

Summary of Research

EXHIBIT 5
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HB 378



2002 Survey of Upland Game Bird Hunters on the Fort Peck Reservation

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Located in northeastern Montana, the Fort Peck Reservation encompasses more than two million acres of land. The area is well known for its rich cultural resources such as the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Culture Center and Museum in Poplar, Montana. The area is also well known for its diverse populations of upland game birds which include sharp-tailed grouse, Hungarian partridge, ring-necked pheasant, sage grouse, and turkey.

Bird hunting enthusiasts can purchase an upland bird Tribal stamp to hunt sharp-tail grouse and Hungarian partridge while on the reservation. Also available is a separate pheasant Tribal stamp. A total of 612 individuals purchased the pheasant stamp and 269 individuals purchased the upland bird stamp in 2002. Currently, there are no open seasons for sage grouse and/or turkeys on the reservation.

In 2002, a sample of upland game bird hunters to the Fort Peck Reservation were surveyed. This survey was a Joint Cooperative Project between the Fort Peck Tribes and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). The purpose of the survey was to provide information that will be used to help manage upland game bird hunting on the reservation over time. The survey focused only on hunting opportunities within the exterior boundary of the reservation.

This research summary highlights the key findings from the 2002 survey effort.



EXCELLENT RESPONSE TO THE SURVEY

Survey questionnaires were mailed to a total of 680 bird stamp holders. Because 50 of the addresses for these individuals proved to be undeliverable, the total number of bird hunters who received the questionnaire was 630.

In total, a 50 percent response rate to the survey was achieved, which is considered to be a high response rate for a mailback survey of this type.

Seventy percent of the survey respondents were Montana residents. Thirty percent of the respondents reside in a state other than Montana.

When asked which Tribal stamp(s) they purchased for hunting opportunities on Fort Peck Reservation, 77 percent of the respondents (237 individuals) reported they purchased the pheasant stamp and 54 percent (166 individuals) reported they purchased the upland bird stamp.

On average, survey respondents reported taking four separate trips to the Fort Peck Reservation to hunt upland game birds in 2002. And, respondents reported spending a total average of six separate days hunting on the reservation.

MOST SURVEY RESPONDENTS REPORTED THEY SUCCESSFULLY HARVESTED BIRDS

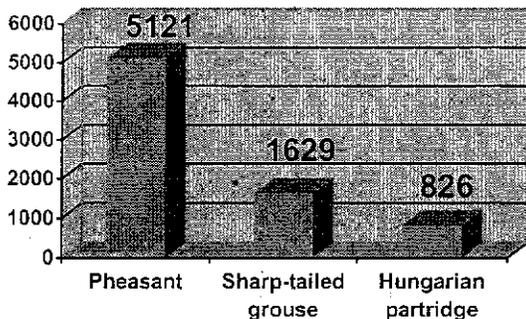
Pheasant hunting: 93 percent of the pheasant stamp holders reported harvesting at least one pheasant. The average number of pheasants harvested by these hunters was 9 birds.

Sharp-tailed grouse hunting: 68 percent of the upland bird stamp holders reported harvesting at least one sharp-tailed grouse. The average number of grouse harvested by these hunters was 9 birds.

Hungarian partridge hunting: 52 percent of the upland bird stamp holders reported harvesting at least one Hungarian partridge. The average number of partridge harvested by these hunters was 6 birds.

The above information in combination with information about the total number of individuals who purchased the upland bird and pheasant Tribal stamps in 2002 was used to derive harvest estimates the entire 2002 hunting season at Fort Peck Reservation (see figure 1 below).

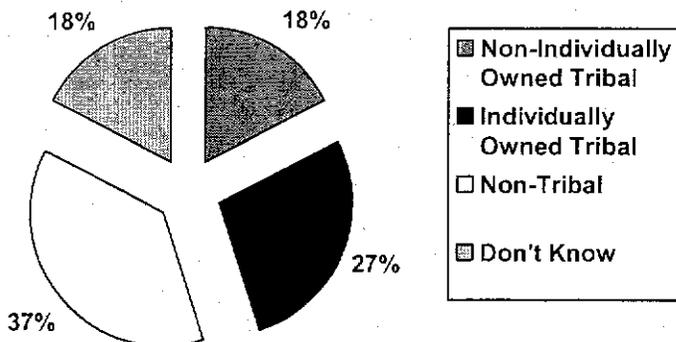
Figure 1. 2002 Fort Peck Reservation upland game bird harvest estimates (number of birds harvested by species).



TYPES OF PROPERTY HUNTED

When asked where they spent the most time hunting, 18 percent of the respondents said they did not know. Another 18 percent said they spent the most time hunting on non-individually owned Tribal property. Twenty-seven percent said they hunted mostly on individually owned Tribal property. Lastly, 37 percent reported most of their time was spent hunting on non-Tribal owned property (see figure 2 below).

Figure 2. Percent of respondents by type of property where they reported spending the most time hunting upland game birds at the Fort Peck Reservation.



A MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS STAYED AT A LOCAL AREA MOTEL/HOTEL

Overall, 59 percent of the respondents reported they stayed at an area hotel/motel during their visit to Fort Peck Reservation. Only four percent stayed at an area campground.

Two-thirds of the nonresident respondents to the survey reported they stayed at an area hotel/motel. This compares to 56 percent of the respondents who were Montana residents.

RESPONDENTS REPORTED DOING MORE THAN JUST HUNTING UPLAND GAME BIRDS WHILE VISITING THE RESERVATION

Survey participants were asked, "During your stay on the Fort Peck Reservation, please list other activities, which interested you the most". The three most frequently listed activities were as follows:

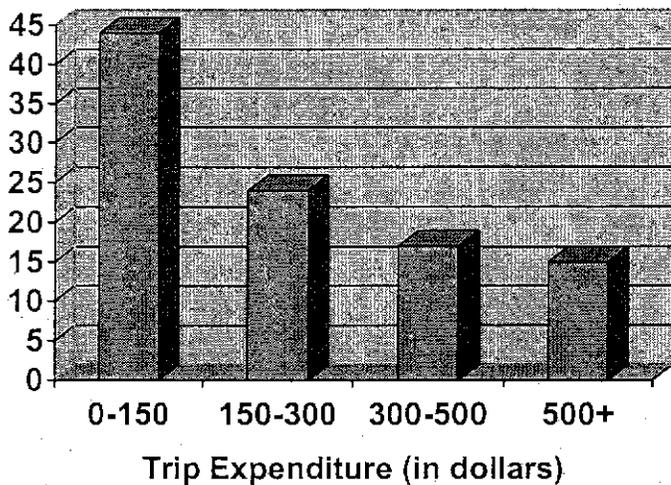
- Recreational activities such as fishing, scouting other hunting areas, bird watching, deer watching, and observing wildlife in general. (43 responses)
- Sightseeing such as learning more about the local history, and learning more about the area geography and associated landscape. (20 responses)
- Social activities such as experiencing the local culture, local entertainment, meeting new people, and visiting with friends and/or family. (20 responses)

ESTIMATES OF TRIP EXPENDITURES

Survey participants were asked to estimate how much they spent per trip during their visits to Fort Peck Reservation. These estimates included a comprehensive list of expenditures including gasoline, groceries, overnight accommodations, and other miscellaneous expenses.

Most of the respondents (nearly 70 percent) reported spending \$300 or less per trip. More specifically, 44 reported spending between zero and \$150 per trip. Twenty-four percent reported spending between \$150 and \$300 per trip. Only 15 percent reported spending \$500 or more per trip (see figure 3 next page).

Figure 3. Percent of respondents by the amount of money spent per trip to Fort Peck Reservation to hunt upland game birds.



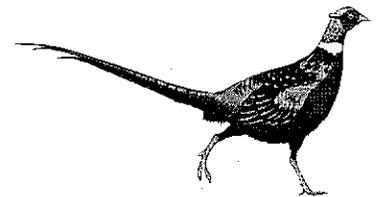
VERY FEW RESPONDENTS USED THE SERVICES OF AN OUTFITTER

Only five percent of the respondents reported they used the services of an outfitter and/or guide while hunting on the Fort Peck Reservation.

IDEAS ABOUT HOW TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE HUNTING EXPERIENCE

When asked what services the Fort Peck Tribes could provide for a better quality hunting experience, respondents offered many ideas. Below is a list of the four most frequently mentioned ideas.

- **Access related issues.** Provide more and better maps; sign designated property; and, implement a program similar to FWP's Block Management Program. (82 responses)
- **Rules and regulations related issues** A need for more area license agents/dealers; a need for more and better information about rules and regulations; and, the current rules and relations do not address some problems. (43 responses)
- **Enforcement related.** While there were many positive comments about enforcement personnel in general, some comments focused on a need for higher quality public service from wardens in the field. (10 responses)
- **Habit related issues.** A need to enhance and/or improve wildlife habitat. Several respondents expressed concern that habitat is negatively being affected by agricultural practices in some instances. (10 responses)



DISCUSSION

This survey is a shining example of how two agencies can work cooperatively together for the betterment of Montana and Fort Peck Reservation. Results of this survey will provide wildlife managers with statistically accurate information that can be used to help maintain and/or improve the quality of the upland game bird hunting experience at Fort Peck Reservation.

From this survey, we learned that most upland game bird hunters on the reservation in 2002 had successful hunts. We also learned that many upland game bird hunters on the reservation visit the area for more than just bird hunting. They are interested in other recreation activities such as fishing and observing the wide variety of wildlife that inhabit the area. Additionally, many visit the area for sightseeing and social purposes.

One of the primary goals going into the survey was to identify what might be done to enhance the quality of the upland game bird hunting experience at the reservation. Results of the survey suggests there is room for improvement in terms of providing information to the hunter. In particular, there appears to be a need for more and better information about how to gain access to hunting areas. Furthermore, there appears to be a need to for more and better information concerning Tribal hunting rules and regulations. A significant number of survey respondents reported that this kind of information is not readily available nor easy to find.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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