

Regional Biologist Report
Bob Eriksen, NWTF Regional Biologist
October 1, 2013-December 31, 2013

Meetings, Banquets and Presentations

- Presented three sessions on careers in the wildlife field at Bradford/Sullivan County Schools Green Career Day held at Mt. Pisgah State Park in Troy
- Met with Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Game Commission to renew regional biologist contract

Special Projects

- Prepared bills for payment of bait purchases and travel associated with the current hen study
- Made arrangements for speakers and presentations for the Law Enforcement Officers' Session at the NWTF Convention and Sports Show
- Developed donations to offer a breakfast social for the wildlife officers at the NWTF Convention and Sports Show
- Researched information on wild turkey progress in Quebec, Canada for Edgefield staff

Golden-winged Warbler Initiative

- Participated in conference calls and email strings regarding golden-winged warbler initiative work requirements
- Worked on CAP 142 plans for properties in Pennsylvania and New Jersey
- Conducted two site visits in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania

Save the Habitat, Save the Hunt

- The Maryland Save the Habitat, Save the Hunt Committee developed three goals and strategies to achieve the goals. These goals need to be emphasized at the board meetings and local chapter meetings so that we can get traction on them and start moving. The goals and strategies are as follows:

Strategic issues:

- 1) Create more hunters – hunter to move toward replacement rate. 1,000 in 10 yrs.
 - a. Develop NWTF volunteers into HE instructors (at least 5 per chapter)
 - b. Utilize young guns club to increase opp. Every committee member to mentor 1 child per year (offer opportunities through hunter education classes)
 - c. Coordinate w/ DNR to provide mentoring (tie in w/crop damage permits?)
 - d. Create more chapters (2)

- 2) Enhance on state and private lands (5,000 acres per year)
 - a. Conservation seed (800 bags)
 - b. Seed subsidy
 - c. Timber harvest acreage state land (200-300 ac/yr)
 - d. Superfund habitat work (500 acre/yr)
 - e. GWW acreage
 - f. Federal lands mgmt (NASA, DOD, USFWS)
 - g. Land acquisition
- 3) Partnerships (at least 5)
 - a. Matching funds for land purchase – conservancies (chapter has \$16K)
 - b. Grants (NRA, etc)
 - i. BB gun trailer funding
 - ii. Youth hunts/events
 - c. Corporate/gov't
 - i. State parks
 - ii. County parks

- The Delaware Board of Directors held the first Save the Habitat, Save the Hunt meeting over the summer. The participants from the chapters and the Division of Fish and Wildlife provided valuable input and a “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats” (SWOT) analysis was completed based on votes by the committee.
- The New Jersey State Chapter Board of Directors held the first Save the Habitat, Save the Hunt meeting in conjunction with their September board meeting. Board members were asked to vote on the important issues facing the state. A SWOT analysis was followed by the votes and voting produced a list of strengths and opportunities.
- The Pennsylvania Chapter Save the Habitat, Save the Hunt Committee met last May. The purpose of the preliminary meeting was to identify the current strengths and weaknesses of our efforts to conserve wildlife habitat and preserve our hunting tradition in the Commonwealth. Everyone had spent time preparing for the meeting thinking about the answers to six questions sent out earlier. Much of the meeting was spent conducting what is known as a SWOT analysis, listing everything the group viewed as Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats to saving the habitat and saving the hunt in Pennsylvania.

We listed 30 strengths under Save the Hunt along with 18 weaknesses, 29 opportunities and 20 threats to the hunting tradition in Pennsylvania during our brainstorming session. When we moved on to Save the Habitat we listed 9 strengths, 10 weaknesses, 11 opportunities and 16 threats. Obviously we cannot address all of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats we thought of in both areas at one time. We had to narrow down the list. We did that by having the lists displayed and each representative could cast five votes under each category.

Our top rated SWOTs include both Save the Habitat and Save the Hunt and most address both goals.

Strengths:

- Public access is good in Pennsylvania
- Mentoring for new hunters is already in place
- Relationships with natural resource agencies are good and we have a record of good science-based decisions

Weaknesses:

- There is a lack of appeal regarding hunting and management to Gen-Y
- Landowner buy-in for access and management is weak
- There is a lack of education of our local chapters and lack of local chapter engagement. This includes communication deficiencies and member recruitment and retention

Opportunities:

- We can grow and improve partnerships
- We need to identify limiting factors to both hunter and member recruitment and retention
- Education and developing an intended focus on critical habitat areas

Threats:

- Aging hunter cohort and membership/ lack of new volunteers
- Legislative ignorance and ignoring science-based data and facts
- Forest maturation and negative perceptions in the public about hunting and management of habitat and wildlife

Supervisory Responsibilities

- Participated in numerous conference calls providing updates on projects in the region and discussing major initiatives for FY 2014

Writing Projects

- Developed articles on land management plans and turkey nest timing for “Pennsylvania Turkey Talk”
- Wrote articles on “Save the Habitat, Save the Hunt” for “Maryland Turkey Droppings” and “The New Jersey Gobbler”
- Prepared an article on Golden-winged Warbler Habitat opportunities for the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen’s Clubs publication, “On Target”
- Prepared spring gobbler season forecasts information for Turkey Country
- Provided information on turkey population declines for an freelance writer preparing a Turkey Country article

Hunting Heritage Super Fund and Outreach Fund Activity

- Processed 3 Super Fund request forms for the Pennsylvania Chapter, 2 for the Delaware Chapter and 1 each for the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia Chapters

Information Requests

- Provided information to 18 individuals on wild turkey nesting, gobbling activity, wild turkey behavior, hybridization, natural history, habitat requirements and hunting