

Forever Illinois Newsletter

July 2009



ATTEND A DISTRICT MEETING

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- District Meetings last week in July!
- Chapter Block Grant Requests Due July 24!
- Grant Reporting Due August 1
- **2010 IL State Meeting Set January 23, 2010**
- PF/QF Searches for Illinois Youth Leadership Council candidates

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Mark your calendars and make plans to attend one of the three 2009 IL District Meetings.

Meeting Dates:

- **Mon, July 27—DeKalb Best Western**
- **Tues, July 28—East Peoria Par-A-Dice Casino**
- **Wed, July 29—Decatur Hotel and Conference Center**

Banquet package preview begins at 5:30 with the official meeting running from 6:30-8:30pm.

One gun will be given away at each meeting.

This is your best opportunity to view the banquet package and

encore merchandise for your upcoming event.

This year has a new smaller, less expensive core banquet package with the opportunity to customize it to your event with a wide variety of encore prints and merchandise. We know chapters will be excited for this new system.

We only have a limited quantity of many of these items so chapters should plan on ordering at the meeting so they don't lose out.

Each chapter will receive a 3-ring binder with index tabs that includes underwriting booklets, pass thru programs, fundraising ideas, information on grants and

much more!

Tim, Matt and Aaron will be at each meeting to answer your questions and give you ideas on how to maximize your bottom line for habitat.

In addition to the gun drawing, we will also be providing a variety of **chapter incentives** as well as committee incentives for ordering at the event.

We can't wait to see you at this year's district meetings—where you are sure to get a lot of information and have a lot of fun!

Think Habitat!

Sponsor an "Upland Tales Classroom"

Chapters can now sign up a classroom in their community to receive 50 issues of upland tales magazine during the upcoming school year along with a teachers guide for lesson plans

that encourage conservation and a land ethic.

The cost to chapters is \$250. At the end of the school year, the teacher will be provided upland tales membership applications

for students who want to continue a upland tales membership.

A great new tool for introducing youth to conservation and Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever.

Fiscal Year Ends June 30, 2009—Reporting time

The PF/QF fiscal year ends at the ended June 30. Chapters must report grant-related activities no later than **Aug 1** or they will not be reimbursed for those expenses.

Reporting should include any previously unreported grant activities since July 1, 2008.

Chapters should also submit their Chapter Habitat Summary

which lists total projects and acres by category along with youth events. This document is important in reporting our accomplishments in Illinois. If you need help—contact your RWB. Thanks.



Conservation Advocacy

Help Launch the Dedicated Funding Campaign

Every PF and QF leader is well aware of the challenges impacting our natural resources. The DNR budget has been cut annually for just shy of a decade resulting in major lay-offs and skeleton programs. Soil and Water Conservation districts have faced similar cuts and set-backs.

We also understand that benefits of wildlife habitat go far beyond providing homes for wildlife and recreation for hunters. There are both consumptive (hunters, anglers) and non-consumptive users of wildlife habitat and that habitat also preserves our soil and cleans our state's waters - water used by people who may have never set foot off of the paved road.

Many of the state's conservation groups (including PF/QF) are preparing to launch a campaign to support dedicated funding for our state's natural resources. We know it will be a long process (it took 8 years in MN).

We are going to start to raise awareness with a booth at the IL State Fair in August. Efforts are underway to produce promotional and informational materials to aid in educating some of the 400,000 who pass through the conservation area of the state fair.

All the groups are being asked for help in manning the booth during the 10-day fair

(Aug 14-23).

We are asking for PF/QF volunteers to step up and help us man the booth. The fairgrounds are open from 7am to midnight (buildings 9-9). If you would like to help, please contact Aaron with days/times you would be available. We are hoping to have 2 people, 2 hour shifts.

We hope to replicate the effort at other major events (Deer/Turkey Classic, Hunting and Fishing Days). If your chapter has a booth at these or other events, please let us know and we will get you materials.

Missourians 'Show Us' How to Protect Habitat

One-eighth cent 'conservation tax' is the envy of the nation

By Joel M. Vance

It is the gray light before dawn, that half-hour between legal shooting and the tip of the sun over the river to the east. There is a sudden rush overhead, as if a great bird of prey had stooped to my decoys. But it's not one bird, it's a flock of teal doing what teal do—appear from nowhere in a huge hurry.

They pull out of their swoop in front of the decoys, wheel and are motionless in the turn, then they're incoming. When I stand they reach for altitude and again are motionless for that instant before they overcome gravity. I shoot and one falls. I swing on a second bird too hastily and shoot behind it and then they are gone.

This is my duck hole, shared with son Andy and a couple friends. No one else ever appears here and that's fine with me, although it's on public land within sight of a gravel road that sees considerable traffic.

The two-acre wetland, never more than chest deep, likely wouldn't exist except that Missourians have taxed them-

selves for 30 years to buy bulldozers to scoop out shallow wetlands on public wildlife areas.

That's not all the one-eighth cent sales tax has done for the Missouri outdoors, not by a long way. But it's one that I appreciate as much if not more than many of the other projects the more than \$90 million-a-year tax provides.

Missouri's sales tax for conservation is unique in the country. In 1976 voters approved a Constitutional amendment to tax themselves a penny on every eight dollars of purchase with the money dedicated to fish, wildlife and forestry, administered by the Department of Conservation. No other state has done anything similar.

A number of states have passed or proposed tax incentives for conservation practices, but these realize only a drop in the bucket to what's needed and only one has anything approaching the Missouri tax. Arkansas has a one-eighth cent sales tax for conservation, but only 45 percent of it goes to the Game and Fish Commission. The rest goes to

other agencies, including state parks—and Missouri has a separate one-tenth cent sales tax split between state parks and soil and water conservation.

Dan Zakos, federal aid coordinator for the Missouri Department, says, "I've been contacted by Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan and Iowa. It's too tough without significant grassroots support and a unified front of all conservationists. Even Arkansas had to put several different but similar eggs in the basket to make it work."

The Show-Me State citizens pulled off this legislative end-around by initiative petition and a referendum vote, a bypass of the elected representatives available to only about half the states. Those who don't have initiative/referendum must rely on their legislature to get a dedicated source of funds and legislatures are notoriously reluctant to approve money they can't control.

The Missouri tax opened up a conservation program that already was considered among the top few nationally. Now it is the envy of every other state wildlife agency. None have a protected budget and regulatory autonomy even close to that of the Missouri department.

While the Missouri conservation program is broad-based, across fish, wildlife and forestry (that has been the constitutional mandate of the

Conservation Department since citizens first established a non-political department through initiative in 1936), wetlands have been a major beneficiary. Wetlands take a bunch of managing. You can buy land and walk away from it and deer and turkeys will proliferate, but it takes intensive care to encourage migratory waterfowl.

Missouri lays in that uneasy geographic belt between the marsh lands of the lake states and the marshlands of the south. Waterfowl hunting success depends on weather, but also on available habitat, and aside from farm ponds and larger lakes, wetland habitat mostly has been created over the past half century.

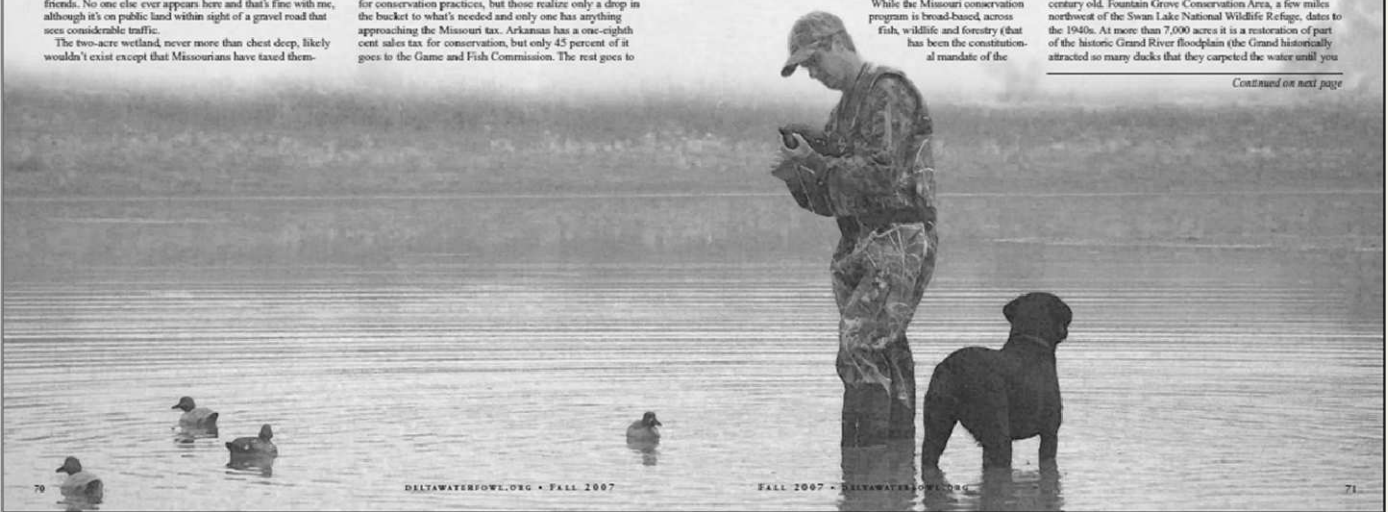
A sudden cold front can move many ducks south and if a warm front is stalled over Missouri, hunting becomes blessed. But if the cold shoulders into Missouri it can freeze shallow water and send ducks Diver-ward.

By the 1960s when conservation had become a formidable science, Missouri's historic wetlands almost all had been drained for agriculture and what pioneers described as "flocks that darkened the sky" were only mentions in history books.

The Department's wetland program now is more than half a century old. Fountain Grove Conservation Area, a few miles northwest of the Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge, dates to the 1940s. At more than 7,000 acres it is a restoration of part of the historic Grand River floodplain (the Grand historically attracted so many ducks that they carpeted the water until you

'By the 1950s Missouri had lost more than 87 percent of its historic wetlands.'

Continued on next page



This article is difficult to read in this newsletter, but it is an example of the dedicated funding for natural resources concept that has spread to Minnesota (passed in November 2008) and is actively being walked through the legislature in Iowa. Similar to other states, it would take a constitutional amendment in Illinois. In addition to the NGOs who are promoting dedicated funding, the DNR has formed a task force to explore funding opportunities.



Youth & Education

Illinois Youth Leadership Council searches for conservation minded youth

Springfield, IL – The IL Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever state council recently announced their intent to establish an IL Pheasants Forever / Quail Forever Youth Leadership Council (IYLC) modeled after the National Youth Leadership Council. The move ties nicely into the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) identified focus of youth recruitment.

The IYLC will be charged with serving as liaisons with other youth groups (FFA, Boy/Girl Scouts, 4-H), growing the conservation vision and mission of Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever in today's youth, addressing hunter recruitment and growing the youth conservation programs in the state. IYLC candidates will receive leadership and com-

munications training and be ambassadors for Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever in Illinois. They will serve as spokespersons for other youth in conservation and hunting issues and will have the opportunity to share their voice with DNR, Fish and Wildlife Service, and elected officials. Youth must be accompanied to IL Youth Leadership Council Events by a parent or guardian.

Twelve (12) conservation-minded youth will be selected from across the state of Illinois to serve on the IYLC based on their responses to a questionnaire. The questionnaire is open to all IL youth aged 10-17. The goal is to represent the state geographically and by age groups with the

conservation leaders of tomorrow. The questionnaire and more details are available on the youth page at www.illinoispf.org. Applications are due by September 1, 2009.

A press release will be shared with outdoor writers in Illinois to get a solid list of candidates from across the state for the council.

Chapters are encouraged to identify potential youth leaders for the inaugural youth leadership council.

If you have questions about the Illinois Youth Leadership Council, you can visit the IYLC page on the state web site or call Aaron at 217-635-5207.



Check out the new Youth and IYLC pages on the state website www.illinoispf.org or www.illinoisqf.org



Tweet, tweet, not just for the birds...

Pheasants cackle, bobwhite whistle, so why are "Ringnecks and Whistlers" tweeting?

Many of our members are just getting accustomed to using email, but while our youth still use email, they have developed social networks and social messaging using internet applications like Facebook and Twitter (sending a message on twitter is called tweeting).

PF/QF understands that today's youth are tomorrow's conservation leaders and we need to communicate with them in their language if we hope to engage them in the outdoors. Seem counter-intuitive, that's a different article.

Upland tales now has a facebook page that will post youth events, photos and other wildlife facts along with discussion pages.

There is also a twitter page for upland tales - fans will receive occasional updates about what's happening with our youth programs.

The website also has received a makeover and has a blog (another communication method for the young or young at heart).

Want to learn more about these applications, ask your kid or a neighbor kid—they'll explain it much better than me.



Grants

August 1st - Grant Reporting Deadline - Miss it and you LOSE!

Yet another reminder to chapters about the upcoming August 1st deadline.

June 30th marked the end of the PF/QF fiscal year which means auditors will be arriving soon to go over the books.

All grant activity completed between July

1, 2008 and June 30, 2009 must be reported to the IL state office no later than **August 1st**.

Any grant activity that occurred during that period that is not reported **WILL NOT BE REIMBURSED**. Once the books are

reviewed, we can't make changes.

This includes project activity that occurred during the last fiscal year that has not been invoiced or paid—be sure to get your vendors to invoice you ASAP.

Deciphering grant reporting requirements

Confused, frustrated looking for a simple answer about grant reporting? We're getting there, but it's a process.

Did you know there are ten (10) 2009 Block Grants, 6 active 2008 grants and a month from now is the deadline for the 2010 block grant proposals?

It's been challenging coming up with a simple yet complete reporting system that meets the state requirements and offers chapters flexibility to suit their technological experience. We've found one system does not fit all.

However, we have made some great strides. We now have grant policies that lay out the requirements which each chapter must sign. That's our first check

that each chapter understands the "strings" attached to grant funding.

We also have a document that describes the different options available for grant reporting. Chapters familiar with DNR forms can still use them, chapters familiar with excel may use the spreadsheet and other chapters may chose to use a pencil on the individual project report.

One of the biggest hurdles has been providing a detailed map which would provide an audit the ability to easily spot check a project.

The standard has been highlighted aerial photos, but changes in USDA privacy laws in October of 2008, have made these more difficult for some chapters to obtain.

For chapters who have a pencil and a gps handheld unit, they can sketch the project using the individual project report or a blank piece of paper.

Perhaps the simplest way to provide the map is to use Google Earth—a few clicks and you can email a map to the state office. We have a great guide to help.

All the necessary forms are available from any of the PF/QF staff and will be available in the chapter only area of the web site.

Hard copies of these documents will be included in the 2009 District Meeting Binders. Each chapter will get one binder.

These reports will no doubt change with suggestions from chapters, but we'll keep you updated on changes.

2010 Block Grant Proposals Due July 24

The DNR block grant deadline is at the end of July. In late June, chapters were asked (email) to complete a standardized request form and return it before **5pm on July 24th**.

Also included in the email was a word document which outlined each of the proposed chapter request categories:

- Warm Season Grass Establishment
- Switchgrass Establishment
- Warm Season Grass Upgrade
- Fescue Conversion
- Cool Season Grass Upgrade
- Woody Cover Removal
- Incentives

- Prescribed Burning
- Equipment

The requests will be used to determine the amount of acres we will request in the block grant proposals for various practices.

Please be conservative when determining your request levels. We will not allow chapters to request more acres than the average they completed over the past 2 years, without an explanation. We will be requesting statewide acres above and beyond chapter requests.

Chapters are encouraged to provide other ideas for grant proposals.

The grant request form (excel spreadsheet) should be completed, saved with your chapter name and emailed to akuehl@pheasantsforever.org.

Remember that chapters also have to have signed the grant policies, fax to 217-498-7743, or email a signed scan to ksteling@pheasantsforever.org. Chapters will NOT be allowed to participate without a signed copy on file.

Delinquent chapters will not be allowed to participate in grant proposals.

If you need assistance in completing any of the forms or help getting off the DNR delinquent list, contact the PF/QF staff.



Habitat - Habitat - Habitat

Ragweed! -- Just what the doctor ordered!!

BY JIM WOOLEY



Itchy eyes, scratchy throat and ahhh-choo!! We know that hunters number among the millions poleaxed by allergies, so ragweed benefits for wildlife might be a touchy subject here. Even the most drippy-nosed of quail enthusiasts, through, are recognizing that ragweed can be Mr. Bob's best friend. Want a simple quail habitat practice that's hard to get wrong? Think ragweed.

Here are some ragweed facts to sniffle about. The 18 North American species of ragweed belong to the composite family (asters, daises, dandelions). A single ragweed plant can yield a billion grains of pollen, and each grain can wind-surf up to 500 miles (which means you can run, but you can't hide). Global warming may have doubled ragweed's pollen production (and that's not getting better!). Most folks are familiar with common ragweed (up to waist high) but its giant ragweed cousin can reach 10 feet tall (both provide good quail benefits). Finally, most ragweeds are annuals, but there are perennial varieties as well.

The quail of yore were a happy by-product of sloppy farming (by today's standards anyway) - small, weedy fields, low-intensity grazing, brushy fencerows, lots of edge. Coveys, nesting pairs and broods need those early successional plant communities to provide thin stem densities for easy movement, mid story canopy to conceal feeding broods, and bugs for chicks to eat. Across quail country, these small farms have morphed to larger, cleaner tracts or to pine plantations—eliminating the old field habi-

tats favored by quail (and other wildlife like fox, coyotes, hawks, pheasants, song-birds and even deer). Recreating yesterday in today's manicured ag-landscape can be an intensive undertaking— but there are some simple fixes too. Targeted disturbance creates these habitats and lots of ragweed.

Ragweed produces an abundant seed crop rich in fat and protein that stays on the plants into the winter—available to wildlife. Ragweed seed can contain up to 47% crude protein and 38% crude fat. That's nutritious stuff, and quail love it. Studies have shown ragweed is the most utilized natural quail food in Missouri and Oklahoma. The seed also provides food for birds like mourning doves, goldfinches, chickadees, and juncos. Ragweed greens are also a preferred browse for deer and provide brood habitat for wild turkeys. And, it has the right plant structure to provide fall and winter roosting areas.

Now, this is a wildlife plant!!! So how do you go about getting this green miracle started on your land? Does a cartel control the flow of this valuable seed, much like OPEC does oil? Nope—this is so simple it's crazy. While you can buy ragweed seed (yup, it's expensive), Mother Nature has most likely planted it for you already—the seed persists in the soil for up to 80 years. Ragweed likes disturbance - - all you have to do is manage for it. So, ready, set, rip and tear! The best management for ragweed (and to drive your allergic neighbors nuts) is simple disking, spraying and burning.

Disking is an easy way to create ragweed cover, and timing is critical. In the northern quail range, spring and early summer disking means more ragweed. Stands disked later in the summer favor grasses and biennials. Starting from bare soil, annuals like ragweed will dominate the site. In succeeding years, the field will

revert to greater percentages of biennials, perennial forbs and grasses. A once -over deep disking will create a mixed annual-perennial crop again. Heavier disking (applied rotationally) will set back the site and allow annuals like ragweed to dominate again.

Applying herbicides properly can also improve habitats. Herbicides like glyphosate (Round-Up) can reduce competitive grasses and allow and allow useful annuals like ragweed, smartweed, barnyard grass, lambsquarter, pigweed and foxtail to flourish. There are also many other chemical treatment options. Well-planned fire also sets back natural succession and enhances annual forbs like ragweed. Using fire (hot fire or cool?, fall or spring burns?, patch or whole field?) and chemicals is complicated so consult with a wildlife professional.

Stiff Goldenrod *Solidago rigidum*



Blooms: August-October

Soil: Moist-slightly dry

Description: Yellow flower, up to 5' tall, coarse hairy stems. Large basal leaves. Alternate. Common throughout the state.

Notes: The scientific name is from Latin meaning restore or cure. Very attractive to insects (including butterflies), seeds eaten by some birds (goldfinch, Gr Pr Chicken), and herbivorous mammals (white-tailed deer) in early growth stages.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP



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UPCOMING EVENT CALENDAR

Does your chapter have an event for our calendar. Please get your upcoming banquet, youth and other events to your regional wildlife biologist for inclusion in our monthly newsletter and on the state web site. Thanks.

Description	Location	Time	Date
Focus on Forever Workshop	Nebraska		7/17-7/18, 2009
District Meeting	Best Western, DeKalb	6:30-8:30pm	7/27/2009
District Meeting	Par-A-Dice, E Peoria	6:30-8:30pm	7/28/2009
District Meeting	Decatur Hotel & Conf Center	6:30-8:30pm	7/29/2009
Champaign Co PF Banquet	Hawthorne Suites, Champaign	5-10pm	8/21/2009
McLean Co PF Banquet		5-10pm	9/10/2009
Kane Co PF Banquet		5-10pm	9/24/2009
South Cook PF Banquet		5-10pm	9/24/2009
2010 State Meeting Social	Par-A-Dice, Peoria	5pm-12am	1/22/2010
2010 State Meeting & Banquet	Par-A-Dice, Peoria	9am-10pm	1/23/2010
Rock Island/Henry PF Banquet		5-10pm	2/5/2010
2010 Pheasant Fest	Des Moines, IA		Feb 26-28, 2010

Does your chapter have an article for our monthly newsletter? Are you willing to share the success of a recent chapter event (youth day, seed giveaway, banquet, habitat project, etc) with the other chapters in Illinois? If so, please send your article and photo(s) to akuehl@pheasantsforever.org.