

Public Forum
Dave Stiefvater



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To: ODFW Commission

Presented by: Dave Stiefvater Habitat Coordinator for Malheur County of Pheasants Forever

Subject: Recovery Plan for Upland Game Birds

In 1950's to late 1980's Malheur County was the destination place for upland game bird hunters. Pheasants, chukars, and quail were plentiful. For example in 1981, the last week of pheasant season, hunters could harvest 3 pheasants, of which 2 could be hens & one rooster. In the 2018 hunting season the bag limit is 2 roosters per day and a hunter would be lucky to harvest 2 during the entire season! So why the decline? Loss of Habitat and Predators.

Pheasants are dependent on agriculture land, cover, water, & nesting habitat. In the last 50 years, agriculture watering application has changed 3 times. Each time is a loss of habitat critical for upland game birds. At this time the change is to pivots, which could be a silver line to habitat. Pivots normally have corners that are not being used for agriculture. These corners could be planted into dry land habitat which would beneficial upland game birds, bees, and other wildlife. (Bees are pollinators which benefit Ag dependent plants.) The key to recovery is HABITAT!

Anatomy of Habitat Plots:

- 1. Cover**
- 2. Nesting**

- 3. Food**
- 4. Water**
- 5. Winter food**
- 6. Benefits wildlife**
- 7. Weed control**
- 8. Creating and Maintaining quality habitat is the key to producing pheasant and other wildlife! Food plots are beneficial to big game during the hard winters!**

The hunting tradition depends on retaining hunters and the number of youth becoming hunters. Upland game bird hunting offers hunters a season that starts in September and ends January 31. Hunting day opportunities are important along with healthy upland game bird population. We can no longer assume our bird populations will get better! Its time to take action looking at ways to recover upland game birds in Oregon!

I've seen the "Good, Bad & Ugly" for pheasants and chukars populations in Eastern Oregon. A Recovery Plan for Upland Game Birds is critical to the future of the hunting tradition and ODFW!