

Steve Maslowski/USFWS

WHAT IS NBCI?

Background

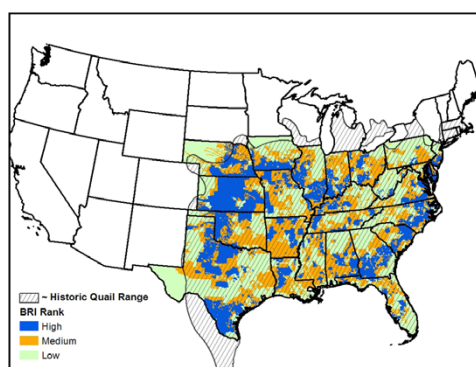


- The steady decline of bobwhites—an estimated 80% over the past 40 years—can be traced to numerous land use practices which have destroyed habitat for bobwhites and other species on a landscape scale.
- Living space for bobwhites has been lost to development and to forest management and agricultural practices.
- As the bobwhite is a resident (non-migratory) game bird, it is the management responsibility of individual state wildlife agencies. Those agencies came together to examine the issues on a range-wide basis because individual efforts by the respective states were largely unsuccessful on more than an individual project scale.
- The Southeastern Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies first put 50 state biologists to work analyzing the wild quail decline from a range-wide perspective in the late 90's. The result was NBCI 2002.
- A paper-based plan, NBCI 2002 spurred progress, including changes in U.S. agricultural policy that created thousands of acres of new quail habitat, however, it did not overcome all the challenges.
- The interest and momentum created by this new range-wide approach did incentivize all states in the core bobwhite range to participate in the recent massive revision and upgrade—managed by Tall Timbers Research Station—of the original plan.
- Some 600 biologists helped develop NBCI 2.0, a GIS-based online plan with a suite of new digital tools for quail biologists that is on the cutting edge of conservation planning. As such, NBCI 2.0 represents the most comprehensive interstate effort on behalf of a resident game species in the history of wildlife management.

Overview



- NBCI is an historic interstate commitment by the 25 core bobwhite states, private conservation groups and research institutions to work together at regional and national levels to restore viable wild populations of bobwhite quail. (See map below.)
- NBCI is the range-wide plan—by the states and for the states—for recovering bobwhite populations to density targets established by the respective state wildlife management agencies. NBCI components include:
 - A massive, constantly evolving on-line database detailing and characterizing the bobwhite potential of 600 million acres of landscape across 25 states and 17 Bird Conservation Regions—to the local level
 - A range-wide “prescription” for restoring recreationally viable populations of wild bobwhites across this landscape, including a range of specific management actions necessary to increase quail populations in specific settings
 - A suite of mapping applications and web-based tools for biologists to identify, plan and implement projects that offer the greatest return on investment, i.e., the “most bobwhites for the bucks”
- NBCI is a team of targeted specialists to support state efforts and help overcome obstacles on a regional and national level.



Bobwhite Habitat Potential

NBCI 2.0's Biologist Ranking Information (BRI) indicating the potential for habitat restoration benefiting bobwhites, grassland songbirds and other species.

The 25 NBCI states include: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

Early Adopters



- The NBCI database has been or is being used to develop quail focal areas and/or perform quail priority mapping by state working groups in Mississippi, Texas, Georgia, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, Kansas, South Carolina and New Jersey, and to refine existing plans in Missouri.
- University of Tennessee researchers have used it to develop bird monitoring plans in Tennessee and Ohio.
- NBCI has been used to create maps to support multi-state proposals for habitat initiatives and to educate forestry commissions in South Carolina, Tennessee and Georgia.
- Florida is using NBCI to support their bobwhite conservation efforts and to encourage partnerships among various species-oriented conservation strategies.
- The Grassland Bird Working Group of the East Gulf Coastal Plan Joint Venture and the Ouachitas Landbird Working Group of the West Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture have used NBCI as an education platform and a template for conservation, and other bird groups are using it as a reference or guide.
- The Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability has used the NBCI database for mapping purposes.

Some Findings



- Of the 195 million acres classified by biologists as having either “high” or “medium” potential for conservation efforts, increased use of prescribed fire is the greatest single need.
- Range-wide, other specific management needs include field/field edge management, compatible forest management, conversion of sod-forming exotic grasses to native warm-season grasses, and brush management (in the West).
- NBCI has already begun to identify significant policy gaps, especially the need for private, state and federal use of prescribed fire and new incentives for both private and public landowners and managers.

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Bewick's Wren



Eastern Cottontail

Frank Doyle/USFWS



Loggerhead Shrike

Dave Menke/USFWS



Bachman's Sparrow

Ed Schrade

The loss of native grasslands affects more than bobwhite quail. For instance, grassland birds are declining at faster rates than any other community of birds in North America. Other species, such as the cottontail rabbit and the gopher tortoise, are also registering declines.



Gopher Tortoise

Brian VanAlstine

Dave Menke/USFWS



Greater Prairie Chicken