

WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Number 106

Spring 2025

2025 WSGS ANNUAL MEETING SET FOR JULY 19 **AT NAMEKAGON BARRENS WILDLIFE AREA**

This year's Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society annual membership meeting will be held at the Namekagon Barrens State Wildlife Area in conjunction with the Friends of the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area (FNBWA) on Saturday July 19.

The Friends group refer to their annual meeting as "Blueberries on the Barrens". This name has its origin in the fact that FNBWA board members scout the area in advance and provide a wild blueberry patch map to attendees who are interested in heading out in the morning hours to the wildlife area and surrounding Burnett County Forest Lands to pick blueberries. The group then reconvenes at the picnic shelter on the property around 10:00 a.m. where members of the Wis. Sharp-tailed Grouse Society will join in. There will be time for socializing, checking out displays, silent auctions and vendors, as well as purchasing raffle tickets and merchandise. Several speakers will present on topics related to the Namekagon Barrens and the greater Northwest Sands region. A picnic style lunch will be provided at noon and the show is winding down by 1pm or so.

For members of WSGS we plan to have a business meeting beginning at 9:00. That meeting will consist of a review and approval of the previous meeting's minutes followed by the treasurer's report. Any updates or new agenda items will then be presented for discussion and voting on any motions made. The Board will be provided voting totals for nominees of the three positions that are expiring and the newly elected board members announced and welcomed. The last action for the meeting is a vote for 2025-26 WSGS officer positions. Officers are nominated by and from the Board of Director members who are present, and will cover the positions of Secretary, Treasurer, Vice-President and President.

As stated above, we will join the Friends of the Namekagon Barrens group beginning at 10:00 a.m. for the remainder of the joint meeting agenda. *Continued on page 2.*

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Directions to FNBWA pavilion: 33174 Gomulak Firelane, Danbury, WI

From WI Hwy 35: Go east on St. Croix Trail 9 miles and follow the signs.

From WI Hwy 77: Go north on Namekagon Trail 6 miles, then east on St. Croix Trail 2 miles and follow the signs.

From Minong: Go west on Nancy Lake Road 9 ½ miles to County Line Rd go north 1 mile to St. Croix Trail then west 1 mile and follow the signs.

There is no fee for attendance but a donation to cover costs is appreciated if staying for lunch. ■



SPRING SHARPTAIL NUMBERS INCREASE **FALL HUNTING SEASON DISCUSSIONS BEGIN**

For the fourth consecutive year, the number of male sharp-tailed grouse counted on spring surveys in the occupied range of the state has shown an increase. This year's statewide count of 275 males showed an increase of 7% when compared to the 2024 survey total of 257. Sharptail surveys are the responsibility of federal, state and county resource management staff who also enlist the assistance of numerous volunteers on those days when conditions align and meet the protocol to do it right. The early morning surveys are done three times on each property during the period from April 15 to May 15 with highest daily count used for each site's final report. The numbers are then compiled by the WDNR's sharptail biologist, added to a table with survey numbers from previous years for comparison and presented to the state agency's Sharp-tailed Grouse Species Advisory Committee. The advisory committee includes representatives from the Wis. County Forest Association, the Wis. Conservation Congress, the Ruffed Grouse Society and Wis. Sharp-tailed Grouse Society as well as Federal and state biologists with sharptail management responsibilities. This group reviews the data and debates other relevant aspects of the spring survey that includes the possibility for a limited permit fall sharptail hunting season.

After receiving the 2025 survey data, the Sharp-tailed Grouse Advisory Committee began discussing the opportunity for a limited permit hunt at Crex Meadows Wildlife Area. Using a table-matrix designed and approved for the decision making process, the Committee voted unanimously to recommend a permit only type hunt at Crex this fall. The criteria used for justification of the recommendation included 1) a spring population greater than 100 males for two consecutive years, 2) A recent population trend that has been increasing while 3) expanding into new habitat, 4) in an area with over 10,000 acres of suitable connected habitat and 5) weather conditions over the last year conducive to continued population stability and growth.

The next step in the process was for the hunting season recommendation to be taken up by WDNR's Wildlife Leadership Team for their review and decision making. They also voted to proceed with a limited permit hunting season for Crex meadows. The proposal now moves to the DNR's Division of Fish, Wildlife and Parks Administrators office for their final review and decision. Upon receiving final approval for a fall hunt through the outlined process, the STG Species Advisory Committee reviews any new indices that may

affect spring nest success and brood survival before coming up with recommendations for a harvest quota and the number of permits to be issued. The rest of the process falls to the DNR's License Section to design an application, advertise availability, receive and log in submitted apps, have a random drawing and then issue permits.

This is a process that is moving through the system with some degree of urgency primarily because all the licensing actions that need to be produced, scheduled and completed in a compressed window. So, watch outdoor news media sites for anything pertaining to sharptails to keep up on the latest. We will definitely notify our membership if the recommendation makes it to the license application phase.■

SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SURVEY NUMBERS **BY PROPERTY AND YEAR**

<u>Managed Property</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>
Crex Meadows WA	25	19	68	76	102	119
Douglas county WA	13	8	6	18	29	29
Moquah barrens USFS	22	7	3	3	2	8
Namekagon barrens WA	56	57	66	65	90	82
Five mile barrens, Brule River LLC				2	1	
Five Mile Barrens, DFC					2	2
Riley Lake– USFS	12	7	6	12	14	14
Barnes Barrens		4	15	19	13	17
TOTAL	128	102	164	195	253	271

FIND US ONLINE!

Facebook: *Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society*

Instagram: *wisharptails*

Website: *<http://www.wisharptails.org/>*

Email: *information@wisharptails.org*

THE WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY

Officers

President: Ken Jonas
Vice President: Mike Amman
Secretary: Paul Kooiker
Treasurer: Mike Cole

Board Members

Paul Cook
Bruce Moss
Ashly Steinke
Trevor Bellrichard
Mark Parman

Newsletter Compositor

Lauren Thomas

SEEKING BOARD OF DIRECTORS CANDIDATES 2025

Nominations for Wis. Sharp-tailed Grouse Society Board of Director positions are now being accepted. The term of office for three WSGS board members, Bruce Moss, Paul Cook and Trevor Bellrichard, expire with the annual meeting in July. Board members serve for a three-year term and are expected to attend and contribute during each of the six Board meetings held annually. All WSGS members in good standing are eligible and can self nominate or be nominated by other members.

Nominations should include the candidate's name and contact information along with a short write-up of their experience and interest in the resource and organization. Please don't send a resume' of your work experience.

Nominations should be mailed to: Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, 102 East Crex Avenue, Grantsburg WI 54840 or e-mailed to: jonas@wisharptails.org

Nominations will close on June 25th. A ballot with your name and nomination info. will be sent to the membership shortly thereafter. Votes may be cast by the membership up until the time they are tallied at the Annual Meeting July 19.

2025-26 WSGS BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINATION

Name of Candidate _____

Contact Information _____

Name of Nominator (can be self) _____

Contact Information _____

Qualifications, Experience, Interest (attach a short write-up)

WSGS BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES **FEBRUARY 4, 2025**

*Present: Ken Jonas, Mike Cole, Mike Amman, Trevor Bellrichard,
Ashly Steinke, Mark Parman, Paul Kooiker*

Meeting started at 6:33pm via ZOOM.

- Approved December 10, 2024 minutes (TB/MC)
- Treasurer's report by M. Cole (12/10/24 – 2/4/25): beginning balance was \$23,211 and ending balance is \$25,023. Membership dues (\$2280) were the primary source of income. Memberships increased from 229 to 253 over the past two months. Also received \$600 in donations from two new life members (presently 75 life members).
- Auto renewal initiative – Trevor B. By all accounts this has been very successful to date with 36 new members taking advantage of the T-shirt incentive. The \$600 invested in two months advertising on Facebook has more than paid for itself. Visits to the WSGS website through December and January have increased significantly from 10/day to over 30/day. Trevor pointed out that most organizations are going to

AR for new memberships and renewals. We can anticipate a large number of renewals in March following new signups at last year's Pheasant Fest. A discussion followed on how best to further utilize AR to our advantage, i.e. give out hats and/or prints as well as t-shirts for incentives, going completely to AR for new signups and renewals etc. Trevor will write a draft proposal and send it out to board members.

- Sharp-tailed grouse advisory committee: Ken summarized discussions at the recent January meeting of the advisory committee. The focus was on a trigger point for initiating a hunting season within a sub-population. Two proposals were discussed: 1) When the spring lek count of dancing males reaches 100 with an increasing population trend or 2) When the spring lek count and the 3-year average lek count is at 100 males or above. Apparently, no consensus was reached on this point. Also discussed were possible metrics used in determining hunting quotas, as well as permit levels. Ken will advise the BOD on results of the next advisory committee meeting coming up February 6.
- Possible Crex/Fish Lake habitat projects: Ken found out that non-profits such as WSGS can apply for Turkey Stamp funding which can be used on public as well as private lands. Crex staff are planning on herbiciding 50 acres on Crex via drone application. Estimated cost is \$12,000, although there was some concern that this appears to be a high bid compared to similar projects in the recent past. The Turkey Stamp application is due shortly, February 14. Ken will meet with Crex staff next week to see how WSGS can assist on this project (up to \$3000). Potential barrens improvement on Fish Lake WA was discussed in detail at the last BOD meeting (see December 10, 2024 minutes). The goal is to create additional barrens thereby connecting existing STG habitat with large sedge marshes. This would entail timber sales – perhaps whole tree chipping – which would also remove scattered mature trees present in existing barrens, with follow-up herbicide treatment via drones. A motion was made and passed (AS/MP) to fund up to 50% of the total cost at Fish Lake. More details to come as the project is fleshed out by DNR staff.
- Bayfield County Forest: Mike A. brought us up to date on projects and plans. The goal for 2025 is to roller chop 200-250 acres on the Bass Lake Barrens. Funding for this is from both the Important Bird Area grant (\$7000) and additional \$3000 from the GLFWRA grant. They plan to prescribe burn the west half of Barnes Barrens (300-400 acres). No burns planned for the Bass Lake Barrens this year – firebreak work ongoing there. The proposed expansion of 400 acres to the Barnes Barrens will go before the Bayfield County Forestry and Parks Committee for approval in March.
- Oulu Grassland project: Ashly gave us the good news – the \$200,000 grant application was approved by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The bad news is that the Trump administration has paused all federal grants, so this grant is on hold indefinitely.
- Ashly also told us he met with DNR staff to discuss a possible “steppingstone” project on private lands connecting Crex Meadows and Fish Lake WA's, with potential funding from USFW, Audubon, and WDNR.

Meeting adjourned at 8:28pm (MC/MA)

Submitted by Paul Kooiker

February 21, 2025

PRESCRIBED BURNING SPRING 2025



It was a very good spring for prescribed burning around the state with 28,739 acres completed on 276 managed burns. Prescribed burns in the Northwest Sands to benefit critical barrens habitat including sharp-tailed grouse also went very well. County and state agencies accomplished 19 burns on 6493 acres of barrens habitat. Crex Meadows Wildlife Area was at the top of the list, burning 4729 acres on 11 prescribed fires. The largest number of acreage managed in one prescribed fire at Crex was 1010 acres. Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area pulled off 5 prescribed burns totaling 1290 acres. Especially noteworthy for Namekagon was the burning of the entire South Unit of the property. This unit has some very challenging terrain with steep hills

and rolling contours. The South Unit was ignited in two burn compartments on the same day, totaling 625 acres. Other burn prescriptions for barrens management occurred on the Douglas County Wildlife Area with 313 acres and Barnes Barrens (Bayfield Co. Forest) with 161 acres. Congratulations to everyone who was involved in these challenging management efforts. Your dedication to keeping our rare, fire dependent, early successional barrens landscape functioning as a unique ecosystem is very much appreciated. It would not be here except for the efforts of you and those who made those efforts in the past. ■



WSGS TREASURER'S REPORT
FEBRUARY 4, 2025– APRIL 7, 2025

Starting Balance February 4, 2025

25,022.70

Expenditures

USPS — Shipped 11 prints, 7 hats, 1 knife. (20) postcard stamps, roll of tape	154.72
Renew Memberships with PF, FOBS, NAGP, FNBWA	350.00
Amazon (Mailing tubes for prints)	54.85
Total	559.57

Pending Expenditure– Renew website for 2 years

696.00

Income

Memberships	899.03
Merchandise	24.03
Donations (Jere Dhein, PayPal Grant)	106.00
Total	1029.06

Net Gain for Period

469.49

Ending Balance April 7, 2025

25,492.19

Membership Totals

2/4/2025	253 (includes 75 life members, 9 courtesy) — 3 were removed (Aug/Sept/Oct 2024 renewal dates), 5 pending removal (Nov/Dec renewal dates) if not paid up by 2/15/25.
4/7/2025	251 (includes 75 life members, 9 courtesy) — 2 were removed (Jan/Feb 2025 renewal dates), 10 pending renewal (March 2025 renewal dates) if not paid by 5/15/2025.

Submitted by Mike Cole

4/7/25



BARNES BARRENS EXPANSION

Bayfield County recently approved expansion of the Barnes Barrens with the new boundaries now adding 500 acres to the existing 1000 acre core. The plan for open barrens habitat restoration on is to begin by roller chopping 100 acres of the this new expansion this summer. A good chunk of the new expansion is currently in a good barrens condition as those acres are very young jack pine seeded sites that had poor regeneration. Those acres will simply need to be burned once the fuel breaks get put in over the next couple years. The management of those county lands will improve connectivity distances of habitat areas in the Bayfield/ Douglas county line area: Motts in the SW, Barnes to the east and Bass lake to the north. ■

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

We are going to a primarily electronic newsletter, with hard copy only on request.

Name: _____
Street/PO Box _____
City: _____ State: _____
Zip: _____
Phone: _____

Would you like to volunteer for:
_____ Board of Directors
_____ Newsletter articles
_____ Other

Email: _____

_____ Electronic Newsletter _____ Hard Copy Newsletter

Dues Enclosed:

\$ _____ Regular - \$30 (receive decal)
\$ _____ Family - \$50 (receive 2 decals)
\$ _____ Sustaining - \$100 (receive hat & decal)
\$ _____ Life - \$300 (receive decal, patch & hat)

***Specify which color hat you want (see <https://wisharptails.org> for hat photos) or let us pick one for you!

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO AND RETURN THIS APPLICATION TO:

Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, 102 East Crex Avenue, Grantsburg, WI 54840

Or visit our website for membership and merchandise orders at <https://wisharptails.org>

Questions? Please e-mail WSGS President, Ken Jonas: kenjon@centurytel.net

Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society
102 East Crex Avenue
Grantsburg, WI 54840

