

# EAST GULF COASTAL PLAIN JOINT VENTURE

## NEWSLETTER, Fall 2015



### MDWFP Field Tour Highlights Conservation on Private and Public Lands in Mississippi



Highlighting the “Fire on the Forty” program, Photo: R. Holbrook

The EGCPJV Prescribed Fire Communications Strategy has a Policy Goal to “support and advocate the establishment and/or strengthening of laws, policies, budgets, and regulations required to consistently allow and apply prescribed fire across the Southeast.” On August 14, board member Ed Penny and MDWFP staff including Chad Dacus, John Gruchy, Adam Butler, and Josh Moree met with policy makers to discuss several natural resources issues important to Mississippi. Participants included staff from Senator Thad Cochran’s office, Senator Roger Wicker’s office, JV Staff member Rob Holbrook, and Dr. Larry Rodgers – a private landowner in Lawrence County. The group visited Marion County Wildlife Management Area, near Columbia, where they discussed the value of the Joint Venture partnership in developing multi-state and multi-partner opportunities, which often brings additional resources and funding into Mississippi.

The tour of longleaf management on the WMA highlighted the critical role of prescribed fire and how funding benefitting at-risk species such as Gopher Tortoise also restores habitat for a wide range of traditional “game” species. These species include Northern Bobwhite, Eastern Wild Turkey, and deer, which are highly valued by the public. Funding for threatened, endangered, and other high priority species results in a wide array of benefits to wildlife and provides recreational and ecological benefits. Ed Penny also led a discussion of how Mississippi’s “Fire on the Forty” program has relied on numerous partners to fund the popular and successful initiative providing technical assistance for prescribed burning on private lands. Dr. Rodgers gave a private landowner’s view of how “Fire on the Forty” allows him to use prescribed fire to control invasive species, reduce competition by unwanted vegetation, and provide wildlife habitat.

### National Joint Venture and NRCS Meeting is a Resounding Success

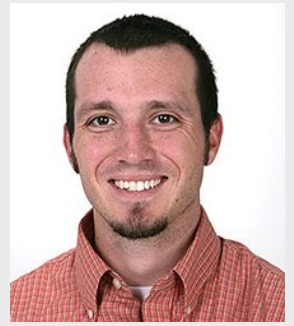
In September, multiple Joint Venture staff members from across the US met with NRCS staff to discuss current collaboration among JVs and NRCS and to explore future potential opportunities. The multiple day meeting occurred at Tara Wildlife outside of Vicksburg, MS. Rob Holbrook, EGCPJV Assistant Coordinator, participated in the meeting and made several connections with key NRCS staff in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Kentucky, and with coordinators of the Working Lands for Wildlife Program in Washington, DC. JV staff are arranging follow-up meetings to focus on opportunities identified at Tara. A thank you from the EGCP Joint Venture to staff from other Joint Ventures, including Keith McKnight (LMVJV), Todd Fearer (AMJV), and Dave Smith (IWJV), who invested time and energy working with NRCS to insure a well-attended and extremely productive meeting.



NRCS/JV Staff identify collaborative opportunities, Photo: K. McKnight

## Welcoming two New Board Representatives to the EGCPJV

The East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture is pleased to welcome two new board members. Mr. Derek Alkire will be joining us as the new representative for the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf). Derek serves as the Conservation Field Supervisor over Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi and works from Saffillo, MS. He works with four staff implementing conservation-based activities to benefit wild turkeys and additional upland species and has an interest in working with partners to combine and leverage resources for habitat conservation. Derek received a BS degree in wildlife resources from West Virginia University and an MS degree in forestry with an emphasis in wildlife from Mississippi State University.



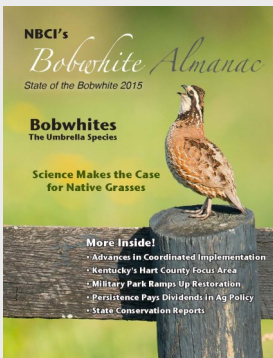
Derek Alkire, Photo: NWTf



Steve Chapman, Photo: NBCI

Mr. Steve Chapman currently serves as the Forestry Coordinator for the NBCI and will represent this initiative on the management board. Steve is a Registered Forester and a Society of American Foresters (SAF) Certified Forester. Prior to joining NBCI, Steve worked as a consulting forester after retiring from the Georgia Forestry Commission in 2013. He has a BS degree in Forest Resources from the D.B. Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources at the University of Georgia. Steve continues to be active in the SAF, where he currently serves as the Chair-elect of the Georgia Division. As we welcome these new board members, we also thank Mark Hatfield (NWTf) and Mike Black (NBCI) for their previous service to the East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture.

## NBCI Issues 5th 'State of the Bobwhite' Report



The newest "State of the Bobwhite" report is now available and presents information on using Northern Bobwhite as an "umbrella species", science supporting the use of native grasses as the best choice on working lands, and advances made in the coordinated implementation of bobwhite focal areas. "State of the Bobwhite" includes conservation reports from 25 states and includes agency inventories of habitat management which occurred in East Gulf Coastal Plain states in the previous year. It also presents advances made in the coordinated implementation of bobwhite focal areas.

Additionally, many of our friends and partners have been recognized by the Initiative for their contributions to bobwhite and grassland bird conservation. Greg Hagan (FWC), Theron Terhune (Tall Timbers), and Reggie Thackston (GA DNR) accepted a Legacy Landscape designation for the Albany/Red Hills Region. Our very own John Morgan (small game manager for KDFWR) received the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative for individual achievement. John has served as the chair of the research subcommittee and played a critical role in the development of the Conservation Implementation Program. He is an amazing leader in quail conservation, and we are so proud to have him as an EGCPJV partner!



John Morgan, Photo: NBCI

## **The Prescribed Fire Summit: Putting Fire to Work for Working Forests and Landscapes** was held



July 28-29, 2015 at Tall Timbers Research Station in Tallahassee, FL. Amity Bass and Rob Holbrook attended on behalf of the EGCPJV. The goals were to understand the current state of prescribed burning in the Southeast on private lands, discuss known impediments to burning and ways to overcome obstacles, develop communication strategies and messaging for landowners and consultants, and establish objectives to consider when developing future efforts. The ultimate goal is to increase the use of prescribed burning in fire-maintained ecosystems on private lands through more effective, coordinated communications. Board member Amity Bass presented on the EGCPJV Prescribed Fire Communications Strategy and led a panel discussion on "Ideas and Insights for Programmatic, Large-scale Communication Efforts". EGCPJV participation in this Summit has resulted in greater use of the EGPJV

Prescribed Fire Communications Strategy and has provided new opportunities to work with partners such as Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS) to accomplish strategy goals. As a result of this meeting, two prescribed burn certification trainings will occur in Louisiana during 2016. SERRPAS is funding a workshop in May 2016 in the East Gulf Coastal Plain of LA, and the West Gulf Ecosystem Partnership is funding the other in late summer of 2016 in that geography. These trainings address the education in the Communications Strategy which is to focus on landowner trainings to achieve fire capacity and application at a large scale. For more information on the Prescribed Fire Summit, visit: <http://www.ncsafeop.org/RxFire/communications/>

## **Migratory Bird Treaty Centennial – Celebrating 100 Years of Migratory Bird Conservation**

2016 marks the centennial of the Convention between the United States and Great Britain (for Canada) for the Protection of Migratory Birds, signed on August 16, 1916. The resulting Migratory Bird Treaty and the three others that followed - with Japan, Russia and Mexico - form the cornerstones of efforts to conserve birds which migrate across international borders. The Centennial represents an unprecedented opportunity for the conservation community to celebrate, promote, and raise awareness and support for the conservation of migratory birds and their habitats and the benefits this work provides to all wildlife. Our regional Centennial plans include four major "Migratory Bird Festival" events at zoo venues in urban centers across the region and incorporating Centennial messaging into existing local events. Goals and potential objectives of this year-long effort include:

- \* Creating **awareness** about the importance of migratory bird conservation
- \* Promoting key **actions** to help birds
- \* Increasing **support** for migratory bird conservation programs and initiatives
- \* Expanding opportunities for **engagement** in bird watching, hunting, and conservation

**CONTACT US TO LEARN MORE AND GET INVOLVED: [MBTREATY100@FWS.GOV](mailto:MBTREATY100@FWS.GOV)**

**Web: [www.fws.gov/birds/MBTreaty100](http://www.fws.gov/birds/MBTreaty100)**



Celebrate Birds! Photo: USFWS