

**McPherson Valley Wetlands Update:**

Highlights...

**\*Area conditions look great & duck numbers are high.....but could still use a little water to push us through the fall.**

**\*Changes coming to the daily permit system in the form of Isportsman.**

**Brent Theede, Public Lands Manager**  
 Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism



**Area Habitat and Water Conditions**

Habitat conditions across the area range from fair to excellent. Fortunately, a significant portion of the area falls in the excellent category. Vast stands of rank smartweed have erupted this spring and summer in most of the Big Basin creating exceptional food production for migrating waterfowl this fall. As of August 1, annual smartweed in the Big Basin was over 5 feet tall in pools 7, 8, 9, and 10, and in lesser densities in many surrounding pools. Soil disturbances during the past 2 drought years, and perfect weather conditions this spring are credited for the current conditions. Food production will not be a limiting factor, and thick vegetation may actually make hunting a little more difficult early in the season while trying to place decoys and locate downed birds.

Mid June rains provided the wetlands with significant inflows that filled all but 3 pools on the entire area. Staff was able to run re-lift pumps for several days and supply water into the storage pools on the south refuge to approximately 75% of capacity. However, the lack of rain since June has taken its toll. Between evaporation and transpiration, we have lost well over half of this water. During hot windy days, it is not uncommon for area pools to lose as much as one inch a

day. It doesn't take many days with these conditions to deplete any water we have captured. As usual, one more run-off rain would greatly improve conditions and hunting opportunities across the area.



Pool 10 – Big Basin.

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**Changes coming to the Daily Permit System at MPWL.**

Since the beginning of the McPherson Valley Wetlands project, hunters have been required to fill out daily hunting permits if hunting on the property. Historically, this was accomplished through the use of paper permits that could be picked up at every parking lot on the area, free of charge, at any of the “iron rangers”.

Currently, staff spends up to a full day each week traveling to each iron ranger to pick up permits,

stock new permits, sort permits, and manually record data. Over the course of a hunting season, this adds up to a lot of staff time and operation costs. With the developments in technology these days much more efficient methods are available to staff to collect these data.

This year KDWPPT will implement a new daily permit system in the form of Isportsman at many properties across the state. Isportsman is an electronic registration / data collection tool that will make data collection much easier for staff, and allow for more up to the minute data analysis throughout the season.

What does this mean for the hunters? Initially, users will need to register their personal information to set up an account in the Isportsman program. Once this is completed, the system will allow hunters to call in from any phone or log in from any PC or smart phone and register to hunt on any particular day. Once the hunt is over for that day, hunters will call back in and report harvest, etc, similar to returning paper daily permits upon the completion of their hunt.

The system is still under construction, but will go live prior to September 1. Hunters can access the site now, and should visit <https://kdwpt.isportsman.net/> as soon as possible to register (see directions below). Once registered, hunters will be able to call or log onto the system September 1<sup>st</sup>, and get their hunting permit for dove opener. More detailed login information will be posted on the MPWL webpage and MPWL waterfowl report page as we approach September 1. Hopefully the transition into Isportsman will be smooth, and prove to be easy and a benefit to everyone.

**Directions to register on Isportsman:**

- 2 Visit <https://kdwpt.isportsman.net/>
- 3 Scroll down the left side of page to blue “register” button.
- 4 Provide your information.

**Fall Flight Forecasts**

The USFWS annually performs aerial surveys to estimate May pond numbers as well as current waterfowl numbers. This year almost all species, except pintail and canvasback, saw an increase in numbers when compared to last year. Below is a table that illustrates the current number of each species, the percent change in population from 2013, and the percent change from the long term average. May pond counts

were also up from 2013, indicating positive changes for breeding waterfowl habitats. If Mother Nature provides us with a little bit of additional rain and some timely cold weather, this should prove to be a very productive and enjoyable waterfowl season.

Duck Trends:			
Species:	2014 (millions)	2013 (% change)	Long term Avg. (% change)
Mallard	10.9	+5	+42
Gadwall	3.8	+14	+102
Wigeon	3.1	+18	+20
GW teal	3.4	+13	+69
BW teal	8.5	+10	+75
Shoveler	5.3	+11	+114
Pintail	3.2	-3	-20
Redhead	1.3	+6	+85
Canvasback	0.7	-13	+18
Scaup	4.6	+11	-8
Total:	49.2	+8	+48
May Ponds:	7.2	+4	+40

**Dove / Sunflower Fields**

Again this year there will be two dove management fields at MPWL. They will be located at the Little Sinkhole / Farland Lake marsh unit southeast of Inman. These fields can be found approximately 1.5 miles south and 1 mile east of Inman, or ½ mile south of 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Buckskin Road. The two fields are divided by a natural drainage / wetland, and total approximately 75 acres. These fields were planted on May 16<sup>th</sup>, which is typically a little late, but wet conditions prevented earlier planting. These fields survived the June rains and have really produced in terms of yield. As in the past, 25% of these fields will be the departments share, of which, a portion will be mowed to scatter seeds to attract doves. The remainder of the field will be left standing for “hunter cover” in an alternating pattern across the fields. Along with these two sunflower fields, staff will burn approximately 63 acres of wheat stubble at the Little Sinkhole / Farland Lake marsh unit as well. **This field will be open to youth and their mentor only on September 1<sup>st</sup>,** and open to everyone after September 1. This field is located 3 miles east and 2 miles south of Inman, or at

11<sup>th</sup> and Arrowhead. As with all shot gun hunting at MPWL, non-toxic shot is required to hunt doves.

These fields have become very popular over the past several years, and will likely be crowded. Please be extra cautious on shot selection, and make sure you can see blue sky between the bird and the ground before taking the shot. Even though most hunters stay close to their “claimed” spot, it is easy to lose track of other hunters as they chase downed or crippled birds. By elevating your shots, we can greatly reduce the chance of accidents. We want this field to be enjoyed by all, which includes going home safe.



Dove Management Field SE of Inman.



Pool 8 – Big Basin.



## KANSAS GAME WARDENS FACEBOOK PAGE

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<https://www.facebook.com/kdwptgamewardens>

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### Marion Wildlife Area News

By Scott Amos

During the summer and fall 2014 we will be implementing some proactive grassland management techniques on the area in the form of brome conversions back to native warm season grasses. To accomplish this, a summer burn will be conducted along the north side of 260th between Jade and Indigo roads. This burn will expose and stimulate cool season grasses (predominately smooth brome) so that they can be sprayed with herbicide (glyphosate & Plateau) this fall. The objective is to kill out the cool season grass so that the native warm season grasses can flourish. This tract was previously planted with native grass but smooth brome has successfully crowded out the native desirable species. If successful, this process will be repeated on other tracts in the future, and supplemental native grass plantings will follow. We will also be mowing a tract on the south side of 260th and spraying it this fall so that

we can have a side by side comparison of the two different techniques (burned vs. mowed).

These areas may be short on winter cover this year but the positive results from this grassland management technique should speak for itself in the years to come.

**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. Please be sure to check the McPherson Valley Wetlands webpage and waterfowl reports for more up-to-date information. Updates to these information portals have already begun. Feel free to call or visit our office anytime with questions or concerns. McPherson Valley Wetlands’ staff 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>

Isportsman:

<https://kdwpt.isportsman.net/>



Pool 7 – Big Basin.

