

# Farmers will use some, not all, practices to help quail, Missouri survey shows

A large majority of landowners want bobwhite quail on their property, and they recognize that habitat management is the solution to quail restoration, a landowner survey by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) indicates.

A smaller percentage of landowners, however, were willing to use prescribed quail-friendly practices.

“Much of the potential success of large-scale northern bobwhite restoration depends on private landowners working together to restore habitat on multiple, contiguous farms,” says Dr. Tom Dailey of the MDC. “So we wanted to get a better idea of what it will take to engage landowners to manage habitat for quail.”

The MDC analyzed responses from 735 northern Missouri landowners—20 percent were full-time farmers, 24 percent farmed part-time, 36 percent were landlords, and 20 percent were recreational owners who did not use the land for farming.

Reasons landowners gave for hesitating to manage land for bobwhite quail were that they did not:

- like the (weedy, unmowed) habitats or practices (use of prescribed fire)
- have the expertise or equipment to implement the practice
- have the labor or money
- want strangers knocking on their door asking to hunt
- like contracts or the requirements involved

On the other hand, of the more than 80 percent of landowners who wanted to see quail on their land, nearly half showed interest in quail habitat restoration. The top priority for these landowners was knowing that management is, in fact, increasing quail numbers.

These landowners fit a profile: row crop income was not important; positive experience with government conservation programs; willing to use quail-friendly management (fire, disking, native plants, etc.); money and time less of a constraint; attended habitat workshops; allowed quail hunting; male; some college education; and owned land for just a few years.

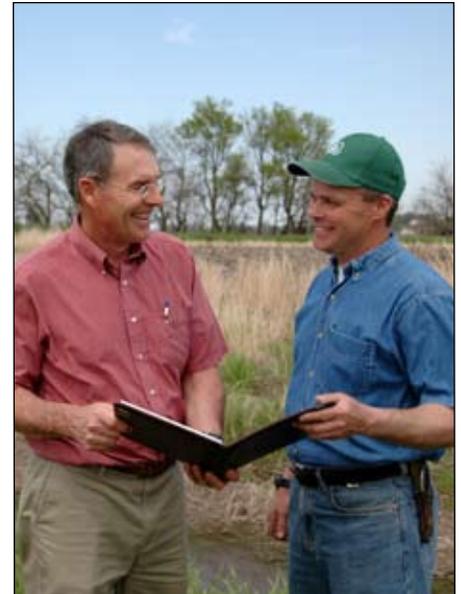
Many of the landowners had participated in conservation programs. The two most used programs were the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Conservation Reserve Program and programs of Missouri Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Across all programs, 76 percent rated their experiences as “good.”

“Overall responses from this study confirm the need for aggressive restoration programs with conservation agencies and organizations collaborating. Landowner needs are complex, so multiple strategies must be used to craft programs that are effective, socially acceptable and economically attractive,” Dailey says.

The study gave the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) a better understanding of landowner needs and desires, and why they might adopt certain practices, according to Pat Graham, retired NRCS state biologist in Missouri.

The survey was one of 11 projects coordinated across the quail range by Mississippi State University and funded by the NRCS Agricultural Wildlife Conservation Center (AWCC) as part of the Bobwhite Restoration Project. The University of Missouri and Quail Unlimited also participated.

The AWCC, located in Madison, Mississippi, is a fish and wildlife technology development center.



NRCS photo by Lynn Betts

NRCS employee discussing northern bobwhite with landowner

Summary of:

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For more information, see:

USDA/NRCS Bobwhite Restoration Project online at <http://www.cfr.msstate.edu/nbci>

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