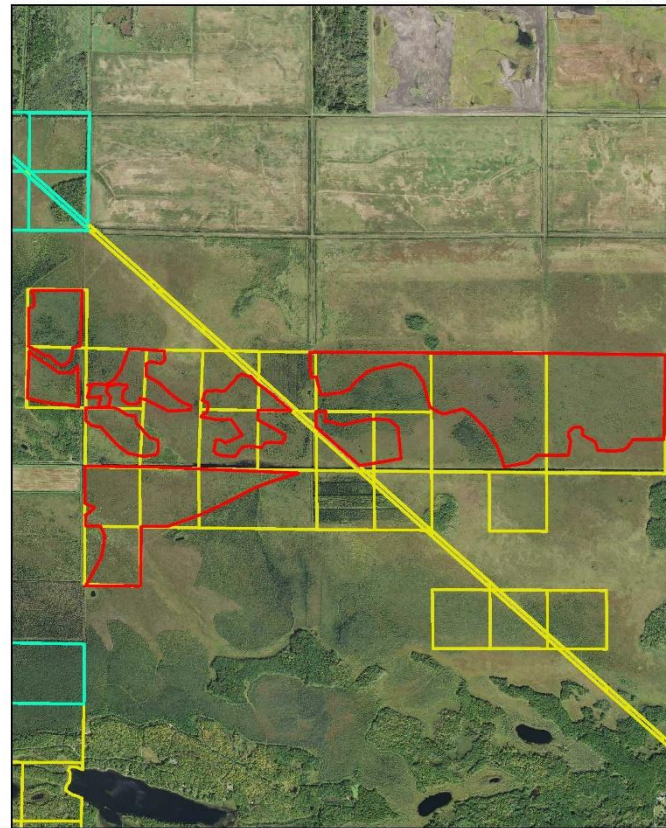
Example of Projects

100 acres total

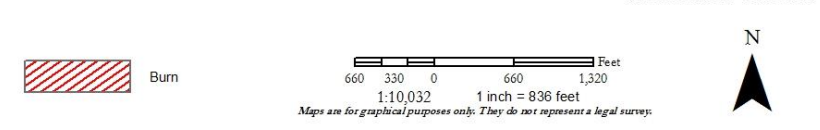
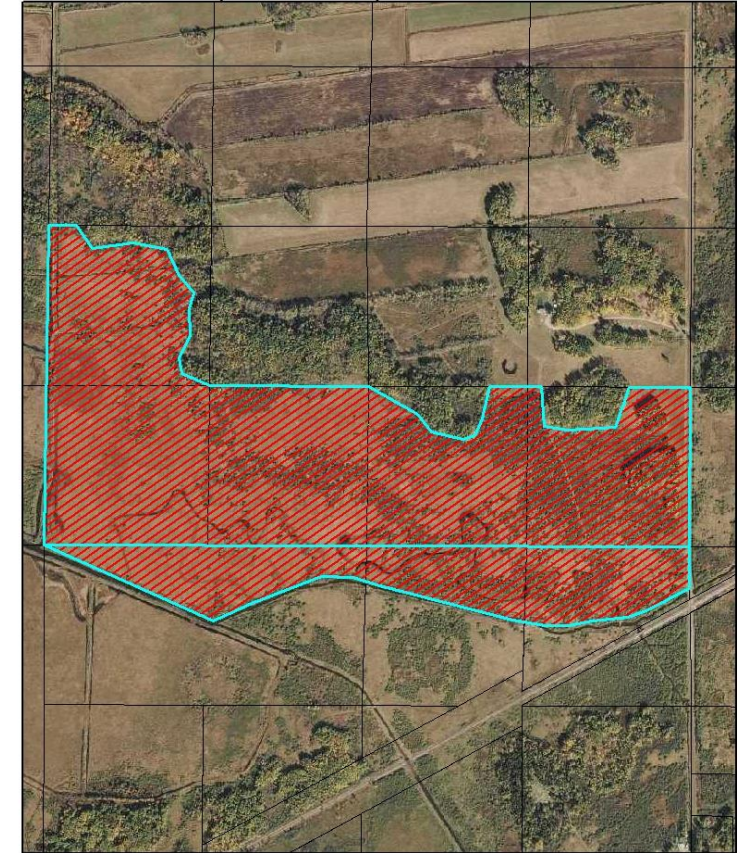


SooLine Brush Mowing
553 Acres

5/15/2019
Aitkin County



Burn 181 (234 state) acres 2018



I ENVY THE PRAIRIE GROUSE BIOLOGISTS AND MANAGERS IN THE CENTRAL PLAINS, WHERE THE BIRD IS TAKEN FOR GRANTED AND SEEMS TO BE HOLDING UP. THOSE FOLKS ARE DOING A GREAT JOB. BUT THEIR JOB IS UNLIKE THAT OF THOSE WHO WORK IN WHAT IS NOW THE FRINGES OF PRAIRIE GROUSE RANGE AND WHO NEED TO FIGHT DAILY JUST TO SLOW DOWN THE POPULATION DECLINE. THEY BATTLE CONSTANTLY WITH THOSE WHO DON'T UNDERSTAND OPEN-LANDSCAPE HISTORY AND ECOLOGY IN THE FOREST, AND WITH THOSE WHO WANT TO PLANT TREES ON LEKS. AND GRADUALLY THE BATTLES ARE BEING LOST, ESPECIALLY IN THE WESTERN GREAT LAKES STATES.

- BILL BERG 2003 *THE PRAIRIE GROUSE TECHNICAL COUNCIL, SIREN, WISCONSIN, 29 SEPTEMBER–3 OCTOBER, 2003.*