



Southeast Regional Newsletter

February 2009

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RUFF Capital Campaign Nears Halfway Mark

RUFF, or Restoring Upland Forests' Future, is a capital campaign aiming to raise \$5 million dollars in the next two years. The money will be used to fully endow our team of biologists and to reduce overhead by purchasing a building for headquarters.

To date a total of \$2.1 million dollars has been raised – placing us just shy of the halfway mark.

Make a donation today by calling 1-888-564-6747, or on our website www.ruffedgrousesociety.org.

Tail Feathers Membership Drive

Will you be our 2009 Super Recruiter?

A new membership recruitment program will allow members, and their chapters, to compete for the title of Super Recruiter 2009.

When you introduce a new member to the Ruffed Grouse Society, let us know and we will track your credits. Top recruiters will be posted, along with a running tally of credits, on our website. We'll also keep you posted of your standing during the course of the year.

Rules:

Each member will receive one individual credit, and one credit for their chapter every time they sign up a new member through the end of 2009. In January, 2010 a tally will be taken to determine the top individual recruiter and the top chapter recruiter.

The individual will receive a special edition Tail Feather Super Recruiter Grouse Display from headquarters, as well as recognition on the website, magazine and at their banquet.

The chapter with the most credits will get their

chapter name engraved on a plaque to be displayed at headquarters and presented by their Regional Director at the 2010 chapter banquet.

To receive credit for the contest you must do one of the following:

1. Fill out a recruitment form, (which is posted on the website) and send the completed form to: Membership Department, 451 McCormick Road Coraopolis, PA 15108,
2. Send an email with your new member information to: membership@ruffedgrousesociety.org, or
3. Write your name on the back of the banquet stub, and specify that you are a super recruiter.

Note: If you have already signed up new members this year, let us know and you will receive credit accordingly.

A new member is anyone brand new to the organization, or someone who has not renewed their membership in the past 365 days. Any level of new membership/sponsorship counts for one credit toward the program.

Contact the Membership Department with questions: 1-888-564-6747.

Minnesota Court Sides with Conservationists in Superior National Forest Lawsuit

US Forest Service to Proceed with Habitat Management Projects

An important legal victory was won recently in a case regarding the Superior National Forest (SNF) in northern Minnesota. The Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) joined with others - including Minnesota Forest Industries, Inc., Minnesota Timber Producers Association, All Terrain Vehicle Association of Minnesota, Blue Ribbon Coalition, Lake County and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - to defend important habitat management projects being proposed by the US Forest Service in the area. These projects were part of the recently revised Forest Plan.

In 2008 the Sierra Club and other preservationists had filed suit to halt the implementation of the Forest Plan, on the grounds that the Plan allowed habitat management projects adjacent to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). They argued that these projects would affect the wilderness character of the BWCAW itself, and should be prohibited.

Last November the United States District Court for the District of Minnesota granted RGS its request to appear as amicus curiae in support of the US Forest Service (USFS) and US Department of Agriculture (USDA) in their defense against the litigation.

Preservationists argued that aspen clear-cutting and other logging – despite the fact that it will benefit ruffed grouse, American woodcock and other species of wildlife in the SNF - will negatively impact not only the forest itself, but the adjacent BWCAW as well.

Speaking on behalf of RGS, attorney Ryan Woody of Hartford, Wisconsin, provided arguments to the contrary of the preservationists' claims. In late January of this year the court ruled in favor of the defense on all counts.

“The win on the SNF case is important because it involved the newly revised Forest Plan, which governs all future management and projects on the SNF for at least the next 15 years. In addition, I think the court’s decision is important for future projects, because the court showed its respect for the Forest Service’s expertise and reviewed the Plan under a very deferential approach ... As far as RGS is concerned the newly affirmed plan should provide for important opportunities to actively manage forest conditions to improve early successional habitat for ruffed grouse and other species,” Woody said.

RGS Senior Regional Wildlife Biologist Gary Zimmer agreed with Woody’s assessment, adding that “The Court decision supports the many years of planning conducted by the Forest Service when it revised the Superior National Forest Plan. After years of delays, it is now time to implement that revised Plan in this area.”

Conservation Plan of Alaskan Wildlife Refuge Omits Hunting as Priority Objective

RGS Disappointed at Absence

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Draft Revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge does not list enhancing game wildlife habitat and populations or hunting opportunities in the listed goals of the Plan to enhance wildlife-oriented recreation.

At nearly two million acres in size, the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge - located about two and a half hours from Anchorage in south-central Alaska - is characterized by its diverse habitats and wildlife. Created in 1941 to protect the Kenai moose, 65 percent of refuge lands are designated wilderness.

In a letter to US Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) Planning Team Leader Rob Campellone, Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) Director of Conservation, Dan Dessecker wrote: "This is especially disconcerting given that public comments provided during the development of the Draft demonstrate that hunting is tied with hiking as the second most popular form of public recreation on the refuge. In addition, this conspicuous absence of hunting from the list of priority objectives for the refuge runs counter to clear direction provided by President George W. Bush in his Executive Order 13443, the stated purpose of which is to facilitate the expansion of hunting opportunities and the management of game species and their habitats." Dessecker added that if implemented, the current Draft will lead to reductions in habitats essential for game wildlife and, therefore, hunting opportunities.

RGS respectfully urges the US Fish & Wildlife Service to modify and select an alternative for implementation that will aid in meeting public expectations for recreation on the refuge and help to secure the future of our hunting heritage.

REGIONAL NEWS

Spring Banquets

We are starting up on our regional spring banquets. Here is a list of those currently planned. We didn't have an update at the last newsletter, but I'm glad to report that this year the gain needed for chapters to share in banquet revenue is 10%, where it was 15% last year. We hope this encourages folks to come out and support banquets to help generate revenue for local projects.

Kanawha Valley Chapter, Charleston, WV – March 6, 2009

Highland Drummer Chapter, Lewisburg, WV – March 21, 2009

Appalachian Highlands Chapter, Johnson City, TN – March 28, 2009

Volunteer Chapter, Knoxville, TN – April 4, 2009

Flyers for all of these banquets can be found on our website, www.ruffedgrousesociety.org, under Events and Banquets on the Membership tab at the top of the home page.

Hunting Season

As you read this the hunting season is winding down. Hope your season has been moderately successful. I'm getting mixed reports from my travels through the region. I was having early season success and have had numerous non-productive points late in the season. It's a mixed bag. One member told me he and some friends went hunting in NC near the VA border and flew 14 birds one Saturday and in the same spot a week later only flew 4. Weird.

National Dream Hunt Raffle

We've still got tickets for our National Raffle, this year a all-expenses Dream Hunt for two to Montana and Minnesota with an SKB shotgun thrown in for both hunters. We will be selling these tickets at our

banquets but you don't want to wait. We only have 2500 and when they're gone that's it. You can contact me if you are interested. The drawing is June 29th. So if you have a Fall banquet you better order them now!

Habitat

I saw a quote a couple of weeks ago from a fellow named Josiah Gilbert Holland that I thought was appropriate for this topic: "God gives every bird his food, but he does not throw it into the nest." I think this is appropriate because we can't sit back and wait for "someone else" to get something started in habitat improvement.

We've got several chapters currently involved in projects in NC, VA, and WV. But we don't have to get our boots muddy to get involved. Here's an example. Last Fall we sent an email to members requesting their comments on a Forest Service project in North Carolina. (Dylan). The Decision Notice was just released and the District Ranger chose our preferred alternative. He was supported by 38 members of RGS in his decision. Only four preservationist groups commented. This can always be appealed, but with overwhelming support they might just decide not to.

My point is, we have to "get out of our nests" and not wait on "someone else" to do the work if we want to impact management of our National Forest. We must comment on projects, attend public hearings, let our voices be heard. There are two things you can do to that end. Contact your local District Ranger and get on their mailing list for Scoping Notice and Environmental Assessment announcements. That way you know when something is about to happen. Second, make sure your email address is updated at National, either in the membership box on the website or calling member services at National. We will continue to email notices to our members when we are aware of a NF action that needs their input. It only takes a few minutes to write an email response in support of sound forestry management. All comment **MUST** be considered as part of the review process. Let's shout down the preservationists!