



NEWS RELEASE

State Wildlife Agencies Get a Boost from Ruffed Grouse Society

The Ohio Division of Wildlife and West Virginia DNR Wildlife Resources Section got a year-end boost to their initiatives to improve grouse and woodcock habitat on state lands. In partnership with the Richard King Mellon Foundation of Pittsburgh, PA, the Ruffed Grouse Society awarded \$32,000 in grants to the two states.

The Society became part of an \$88,400 matching grants initiative in West Virginia with a \$15,000 grant that will go toward approximately 200 acres of habitat improvements on 8 wildlife management areas and state forests. The focus of the project will be increasing the amount of young forest habitat critically important for grouse, woodcock and numerous other game and non-game species. West Virginia has been working hard to enhance grouse and woodcock habitat on public lands throughout the state. Thanks to the dedication of the R.K. Mellon Foundation, we were able to support these important efforts when the money was needed, noted Mark Banker, Regional Biologist for the Society.

In Ohio, reclaimed surface mine lands offer a blank canvas for creating quality wildlife habitat from the ground up. The Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative is an important new program of the US Department of the Interior's Office of Surface Mining that encourages coal companies to reclaim surface mines back into a forested condition rather than grasslands with high soil compaction that take decades to grow trees. These extensive grasslands have no benefit to ruffed grouse, American woodcock, or other forested wildlife and the resulting fragmentation act as barriers to grouse brood dispersal. Research conducted in eastern Kentucky and southwestern Virginia has demonstrated that the forestry reclamation approach which involves the placement of loosely graded fill overtop mined sites has resulted in excellent tree growth and over 90% survival of individual trees. This is a viable approach to re-establishing early-successional forest communities and eliminating fragmentation of forested landscapes.

The Society made a \$17,000 grant in support of the latest reforestation efforts at Jockey Hollow Wildlife Area in Harrison County, where recently mined lands will be replanted with trees this spring under the guidance of the Ohio Division of Wildlife. Cravat Coal Company will prepare the site for planting and also rehabilitate a hunting trail disturbed during mining activities. Grouse hunting on and around reclaimed surface mines can be dynamite. The long-term goal is to improve hunting while doing the best possible job of reclaiming the land immediately, explained Banker. Both of the grants were awarded in late 2006 with work to be well underway or completed in 2007.

Established in 1961, the Ruffed Grouse Society is the one international wildlife conservation organization dedicated to promoting conditions suitable for ruffed grouse, American woodcock and related wildlife to sustain our sport hunting tradition and outdoor heritage

Further information on the RGS, its mission, management projects and membership can be found on the web at: www.ruffedgrousesociety.org.

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