

The North American GROUSE Partnership



2016—2017 Annual Report



Row 1—White-tailed Ptarmigan (Garykramer.net), Sooty Grouse (M. Schroeder), Greater Sage-grouse (J. Sartore); Row 2—Ruffed Grouse (Garykramer.net); Sharp-tailed Grouse (C. Baetsen), Rock Ptarmigan (Garykramer.net); Row 3—Dusky Grouse (Garykramer.net), Willow Ptarmigan (Garykramer.net); Lesser Prairie-chicken (J. Sartore); Row 4—Gunnison Sage-grouse (B. Gress), Greater Prairie-chicken (M. Williams), Spruce Grouse (Garykramer.net)



Message from NAGP President and Executive Director

The North American Grouse Partnership (NAGP) was established in 1999 by 13 dedicated conservationists who wanted to ensure the future of all grouse species but particularly prairie grouse, whose populations have been in a decline. The organization has had many forms through the years but in 2016 we decided to re-assess how we could be most effective in the current environment and with limited resources. Being an all-volunteer organization the decision was made to hire an executive director and focus on policy and partnerships for grouse conservation. 2016 was a rebuilding year where our focus was on resurrecting the Prairie Grouse Partners with our conservation organization partners specifically to ensure the effective implementation of conservation strategies for lesser prairie-chickens and sage-grouse, reestablishing our relationships with our partners, and engaging on policy issues at the national level related to grouse conservation. ***Our “Case Statement” developed in August 2016 outlines our blueprint for our current priorities and can be found on our website, www.grousepartners.org.*** We are working for the **birds, the landscapes** they inhabit and the **human connections** to both.

A number of grouse populations continued to deserve attention in 2017, and the NAGP was there to provide a voice for their conservation. Of specific concern has been threats to the management processes for greater sage-grouse and a focus on status and management planning for lesser prairie-chickens. In addition, NAGP continued to focus on prairie grouse as part of our strategic planning of priority issues, and continued to emphasize implementation of the Grassland Conservation Plan for Prairie Grouse.

Greater sage-grouse have received considerable attention in recent years, with numerous plans developed for their conservation. The new Trump administration has proposed potential changes to the completed cooperative planning that has raised new concerns over the future status of this species. ***NAGP has provided input along with numerous other conservation partners about our concerns for weakening of conservation actions for sage-grouse. NAGP also responded to a proposal in Wyoming to approve captive breeding of sage-grouse and prepared a position statement brochure that describes the limitations and concerns with this practice.***

NAGP put considerable focus in 2017 on developing a review of the status of lesser prairie-chickens (LPC) and the conservation programs directed at this species. ***A report (www.grousepartners.org/lpc-assessment) was produced that included recommendations on future conservation actions that are important to improving populations and habitat of this species.*** NAGP views LPC populations as in a recovery mode, and identified the need for substantial increased conservation efforts if this species is to be maintained across its range in functional populations. ***As a result of our increased attention and report, efforts are underway to provide better coordination between LPC programs and better outcomes for actions.***

NAGP also placed emphasis on implementation of the Grassland Conservation Plan for Prairie Grouse which was approved in 2009 as a blueprint for prairie grouse conservation. ***NAGP lead the formation of two on-going interstate working groups for greater prairie-chickens and sharp-tailed grouse with state agencies and coordinated work during 2016-2017.*** NAGP strongly endorses the work of these groups as proactive actions to maintain these species which are serving as flagship species for grassland conservation and provides leadership to the groups efforts.

NAGP provided fiscal sponsorship of the 2017 Prairie Grouse Technical Council meeting which held in Dickinson, North Dakota. We strongly support the bi-annual meeting of this group that allows for active exchange of information on research and status of prairie grouse species. We look forward to playing a larger role with this group in the future.

An additional operational priority in 2017 was rebuilding our communications and outreach to our members. ***We have an updated website and produced several newsletters during the year to keep our members informed of our on-going activities.*** This will continue to be a priority during 2018.

Thus, 2016 and 2017 were pivotal years for NAGP through more active involvement in policy and management and in outreach to our members. We look forward to continuing and expanding this progress in 2018, and seek ideas and support from all that share our concerns for grouse populations and their habitats in North America.

Jon Haufler, President and Steve Belinda, Executive Director.

The North American Grouse Partnership is a Key Voice for grouse in North America whose mission is to promote the conservation of grouse and the habitats necessary for survival and reproduction

NAGP Policy Report (Terry Riley, Director of Policy)



My job with NAGP is to lead efforts related to grouse policy and advance grouse conservation actions on the ground. Grouse conservation, for me, started while I was working on my master's degree at New Mexico State University in the mid-1970s. My research project focused on the examination of lesser prairie-chicken ecology in eastern New Mexico on federal public lands administered by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM). After stints with the US Forest Service and Iowa DNR, I worked on policy issues related to grouse, primarily greater and lesser prairie-chickens and sharp-tailed grouse for the Wildlife Management Institute. I was active in the formation of the NAGP and have previously served on the Board of Directors. I own 320 acres in Nebraska which I manage with my wife for upland birds, deer and other wildlife. Because of our efforts with the Conservation Reserve Program and re-introducing prescribed fire, we now have prairie-chickens and other game birds using the property.



Policy Highlights for 2016-2017

- Provided comments to the US Fish and Wildlife Service on the potential listing of the lesser prairie-chicken
- Provided written and oral testimony on Wyoming's efforts to allow captive greater sage-grouse breeding in game farms
- Developed position statement with the NAGP Board against the use of captive reared sage-grouse for mitigation
- Provided comments and supported numerous bills at the national level on Farm Bill, Wildfire funding, Mitigation, Sage-grouse, range management, hunting, and other grouse related efforts
- Worked with the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative to support and expand their "Native's First" efforts into grouse habitats. This effort promotes the use of native vegetation in restoration, rehabilitation and establishment plantings.
- Developed priorities for grouse for the 2018 Farm Bill and provided our conservation partners with priorities for their efforts



Prairie Grouse Partners Inaugural "Dream" Grouse Hunt

In October 2017, with coordination from our conservation partners (Mule Deer Foundation, Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, Ecosystem Management Research Institute and the American Bird Conservancy) who make up the Prairie Grouse Partnership, NAGP hosted the inaugural "Dream Hunt" for prairie grouse near Iona, South Dakota.

NAGP Board member Andrew Bogan and Quentin McEntee from Traxx Outfitting were hosts for 2 days of grouse hunting, grouse discussions, and fun times. NAGP used this hunt to test the waters as a special event fundraiser to raise needed money for our prairie grouse policy and advocacy. Hunters joined Kelly Hepler, Director of South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks, Howard Vincent (PF), Ed Arnett (TRCP) and NAGP staff Steve Belinda and Terry Riley to discuss how to best advocate for the conservation of grouse and their habitats and what policy priorities need our attention in 2018 and beyond. Noted wild game chef and author Hank Shaw provided tips on upland game cooking and whipped up a great grouse dinner. Shotgun maker Purdey and Sons, Ltd. also sent a representative and some awesome shotguns for hunters to shoot. A lot of grouse were harvested with a first prairie-chicken for numerous hunters including NAGP Executive Director Belinda. The event was a success and was covered by Nick Lowry, managing editor for the Pierre Capital Journal, and numerous articles have been published. Covey Rise Magazine also will be featuring the hunt in the magazine in 2018.



NAGP ED Steve Belinda with his first prairie-chicken (greater)



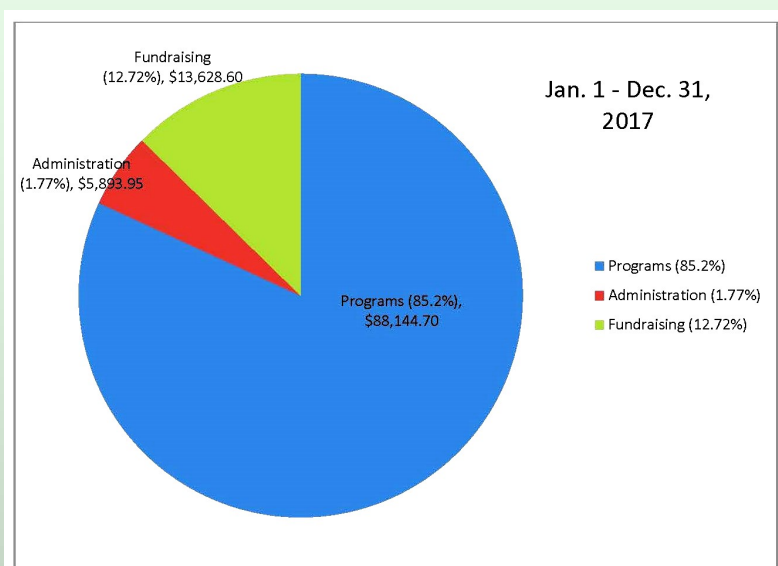
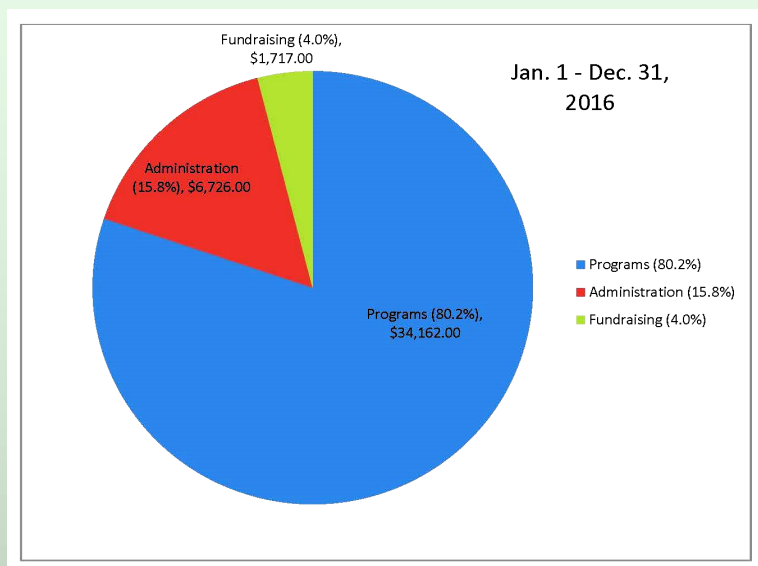
A great bag for the first morning's hunt from one group



Prairie-chicken habitat at its finest

NAGP Financial Information 2016-2017

	2016	2017
Beginning Balance	\$74,702	\$68,495
Income	\$36,398	\$83,992
Expenses	\$42,605	\$107,167
Ending Balance	\$68,495	\$45,320



Conservation Partners and Key Contributors

Mule Deer Foundation
Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever, Inc.
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Ecosystem Management Research Institute
Ruffed Grouse Society
Traxx Outfitting

Grasslans Charitable Foundation
Wolf Creek Charitable Foundation
George B. Storer Foundation
Seidman Family Foundation
Lesser Prairie Chicken Conservation, LCC
James Purdey & Sons Ltd.

NAGP Life Members

Steve Belinda
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Christina Cragholm
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Ralph Rogers
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Peter Widener

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