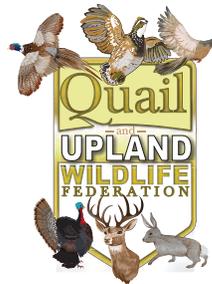


Figure 1. Annual change in northern bobwhite populations across their range from 1966-present. Many populations in Eastern Kansas have declined by $\geq 50\%$ over that time span.



Northern bobwhite by Heather Inman

Conservation Partners:



KDWPT Region 4 Office
 6232 E. 29th St.
 N. Wichita, KS 67220
 Phone: 316-683-4664

Kansas Quail Initiative



2012-2017

Cover photo by Thomas Dailey

The Need and Approach:

The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, & Tourism (KDWPT) is greatly concerned about the quail population declines that have occurred across many parts of Kansas (Figure 1).

For many years, the KDWPT has provided cost-share to private landowners across the state for needed habitat improvements, and population monitoring has revealed that those programs have been successful in increasing quail populations where the work occurred.

However, limited funding and landowner interest have precluded us from restoring quail across broad landscapes. The KDWPT recognizes that our ability to restore quail populations on a larger scale will be maximized if our resources are more focused.

Although the KDWPT will continue to work with landowners across the state, we will (1) also provide additional incentives to landowners within select Quail Focal Areas as additional encouragement to adopt quail-friendly practices on their property. And (2) we will place greater emphasis on quail restoration on KDWPT- managed properties within these Quail Focal Areas.

Focal Area Selection:

The focal areas were outlined with 14-digit hydrologic units to conform to the way the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) targets their conservation programs. The general areas were selected because they were ranked by field biologists as having either a medium or high restoration potential in the recently published National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI).

Other considerations included presence of publicly owned lands, private landowner eligibility for federal conservation programs, outside funding opportunities, and expected landowner interest in quail conservation. The size of each focal area was determined by matching the estimated amount required to convert 5% of each landscape to suitable quail habitat with the anticipated funding availability.

Primary Objectives:

1. A 50% increase in bobwhite populations above baseline level.
2. A 5% net increase of suitable quail habitat within each focal area.

Objectives will be evaluated at the end of a 5-year implementation phase using population survey results and comparison of aerial imagery.

Public Land Improvements:

Managers will utilize revenue from agricultural leases to improve quail habitat on ≥5% of each property intersected by the focal areas. The public lands will be used as demonstration areas to illustrate the results of specific habitat improvements to nearby private landowners. Landowners are encouraged to tour these areas at their convenience, but organized field days will also be hosted annually at each prominent public property in the initiative area (Melvern Wildlife Area and Grand Osage Wildlife Area).

Private Land Cost-Share:

Landowners in the focal areas will be reimbursed for 100% of the estimated costs of implementing quail-friendly practices on their property.

The preferred approach will be to assist landowners with enrollment into USDA cost-share programs and cover the landowner share of the estimated costs with non-federal money. Non-federal money will be used to cover 100% of the estimated costs of practices that aren't eligible for federal cost-share.

The KDWPT will also emphasize the voluntary public access and habitat improvement program (VPA-HIP) in these focal areas to incentivize enrollment in continuous CRP practices, maintain those practices, and secure long-term public access.

Participating landowners in the VPA-HIP program will receive 100% cost-share for establishing continuous CRP practices, plus a lump sum payment for providing long-term public access. Some habitat improvements that will be eligible for payment through the Kansas Quail Initiative include native grass establishment, tree shearing, inter-seeding of forbs/legumes, shrub plantings, prescribed burning, prescribed grazing, etc. (Table 1.).

Private Land Program Support:

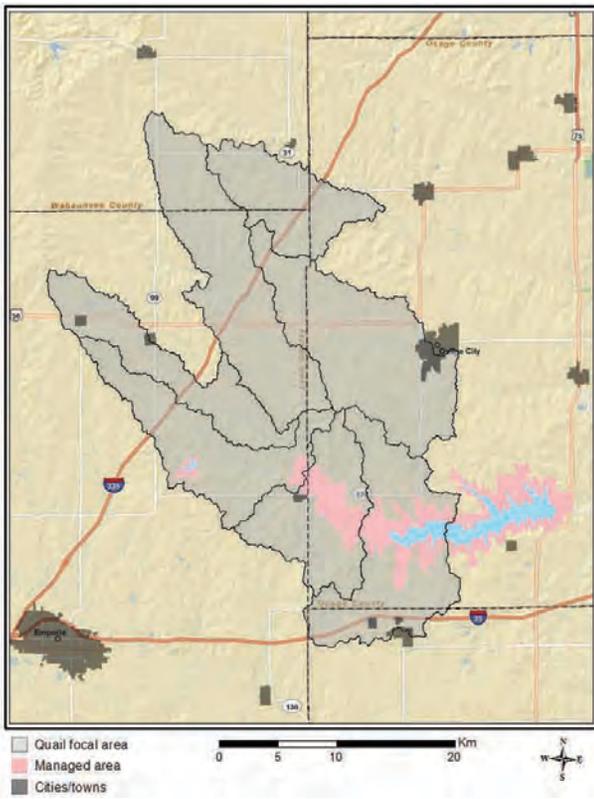
The KDWPT is committed to spending up to \$100,000 a year on private land habitat improvements in the Quail Focal Areas for each of the 5 years of implementation. This is the estimated amount required to convert a minimum of 5% of the improvable acres to suitable quail habitat. Contributions from numerous conservation partners will be pooled with these funds to expand the amount of work that can be completed.

How To Enroll:

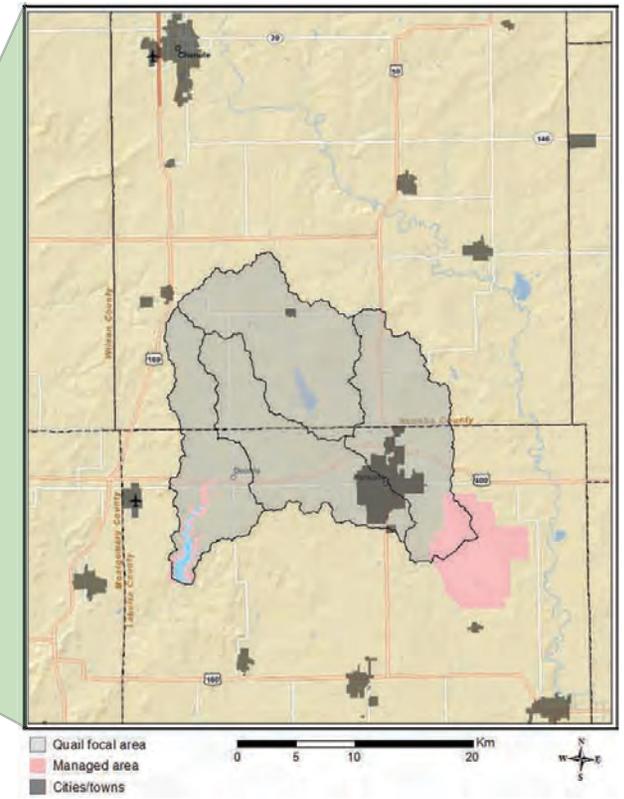
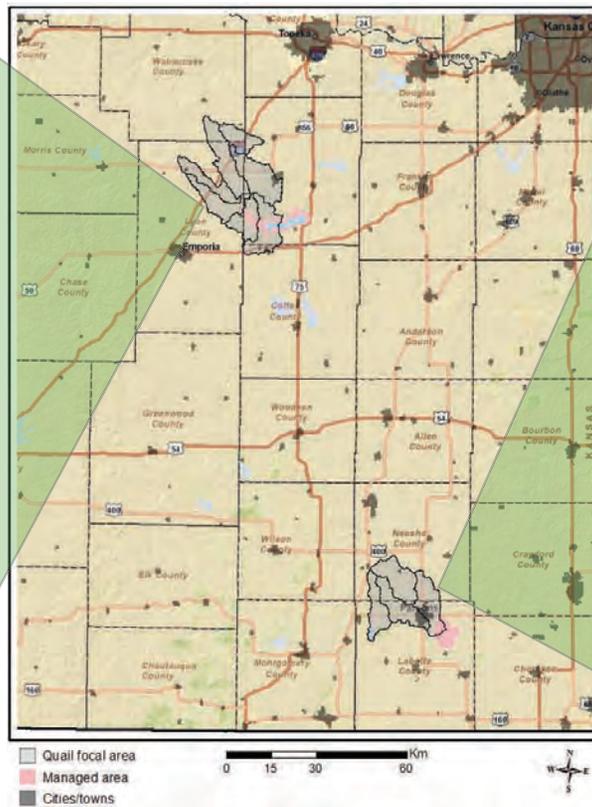
Interested landowners should contact the local KDWPT district biologist that covers the county in which their property is located. The district biologists will be able to answer specific questions about the program, conduct on-site evaluations, and assist landowners with enrollment into the applicable program(s). Additionally, habitat tours will be held at least annually within the Quail Focal Areas to discuss quail habitat requirements and illustrate how habitat deficiencies can be corrected with practices eligible for quail initiative support.

Table 1. Quail-friendly practices for which landowners in the focal areas will be reimbursement at 100% of the estimated average cost. All applications must be approved by KDWPT field biologists to receive full cost-share.

BRUSH MANAGEMENT TO RESTORE NATIVE PLANT COMMUNITIES
CHEMICAL ERADICATION OF NON-NATIVE GRASSES
PRESCRIBED BURNING (INCLUDES FIREBREAK ESTABLISHMENT)
WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY COVER CROPS
FENCING TO DEFER GRAZING
NATIVE SHRUB ESTABLISHMENT
NATIVE GRASS AND FORB SEEDING
INTERSEEDING OF NATIVE FORBS INTO NATIVE GRASS STANDS
FOREST STAND IMPROVEMENT
PRESCRIBED GRAZING PLANS
WINDBREAK AND SHELTERBELT RENOVATION
DISKING NATIVE GRASS STANDS TO STIMULATE FORB GROWTH
FOOD PLOT ESTABLISHMENT
FALLOWING CROPLAND STRIPS



The northern Quail Focus Area includes parts of Lyon, Wabaunsee, Coffey and Osage counties. It encompasses 194,911 acres, of which more than 160,000 are potentially improvable for bobwhite quail.



The southern Quail Focus Area includes parts of Labette and Neosho counties. It includes 114,711 total acres, nearly 76,000 of which are potential bobwhite quail habitat.

KDWPT BIOLOGISTS:

Counties	KDWPT District Biologist	Phone	Email
Lyon	Rick Tush	620-583-5049	rick.tush@ksoutdoors.com
Wabaunsee	Brad Rueschhoff	785-273-6740	brad.rueschhoff@ksoutdoors.com
Coffey & Osage	Bob Culbertson	620-343-7276	bob.culbertson@ksoutdoors.com
Labette & Neosho	Allen Reed	620-449-2539	allen.reed@ksoutdoors.com

THE GOOD,

Good quail habitat: native grasses, forbs, and shrubs provide adequate food, overhead protective cover, and open space at ground level which facilitates movement and increases foraging efficiency.



THE BAD ^A_B THE UGLY



Woody encroachment into native pastures: inadequate fire frequency has allowed invasive woody plants to encroach into native rangelands. Pastures in this condition provide suitable habitat for many of the primary quail predators.



Tall fescue: poor habitat due to lack of plant diversity and insufficient open space at ground level



Inadequate grazing management: pastures without at least 12" of the previous years' growth during May-July don't provide adequate habitat for quail to conceal a nest or rear their young.