

Food Plot Information from US Fish and Wildlife Service

From: Kerr, Tom <tom_kerr@fws.gov>
Sent: Thursday, November 9, 2023 11:59 AM
To: Joe Pavelko <Joe.Pavelko@lsohc.mn.gov>
Cc: Mark Johnson <mark.johnson@lsohc.mn.gov>
Subject: WPAs and Food Plots

Mark/Joe,

Following is an outline of the FWS position on food plots on federal Waterfowl Production Areas.

The Fish and Wildlife Service does not allow food plots on Waterfowl Production Areas in Minnesota.

- Waterfowl Production Areas (WPA) are units of the National Wildlife Refuge System and are acquired and managed for the purpose of providing breeding and migratory habitat for waterfowl.
- Waterfowl and other migratory birds are some of the federal trust species that the Fish and Wildlife Service manages for on WPAs.
- Upland nesting habitat has been identified as a limiting factor for migratory bird nesting success in Minnesota. We are maximizing the limiting habitat (grasslands) for federal trust species.
- In order to minimize predation on nesting migratory birds, we maximize the size and quality of grassland blocks and reduce habitat fragmentation.
- For management of WPA lands, managers follow the Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Integrity, Diversity and Environmental Health (BIDEH) Policy (601 FW3) and the Compatibility Policy (603 FW2). These policies help guide their decision making processes.
- These policies come from the fundamental mission of the National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act of 1997 (16 USC 668dd) that the fundamental mission of our system is wildlife conservation: wildlife and wildlife conservation must come first.
- Each unit of the refuge system is managed to fulfill the refuge (WPA) purposes and our mission by ensuring that the biological integrity, diversity and environmental health of each unit are maintained and where appropriate, restored.
- The only use of farming on MN WPAs is limited to short term (typically 1-3 years) site preparation of upland fields for planting with native prairie.

- Based on the purpose of WPAs, federal trust species habitat needs, the guiding policies (BIDEH and Compatibility) and the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, we do not allow the use of food plots on WPAs. WPA lands are managed to provide the greatest amount of wetland and grassland habitat possible to meet the purpose of providing migratory bird breeding habitat.

Please let me know if there are any other questions or additional information you may need.

Thanks
Tom

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