

Tall native prairie grasses bend in the wind for as far as I could see over the rolling hills.

No, I wasn't on the grasslands of the Dakotas, Kansas or Nebraska. I was in northeast Pennsylvania last October on Pennsylvania Power and Light's (PPL) Montour Preserve where the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) is developing one of four Wild Pheasant Recovery Areas (WPRA).

WPRA has been going on since 2005. More importantly, it's working. The PGC recently found 40 pheasants/survey route in the Turbotville Study Area, which includes Montour Preserve. Nine PF chapters and the Mellon Foundation have helped fund these critical upland projects.

"This was once the best pheasant area in the state, but then populations dropped 85 percent in the 70s," according to Scott Klinger, a wildlife resource biologist with the PGC. "Today, the pheasant popula-

tion has increased three years straight without adding new wild birds."

Down the road a bit at the farm of Central Susquehanna Chapter member Carl Schwartz, we stopped to see a food plot he planted using PF's Blizzard Buster Mix. As we chatted, a rooster flew into the plot!

During a February 24, 2013, pheasant survey, a PGC crew pushed up 180 hens and roosters at Schwartz's farm. He has 300 acres of Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) acres and practices no-till on his crop land. "I enrolled in CREP because it was time to slow down and help the wildlife. CREP preserves the soil. There is no runoff from this farm," Schwartz said proudly.

Klinger likes what Schwartz has done. "We want to duplicate this in the entire study area. With 30 acres of this in every

two square miles, we'd have some serious pheasant hunting," he said.

Shon Robbins, PF's regional wildlife biologist for the east coast, said PF is working in partnership with the PGC and NRCS to use CREP and other state and federal habitat programs to make Klinger's goal a reality. In fact, PF's Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist program will grow this spring from five to eight partnership positions in the state.

National Pheasant Plan

I last reported on the WPRA in 2005 when it was just starting. Now, some believe a limited wild bird season could open in the state in three years. That is good news.

Even better, there is a National Pheasant Plan (NPP) being drawn up to revive



The Chillisquaque Creek project (here and at right) rivals anything the author has seen in terms of native planting quality. Wild pheasants abound in this area. Pictured from left are some of the folks that made it all possible: Kurt



Bond, PF private lands biologist; Shon Robbins, PF regional wildlife biologist; Lynn Appelman, Central Susquehanna Chapter; and Scott Klinger, Pennsylvania Game Commission.