

Pheasant Habitat Improvement Program

PHEASANTS  FOREVER



Progress Report: 1992-2005



Executive Summary

The Pheasant Habitat Improvement Program, or PHIP, is a joint venture of the Division of Wildlife, Pheasants Forever, Inc. and eastern Colorado Pheasants Forever chapters, with a mission of improving pheasant habitat in eastern Colorado. PHIP began in 1992 with 3 Pheasants Forever chapters and has now grown into 11 chapters of Pheasants Forever actively involved with doing habitat through PHIP. PHIP has reaped the benefits of strong partnerships with local Pheasants Forever Chapters, in addition to other community groups, including landowners, Future Farmer members, Boy Scouts, Explorer Scouts, Conservation Districts, Natural Resource Conservation Services, to mention a few. Division of Wildlife District Wildlife Managers, Wildlife Technicians, and Terrestrial biologists have played an important role in PHIP as well.

How does PHIP work?

The PHIP program's greatest asset is the partnerships that have been created with local chapters of Pheasants Forever, and the dedication and commitment these groups have developed for creating pheasant habitat. The mechanics of PHIP are quite simple. Since 2003, the Division has contracted PHIP directly to Pheasants Forever, Inc., and local chapters in Colorado. Chapters contact landowners to explain the program specifics and suggest the types of projects that would increase pheasant habitat locally. After signing a simple 1 page Habitat Project Agreement with the landowner, the chapters prepare the site, purchase necessary materials, and then organize the planting effort, either with chapter volunteers, or in some cases, by sub-contracting the work to a local community group. PHIP reimbursement rates are set to cover all of the costs of materials, and some practices include a small payment for labor.

Eastern Colorado Pheasants

Nearly everywhere pheasants occur in substantial numbers, whether it is Colorado, Kansas or South Dakota, pheasants are absolutely reliant on grassland habitats, or a suitable cropland substitute. Over large parts of the core pheasant range in Colorado, pheasants have a year-round survival problem, because grassland habitats are lacking, and cropland habitat surrogates often lack an integral habitat component. Indeed, during research conducted in the mid 1990's, the Division found that pheasants faced significant mortality pressures through every month of the year, a finding which has forced us to re-evaluate the focus of PHIP. Throughout the decade of the 1990's, PHIP focused on creating severe winter weather survival cover, which was found to be the limiting factor for pheasants in eastern Colorado during a research study in the early 1980's. With the turn of the century and new research findings, PHIP is moving to address deficiencies in year-round survival cover, with a focus on improving night-roosting cover across eastern Colorado. This shift in focus also requires a different mind set – focusing on grassland habitats, cropland stubble quality, and annual survival habitats, commonly known as food plots, as opposed to severe winter weather habitat. With eastern Colorado subject to drought four of the last five years, increasingly important to pheasants is quality brood habitat – areas where hens and their broods can find security cover and insects in abundance

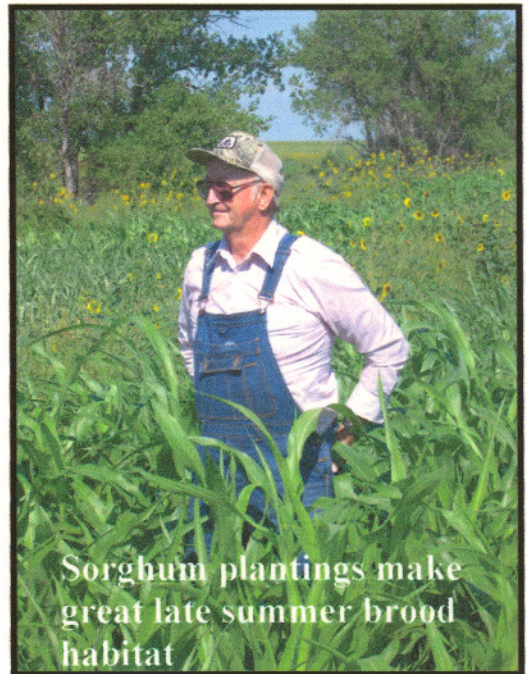
Recent droughts have drastically impacted pheasant numbers over the last few years, and have made habitat development a difficult endeavor, yet very important. Many areas were so dry that chapters chose to slow their habitat work until good conditions return, but many chapters have found landowners even more receptive to doing habitat projects when wildlife and farming are facing difficult weather conditions.

FOOD AND COVER PLOTS

Purpose:

Food plots encouraged by PHIP encompass two types of projects, including, plots that are seeded to a forage and grain sorghum mix, and those that chapters now refer to as “natural” food plots, which consist of annual forbs such as kochia, annual sunflowers and giant ragweed. Both types of plots serve a similar purpose – create a dense, tall, secure habitat that contains a food component, either in the form of a grain like corn or sorghum, or a seed, like annual sunflower. Chapters can either plant the sorghum mix to provide a food plot, or depending on location, can often disk or mechanically disturb a plot to encourage annual forbs to grow. Commonly known as disturbance tillage, this practice creates good habitat in all but the driest years, but requires special attention to the timing and degree of disturbance. Planted food plots are more predictable in success, but obviously require sufficient rainfall to grow and produce food and cover.

Pheasants use food plots as soon as the plot has grown enough to provide cover, which normally means use begins sometime during or after wheat harvest in July, and use continues through the fall, winter and spring months. It is very common to find hens and broods in both planted and disturbance plots during summer, as both provide two things chicks need – shade from the summer sun, and an abundance of insects for foraging. Food plot attractiveness to pheasants also makes them an outstanding place to hunt and harvest pheasants. In the mid 1990’s, a harvest study showed that hunters who hunted food plots shot 3-4 times as many roosters per hour effort than hunters that hunted other cover types. For this reason, and the survival benefits that food plots provide, PHIP is exploring all avenues to increase their prevalence and distribution in PHIP areas of eastern Colorado. Many of these plots are enrolled in the Division’s Walk-In Access Program, and are very popular with hunters. Over the last few years, PHIP has allowed landowners to experiment with ‘mega food plots’, totaling up to 40 acres at a site. Designed to mimic CRP ‘Cover crop’, the larger plots tend to hold more birds longer into the season. Much like tall grass pivot corners, pheasants will continue to use mega food plots under all but the most intense hunting pressure, and a few weeks after season ends, it is not uncommon to find large numbers of birds using the habitat plots.



Accomplishments:

Over 22,000 acres of food plots have been funded over the course of the PHIP program. 2005 totals surpassed 4,303 acres. Benefits to pheasants were excellent in most cases, and the food plots served a dual purpose of providing both survival cover and increased hunting access, as nearly all food plots are commonly enrolled into the Walk-In Access Program. Food plots have been very popular with landowners in Phillips, Yuma and Baca counties, with the Yuma County chapter deemed the king of food plots, where most are planted into pivot irrigation corners. Pivot corners are perfectly suited to pivot corners, particularly because of the pheasant densities that are normally found within the irrigated and dry cropland interspersed areas within Colorado. Other excellent locations that are commonly used include within CRP fields (where the

food plot represents the only food source within a sea of grass), small difficult to farm tracts within cropland, and adjacent to field windbreaks or other shrub thicket plantings

PHIP guidelines suggest several specific criteria for developing food plots, with the goal of producing a food and cover plot ideal for meeting pheasant habitat requirements in Colorado. Some important factors include:

- A locally adapted variety of forage sorghum – 75% of the mix - is integral to food plot development due to the requirement to produce tall, standing cover. Ask for a drought resistant variety.
- Add locally adapted grain sorghum at approximately 25% of the mix, to produce seed, and most importantly, to provide support for the tall growing forage sorghum plants. Again, look for drought tolerant varieties.
- Plant the food plot at the proper time, generally speaking, as early as possible. In much of eastern Colorado, food plots do best when planted between May 20 and June 10. Early planting helps the forage sorghum stalk mature and remain standing over winter.
- Plant a light rate of seed – often 2-4 lbs./acre is sufficient for food plots. Plots that are drilled instead of planted will require a higher rate of seed.
- Weed control is beneficial when grassy weeds or puncture vine is present, but detrimental when annual sunflower or Kochia are present.



With good conditions, the end result is a rank, tangled patch of pheasant cover that offers them everything they need – overhead cover to avoid avian predators and ground cover to avoid coyotes and foxes, which will continue to stand throughout the winter months.

SWITCHGRASS PLANTINGS

Purpose:

Year round survival cover is a significant limiting factor for Colorado's pheasant population. From Division research from the mid 1990's, it is evident that pheasants face significant mortality pressures nearly every month of the year, because night-roosting and survival cover good enough to limit predation is uncommon. One solution to this problem was developed by seeding small waste areas or difficult to farm corners to switchgrass. Often, switchgrass has been seeded into areas that farmers cannot get large farm equipment into, or in combination with other PHIP plantings, like shrub thickets, two-row shrub plantings, or even Continuous CRP field windbreak plantings.

Switchgrass is the preferred species of grass for several reasons. Switchgrass provides pheasants with a habitat that will remain standing through all but the worst winter storms, and grows tall enough in Colorado (2-4 feet in most cases) to provide birds with overhead predator protection. Because switchgrass is a native species, it is fairly drought tolerant, and grows well in most types of soils found on the eastern plains. Switchgrass plantings also provide excellent cover for nesting pheasants, because pheasants frequently depend on residual cover for initial nesting in the spring. Being a warm-season grass, the primary growth stage often coincides with mid-summer rainfall, and results in a tall, dense habitat that greatly increases in value as winter approaches. In recent years, we have encouraged the addition of grasses including yellow indiangrass, and forbs like alfalfa, sweet clover or sunflowers into these plots, which only enhances the project's value to pheasants.

Accomplishments:

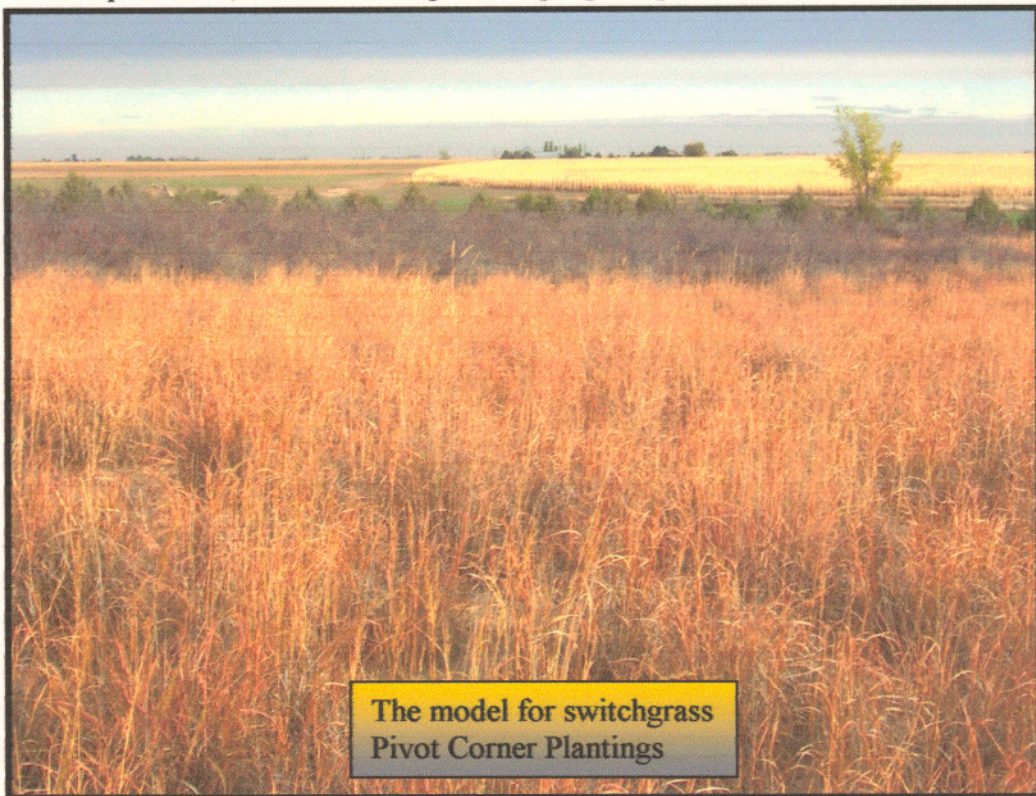
338 sites totaling 2,188 acres have been planted to switchgrass over the life of the PHIP program, mostly in waste ground parcels of 5 acres or less. Typical locations include road ditches, irrigation corners, waterways, re-claimed gravel pits, creek bottoms, areas that are too small for farmers to work with large equipment, and often in conjunction with other PHIP projects. To further encourage chapters to plant switchgrass plots, a Tye no-till grass drill is available for loan to chapters, and is specifically tuned to plant switchgrass to the appropriate depth and seeding rate. Typical seeding rates for switchgrass are 2-4 lbs./acre. Switchgrass can be planted anytime during the months of November through May, but spring planting is preferred. Because many of these projects are seeded into sorghum food plots, we recommend that chapters allow pheasants to use the food plots through March, and begin seeding switchgrass in April. Switchgrass is not difficult to establish, with the proper planting procedures, which are detailed under the Pivot Corner Planting sub-section.



The Tye drill can be set to plant grass and forb mixes, single species plantings, or even food plots.

PIVOT CORNER PLANTINGS

Purpose: Developing permanent habitat on pivot corners is the perfect opportunity to address several important habitat requirements for pheasants, in addition to providing a great place to hunt. Designed to take advantage of the habitat already provided by the crop under the irrigation sprinkler, this habitat practice established tall warm season native grasses on the corners of the sprinkler to provide permanent cover, which is often lacking in intensively irrigated areas. Through PHIP, a Pheasants Forever chapter contacts the landowner, explains the practice, and seeds the grass after an acceptable cover crop has been established. Landowners get an incentive payment to maintain the habitat, in return for meeting the requirements of the practice, including enrollment into the Walk-In Access Program, and attempting to enroll the corners into CRP during the first available general signup. In many cases, this practice has been a great way to get sprinkler corners into CRP, in the past a difficult endeavor, as most corners do not reach the necessary score to be accepted into the CRP program. Once accepted into CRP, corners are no longer covered under PHIP incentives, but are eligible for a bonus payment for enrollment into the Walk-In Access Program.

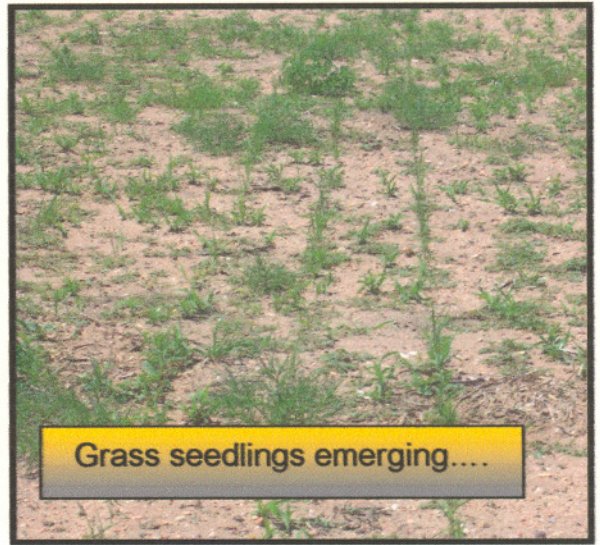


The model for switchgrass
Pivot Corner Plantings

Accomplishments: The pivot corner incentive program was created in 2003. Since 2003, over 2,000 acres of pivot corner plantings have been established, primarily in Phillips and Sedgwick counties, with a smaller number occurring in Yuma County. Landowner response has been strong, and in the future, we want to see more and more chapters using this practice to benefit pheasants. Under our current operating plan, shrub thickets are not an integral part of the practice, although they are not precluded from pivot corners. The



This 2nd year corner, still dominated by
annual weeds, provides great hunting cover



long range plan with this incentive practice is to enroll all corners enrolled under this incentive practice into either the general CRP Program, or the Colorado High Plains CREP Program when it becomes available, while still maintaining hunting access for Colorado's hunters through the Walk-In Access Program.

Due to their proximity to excellent food sources, their small size and shape, pivot corners in tall grass are excellent hunting cover, particularly for small and medium sized hunting parties, which sometimes struggle to find pheasants when hunting large fields. Corners in tall grass often concentrate large numbers of pheasants, and at least give hunters a good chance of getting close to pheasants. Better yet, under all but the most intense hunting pressure, pheasants will rarely completely abandon good quality pivot corners.

Pivot Corner plantings and Switchgrass plantings are not difficult to establish when proper procedures are followed. Over 14 years, PHIP has established some fairly simple guidelines to follow for establishment:

- Seed bed establishment is very important to successful grass establishment. As a general rule, the firmer the soil, the better seed will germinate. Seeding into a cover crop like sorghum, corn stalks or millet stubble is vastly preferred to wheat stubble or growing vegetation.
- Planting depth may be the biggest factor in establishing tall, warm season grasses like switchgrass, yellow Indiangrass, and bluestems. These grasses do best when seeded less than ½ inch deep or even broadcast on the surface.
- Seed at relatively low rates – 2.5 lbs/acre is optimum for switchgrass.
- Weed control on newly seeded plantings can help or hurt, depending on the method and intensity.
 - In many cases, mowing for weed control is detrimental to grass seedlings when mowing cuts grass leaves in addition to weeds. If mowing is the only alternative, leave 12-15" stubble above emerging grass seedlings.
 - Frequently, herbicide treatment can help an establishing grass stand by minimizing moisture competition for a few weeks during establishment. Generally, growth inhibitors like 2-4D are the only treatment necessary, and have no effects on grass seedlings.
- Proper management is an important, relatively infrequent action. In Colorado's arid climate, management, in the forms of burning or moderate disking once in 5-7 years can prolong a grass plots' productivity.

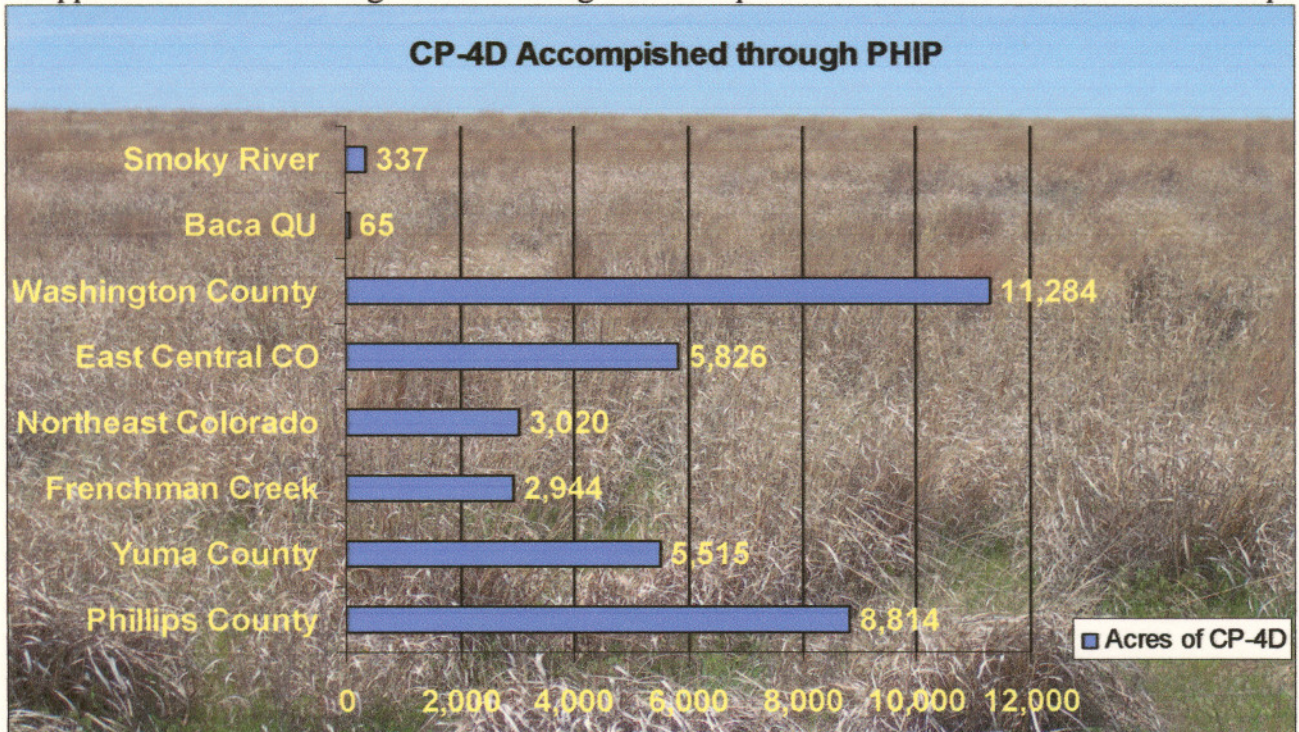
CRP ENHANCEMENT

Purpose:

Today's Federal Farm Bill programs represent a tremendous opportunity to impact pheasant habitat on a region-wide scale. The Conservation Reserve Program is the largest of the farm bill programs, and could secure large parcels of habitat for pheasants and other wildlife. Unfortunately, early enrollments did not address species requirements, due to the varieties of grass that were seeded, primarily smooth brome and other short grasses in Colorado.

Unlike 1985, the 1996 & 2002 Farm Bill resulted in an equal focus of soil and water conservation with wildlife habitat. In turn, the Division created a grass mix specifically tuned to produce the type of grass cover pheasants could flourish in. This mix, known as the CP-4D pheasant mix, includes a 50% switchgrass and 20% yellow indiangrass component in any soil type, while the remaining 30% of the mix is made up of a minimum of three grasses, based on soil type, and either a forb or shrub component. In 1998, we added an option to the PHIP habitat guidelines that allowed chapters to provide a one-time \$5/acre incentive payment to landowners that were interested in planting the pheasant grass mix into their new or enhanced CRP. Since that time, chapters have provided incentives to landowners to plant over 37,000 acres of the CP-4D pheasant mix. Many of those acres are on the verge of blooming into tremendous cover for pheasants.

CRP planted to the CP-4D pheasant mix will positively impact the deficit in year-round survival cover, which appears to be the most significant limiting factor for pheasants in eastern Colorado. This is especially



true for birds that currently do not find acceptable night-roosting habitat and are forced to roost in poor quality wheat stubble or CRP. These grass stands will also create large blocks of undisturbed nesting cover, and will also help to reduce mortality during and after strong winter storms, due to the fact that switchgrass and yellow indiangrass stand up well to blowing and drifting snow. With new CRP signups in 2003 and fall of 2004, we anticipate that several thousand more acres of CP-4D pheasant habitat will be created by 2007.

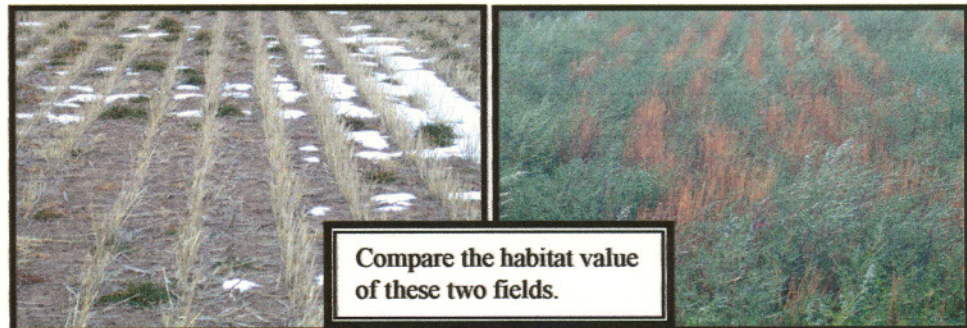
TALL WHEAT STUBBLE INCENTIVES

Purpose:

No more striking decline in habitat quality for pheasants exists in Colorado than the decline in quality and quantity of wheat stubble. During a Division research study conducted in the mid 1960's, wheat stubble and weed canopy in the core pheasant range of eastern Colorado averaged nearly 20 inches tall. Similar studies conducted in the mid 1990's resulted in averages of only 8-10 inches tall, and that today's best quality stubble was equivalent to the average in 1960's era wheat stubble. The importance of this decline is not always obvious or intuitive with regards to region-wide pheasant populations, most of which depend on wheat stubble. Pheasants, originally being grassland birds, have adapted to using green wheat and wheat stubble as an alternate habitat in Colorado. Needless to say, whether nesting in green wheat in the spring or night-roosting in wheat stubble in the winter, both wheat and stubble play a critical role in pheasant population dynamics. In the 1990's, the Division also compared survival rates of pheasants in different qualities of stubble. Results were not surprising, with pheasants in tall weedy wheat stubble showing much higher winter survival than birds in 'average' or 'below average' wheat stubble complexes. As a result, in 2001 a practice was created in PHIP that allowed chapters to provide a \$5/acre incentive to farmers to leave wheat stubble tall and unsprayed after harvest.

Accomplishments:

Nearly 3,600 acres were enrolled in the pilot practice for tall, weedy stubble since 2001, mostly in Phillips County, with smaller amounts in Logan, Washington, and Sedgwick counties. In 2002 and 2004, drought severely limited stubble height in nearly all wheat producing areas, reducing



participation in this program by wheat growers in eastern Colorado. While this program will be offered in the future, we plan to transition this incentive into the proposed High Plains CREP proposal, which will allow the development of better incentive package for landowners to leave tall, unsprayed wheat stubble. Region-wide, one of the most important habitat initiatives for pheasants is reversing the decline in the quality of wheat stubble. Enrolling these fields in Walk-In Access has been emphasized, providing further benefit to Colorado sportsmen, as weedy, tall stubble is one of the few habitat types that provides secure roosting, day loafing and feeding cover for pheasants, all in the same small area.



WOODY COVER PLANTINGS

PURPOSE:

Division research conducted in the early 1980's indicated that severe winter weather was the limiting factor for pheasants in eastern Colorado, particularly when winter snow storms were accompanied by strong winds and drifting snow. Pheasants inhabiting poor, thin cover were killed in large numbers, either from hypothermia or suffocation during severe winter blizzards, and those that did survive the initial storm were at peril from a host of predators, because the storm normally covered up the available security cover. Shrub thickets with windbreaks were developed to provide a tall, dense cover that would remain standing through the most severe storm, and give pheasants a place to escape predators and the elements. Shrubs that sucker from the roots, like native plums, chokecherries, or buffaloberry, are used to create this dense thicket, and are oriented to the lee side of the 3-row juniper windbreak that protects the thicket from blowing and drifting snow. Shrub thickets and windbreaks are critical to pheasants during and immediately after winter storms. Other plantings, including 2-row creek plantings and field windbreaks are also encouraged under PHIP, but are primarily designed to provide loafing and escape cover, travel corridors, and of course, good places for hunters to hunt.



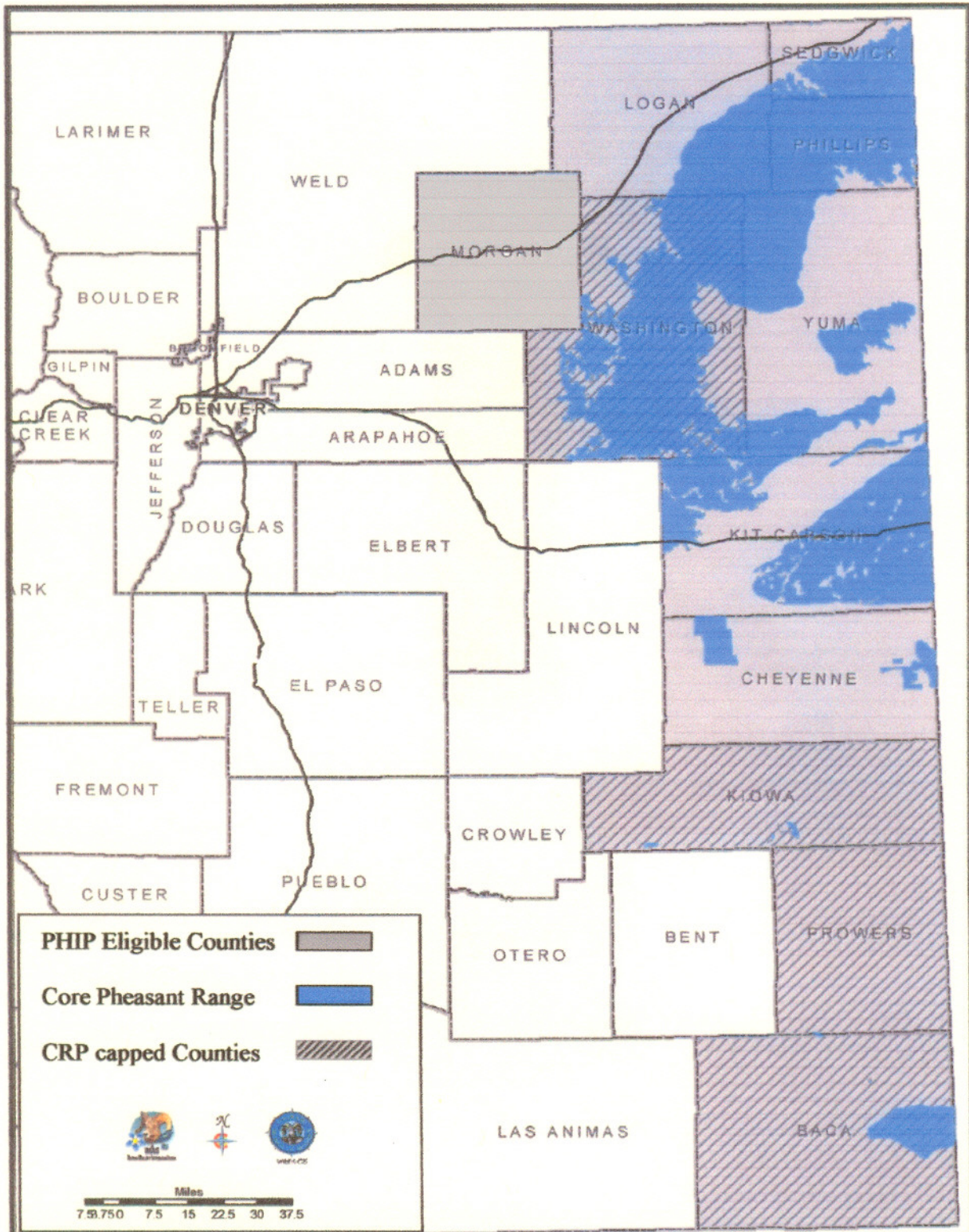
ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

In the 13 seasons PHIP has been active, Pheasants Forever chapters have planted 2,185 woody cover plantings across the pheasant producing areas of eastern Colorado, a total effort easily making shrub thickets (over 2,034 individual thickets) the most popular habitat feature offered through the program. Most of these plantings include not only a shrub thicket but a juniper windbreak as well, although in many cases, chapters have planted small thickets, without windbreaks into small waste areas, bends in creek bottoms, or other small areas that were conducive to creating habitat.



Shrubs and trees that are beneficial to pheasants can be difficult to establish in eastern Colorado, because of relatively low annual precipitation and unpredictable periods of drought. For this reason, the species of shrubs and trees that are allowed under PHIP are chosen not only for their suitability for pheasant habitat, but also their drought tolerance. Successful establishment of these plantings leads to the dedication of the chapters to prepare sites properly, a concerted effort use proper planting techniques, the moisture-conserving advances of weed barrier fabric, and consistent replanting the few thickets that do need work. Since 1999, the Division has evaluated the status of a sample of plantings, and as we found in 1997, over 70% were rated as having good or excellent growth and survival. The last decade and beyond has shown us that pheasants can get some benefits from these shrub thickets in as little as 5 years under ideal growing conditions, although in most cases, 7-10 years are needed to allow a thicket to grow and mature into a predator and weather-proof oasis.

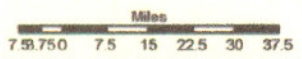
PHIP Range Map



PHIP Eligible Counties [Solid Grey Box]

Core Pheasant Range [Solid Blue Box]

CRP capped Counties [Hatched Box]





THE FUTURE

The PHIP program has followed a logical progression, first emphasizing the critical survival habitats, like shrub thickets, to today's most focus of improving year-round survival cover. The largest opportunity to do this is through the establishment of high quality pheasant grasses in CRP enrollments, and by developing a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) for pheasants in eastern Colorado. In 2004, a general CRP signup enrolled nearly 96,000 acres of new CRP within the core pheasant range, and PHIP incentives are in full effect to take advantage of this opportunity. The Division created 'Pheasant Zone' within this CRP signup was a tremendous factor in getting large numbers of new CRP acres into the core area. Over the course of 2005, the Division has proposed a CREP program for eastern Colorado. This program, if approved by the United States Department of Agriculture will dramatically improve pheasant habitat within the core pheasant range, by combining federally funded permanent grass cover with a managed wheat farming system that focuses on eliminating herbicide use and leaving tall residual cover. All aspects of the proposed program are designed to benefit pheasants, and our estimates are that we could likely see a 100% increase in the number of pheasants on the impacted acres within the proposal. All acres of CREP would also be enrolled into the CDOW's Walk-In Access Program.

With the successful implementation of the Division's Walk-In Access Program for small game hunting in Colorado, PHIP will be emphasized on those enrollments as well, with projects like food plots, the pivot-corner incentive practice, and wheat stubble incentive of special interest. This emphasis of creating habitat that produces pheasants and provides good hunting opportunity was very evident since 2002 and will expand in the future. In 2003 and 2004 approximately 160,000 acres were enrolled in the Division's Walk-In Program, the program remains to be popular with hunters and landowners alike. For the most part, crowding concerns have been eliminated, in part due to the increased acreage available. With the Walk-In program's success, PHIP's challenge will be to concentrate those habitat improvements that produce pheasants on parcels of land that will be enrolled into the Access Program with the goal of providing higher quality hunting for Walk-In participants, while not neglecting other habitat limitations.

PHEASANTS FOREVER CHAPTERS

Each PF chapter has created a unique persona for working with PHIP in their local community, and continues to contribute to the evolution of the program specifications and guidelines. The **Phillips County Chapter** has a long list of contributions to creating pheasant habitat, and as a result, are currently the highest ranked PF chapter in the nation in habitat dollars spent, much in part due to their expertise in coordinating and planning federal farm bill habitat projects. Traditionally, they are the number one PHIP chapter as well, and since 2003, have focused primarily on developing pivot corner projects. This chapter has also purchased several tracts of land and has created a land trust organization to support their purchases, all of which will be managed for pheasants. Phillips County has also been a tremendous supporter of the Division's Walk-In Access Program, and has assisted the Phillips County Conservation District in the administration of the Access Program. To maximize production during a short planting window, the chapter, through DWM Jack Wieland and the local Boy Scout troop has led an extensive effort to replant and maintain older sites, while still planting new sites for CRP participants.

The **Yuma County Chapter** began habitat work in 1992, along with Phillips County and Northeast Colorado PF. Historically, the Yuma Chapter's focus has been on creating habitat that helps pheasants immediately, while not ignoring the long term benefits of critical winter survival cover. Yuma County's signature plantings are food plots and disturbance tillage plots, with nearly 9,000 acres accomplished over the life of the chapter, an effort that undoubtedly contributes to Yuma County's ranking as the highest pheasant harvest county in the state. The chapter has also been very active in combining shrub thicket projects with recently enrolled CRP parcels. Over the last several years, the chapter has also contracted nearly all shrub plantings to local community groups, including the Wray FFA and the Wray CD. DWM Mike Trujillo has continued to lead the chapter's efforts to increase habitat distribution across the county.

Logan County has two Pheasants Forever Chapters. The **Northeast Colorado** chapter resides in Sterling, and has been involved with PHIP since 1992. This chapter focuses habitat efforts near Sterling, Willard, and Crook. Over the last few years, NEC has emphasized pivot corner grass plantings and food plots. Also located in Logan County is the **Frenchman Creek** chapter, based in Fleming, which has provided an excellent model of community involvement and pride in doing habitat work since 1995. The Frenchman Creek chapter is also locally famous for the large numbers of county residents and urban immigrants that arrive for a weekend of habitat planting. Frenchman Creek's real claim to fame is their highest ranking of all PHIP participants with regards to shrub and tree survival in their plantings – quite a testament considering the periods of drought that Logan County is prone too.

The **Washington County** chapter of PF started habitat work in 1993, and has continued from that point. After a year off in 2002, the chapter has ambitiously reorganized their efforts in preparation for 2003 and continued in 2004. Washington County was one of the first chapters to incorporate the local FFA chapters into their habitat planting efforts, with FFA chapters in Lone Star, Otis, Akron, Arickaree, and Woodlin partnering with the PF chapter. Each FFA is normally granted a specific number of plantings, and the FFA works within their geographic area to find interested landowners with good sites for habitat projects. FFA chapters, and the PF chapter, also work in coordination with the Washington County NRCS on CRP-type windbreak plantings.

The **Morgan County** chapter of PF began PHIP plantings in 1996. Their method of operation has been to emphasize the importance of coordinated habitat projects, in particular the synergy of shrub thicket plantings combined with switchgrass plantings or food plots. The chapter has also been very effective at replanting, mowing, and maintaining their older sites, while adding new projects every year. The chapter has also led efforts in publicizing the importance and success of the PHIP program, and was a tremendous factor in the

development of the Small Game Walk-In Access program, a program which they also coordinate for Morgan County, with an assist from the Morgan County Conservation District. The Chapter and the Conservation District have done an excellent job at coordinating the Walk-In Program, and their quality control and Walk-In mapping efforts are top-notch.

Sedgwick County began PHIP plantings in 1999, as a branch effort with Phillips County. Sedgwick County is currently following the model established by Phillips County – coordinate and conduct NRCS plantings for field windbreaks and riparian buffers along the dry creek beds in southern Sedgwick County.

The **Northern Colorado** chapter, based out of Fort Collins, may have the most unique mission of all PF chapters in Colorado. The majority of their habitat work occurs in northern Weld County, where habitat projects will not only benefit pheasants, but plains sharp-tailed grouse as well, which are currently a resident in the CRP lands of northern Weld County, and are a state endangered species. Recently, Northern Colorado has also branched out to work with landowners on the eastern edge of Weld County as well.

The **Smoky River** chapter of PF has been characterized by strong ties with local NRCS personnel and the local Conservation District in Cheyenne Wells. With Cheyenne County currently facing severe drought concerns, the chapter is focusing on maintenance and replanting of old sites, instead of planting new sites.

The **Pikes Peak** chapter, located in Colorado Springs, currently conducts habitat work in Kit Carson County, and has developed an excellent relationship with local landowners and DWM Tom Seamans. Pikes Peak's focus is evolving towards emphasizing habitats that will do well under the periodic drought that the county is currently experiencing. **Kit Carson** Pheasants Forever is a newly established chapter, and will work within a county where nearly unlimited potential exists for habitat development.

The **Lamar Rebel Roosters** chapter of PF began PHIP plantings in 1998. Working in Prowers, Bent and Kiowa Counties has given the chapter the ability to experiment with different species of tree and shrubs, to find those best suited to the aridity of SE Colorado. In 1999, the Chapter partnered with Bent County NRCS to create a project that emphasized wetland conservation, shrub planting, and establishment of permanent switchgrass cover on 115 acres near Las Animas. Recent developments have expanded to the eastern parts of Prowers County, where pheasants co-exist with bobwhite and scaled quail.

Baca County first saw PHIP plantings in 1998, when the Baca County Quail Unlimited Chapter accomplished 6 shrub thickets. Baca County PF began in 1999, and is unique in the fact that their projects can provide habitat for pheasants, bobwhite, and scaled quail, which are common in the County. With the Chapters' and local DOW staff's suggestions, PHIP may begin to develop some special projects that lend to multi-species habitat plantings.