

McPherson Valley Wetlands Update:

Drought conditions continue to plague the wetlands. With hunting season rapidly approaching, currently only three pools in the Farland Lake / Little Sinkhole marsh unit contain any water.

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Area Habitat and Water Conditions

Same song, second (and hopefully last) verse!

Drought conditions continue to plague the McPherson Valley Wetlands, as well as most of central Kansas. All pools in the Big Basin and Chain of Lakes are dry, and all but three pools at the Farland Lake / Little Sinkhole unit are dry as well. Major rains and run-off events will be needed to significantly improve hunting conditions at MPWL.

The last major run-off event occurred during the early summer of 2009. Since that time, the re-lift stations on the area that strictly pump run-off have been used once for a very short time during the summer of 2010. We all know that drought is a natural part of the cycle, but still very frustrating to a duck hunter. Not only are these effects felt at the wetlands, but area crops, rangelands, and farm ponds are all suffering alike.

Staff is planning to utilize our ground water pumps, and inundate some of our marshes. However, with 4-5” cracks currently in the ground from drought, pumping will be slow going. Ground water rights are limited in number and water allocation, and trying to produce huntable water will be a challenge. Some of this allocation will be saved until the regular duck season. Hopefully, between now and then we will get a little rain to at least soak up the ground.

Area staff encourages area users to contact the area office for up to date conditions. Pre-hunt scouting

is also highly recommended. Water levels and waterfowl numbers can change on a daily basis. The answering machine at the area headquarters will be updated at least weekly, or as changes in conditions or opportunity occur.

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Spring and Summer Management Activities

Efforts to control spike rush, cattails, rushes, and trees through disking and spraying have been on-going since March of 2011. Since that time, over 300 acres have been disked in various pools across the area. Below is a list of pools that have been disked or partially disked:

- Big Basin – Pools 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10
- Chain of Lakes - Pools 2 & 3
- Farland Lake/Little Sinkhole - Pools 10, 11, and 12

With the lack of moisture, very little natural vegetative response has occurred, therefore Japanese millet has been planted in pools 7, 8, & 10 in the Big Basin and pools 2 & 3 at the Chain of Lakes to provide waterfowl and other species a supplemental food source this fall. However, rain is still needed to get the millet up and producing.

Musk thistle continues to be a concern this year, and took a significant time commitment early this spring. Chemical treatments on the few phragmites

stands that developed down at the Farland Lake / Little Sinkhole unit have been very successful. Very few plants remain and will be re-treated this month with similar results expected.

Waterfowl Population Status - 2012

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has released the “Trends in Duck Breeding Populations” annual report for 2012. Although habitat (ponds) has dropped by about 32% from 2011, total duck populations have reached new record highs increasing by 7%. These gains in duck numbers represent a 43% change from the long term average. Only two of the common species in the central flyway remain below their long-term average, American wigeon and Northern pintail. The table below is a summary of population changes for the most common species in the central flyway.

Species	2012	2011	% Change from 2011	Species
Mallard	10.602	9.183	15	40
Gadwall	3.586	3.257	10	96
American wigeon	2.145	2.084	3	-17
Green-winged teal	3.471	2.9	20	74
Blue-winged teal	9.242	8.948	3	94
Northern shoveler	5.018	4.641	8	111
Northern pintail	3.473	4.429	-22	-14
Redhead	1.27	1.356	-6	89
Canvasback	0.76	0.692	10	33
Scaup	5.239	4.319	21	4
Total Ducks	48.575	45.554	7	43
May Ponds (U.S. & CAN.)	5.544	8.132	-32	9
*Numbers in millions				

To view the complete USFWS report visit the following link (be patient, it takes a while to load):

http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/NewReportsPublications/PopulationStatus/Waterfowl/StatusReport2012_final.pdf

Planned Fall Management Activities

If conditions at MPWL continue to stay dry throughout the fall, staff plans to take advantage of the situation (again) and try and stay ahead of some on-

going problems across the area. The area continues to be plagued by perennial and invasive plant communities in the wetland units. By disturbing these areas mechanically, we can set the stage a little better for the future when we finally get out of this drought cycle. However, short term, these areas/pools that are disked in the late summer / early fall, will provide little more than open water should we get any rain later this fall. However, with current extreme dry conditions, there is not much present in terms of habitat and food anyway.

We will also be trying to complete some needed maintenance projects. These include installing a new flow meter on the north refuge pump that is pushing 30 years old, installing a protective roof structure over the north pump, installing new flap gates on pump outlet pipes in two pools, and rocking many of the parking lots across the area.

Dove Banding – 2012

Again this year, area staff participated in a flyway wide effort to catch and band mourning doves. Staff was able to capture and band the quota of 200 doves. Please be sure to check any doves you harvest this fall for the presence of leg bands. Dove bands are pretty small and can be missed if you are not looking for them.





Dove / Sunflower Fields

This year staff has planned two dove management fields at the McPherson Wetlands. Both fields are located in the Farland Lake / Little Sinkhole marsh unit. (see map below for field locations)

Field one is a 30 acre sunflower field located ½ mile south of 9th and Buckskin, southeast of Inman. **This field will be reserved for youth and their mentor only on the opening morning of season from ½ hour before sunrise to noon.** After noon, the field will be open to all hunters.



Field two is a 70 acre sunflower field and is located ½ mile south of 10th and Buckskin, southeast of Inman. This field will be open to all hunters. Due to drought conditions, most of the sunflowers this year did not reach plant potential in terms of plant height and head size. As in the past, staff will mow a percentage of

this field and 75% will be harvested by the agricultural tenant. Hunters interested in participating in dove hunting at MPWL are encouraged to check the MPWL webpage “area news” link for more information about this field. Please remember that other hunters will be in this field, some closer to you than you would like. Please use good judgment when taking shots. Eye protection is also recommended. We want everyone to have a good enjoyable hunt while staying safe.

All hunters must use steel shot when hunting doves at MPWL. A hunting license and HIP stamp are also required to hunt doves. All hunters will be required to pick up daily hunting permits at any of the parking lots prior to dove hunting, and return them at the end of the hunt.

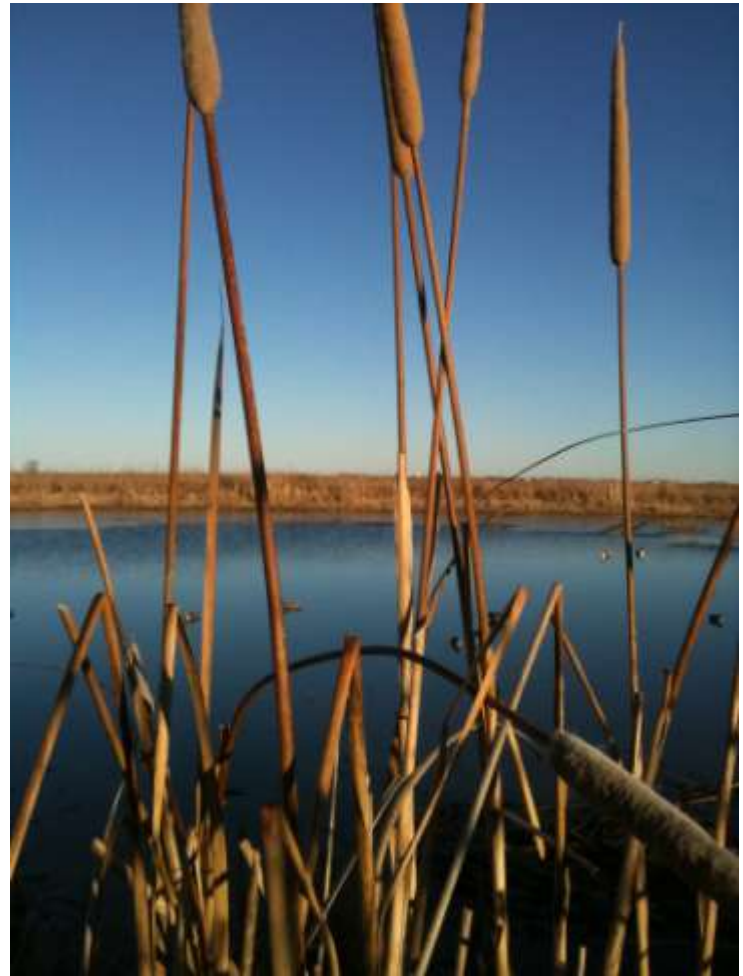
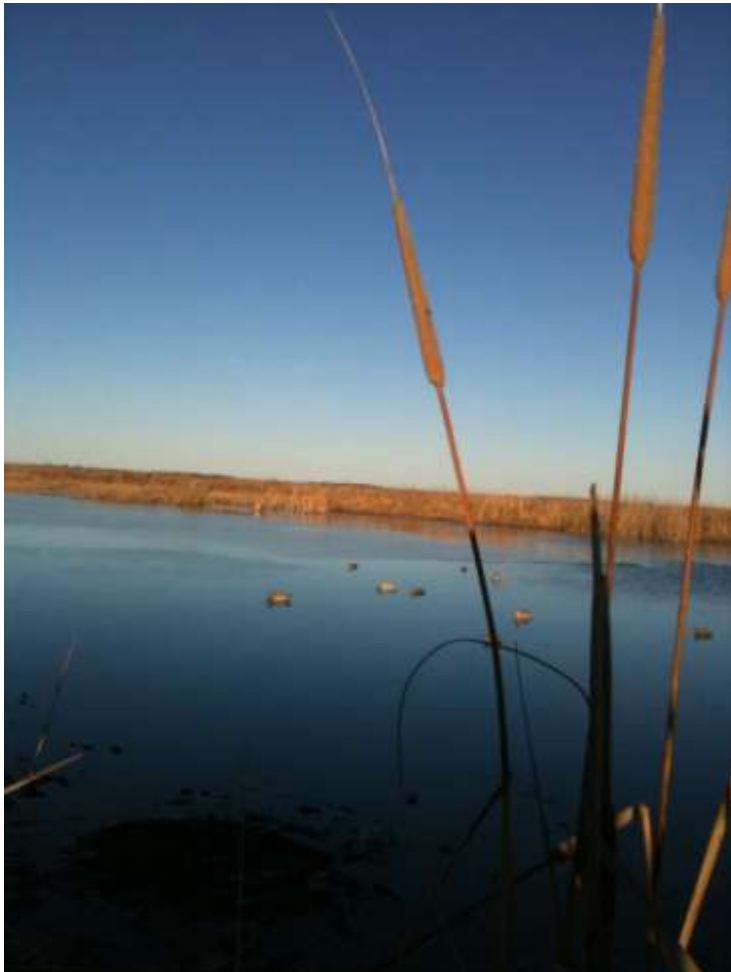
For other dove management / hunting opportunities across the state, visit the following link:

<http://www.kdwpt.state.ks.us/news/Hunting/Migratory-Birds/Doves/2012-Fields-Managed-for-Dove-Hunting>



MPWL Summer Photo Gallery

A few people sent us some photos as requested. We would love to see others. If you don't mind your photos being used in the newsletter, please email them to us at the address provided below.





Upcoming Events

- KDWPT Commission Meeting - Aug. 23, 2012 at 1:30pm. Wetland Education Center, Great Bend.
- Quality Deer Management School - Aug. 25, 2012 (For more information contact Kyle McDonald – 316-772-2704).
- Dove Season Opener - Sept. 1, 2012.
- KDWPT Harper County Youth Deer Hunt – Deadline to apply is Sept. 5, 2012. (see below for details).
- Teal Season Opener – Sept. 8, 2012.
- Marion Wildlife Area Youth Deer Hunt – Application deadline is October 1, 2012, at 9 am. Applications are available through the KDWPT special hunts website: <http://www.kdwpt.state.ks.us/news/Hunting/Special-Hunts-Information>
- McPherson Valley Wetlands Youth Pheasant Hunt Application deadline is October 1, 2012, at 9 am. (Follow special hunts link above for more information).

Youth Deer Hunters Wanted

The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism announces plans for the 13th annual Harper County youth deer hunt. The hunt, in conjunction with local businesses, sportsmen and landowners, is a great opportunity for a youth to experience deer hunting. Activities include a buffalo burger feed, deer talks by experienced deer hunters, shooting rifles at the range, and hunting on private land around Harper County. The Harper County youth hunt is set for September 15th and 16th for the 2012 season. The Department established this early deer season to encourage youngsters to experience deer hunting when weather conditions are less likely to be severe and there is no competition from regular season hunters. This early season is an important function of the department’s “Pass It On” hunter recruitment and retention program, which is

designed to remove barriers to hunting and recruit new hunters.

Interested youth, ages 12-17 are encouraged to apply. Limited spaces are available and a draw will be held. Successful applicants, accompanied by a parent or adult guardian at least 21 years old, will have the opportunity to hunt the evening of the 15th and the morning of the 16th.



Anyone interested should contact Steve Adams, Wildlife Biologist at 316-772-2702 or 620-665-3048, or Kyle McDonald, Wildlife Biologist at 316-772-2704. Deadline to apply is September 5th.

Staff Notes

September 1 will be here before we know it, along with it the opener of dove season and other hunting seasons to follow. Exact waterfowl season dates, limits, and other regulations will be set at the August 23rd KDWP commission meeting to be held at the Wetlands Education Center (Cheyenne Bottoms), 592 NE K-156 Hwy, Great Bend, KS starting at 1:30 pm. These waterfowl regulations are dependent on the federal frameworks however, and with preliminary population estimates higher than ever from the breeding grounds high, we are expecting liberal seasons and bag limit frameworks again. Please be sure to check the McPherson Valley Wetlands webpage and waterfowl reports for more up-to-date information. Updates to these information portals will begin after August 1, 2010. Feel free to call or visit our office anytime with questions or concerns. Staff at the McPherson Valley Wetlands hopes that everyone will have a safe and successful hunting season this fall. Below is all the available contact information for the area manager.

Be Safe!

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Useful links:

McPherson Valley Wetlands webpage:

<http://kdwp.state.ks.us/news/KDWP-Info/Locations/Wildlife-Areas/Region-4/McPherson-Valley-Wetlands>

McPherson Valley Wetlands waterfowl report:

<http://kdwpt.state.ks.us/news/KDWPT-Info/Locations/Wildlife-Areas/Region-4/McPherson-Valley-Wetlands/McPherson-Valley-Wetlands-Waterfowl-Report>

