



# Attitudes of north Missouri landowners toward large-scale quail habitat restoration areas on private lands

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Preliminary Report

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Missouri State Council



## INTRODUCTION

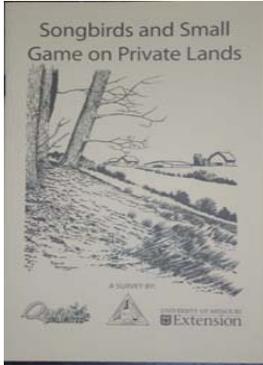
Much of the potential success of northern bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*) restoration is dependent on management of habitat on private land. Efficacious selection of restoration areas requires a foundation of ecological and sociological information. Although we know much about bobwhite habitat management, our skill at engaging landowners in habitat restoration at a large scale is meager. As part of a study to develop a systematic approach for using ecological and sociological data to identify restoration areas, we determined landowner attitudes. One of our primary objectives was to profile and typify landowners that showed interest in cooperative ventures, create a GIS layer displaying these interest levels and then follow-up with landowners in high interest areas to discuss the attributes and elements of a cooperative they would like to be involved in. We will then attempt to implement this cooperative in 2 areas identified through the study as being areas where a high likelihood of success is expected.

## METHODOLOGY

We used a self-administered, mail-back questionnaire (Figure 1) to assess landowner willingness and ability to carry out habitat restoration on their land. Questionnaires were delivered to 1,659 landowners in five ca. 75,000 acre study areas comprising parts of Gentry, Caldwell, Knox, Adair, Macon, Lewis, Clark, and Scotland counties in northern Missouri (Figure 2). Landowners owned at least 20 acres of land in a particular study area, which was selected using quail habitat suitability maps and input from Missouri Department of Conservation employees working in that region. Land use in the study areas is typically row crop or pasture land. We received 735 completed questionnaires, for a response rate of 44%. Although this is a respectable response rate, we are in the process of conducting a follow-up study of non-respondents.

Figure 1. Survey instrument

Figure 2. Five 75,000 acre study areas

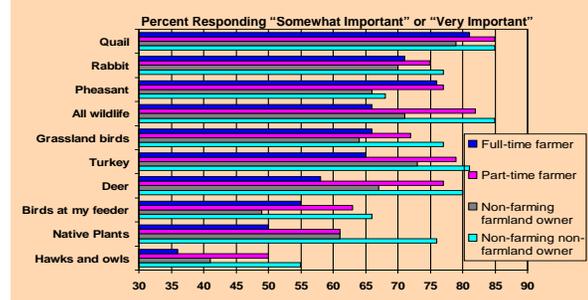


## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

**QUESTION: "How important or unimportant is it to you to have the following on your property?"**

About 80% of landowners said it was "very important" or "somewhat important" to have quail on their property. Other types of game, both large and small, and non-game species were also important to landowners. In general, the non-farming, non-farmland owner (recreational landowner) placed more importance on wildlife than did production landowners (Figure 3).

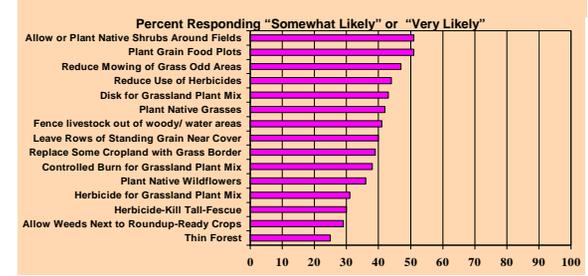
Figure 3. Importance to landowners of having various types of wildlife on their property.



**QUESTION: "The practices listed below are known to benefit quail. Quail do best when there is a mix of plants, the stand is thin, and woody plants are nearby. How likely or unlikely is it that you would use each of these practices on your land to benefit quail?"**

While there is great interest in quail, at best only half of respondents said they might be likely to integrate practices into their operation to benefit quail (Figure 4). A question about quail-friendly practices is very important for 2 reasons. First, it describes the kind of work that needs to be done to benefit quail. Second, it allows biologists to identify landowners who might be willing to do the work, but are not willing to join a cooperative.

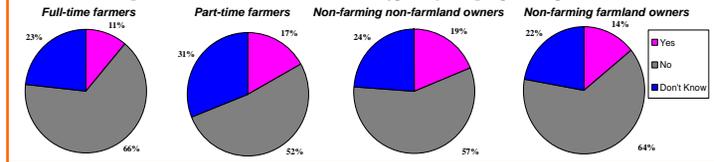
Figure 4. Likelihood of landowners to implement quail friendly practices on their land.



**QUESTION: Would you be interested in joining a quail co-op?**

This question was introduced with a description of what a cooperative might be ( neighbors working together, sharing equipment, getting special technical assistance, etc.) We indicated that landowners would not be obliged to allow hunting or public access. Compared to the popularity of quail-friendly practices, even fewer said they would be interested in joining a quail management cooperative if it was offered (Figure 5).

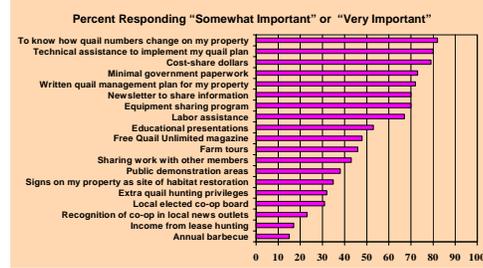
Figure 5. Interest of different landowner types in joining a quail cooperative.



**QUESTION: How important or unimportant would these parts of a quail co-op be to you?"**

If respondents answered 'yes' or 'maybe' to the co-op, they had the opportunity to rate the importance of a list of features. The most important features as identified by at least 50% of respondents were cost share, knowing they are impacting quail numbers, labor and technical assistance, no "government red tape," written plans, information and equipment sharing, education and labor assistance (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Importance to landowners of potential components of a quail cooperative.

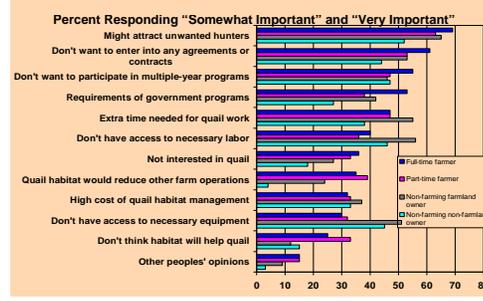


**QUESTION: What are your reasons for not joining a co-op?**

If respondents answered 'no' or 'maybe' to the co-op question, they had the opportunity to rate the importance of a list of reasons why. About 65% said that they did not want to attract hunters (Figure 7). Those that said 'maybe' were more concerned about hunters than those that said 'no' (72% vs. 63%, respectively). However, it is not that these landowners are not willing to let people on their land, because overall about 66% of these landowners said they let their neighbors hunt and fish on their land. It appears they don't want strangers knocking on their door requesting access to their land.

Other important reasons were that they did not want to be involved in contracts, did not want to dedicate the time, and did not want to deal with the requirements of government programs and that they lacked labor, equipment, and money. A lack of interest in quail or the belief that habitat does not help quail were not often cited by respondents, meaning that landowners have interest in quail and believe habitat is important.

Figure 7. Importance of reasons for not being involved in a quail co-op.



## What do landowners think about restoring habitat to benefit wildlife?

### Key Questions

- How important is it to have quail?
- Are landowners willing to use wildlife-friendly practices?
- Are they willing to be part of a quail cooperative?
- What do they want in a cooperative?
- What are the reasons for not being in a cooperative?



For further information, contact tom.dailey@mdc.mo.gov

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