

**McPherson Valley Wetlands Update:**

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 Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism



**2012 – 2013 Hunting Season Review**

Same story, second (or maybe 3<sup>rd</sup>?) verse:

**THE DROUGHT CONTINUES!**

Continued drought has become a very sore subject at McPherson Valley Wetlands (MPWL). The last rain event that produced any measureable run-off occurred in the spring of 2010. Both of the re-lift pump stations have not run since that time. Without run-off, coupled with these pumps, any significant change in water levels at the wetlands is impossible. Long range forecasts are not looking promising either. However, changes can occur very quickly with a couple good hard rains, the area can significantly improve in just a few days.

The 2012 – 2013 hunting season came and went about as forecasted. Very limited water pumped from ground water wells in the Kubin marsh area and at the Farland Lake unit, allowed hunters to harvest 169 total ducks and zero geese for the season. This is the first time in at least 9 years no geese have been harvested at MPWL. A total of 1,394 hunters visited the

area. Hunters reported harvesting 386 pheasant and 1,408 doves, which were the high points for the year. (See table below for past hunter and harvest data)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Hunters</u>	<u>Ducks</u>	<u>Geese</u>	<u>Pheasants</u>	<u>Quail</u>	<u>Dove</u>
2004	3556	2787	149	474	27	89
2005	2164	681	26	435	28	484
2006	1633	217	12	365	16	517
2007	3140	3078	169	386	8	307
2008	3026	3214	54	400	10	146
2009	2858	2584	83	254	8	1149
2010	2714	1980	22	256	20	1151
2011	1227	303	13	137	6	1607
2012	1394	169	0	386	10	1408
<b>Average</b>	<b>2412</b>	<b>1668</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>762</b>

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**Completed and Planned Maintenance and Projects for 2013**

Several on-going projects have been completed through the past year, and many more have been planned for the upcoming year.

## Completed:

- Most holes from beaver and muskrats have been filled with rock on area dikes.
- Rock has been added to most parking lots, and area roads to provide better user access.
- Fall treatments of musk thistle and phragmites were completed on a large scale with hopes of reducing populations this spring.
- Most of our original surface water (run off) rights have now been perfected through the division of water resources.
- Completed approximately 350 acres of disking throughout the area in wetland and upland habitats.
- Pumped approximately 42 days producing 112 acre feet of water for waterfowl seasons from groundwater wells.
- Successfully bid and awarded contracts for a new 120 hp tractor, 60' pull behind field sprayer, and one-ton truck to improve management capabilities and possibilities on the area.

## Planned:

- Construction of “shed” over north pump and well.
- Perfection of remaining surface water rights.
- Transfer of an existing ground water right from agricultural use to recreational use which will provide approximately 200 AF of additional water.
- Continue disking of wetland units to promote annual vegetation.

- Plant milo and/or Japanese millet as the opportunities arise.
- Experiment with chemical applications on unproductive grass tracts to promote more forbs and brood rearing habitat.

**Dove / Sunflower Fields**

Dove management has become an annual event at MPWL, and due to the success and overwhelming participation in dove hunting it will continue this year. Over the past four years, 5,315 doves have been harvested off of the dove management fields at MPWL. Last year, two fields were planted to sunflowers, but harvest success was less than the previous season.

Due to crop rotation needs, only one field will be planted to sunflowers at the Little Sinkhole / Farland Lake unit this season. This field will be located where our dove management was originally started several years ago, just north of 11<sup>th</sup> and Arrowhead. This 60 acre field will be planted to sunflowers and managed as in the past to optimize dove hunting opportunities.

**Regulation Review:  
Frequently Asked Questions**

1. Can you legally shoot waterfowl on the water?

*Yes. However, be careful, as steel shoot will skip off the water causing potentially dangerous situations.*

2. Can you shoot lead shot for upland birds at McPherson Wetlands if you stay away from the wetland pools?

*No. The entire McPherson Valley Wetlands are designated as a non-toxic shot only area. As we know, most of the pools at MPWL are supplied water from run-off coming from upland sites. This can result in lead shot fired in upland areas washing and being deposited in the wetlands where dabbling ducks may ingest it.*

3. Can you hunt deer at McPherson Wetlands, and use lead bullets?

*Yes & yes. Lead bullets are typically larger, and not usually accidentally ingested by waterfowl like shot.*

4. If you shoot a bird and it falls into a designated refuge that is closed to all activities, can you legally retrieve it?

*No. Even though it is morally and ethically the right thing to do, these areas are closed to all activities to give game a place to escape pressure. Therefore, hunters should use good shot selection when hunting immediately adjacent to a designated refuge.*

5. Is target shooting, of any form, allowed at MPWL?

*No. This includes shooting clays with shotguns, and plinking with a .22 in a parking lot. Significant signage and infrastructure has to be replaced each year due to bullet holes from target shooting activities. Obviously these replacements cost money that should be spent on habitat improvements on the area.*

6. Can you use MPWL for dog training?

*Yes, on a NON-COMMERCIAL basis.*

If you have any other questions regarding regulations or questions specific to MPWL, please don't hesitate to contact the area office for clarification. It's a lot cheaper to know the regulations up front than to find out later through a citation!

### **13<sup>th</sup> Annual KDWPT Youth Turkey Hunt** By Wildlife Biologist Technician, Kyle McDonald

The 13th Annual KDWPT Youth Turkey Hunt was held in Hutchinson on April 6th and 7th. This year there were 10 kids participating. The youth patterned their shotguns and heard a calling demonstration before enjoying a BBQ sponsored by the Hutchinson area Ark River Chapter of Pheasants Forever. Each youth also received a Cabela's gift card, box call, camo hat and turkey hunting information packet.



The hunt was a huge success with 8 kids harvesting at least one bird. To sign up for next year's hunt or to volunteer as a guide, contact Kyle McDonald at [316-772-2704](tel:316-772-2704).

More information regarding KDWPT Special Hunts for waterfowl, deer and turkeys can be found at [www.ksoutdoors.com](http://www.ksoutdoors.com).



**Help Protect Your Kansas Big Game Hunting Opportunities**

By Game Warden, Hal Kaina

When the average Kansas citizen thinks about large wild game animals roaming around Kansas, the talk usually turns to deer. Many people do not realize there are some wild, free roaming elk scattered across the state! Kansas Game Warden Hal Kaina and Public Land Manager Brent Theede had the opportunity to personally view one of these elk in November of 2012.



On November 24, 2012, Kaina and Theede assisted the Rice County Sheriff's department in the investigation of the poaching of a large bull elk in Southeast Rice County. A concerned coyote hunter called in the gruesome find. The large bull elk was found approximately 200 yards off the road in a wheat field. The animal had been shot with a single rifle shot and left at the scene.



When officers arrived at the poaching scene it was determined that the animal was deceased but still warm to the touch. It had obviously been shot only hours before. Game Warden Kaina searched the scene for evidence.

A metal detector was used to try to locate any shell casings on the roadway. No useful evidence was located. A local cattle farmer assisted Kaina in loading up the elk with the round bale loading apparatus on his truck.

Kaina and Theede decided to make the best of this bad situation and decided to process the meat from the elk. It took approximately three hours to field dress, skin, and butcher the large animal. A large pile of meat was obtained from all the hard work, estimated at over 400 pounds. Now that is a true big game animal! Kaina then began the process of calling individuals on his needy family list. Five separate individuals were interested in some of the meat and Kaina delivered it to them. Many of these families considered the meat an early Christmas present, as finances have been stretched with the current poor economy.

No suspects have yet been identified in the poaching of the elk in this incident. Any information or tips from the public would be appreciated. Tips can be anonymous. If you have information related to this case you can call Game Warden Hal Kaina at (620) 242-4122 or Operation Game Thief at 1-877-426-3843. Please remember that the big game animals in Kansas belong to all Kansas sportsmen. As a Kansas sportsman, take an active role in protecting YOUR animals and YOUR hunting heritage.

### Staff Notes

Spring is upon us, and soon summer will be here in full force. With that, fishing, camping, frogging, and many other summer activities will be available to enjoy. Hopefully along the way we will be blessed with a couple good run-off rains to fill the wetlands. Undoubtedly, mid-summer heat will take its toll on us and any water we do have. But, September 1<sup>st</sup>, and the start of hunting season is now only about five months away. But who's counting, right?

Be Safe!

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