

# USE OF HUMAN DIMENSIONS INFORMATION AS A TOOL FOR SELECTING LARGE-SCALE RESTORATION AREAS

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## INTRODUCTION

Large-scale bobwhite restoration is dependent on management of private lands, and conservationists are targeting select geographic areas to increase the probability of achieving permanent and significant increases in bobwhite abundance. Efficacious selection of target areas requires a foundation of biological and sociological information. We have a sound biological foundation but lack understanding of how to motivate landowners to carry out quail conservation. This research will determine Missouri landowner willingness and ability to carry out bobwhite habitat restoration in joint-venture style cooperatives with natural resource agencies and conservation organizations. This information will be used in conjunction with biologically-based habitat suitability models to select quail restoration areas and to design marketing plans for USDA Farm Bill conservation practices.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Determine landowner knowledge, willingness and ability regarding quail conservation and open land habitat restoration.
2. Determine desired components of cooperative restoration agreements.
3. Develop a spatial inventory of landowner suitability for implementing cooperative restoration.
4. Evaluate landowner experience with, and attitude toward, cooperative ventures.

## PROGRESS TO DATE

Our primary objective for the first fiscal year was to survey landowners. We developed the survey using previous landowner questionnaires, and by conducting 4 focus group discussions with landowners in the spring of 2005. Correspondence with respondents included an initial letter informing they would be receiving the survey, the survey a week later, a follow-up reminder postcard to non-respondents a couple of weeks later, and a second mailing of the survey instrument in September, about two weeks after the postcards. Response rate from the first mailing was about 42%, with current overall response at about 50%.

Four focus group discussions were held from March 28th to April 27th, 2005. The groups varied in size from 7 to 11 participants, for a total of 37 focus group participants.

Discussions lasted 80-120 minutes. Participants included full- and part-time farmers and landowners whose primary interest is hunting and quiet enjoyment of their land. Some landowners were new to the area and had small properties, while others managed larger farms that had been in their families for many years.

## **RESULTS**

A summary of the focus group discussions is provided below. Because participation in the focus groups was confidential, source of quotes is not provided. Most focus group participants indicated that quail and quail hunting were important to them and to their families. A decline in quail populations was noted by nearly all those who attended. Most of the participants said that they want to encourage quail on their land, and many of them do things they hope will be beneficial. Most participants felt positive toward the prescribed fire, disking, planting favorable bobwhite cover and had participated in some or all to varying degrees, in the hopes that it would increase quail numbers on their land. One of the biggest factors that focus group participants consider is cost of the practice. Cost was mentioned in every focus group, as was labor as a part of that cost. In addition to the cost of doing the practice, how it would impact farm operations and finances is also quite important. Some people in each focus group said that they had not participated in any sort of management practice or cost share program. However, others had participated in one or even several programs, including CRP (this was the most common response), cost share for ponds, WHIP, pasture improvements, Timber Stand Improvement, critical area seeding, cedar eradication, and others. Most participants felt that education was one of the most important aspects of a new program, including how to enroll, what to do as part of the program (such as certain practices), how to do it, as well as why. Economics of a program were also important to participants. Some participants also suggested that incentives for some programs need to be higher. Ease of being involved was also frequently mentioned; people felt that a good program does not have a burdensome amount of requirements and restrictions, such as too many annual requirements for practices. Local expertise and input was also seen as valuable for the success of a program.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

Dailey, T. V. Missouri Quail Human Dimensions Study. Missouri Quail and Grassland Bird Leadership Council meeting. Jefferson City, MO, August 12, 2004.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

None to date.

## **PARTICIPATING AGENCIES AND LANDOWNERS**

Drs. Robert Pierce and William Kurtz, University of Missouri-Columbia, facilitated each focus group discussion

Dr. David Davis, University of Missouri Forage Systems Research Center, organized and hosted two focus group discussions

Bruce Lane, Livestock Specialist, University of Missouri Extension, Adair County, organized and hosted one focus group discussion

Thirty-seven landowners participated in focus group discussions, and must remain anonymous because their participation was confidential

Jeff Hodges, Quail Unlimited Regional Director, is a study collaborator  
Missouri State Council of Quail Unlimited provided assistance in hosting focus group discussions

### **NRCS INVOLVEMENT**

Tom Deberry, Northeast Missouri RC & D Coordinator, organized and hosted one focus group discussion

Pat Graham, State Biologist-MO, is a study collaborator.