

Sterling WMA Newsletter

January 2015

I hope that you all enjoyed Sterling Wildlife Management Area this past year. If you have comments concerning the WMA, please feel free to contact me by telephone: 236-1254 or email: dean.rose@idfg.idaho.gov. I am always interested in ideas to make the WMA a better place for wildlife and wildlife enthusiasts.

Dean Rose
Regional Habitat Biologist

Goals

Sterling WMA

Many of you may not know why the IDFG owns/manages Sterling WMA. The current goals for the WMA are:

1. Manage wetlands for waterfowl and other wildlife production.
2. Manage sagebrush-steppe and other upland habitats for ring-necked pheasants and other wildlife production.
3. Provide public hunting opportunity.

Change in SWMA hunting hours

This was the first year of the change in upland game bird hunting hours during pheasant season. The 10:00 a.m. start time was made to improve the safety of IDFG personnel releasing pheasants, to provide a more equitable distribution of hunting

opportunity, and to help standardized the hunting hours throughout the state. Input from users was positive.

Habitat Improvements

The vegetation rehabilitation of the Harder segment is still going great. The final field was seeded last winter and irrigated during 2014. We will irrigate one more season and then we are done. The next step will be for strips for pheasant broods and grain food plots for pheasants and waterfowl.

We excavated one more pond on the American Game segment last winter to recover some waterfowl brooding habitat that had grown in over the years. If the weather cooperates, we will rehabilitate a second pond on the that segment this winter. That work will happen if the ground freezes so the equipment can get around.

Pheasant Banding Project

Many of you may have harvested a bird with a leg band or radio collar. Our thanks to those of you who contacted us with the information. If you still have a band that was not reported, please call or email me. I need to know the number, when it was harvested and where it was harvested (you can keep the band). Of the 2515 birds that were released, we banded or radioed 473. Our preliminary results suggest that on average a released pheasant is available to our users for just under 3 days before it is harvested or killed by a predator. Of the marked birds, 18 (4%) were killed by predators and 8 left the WMA (a few more left and then came back). The return rate of the marked birds was highest in the central segments (Harder, American Game, Vanderford and Johnson). The Horsch segment was the next highest return. The return rate also seemed to decline as the season went on. A more complete report will be finished soon. If you have an interest in the results, you can contact me and I will get that information to you.

User Survey

On September 1 of 2014, we began an intensive survey of Sterling WMA users. Our intent is to get a better feel for who uses the WMA during, and outside of, hunting season. Many of you were probably contacted during a hunting visit. We will be collecting

the data for one full year and then analyze it in the fall. I will share the results in the next newsletter.

WMA Management Plan Revision

The new plan for SWMA is complete. The public review took place over the summer. Once the Fish and Game Commission approves the plan, it will be used to guide management of the WMA for the next 10 years. The plan will be posted on our web site: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov>.

If you make interesting wildlife observations please contact us or report at: <https://fishandgame.idaho.gov/species/observations/add>.

If you see a Fish and Game violation or observe other potential problems, please contact your local Conservation Officer, Sheriff's Office or call the CAP Line at 1-800-632-5999.

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