



MINNESOTA SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY

THE MINNESOTA SHARPTAILER

Visit Us at Sharptails.org & Facebook

Winter 2022

SPRING FLING & DOUBLE GUN SHOOT on SATURDAY, APRIL 30, 2022

with PF East-central Spurs Chapter at Wings North, 19379 Homestead Road, Pine City, MN

SCHEDULE

6:30 am — Birding tour with Wild River Conservancy Naturalist. Reserve a spot by April 23. Contact Jeremiah Walters at walters@wildriversconservancy.org

9:00 am — Membership Meeting & Presentations on Habitat, Research, and More!

12:30pm — Burger Bar Lunch

1:45 pm — Safety message followed by Double Gun Shoot

4:00 pm — Shooting Team Awards and Silent Auction/General Raffle Winners

FEES (All options below include an Annual Membership)

Morning Only - Program, Muffins, Coffee, Lunch \$40

*Afternoon Only – Lunch and participation in Double Gun Shoot \$60

*All Day - Events & Meals \$80

*This option includes participation in 2 to 4 person teams in the Double Gun Shoot (10 station sporting clays course). When paying, please indicate who is on your team and team name. If you don't have a team, you can be assigned to one that day. Double barrel guns must be used. Extra double barrel shotguns are available to those who don't have one.

REGISTER by April 1st - Mail a check payable to MSGS, to Jillian Fejszes at 1202 Greenhill Drive, Thief River Falls, MN 56701. Or by payment on Venmo to [@mnsharptails](https://www.venmo.com/@mnsharptails).

SPONSORSHIP - If your organization is interested in sponsoring a shooting station, please send payment to Jillian (see above). Sponsors will receive recognition with a sign at shooting station of their choice!

CONTACT - Please reach out to Kyle Arola for any questions regarding the event at 218-689-5178 or kyle.arola32@gmail.com

MSGS is committed to enhancing and protecting sharp-tailed grouse habitat in Minnesota. We can turn every \$1000 raised into \$10,000 of Conservation Partners Legacy grants!

Check MSGS out at sharptails.org & facebook.com/sharptails.org



Greetings from Griz

Dave Pauly, MSGS President & Habitat Projects Coordinator

Your Society is presently engaged in ENERGIZED MISSION MOMENTUM, using all possible strategies to address declining sharptail populations and loss of quality habitats.

The following highlights were/are predicated in our Vision to restore, maintain and sustain the resiliency of the Sharp-tailed Grouse to its former status as one of the most highly desired upland gamebird species in Minnesota.

HIGHLIGHTS (condensed list)

Recruit – Retain -- Re-activate

Membership of now 250 strong with 43 Life Members, our Facebook page with ~2500 follows, and ~2500 likes, reaching ~3500 – progress made both the “old way” and through the new Social Media way!

Funding Sources (separate from Membership dues)

Conservation Partnership Legacy (CPL) Grants (MSGS origination) - \$1.3M. PF-MSGS OHF Grant Partnership – many \$\$M. USFWS MN Private Lands Office Coop Agreement - \$10K (MSGS discretionary use) and \$10K (MSGS targeted Private Lands Habitat Projects). Multiple \$\$K donations as Cash Match to our CPL Projects from several Conservation Organizations and multiple individuals (to MSGS-SOS account). Give To Max Day – increased our coffers by \$3000+. And many thousands of \$\$ the Brush Cut Days provide as In Kind Match to our CPL Projects.

Innovative Projects

Brushlands Enhancement CPL \$\$ were utilized to contract with a vendor of appropriate equipment to be operated by DNR Staff. A Contractor was awarded CPL \$\$ for the use of a Biobaler to enhance brushlands and then utilize ‘bales’ for stream/lakeshore erosion control. And we have an MSGS CPL Grant for habitat restoration work in SW MN on the Crosby-Ripple Unit of LQP Management Area in efforts (with PF) to begin supporting sharptail habitat management in that portion of MN.

Acquisition Projects

MSGS finally (5 year process) achieved our first ever stand-alone protection project - the Huddle Acquisition thru conveyance to DNR Wildlife for addition to the Kroschel-Holy Cow WMA. The acquisition required a Traditional CPL as our usual venue of ECPL (\$50,000 cap) was not sufficient to satisfy the necessary \$\$ amounts. We have also provided funds for several PF OHF Acquisitions with sharptail/prairie grouse habitats/populations, including the recent Prosby tract addition to the Cupido WMA.

Please recognize, this is by no means an ‘all inclusive’ list of “your” MSGS Highlights!

“No Challenge is too great ... when you plan ahead.”

Thank you all for your continued support and desire to see Firebirds experience a return to the landscape!

“Griz”, David C. Pauly

MSGS President/Habitat Projects Coordinator

Griz@scicable.net / 320-279-1777

Board of Directors:

Executive Board

President - Dave Pauly

Vice President - Kyle Arola

Secretary - Martha Minchak

Treasurer - Jillian Fejszes

Regional Representatives

NW MN - Gary Huschle

NE MN - Marshall Deters

SW MN - Walt Gessler

SE MN - Ray Marshall

Coordinators

Habitat - Dave Pauly

Outreach/Newsletters - Jodie Provost

Website/Facebook - Matt Breuer

Membership - Dave Dickey

Fundraising/Merchandise - Bailey Petersen

Student Advisor - Bill Faber

Honorary Directors

Roche Lally, Bill Berg, Jamie Slade

The Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society is dedicated to the management and restoration of sharptails in Minnesota for hunters and non-hunters.

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Joe Worm Receives 1st Ever MSGS Service to Sharptails Award

Joe Worm, DNR wildlife technician at the Cloquet Area Wildlife office, received the first ever “Service to Sharptails” Award from the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society.

Here is what co-workers have to say about Joe: Joe has been a steadfast wildlife technician at the Cloquet Wildlife Area for decades. We cannot begin to fathom the number acres of habitat he has positively impacted though his work, from wetlands to brushlands to forest. Likely tens of thousands of acres. As one of the last strongholds of sharptail habitat in east-central Minnesota, his skills in planning and organizing of projects in the area have been instrumental. He knows the area like the back of hand, tenaciously implementing whatever is needed to get the job done, whether tree removal, firebreaks, ditch crossings, prescribed burns, brushland mowing or shearing, or more. His attention to detail, safety, equipment, and his fellow workers is unmatched.

A quick visit with any of Joe’s colleagues will reflect the light in which we all see him – an unwavering pillar of down to earth, get 'er done attitude that we hope never retires!



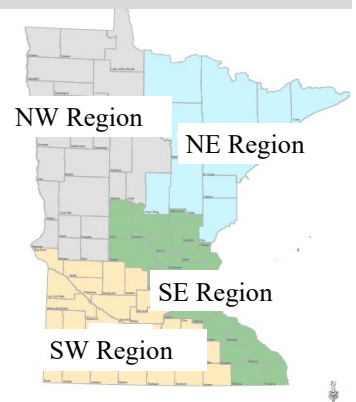
Joe Worm receives the Service to Sharptails Award last fall from Dave Pauly, MSGS President.

Nominees Sought for MSGS’s 2022 Service to Sharptails Award

MSGS is seeking nominees to present recognition to a person or group who has had significant impact on meeting MSGS’s mission. The recipient can be a landowner, contractor, researcher, manager, writer, conservation organization, or other. To nominate a dedicated Firebird Fan, submit a brief explanation of why you think the nominee is worthy and any supporting material to MSGS President Dave Pauly at Griz@scicable.net by April 1. Thank you!

Give Back—Join the MSGS Leadership Team 2022 Call for Election Candidates

Team Firebird is seeking nominees for our Annual MSGS Board Election. Nominations are now open for positions of Vice President, Secretary, and NW and SE MN Representatives (map to right). All serve two year terms to proudly represent you. We have a wealth of passionate sharptail enthusiasts in our member ranks and conservation community with skills, time, and connections to share. Please consider getting involved on MSGS’s Board by nominating yourself or a worthy friend. Or joining one of our teams to assist with outreach, fundraising, volunteer coordination, policy, 2022 Spring Fling planning, and more. Everyone’s contributions are needed to sustain a strong team and are much appreciated. The reward of giving back is great and the people you work alongside amazing! Contact President Dave Pauly with questions and to submit nominations or your interest in serving on a team by April 1 (Griz@scicable.net, 320- 279-1777).



Help Find Sharptail in SW MN This Spring!

MSGS is seeking volunteers to help search for sharptail in SW MN from April 2 to May 15. In recent years MSGS has collected observations of prairie grouse in SW MN to gauge evidence of and potential for viable breeding populations. If interested, see below links to a sign-up sheet, best practices/instructions, observation sheet, and map of priority search areas. Please spread the word to interested others. Questions? Contact Sabin at sabin.adams@hotmail.com

[Sign Up Sheet](#)

[Best Practices/Instructions](#)

[Observation Sheet](#)

[Search Area Maps](#) (a large file with several maps, may need to download it to view it)



A Visit with George Davis:

One of the Originals by Jodie Provost



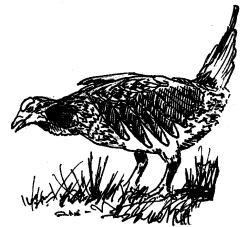
Last summer I had the pleasure of visiting with George Davis, the original Wildlife Manager for the MN DNR Karlstad Wildlife Area. George began his adventures there in 1967 and retired in 1999 - a heck of a run! While his Assistant Wildlife Manager for seven years, he taught me many important lessons at both work and play, from keeping my cookies down on moose survey in the Cessna to waterfowl hunting on Twin Lakes WMA. He was my “DNR Dad” in the beautiful Aspen Parklands.

Hailing from Marshall, MN, George was influenced by his childhood time outdoors with activities such as hunting, fishing, and collecting butterflies. He learned about “wildlife managers” when pulling two out of the ditch one day, thinking “I could do that job!” After serving in the Navy and graduating from University of MN, George was offered a job at Karlstad. He had no idea where it was or that it had moose. Prescribed burning, rotational grazing, prairie and sa-

vanna restoration, involvement in his community, and land acquisition were critical tools of his trade. Under his watch, the WMAs grew from five of about 25,000 acres to over 20 at roughly 100,000 acres. His last prescribed burn was 4,000 acres in size. For wildlife managers that have followed George, his strong and practical shoulders have most definitely been those that we “stand on”. Thank you, George! An interview of George by the MN Chapter of The Wildlife Society will soon be ready on [YouTube](#).

Shane Peterson:

Remembering a Friend to the Firebird by Kyle Arola



Shane on an October Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness trip (L) and on a prescribed burn in NW Minnesota (R)

The Minnesota DNR family lost one of its members on January 7, 2022. Shane Peterson, 39, was a member of the Region 1 Roving Crew for the last 11 years. Prior to that position, he worked as a general laborer out of the Karlstad wildlife office. Throughout his years of work with the DNR he impacted thousands of acres of habitat through prescribed burning, brush mowing/shearing, firebreak installation, noxious weed treatment, and the list goes on. Sharp-tailed grouse depend on many of the acres that Shane directly impacted in NW Minnesota. Most recently, Shane had been assisting area Wildlife offices with updating old burn plans and identifying new burn units. The map below shows a 4700 acre unit that he identified for the Thief Lake area. Firebreak installation and brush shearing are occurring this winter and sharp-tailed grouse will benefit significantly from Shane’s vision for the unit! On behalf of the Firebird and all the other wildlife that have benefited from your work, you will be missed!



A new burn unit within Thief Lake WMA that Shane identified and for which he prepared a burn plan.

Upcoming March- April 2022 Volunteer Brush Cut Habitat Days

Join in a Group Day March 19 or 26 *OR* work Self-Guided any time March 10 – April 10



The University of MN Crookston crew took home the Golden Saw on March 13, 2021 at Palmville WMA. Thirty spirited volunteers, including Bemidji State University students, cut encroaching tamarack from 19 acres on March 10, 13 and 27, to generate \$6,410 of in-kind match. These funds went toward the 10% match required for a CPL grant to enhance more habitat.

What: Hand cut brush to enhance sharp-tailed grouse habitat on Group Days March 19 at La Qui Parle WMA (near Appleton) or March 26 at Gun Lake WMA (near Palisade), Mille Lacs WMA (near Onamia), and by Carp Swamp WMA (near Baudette). OR do Self-Guided work any day on the four sites from March 10 to April 10. OR do both! Enjoy the reward of giving back for wildlife conservation and know your volunteer power will serve as match for a Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) Grant for more habitat work. Not to mention the outdoors, fresh air, exercise, and great fellowship and food on Group Days!

To Sign Up & Log Hours:

1. Covid safety – At least a week prior to volunteering, go to mndnr.gov/vp to review DNR policy and show proof of vaccination. Because the project is on DNR administered land and approved by the DNR Area Wildlife Manager, DNR safety protocol for volunteers must be followed.
2. Group Day, Sat., March 19 or 26 – To volunteer these days, register by one week prior (for a food head count) by emailing Jodie at jodie.provost@yahoo.com. She will send you a site flier with directions and maps. Complete a volunteer agreement form and log hours with the MSGS Rep on site that day. Gather at the site by 9:30 am for a welcome, project and safety briefing. Morning snacks and lunch at noon will be provided. Work convenes by 3 pm.
3. Self-Guided March 10 – April 10 – To volunteer during this time period, at least a week prior email Jodie at jodie.provost@yahoo.com to get the volunteer agreement form, complete, and email it back. She will send you a site flier with directions and maps. After working, email your number of hours worked plus travel time to her.

To Cut Brush: Take this flier with directions and maps (see below), warm layers, hat, gloves, water-proof warm boots, snowshoes if deep snow, water bottle, snacks, charged cell phone, and very importantly, hand tools of a hand saw and/or loppers. Saws work well for larger diameter brush and small trees, and loppers best for smaller/whippy diameter brush. Power tools, such as chain saws, are not allowed. Cut all brush and small trees feasible (usually < 3 inches in diameter) within the project area. On Group Day, some hand tools will be available from MSGS, but please bring your own favorites if feasible to ensure enough tools for all.

Sharptail at St. Croix State Park

Savanna restoration and maintenance at St. Croix State Park in Pine County continues to occasionally attract sharp-tailed grouse. In late November /early December, Asst. Park Manager Karl Sieve reported three sightings of four birds - in the one burn unit they were able to pre-scribed burn last spring and on the nearby Park road to the headquarters (photo to right). In Karl's words, "hopefully they're here to stay." Continued habitat management and friendly competition with Crex Meadows Wildlife Area, just across the St. Croix River in WI, to see who "makes smoke first" may do just that.



Huddle Tract Added to the Kroschel WMA

MSGs's 1st Stand Alone Acquisition with a CPL Grant by Dave Pauly



Marlin and Mary Jo Huddle, fellow conservationists, with their certificate of recognition after their land became part of the Kroschel WMA.

In November a vision became reality when the 60-acre Huddle tract was conveyed and recorded at Kanabec County. This tract was purchased with a Conservation Partnership Legacy (CPL) Grant secured by MSGS – a first. It is now part of the Kroschel-Holy Cow WMA complex! The Marlin and Mary Jo Huddle Family and I began the process in 2016. It was a challenging journey for all, but the Huddles were understanding and patient. Their Conservation Ethic and Firebird Passion clearly deserve recognition. It was an exhilarating feeling (bordering on spiritual) to present Marlin, Mary Jo, and family a Certificate of Recognition. Afterwards a Huddle family member shared, “On behalf of my family, we again want to thank you for making the dedication a special day for my parents. They were extremely happy on how it went and talked about it all the way home. Their positive reaction made all our challenges in making this happen well worth it! We appreciate all you did and thanks again for sticking with us.” These are the acquisition confirmations I always relish as CONSERVATION EPIPHANIES ...*Griz*



Sharptail Short Shots

- [2021 Give to the Max Day Results](#) - **THANK YOU** to the 43 donors that helped MSGS achieve its \$3000 goal!
- [The MN Prairie Chicken Society](#) will hold its 49th Annual Meeting on Saturday, April 23, at the Regional Science Center near Glyndon, MN. Congrats to them for recently receiving Pheasant Forever's "Partnership of the Year Award"! MPCs also has a \$1,000 Scholarship opportunity for an undergraduate college student - deadline is 1 March. Go to their website for instructions and application.
- [The Cupido WMA](#) in Norman County was dedicated on August 6. Much gratitude goes to Pheasant Forever's Build A Wildlife Area and partners that kicked in, including MSGS!
- ["Pulse of the Heartland"](#), an article in the fall National Wildlife Federation magazine, was an excellent read about the loss of North America's grasslands, their benefits, available programs, and a bill, the North American Grassland Conservation Act, that will be introduced in Congress.
- [Conservation Reserve Program Sign Ups](#) were announced for 2022 - The General CRP signup will run from Jan. 31 to March 11, and the Grassland CRP signup will run from April 4 to May 13. Continuous CRP is on-going. "Farmers, ranchers and private landowners are highly encouraged to consider enrollment options. A better, bolder program, with higher payment rates and other incentives has been rolled out, including climate-smart solutions that generate revenue and benefit our planet."
- [The Story of the Stoney Suite](#), Building a Blind with the Boys - Dan Svedarsky strikes again with his ingenuity and fun family activities.
- [Lac Qui Parle Land Sale Approved!](#) The MN State Land Exchange Board approved the sale of 80 acres of land owned by Phillip Sonstegard to the DNR, ending an over two year battle by the landowner to sell his land to the state of Minnesota This is a major victory for both private landowners who want to sell land to units of government and public landowners who need access to quality public land for hunting fishing and outdoor recreation.
- [Working with fire, traditionally](#) - "Vern Northup, the subject in this interview, was and is a good friend.... His comments on the relationship of logging and RX are spot on. While logging has some similarities, there are also significant and great differences in the outcomes. As I looked at the aftermath of Greenwood fire, the differences are apparent and striking. The volume of fallen wood, creation of large cavity trees and the overall numbers of snags, as well as the patchy nature of the burns, are difficult to recreate with a timber sale. Bringing fire more prominently into the management of our WMA/AMAs is worth greater discussion as a group, and with the DNR and USFWS." - Craig Sterle, retired MN DNR Forester.

Enhancing Habitat Across MN's Sharptail Country

From Thief Lake WMA in Northwest MN -Kyle Arola, MN DNR - See below photos from current projects. MN DNR Roving Crew members are operating bulldozers with shear blades to treat dense willow stands to enhance sharp-tailed grouse habitat. Over 350 acres have been treated this winter and prescribed burning will be utilized in the coming years to keep the areas open.



From East-central MN – Becca Kludt, Pheasants Forever (PF) - In 2018, MSGS and PF built on their existing partnership by bringing PF's Enhanced Public Lands Program – Open Landscapes Phase I to Firebird territory using Outdoor Heritage Funds. The goal was to enhance 2,910 acres of open landscape habitat in the Northern Forest region to enhance early successional habitat to benefit sharptails and other wildlife. It was viewed favorably by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council and legislature and awarded \$955,000! Work began in winter 2019/2020. To date we've enhanced 1,657 acres, and have another 1,718 acres contracted. Most recently, 151 acres of brush mowing was completed on the Sandstone WMA in Pine County. The \$12,000 in leverage provided by MSGS in July 2021 will help pay for this project. On behalf of Pheasants Forever, I would like to thank MSGS for your support and help in delivering meaningful work that benefits wildlife and the citizens of Minnesota. We look forward to continuing our partnership for Phase II set to start in July 2022.

From Lac Qui Parle WMA in Southwest MN – Walt Gessler, MN DNR - We've had a good winter for getting habitat projects completed –snow depth is not excessive, and we have good frost conditions for heavy equipment. We should complete four tree removal/invasive removal projects this winter on Lac qui Parle WMA. Across the SW, ~ 8 woody removal projects are under contract with DNR. In addition, non-government organizations have another 20-25 active woody removal projects in progress or under contract. The Morris Wetland District has another half dozen cutting projects. Altogether, these projects are benefitting about 3,000 acres of prairie/openland habitats.

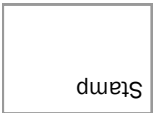
New acquisitions and habitat development projects continue across the region. Most new development on WMAs is geared toward prairie and wetland restorations along with facility development for public access.

A positive development (at least temporarily) was closure on the lawsuit between landowner Phillip Sonstegard, MN DNR, and Lac qui Parle County. This lawsuit was the result of Lac qui Parle blocking the landowner from willingly selling his land to DNR. For DNR to purchase land, a willing seller is needed and the local County Board needs to approve the sale. In this case, the County denied the sale, so the landowner brought suit against the County. In the court decision, the reasons the County gave for not approving the sale were determined to be capricious. After this court decision, the sale was moved forward to the state Land Exchange Board to review. The Board approved the sale.

As noted in this newsletter, we will have our very 1st Brush Cut in the SW on March 19! If you need a break from the cold north come down and join us. For you folks in the forest, this will be an opportunity to increase your sun exposure and get a start on spring fever!!!



A recent 40 acre project on the Nygard tract of Lac qui Parle WMA is shown below. An Outdoor Heritage grant secured by DNR was used to cut invasive buckthorn from remnant prairie.



MN Sharp-tailed Grouse Society
P.O. Box 3338
Duluth, MN 55803

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EMAIL ADDRESSES ENCOURAGED

MSG values its members, communications and funds. To reduce newsletter mailing costs, con-serve funds for other important outreach and habitat opportunities, and allow special communications via email, members are encouraged to provide their email addresses to membership coordinator, Dave Dickey, at 99whitetail@gmail.com. MSGS will not share members' email addresses. Hard copies of newsletters will continue to be mailed to members with no e-mail address and/or those that desire a hard copy.

Minnesota Sharp-tailed
Grouse Society

