

Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program *A Brief Overview and Update*



Environmental Quality Council
September 13, 2007



Brief Overview of UGBEP

- Background
- Types of Project

Updates

- Hunter Participation
- Administering UGBEP
- Current Status
- Future Direction



Background

UGBEP Legislative History

- Established in 1987 as pheasant release program
 - \$2 from each resident upland bird license
 - \$23 from each non-resident upland bird license
- 1989 Legislature changed program –
 - unspent pheasant release funds to be used for habitat enhancement and conservation
- 2001 Legislative Session



Background

2001 Legislative Session

- 15% of funds earmarked for release of upland game birds (pheasant or wild-trapped turkeys)
 - 25% must be spent annually
- Cap single habitat projects at \$200,000
- \$100,000+ projects approved by FWP Commission
- Purchases of equipment, land, and buildings capped at \$25,000
- Limit purchase of constructing roads, pipelines, and wells up to 50% of total.



Background

Montana's Upland Game Birds

■ Exotic

- Pheasant
- Gray and Chukar Partridge
- Turkey

■ Native

- Sage Grouse
 - Sharp-tailed Grouse
- } Prairie Grouse
- Blue Grouse
 - Spruce Grouse
 - Ruffed Grouse
- } Mountain Grouse



Types of Projects

- Upland Game Bird Release
- Habitat Enhancement
- Total Revenue: \$600-700,000/year

Types of Projects

Pheasant Release



Types of Projects

Turkey Transplants



Types of Projects

Food Plot



Types of Projects

Shelterbelts



Types of Projects

Nesting Cover



Types of Projects

Range Management



Types of Projects

Aspen Regeneration



Red Lodge Creek Unit treated approx. 1991, Picture taken June 2007

Types of Projects

Conservation Easements



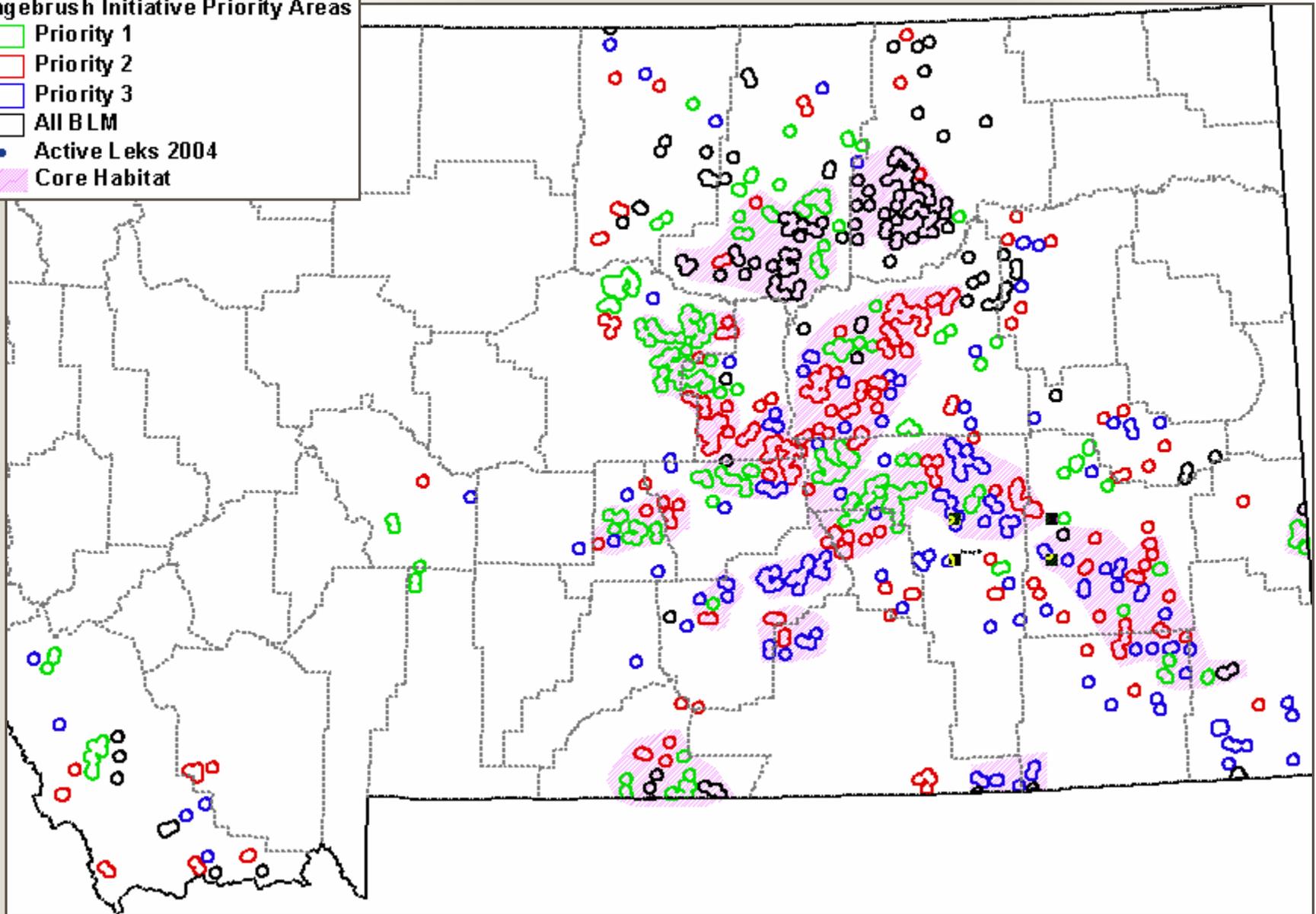
Types of Projects

Sagebrush Leases



Types of Projects

- Sagebrush Initiative Priority Areas**
- Priority 1
 - Priority 2
 - Priority 3
 - All BLM
 - Active Leaks 2004
 - Core Habitat



The header features a horizontal strip with three distinct nature scenes: a white star-shaped flower on the left, a bird in flight in the center, and a rocky landscape on the right. The background of the slide is a light beige color with a vertical gradient on the left side.

Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program Updates

Hunter Participation



Hunter Participation

2007

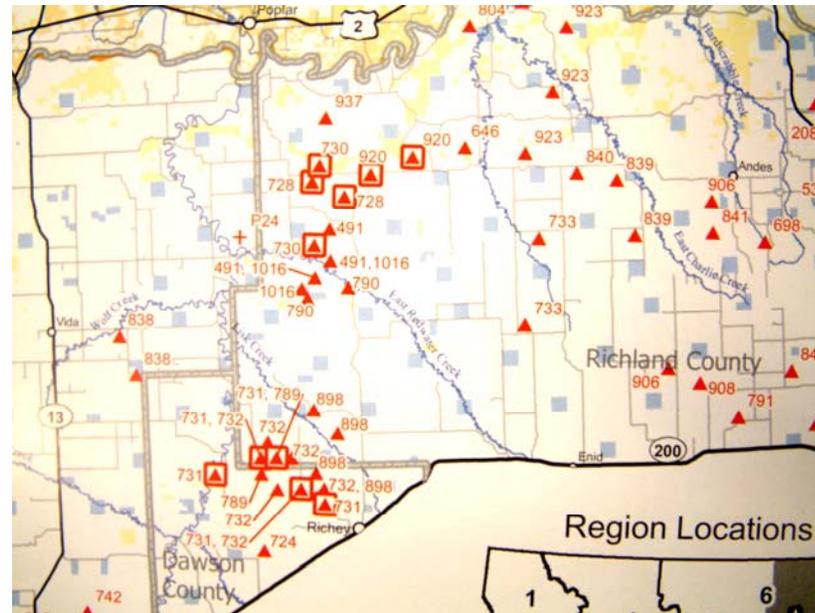
Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program Projects

ACCESS GUIDE



Turn in Poachers: 1-800-TIP-MONT (847-6668)

Region 6		Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Projects				
Blaine County						
Project #	Cooperator	Company	Cooperator's City & State	Acres Open to Hunting	Contract Expires	Project Type(s)
629	Mark Haugen		Chinook, MT	160.0	9/21/2010	Shelterbelts
702	S Bar B Ranch BMA	S Bar B Ranch	Chinook, MT	320.0	1/22/2011	Shelterbelts
784	Gordon Cattle Co. BMA	Gordon Cattle Company	Chinook, MT	5,560.0	5/27/2012	Grazing Management
785	Gordon Cattle Co. BMA	Gordon Cattle Company	Chinook, MT	15.0	5/27/2012	Shelterbelts
811	Mike Baker		Harlem, MT	725.5	10/1/2007	Nesting Cover
862	Walter Funk	Snake Butte Farms	Chinook, MT	1,843.6	6/26/2008	Nesting Cover
864	Dennis Schmittgen		Harlem, MT	555.5	6/26/2008	Nesting Cover
870	Bob Rasmussen	Rocky Road Farms	Harlem, MT	305.6	6/26/2008	Nesting Cover
955	Gordon Cattle Co BMA	Gordon Cattle Co.	Chinook, MT	5,560.0	4/3/2016	Shelterbelts
P72	Darrell Biese		Harlem, MT	1,200.0	8/1/2008	Pheasant Release
P73	Darrell Biese		Harlem, MT	2,500.0	8/1/2008	Pheasant Release
P74	Darrell Biese		Harlem, MT	10,880.0	8/1/2008	Pheasant Release
Chouteau County						
Project #	Cooperator	Company	Cooperator's City & State	Acres Open to Hunting	Contract Expires	Project Type(s)
412	Mitch Goeddel	D & A Ranch	Big Timber, MT	1,280.0	1/22/2007	Grazing Management



Hunter Participation

Signs



UPLAND GAME BIRD HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

Developed through the cooperation of the private landowner and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

This is private property. You must obtain permission from the landowner before entering this property.



Landowner Contact Information

Name: _____

Phone: _____

PHEASANT RELEASE CONDUCTED IN COOPERATION WITH MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

This area open to public upland game bird hunting free of charge.

You must first obtain permission from the Landowner

LANDOWNER _____

PHONE _____



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks



Hunter Participation

2006 Landowner Survey - UGBEP

- Pre-season and post-season mailing
- Habitat projects, specifically
- 412 surveys sent
 - 184 responded (45%)
- About 31% of respondents were enrolled in Block Management

Hunter Participation

Landowner Survey - UGBEP

- Number of **hunter-days**?
 - 7,700 accounted for by those who were able to track use
 - 131 reported number of hunter-days
 - Averaged 59 hunter-days/project reported
 - 13 (7%) reported 0 hunter-days
 - 53 (29%) did not know number of hunters
 - DNRC, Block Management, leased
- Number of **game birds harvested**
 - 4,300 accounted for by those who were able to track use
- 45 and 55% felt hunter turnout and harvest was about average, respectively



Landowner Survey – *FWP Response*

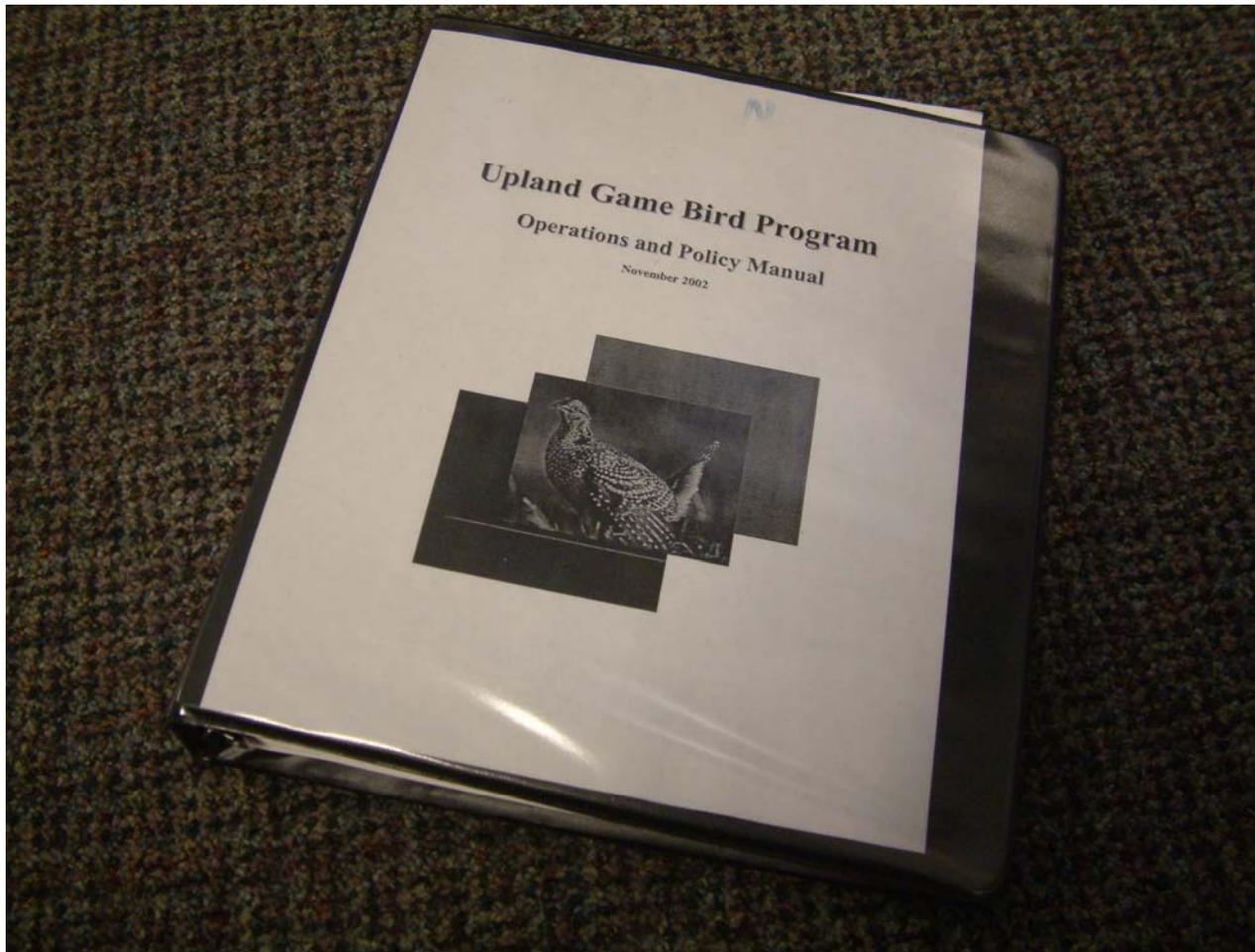
- Approx. 25 respondents reported issues requiring follow-up (e.g., change in ownership, deceased, reluctance to allow bird hunting, unaware of active contract)
 - Individual follow-up, updating records, buy-outs
- Need for regular contact
 - Annual reminder letter

Administering UGBEP



Administering UGBEP

UGBEP Policy Manual – 2002





Administering UGBEP

UGBEP Database

- New Oracle database
- All payment vouchers generated by database
- Tailored to program needs (in development)
 - Acres open to hunting vs. project acres
 - Public vs. private lands designation
 - Tiered structure – amendments, payments
 - Results from monitoring
 - Accessible by field personnel

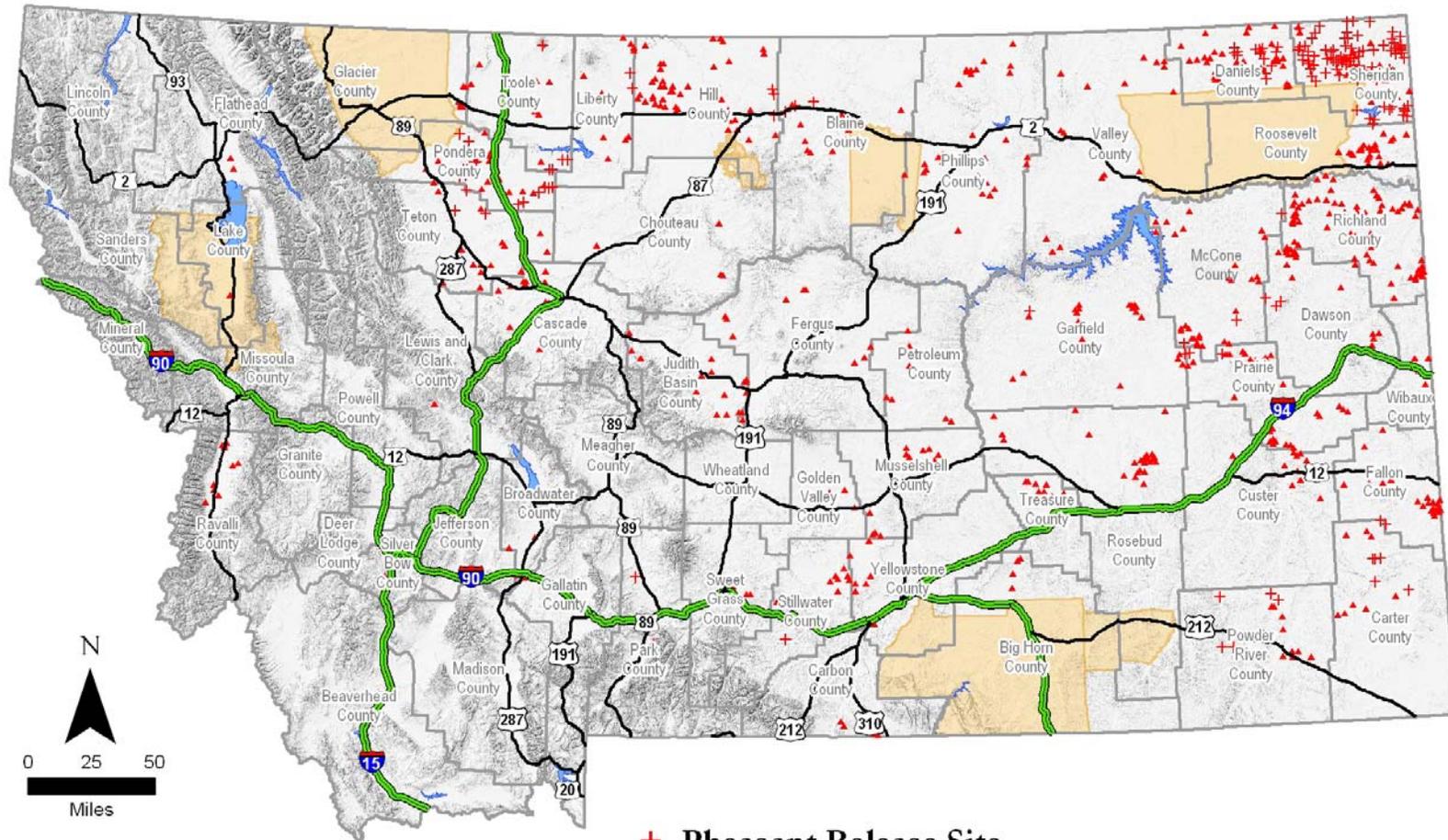
Administering UGBEP

Active Contracts - 2007

- 122 Pheasant Release Contracts
 - 17,500 pheasants released
 - 186,000 acres open to hunting
- 440 Active Habitat Contracts
 - Approx. 1.5 million acres open to hunting



Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement and Pheasant Release Projects



+ Pheasant Release Site

▲ Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Project



Program Review

- 12-member Upland Game Bird Advisory Council (2002/03)
- 3-member UGBEP Advisory Council (2005/06)
- Regional Discussions
- *Emphasizing Program needs*
- *Emphasizing Program direction*

UGBEP Project Access Guide

- Fold-out color maps
- Landowner names (not ranch names)
- Projects on Block Management identified
- Broader distribution via internet/mailings
 - 1,200 requests for guide over 3-week period
- Re-organized to be more user-friendly

Integration with Block Management

- 30% projects on BMAs
- Ongoing discussion between program coordinators
 - Considering new approaches
 - Access, Habitat, Incentives – other state models
 - Pheasants and CRP

Dedicated Staffing/Contracts

- Pheasants Forever, Inc. contract
 - Sidney – 2006
 - Billings – BLM cooperative agreement
- NRCS Cooperative Positions
 - Glasgow (NRCS/FWP-PPJV)
 - Sage-grouse Local Working Group Coordinator (BLM/NRCS/FWP federal grants)
- Redirected workloads – FWP staff



Administering UGBEP

Upland Game Bird Program Biologist

- **Help program reach full potential**
- Day-to-day program administration (bills, contracts)
- Update/Revise Policy manual, applications, contracts, process
- Maintain updated cost lists for practices
- Work on habitat projects in vicinity of work area
- Develop marketing products and annual reports
- Oversee compliance, effectiveness, hunter-use monitoring
- Liaison with local PF/NWTF chapters
- Assist regions with larger/complex projects

Future Direction of UGBEP?





UGBEP Future Direction

UGBEP – Areas of emphasis

- Public lands habitat projects
 - Wildlife Management Areas, DNRC, FAS, BLM, recreation areas
- Block Management Area projects
- Pheasants and turkeys – NWTf/PF chapter participation
- Conservation Easements – integrating with other programs (e.g., Farm Bill, Habitat Montana)
- High priority sagebrush leases
- Funding partnerships – where possible

Need for strategic approaches

- Dynamic landscape – hunting access
- Farm bill – habitat
 - CRP Enhancements (new incentive model?)
 - SAFE CRP integration
 - Biofuels
- Operational reviews of WMA's
- Increasing pressures on habitat
- Enhancing partnerships and leveraging funds – NRCS, PF, NWTf, DNRC, USFS
- Hunter preferences? (comment card?)



Conclusions

- New Era for UGBEP?
- UGBEP and Game Bird Hunting –
 - High priority for FWP
 - Huge potential
 - Considerable opportunity hunters/small communities