



Wildlife Management – A Project to Explore

Defining the Issue

ODNR – Division of Wildlife has legal authority over managements of Ohio's fish and wildlife. The Division uses six categories - endangered, threatened, species of concern, special interest, extirpated, and extinct - define the status of selected wildlife. These categories and the species contained within are revised as the status of Ohio's wildlife evolves. In this Discussion Guide, Farm Bureau Community Councils will be exploring the process using a real case study under development by the agency.

Reestablishing Northern Bobwhite Quail Populations Throughout Ohio

Many families can remember Northern Bobwhite Quail (*Colinus Virginianus*) as a readily available game species. Plentiful coveys of bobwhites were a common feature highlighting late fall and early winter small game hunting throughout Ohio.

Since the late 1970's bobwhite quail populations have been dwindling throughout the state; and Northern Bobwhite Quail are classified as *Species of Concern*. Officially, a species of concern is defined as a species or subspecies which might become threatened in Ohio under continued or increased stress. Also, a species or subspecies for which there is some concern, but for which information is insufficient to permit an adequate status evaluation. This category may contain species designated as a furbearer or game species, but whose statewide population is dependent on the quality and/or quantity of habitat and is not adversely impacted by regulated harvest.

Bobwhites were prevalent throughout Ohio, but are now found primarily in the southwest corner of the state. They need relatively open ground with dense overhead protective cover, and live in areas where crop fields, grass, bushes and younger woodlots intersect. These intersections give the species protective cover and access to food sources. Habitat loss can be attributed to urbanization as well as land clearing/maintenance associated with agricultural production. Select weather events such as periods of excessive snow cover and low temperatures are contributing factors for declining bobwhite populations, too.

Over the past several years, conservation groups and community stakeholders have been working together to enhance bobwhite habitat and reestablish populations in several areas of the state. Collaboration between groups is essential not only for the bobwhite, but for other species of concern throughout the state. The question is, how should farmers contribute to this and similar collaborative efforts?

AFBF Policy – Wildlife Management

In most states wildlife utilizes private lands for habitat and landowners should be compensated for damage. We favor quantification of game animals as an essential step in determining the contribution private landowners are making to public recreation. In addition, there is an increased need to safeguard farmers and ranchers from crop and livestock damage caused by game animals, migratory fowl, certain species of birds and predatory animals.

We believe that essential services to local landowners and the general public should be more important than the protection of wildlife as the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) develops stipulations to a public works project through its management plan.

FWS should follow applicable federal laws and presidential orders that support local government and citizen involvement in management planning and/or the execution of management plans.

We support:

- The privileges of citizens to continue to hunt, trap and fish in accordance with state game management regulations;
- Adjusting hunting seasons in certain areas to help control damage caused by wildlife and migratory birds;
- 5.24. A streamlined process for permits to take nuisance animals.

We oppose:

- USFWS releasing wildlife onto private property without permission of the landowner and; the introduction of predator animals as a wildlife control tool;
- The use of federal funds, including the farm bill, to create programs that pay landowners for public hunting or recreational activity access.

OFBF Policy – Hunting, Fishing and Trapping

We encourage those landowners that oppose Sunday hunting to exercise their right to prohibit hunting on their property. When future wildlife regulations are developed, we suggest the Ohio Division of Wildlife consider the following: Crop damage; Wildlife population; Private property rights and input from landowners; and Highway safety.

We will work toward a program that will provide a practical means for landowners to lease their land for hunting privileges and will support legislation that limits liability for landowners.

Ohio's Recreational User Statute should be expanded to protect landowners that permit hunters on their property from liability for injuries or damages caused by the hunters.

We urge the Division of Wildlife to schedule fish and game hearings for smaller geographical areas and to hold at least one meeting on a day other than Sunday. We encourage stronger enforcement of game laws (i.e., shooting across or from a road and poaching) with mandatory fines and/or sentences.

We oppose any further restrictions of current trapping methods; and encourage landowners to allow hunting and trapping on their property to help in the control of wildlife populations.

We encourage the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife to work with public and private landowners to develop and increase public hunting access areas in metropolitan and urbanized areas, and encourage the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to increase efforts to promote the sport of hunting with Ohio's young people.

We support a constitutional amendment that insures the right to hunt, trap and fish in the State of Ohio. We believe landowners, regardless of business structure, should be allowed to hunt on their own land without permits and also their family lineage to have the same reciprocal access. We encourage landowners to give permission for hunters to follow wounded game onto their property.

We support the Ohio Department of Natural Resources keeping the Division of Wildlife separate from other divisions.

OFBF Policy – Wildlife Control

We encourage farmers to contact their wildlife officer or wildlife specialists to report damage. We also encourage farmers to maintain good relationships with wildlife officers and wildlife specialists to help solve wildlife problems.

We encourage all active members to seek and use permits from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to control damage from wildlife on their property and urge the Division of Wildlife to make

degradation permits with fewer restrictions more available to farmers experiencing damage year round.

We support allowing agricultural producers the right to harvest deer that are actively destroying or causing damage to any agricultural crop that is intended for income prior to obtaining a deer damage permit. Each deer harvested must be reported within 12 hours.

We encourage the development of wildlife habitat on private property that will reduce the need to purchase land for state development of habitat.

We encourage communication and cooperation between property owners and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife, for the purpose of wildlife control. There is a need for both the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) to focus on wildlife damage in the state.

We recommend the establishment of a wildlife animal damage control advisory committee. The committee should be comprised of a representative of the ODA, the ODNR, Ohio State University Extension wildlife specialist and an appropriate number of farmers and sportsmen.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe your approach to wildlife management. Do you feel that wildlife management focus on specific species repopulation efforts or specific species population control? Do you feel that there is a place for a "balance" between these two objectives?
2. Do any of your council members hunt, trap and/or fish? Do they have friends/relatives that do so? Do you open your farm to these activities? What are some of the benefits and what concerns need to be addressed for allowing these activities on farm property?
3. While this Discussion Guide explores the agency process using the Northern Bobwhite Quail as an example, what other species would your council support being reintroduced? What species does your council have concerns with being reintroduced?
4. Given Farm Bureau's policy and experience, how would your community council like to work with county Farm Bureau leadership to address specific wildlife species habitat and repopulation efforts on the local level?