

Region 6 Update

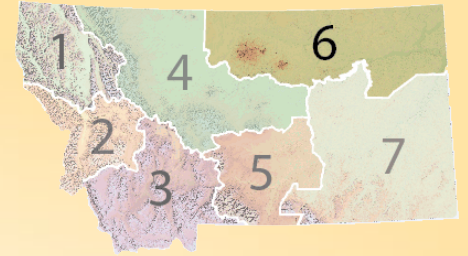
Malta, MT Sept. 12, 2022
Ken Plourde



Overview

- R6 Strategic Plan- Key points
- Habitat Projects Summary
- Habitat Projects Breakdown
- Monitoring Status
- R6 Game Bird Status Update
- Questions





Region 6 Strategic Plan

- Reviews game bird status in Region by species
- 3 Focus Areas
 - Milk River, Northeast Corner, Sage-grouse Habitat
- 1-3 goals for each area
 - Long term conservation or habitat enhancement depending on area
- Approaches listed to achieve area goals



R6 Strategic Plan- Northeastern MT

Habitat enhancement projects, pheasant winter cover

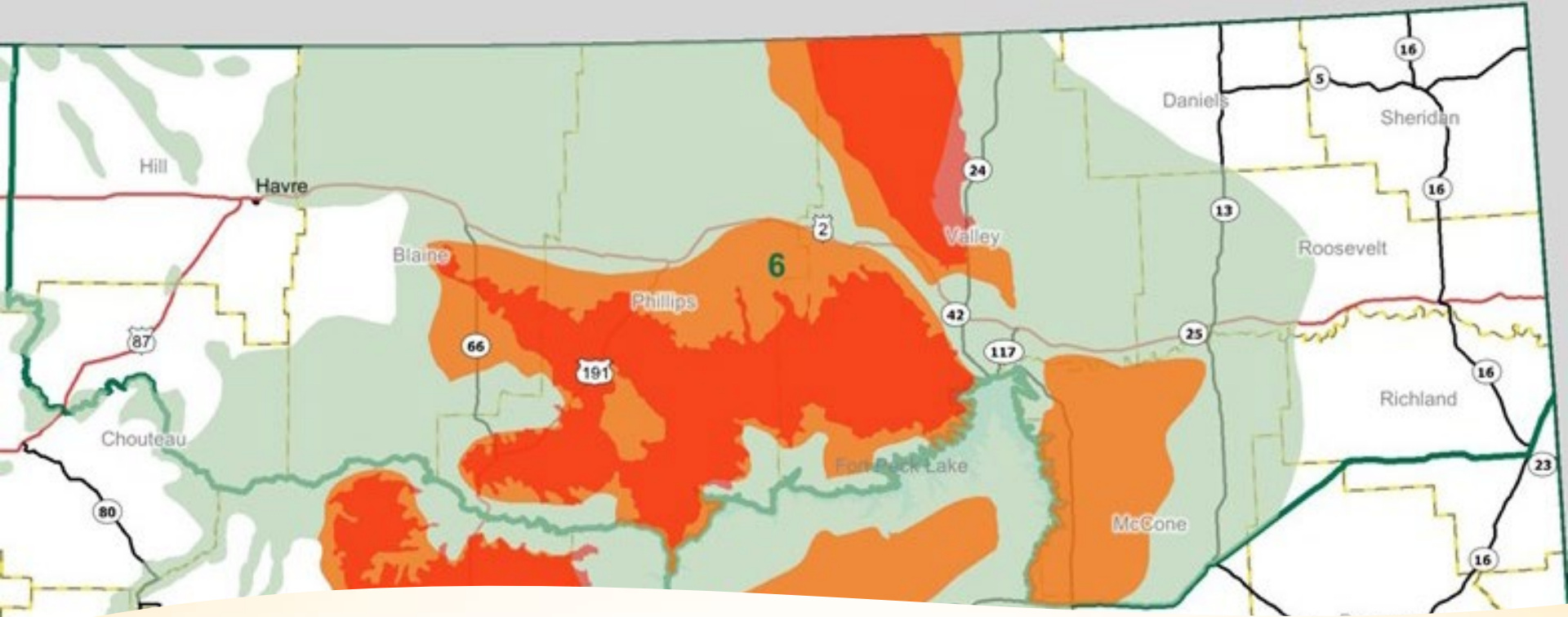
- Build off BMAs, CRP, and past projects
 - Goal of 50% of projects on existing access or habitat areas
- Increase nesting cover and winter cover
- Food plots to reduce emergency supplemental winter feeding
- Re-enroll shelterbelts with HMLs
- Monitor projects to ensure compliance



R6 Strategic Plan- Milk River Valley

- Long term conservation and restoration
 - Use public lands as cornerstones
 - partnerships
 - conservation easements





R6 Strategic Plan- Sage-grouse Habitat

- Sagebrush protection, enhancement and restoration
 - Silver sagebrush corridors to AB and SK and Valley County creeks
 - Work with partners
 - Promote use and benefits of grazing systems; conservation easements, & 30-year leases



Habitat Project Summary

33 New or Renewed Habitat Projects

- 5 Nesting cover/CRP cost-share
- 4 Habitat Management Leases (HMLs)
- 5 Diverse Mix & 3 Standing Grain Food Plots
- 20 Open Fields (not including 2 late contracts)
- 22 different landowners

7,331 habitat acres enhanced or conserved

8,615 access acres (UGBEP only/non-BMA)



Habitat Projects Cumulative

Region 6 Totals

- 186 UGBEP Projects
- 60,126 Habitat Acres
- 92,557 Access Acres (UGBEP Only)
 - 42,045 BMA acres impacted
 - 3,347 public land acres impacted

Project Type Breakdown

- 3 Conservation Easements
- 6 30-year Conservation Leases
- 26 Nesting Cover plantings
- 17 Food plots
- 8 Shelterbelts
- 4 Grazing systems
- 21 Habitat Management Leases
- 101 Open Fields



Nesting Cover

- 5 projects with 4 landowners
- 2,329 acres of new CRP or nesting cover
 - All native mixes
- 2 projects totaling 1,920 acres of new walk-in access
 - Other 3 projects were on BMA or Conservation Lease



Food Plots

- 1 new and 6 renewed contracts
- 3 standing grain plots = 22 acres
- 5 diverse mix plots = 45 acres
- With existing plots = 139 acres of food plots in R6 this year



Habitat Management Leases

- 4 projects totaling 342 acres of habitat
 - 2 projects tied to Open Fields
- 1,260 acres of access and improving 803 acres BMA
- Most of the leased acres are nesting cover and winter cover



Habitat Management Leases



Habitat Management Leases



Open Fields

20 new contracts (+3 late contracts pending)

- 16 landowners
- 5,500 acres habitat
- 8,897 acres access

103 total Open Fields contracts in R6

- 23,100 acres habitat
- 37,202 acres access



Open Fields

- OF enrollment and expirations have kept roughly even since 2019

Year	Total # of Projects	Habitat Acres	Access Acres
2019	107	20,441	36,991
2022	103	23,100	37,202

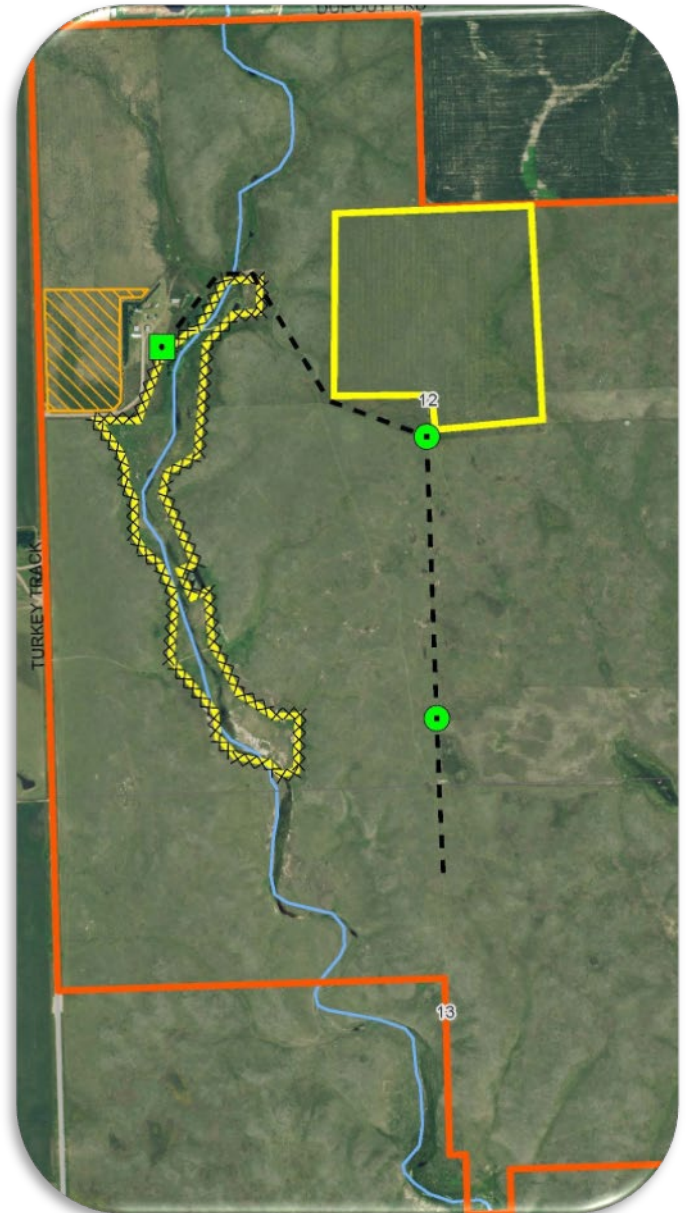
- R6 gained 2,434 habitat and 1,923 access acres this year despite 2022 expirations

Expirations	# of Projects	Habitat Acres	Access Acres
2022	21	3,066	6,974
2023	20	4,489	6,753
2024	2	534	710



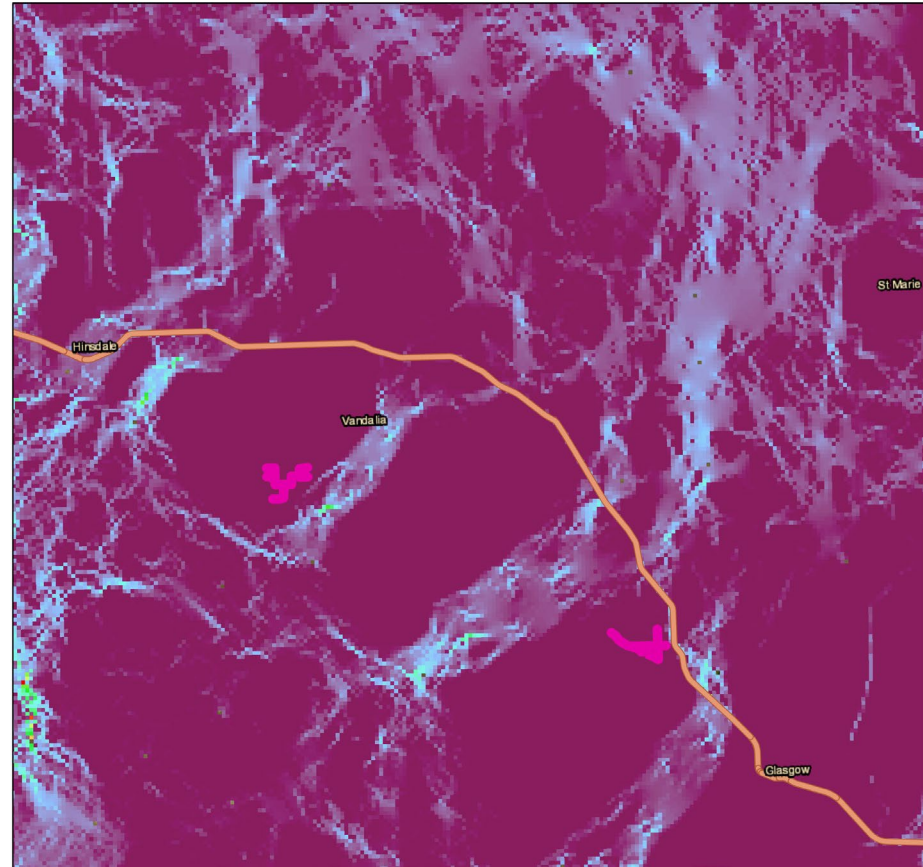
Other Projects

- 1 Migratory Bird Grazing Enhancement combine with UGBEP HML
 - 803 acres of wetland associated uplands
 - Fenced out 73-acre riparian area & covered with HML
 - Water pipeline and tanks to enable rotational grazing
 - Pheasant's Forever partnered on 45-acre nesting cover enhancement



Other Projects

- Assisted enrolling a wildlife friendly fence replacement project with RSA
- Project is on FWP Buffalo Coulee Conservation Easement near Glasgow
- Total of 7 miles of fence replacement



Monitoring

- 112 checked so far this year of 186 total
- At least 86 of 143 annually required inspections have been completed
 - Getting difficult to get to every require project annually





Monitoring



OPEN FIELDS
FOR
GAME BIRD HUNTERS
Walk in Hiking Area



Monitoring



New Signs

Old



New



R6 Game Bird Populations



- Sage Grouse ↓ 26% region wide; 13% below LTA
- Sharp-tailed grouse near average region wide
 - ↓ 32% western R6; 23% below LTA
 - ↓ 10% eastern R6; 14% above LTA
- Pheasants overall down 20% and 8% below LTA
 - ↑ 17% above LTA in eastern R6
 - ↓ 16% below LTA in center of region
 - ↓ 67% below LTA in western R6
 - Brood survey increase on 3 of 4 routes, overall up 63% from 2021 (does not include R6W)



Questions?

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