



River Hills Restoration Partnership Project (MO)

BACKGROUND

River Hills landscape is known for the great diversity of flora and fauna found within its impressive forests, woodlands, and glades. It provides home to many sensitive wildlife species. In 2002, Audubon Missouri, MDC, and the Ruffed Grouse Society developed the River Hills Forest Habitat Project to improve habitat and wildlife populations. Despite this, wildlife habitat quality has diminished in recent years. Historically, this landscape was maintained by frequent disturbances, particularly wildfires which thinned out fire intolerant species and trees of poor health. However, private land is subjected to minimal natural disturbance and typically receives little active management. Consequently, the River Hills landscape is experiencing great change to the detriment of many sensitive wildlife species: woodlands are overcrowded with trees, tree composition is shifting to fire-intolerant species, glades are growing up into cedar thickets, and ground layer vegetation is disappearing.

LOCATION

300,000 forested ac in east central MO (Calloway, Montgomery, Warren counties)--15,000 ac state; 1,300 ac USFS; 283,700 ac private.

ISSUES BEING ADDRESSED

- Improve 800+ ac private/600+ ac public land habitat private land with non-commercial thinning, forest openings, edge feathering, glade restoration
- Restore ground layer vegetation for sensitive wildlife species.
- Create more open, multi-layered forests with abundant snags & loose barked trees
- Restore rare but important natural communities such as glades & woodlands
- Restore forest to desirable oak/hickory species
- Increase landowner awareness through visibility of projects & annual private landowner workshops.

RESULTS

To date 333 acres have been treated. About 1,000 more acres are scheduled for thinning. In spring of 2009 a bird survey will be conducted to track the impact of opening up the forest canopy to bird use of the sites.

OUTCOMES/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Change perceptions to value improved wildlife habitat as greatly as mature woodland
- Improved habitat; open up forest/woodland areas, restore glades
- Improved populations of sensitive species, such as ruffed grouse, American woodcock, Indiana bat and sensitive neotropical migrant songbirds

- Increased herbaceous diversity and abundance
- Regeneration and recruitment of shade intolerant oak species

PARTNERS

- Missouri Dept of Conservation (MDC)
- MO Bird Conservation Initiative
- Ruffed Grouse Society
- University of Missouri
- Audubon Society of Missouri
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service

FUTURE PLANS

Although our project is unique and involves an impressive landscape, there are many other areas in Missouri and nationwide which could effectively be improved with the same model. This project provides great opportunities for other biologists and foresters to learn and implement similar initiatives.

CONTACTS

Project Contact

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GRANT AMOUNT

\$85,000



The Upper Mississippi Forest Partnership and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation have partnered to initiate the Upper Mississippi River Watershed Fund. The Foundation grants projects that benefit the forests of the Upper Mississippi while improving wildlife habitat and water quality.
