
28 YEARS OF UPLAND GAME BIRD HABITAT ENHANCEMENT IN NORTHEAST MONTANA

Kenneth B. Plourde*, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, Flaxville

In 1989 Montana's Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program (UGBEP) was authorized to develop, enhance, and conserve upland game bird habitat in Montana using funding from upland game bird license sales. A combination of high public interest, robust game bird populations, and an extensively cultivated landscape in the northeastern corner of Montana made it a natural focus area for the new program. Habitat enhancements completed under the program included establishing nesting cover, shelterbelts for winter cover, and food plots as well as implementing rest-rotation grazing systems. Over the ensuing 28 years, 431 habitat projects were completed in a five county area. Most projects were completed in cooperation with private landowners and nearly all of the habitat enhancements occurred on private lands. Many projects resulted from partnering with Farm Bill conservation programs. Good working relationships between FWP staff, landowners, and partnering agencies played a key role in the success of the program. A discussion of achievements, challenges, and lessons learned from the UGBEP in northeast Montana may provide insight for wildlife managers dealing with habitat conservation issues across the state.