

Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative Fact Sheet



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The Southeastern Association
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Quail Unlimited

The northern bobwhite quail population has endured a decline of more than 65% over the last 20 years throughout its range. The decline varies from state to state. The projected continuation of this decline necessitated a call for immediate and dramatic action. In response, the directors of the state wildlife agencies from the member states of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies requested preparation of a plan for recovery of the northern bobwhite.

Biologists, managers and researchers of the Southeast Quail Study Group Technical Committee prepared the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI). It is designed to meet conservation and management needs of the northern bobwhite and facilitate integration and collaboration with other species management plans, such as Partners in Flight and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. The NBCI is based on the Bird Conservation Regions (BCR) described in the North American Bird Conservation Initiative.

Conditions that benefit quail benefit a suite of other birds that have experienced population declines. Some quail habitat management practices can benefit Bell's Vireo, Orchard Oriole, Painted Bunting, Loggerhead Shrike, Sedge wren, Grasshopper Sparrow, Dickcissel and Henslow's Sparrow, etc.

NBCI GOAL: Restore northern bobwhite populations range wide to an average density equivalent to that which existed on improvable acres in 1980. This will necessitate impacting habitat on about 7 per cent of 81.1 million acres of farm, forest, and rangeland so as to increase the current quail population by 2.7 million coveys.

NBCI HABITAT OBJECTIVES:

Agricultural Lands – Increase the amount and enhance the quality of nesting, broodrearing, and roosting cover for bobwhites and other grassland wildlife on agricultural lands, through the establishment and/or management of native warm-season grasses, forbs and shrubs.

Forests – Enhance grassland/forb habitat in pinelands and mixed pine-hardwood forests by thinning, controlled burns, site preparation and forest regeneration in a fashion that benefits bobwhites and other wildlife, and increase acreage devoted to longleaf pine where it is ecologically feasible.

Grasslands – Preserve and enhance the quality of grassland, pasture and range by utilizing vegetation management practices and grazing regimes that favor the retention and improvement of native plant communities beneficial to bobwhites and other wildlife.

The NBCI apportions the responsibility for achieving these objectives to the individual states within each BCR. It spells out specific habitat goals by BCR and State. It is a step down design, allowing each state to know exactly how many acres of various habitat types they need to achieve the goals.

The NBCI anticipates that if immediate action is taken, the bobwhite's decline may be arrested in five years. If the plan is followed to its conclusion, the restoration may be effected in 20-25 years. For more information contact the NBCI coordinator in your state or go to www.qu.org/seqsg/nbci/nbci.cfm