

Sharp-tailed Grouse Harvest & Hunter Survey 2014

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Permit Application

Recent declines in sharp-tailed grouse numbers and evidence of reduced genetic variability led the DNR Sharp-tailed Grouse Advisory Committee to again conclude that harvest at any level was not recommended in 2014. By state law, sharp-tailed grouse will retain their status as a game species, and we are hopeful that the population will respond positively to focused habitat management efforts. Biologists will continue to assess the status of our sharp-tailed grouse population annually and look forward to issuing permits in future years when there are clear signals that the birds can sustain harvest without compromising the population as a whole.

A change to the sharp-tailed grouse harvest permit application took effect in 2003, when the sharp-tailed grouse permit application was no longer included in the Patron License Package. Currently, all hunters who wish to apply for a sharp-tailed grouse harvest permit are required to pay a \$3 application fee. All permits are mailed to hunters prior to the start of the hunting season. After harvesting a sharp-tailed grouse, hunters are required to record the date of kill and the deer management unit (DMU) of kill on the registration stub, and mail it back to the DNR in Madison. In 2014, permit levels were set to 0 by the DNR based on the results of spring sharp-tailed grouse dancing ground surveys and a recent genetic study. Since no permits were issued, no survey was conducted of permit holders.

Results

Harvest

In total, zero (0) permits were available for the 2014 sharp-tailed grouse hunting season. The season took place from October 18th through November 9th, 2014. No birds were harvested.

Hunter Survey

The sharp-tailed grouse hunter survey was suspended for the 2014 season as no permits were issued.

Table 1. Sharp-tailed grouse permit distribution, harvest, and permit success, 2014.

Unit	Permits Available & Issued	Harvest	% Permit Success
2	0	0	N/A
8	0	0	N/A

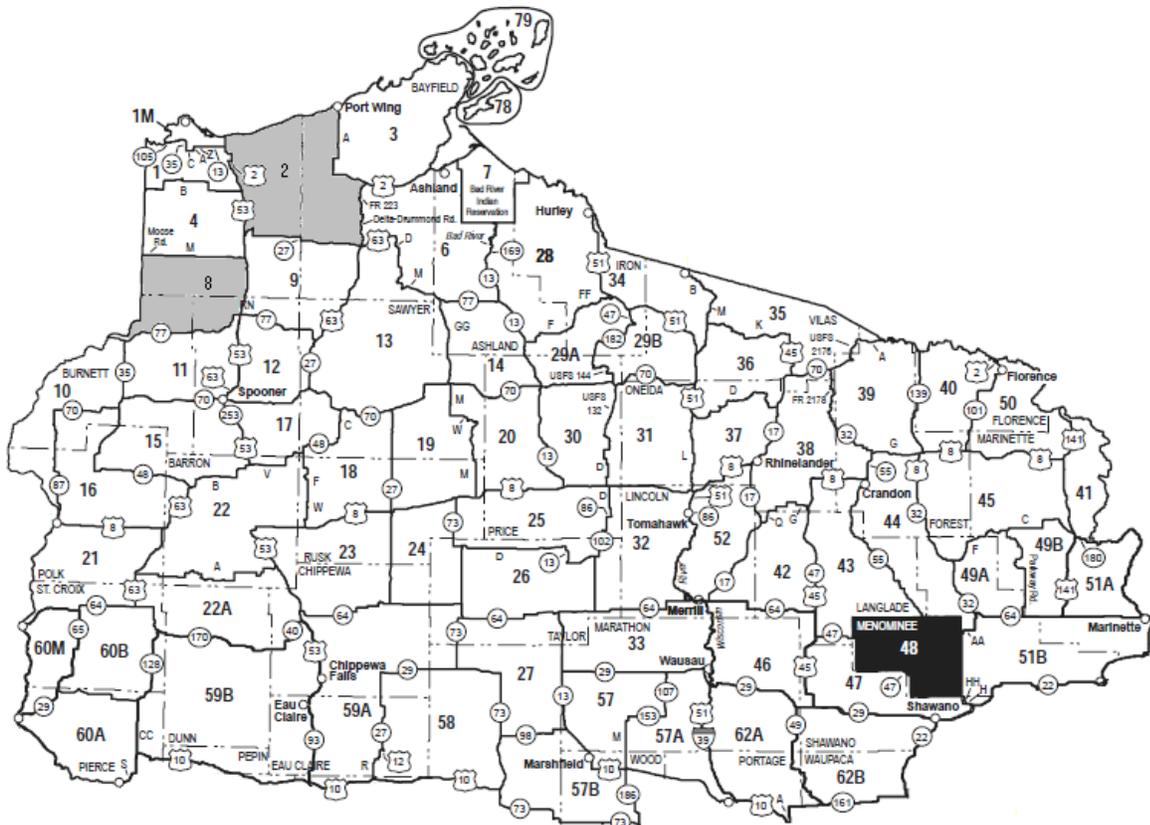


Figure 1. Deer Management Units #2 and #8 (shaded in grey) were open to sharptail hunting in 2014; however, NO permits were issued.

Figure 2: Sharp-tailed Grouse Harvest, 1992-2014

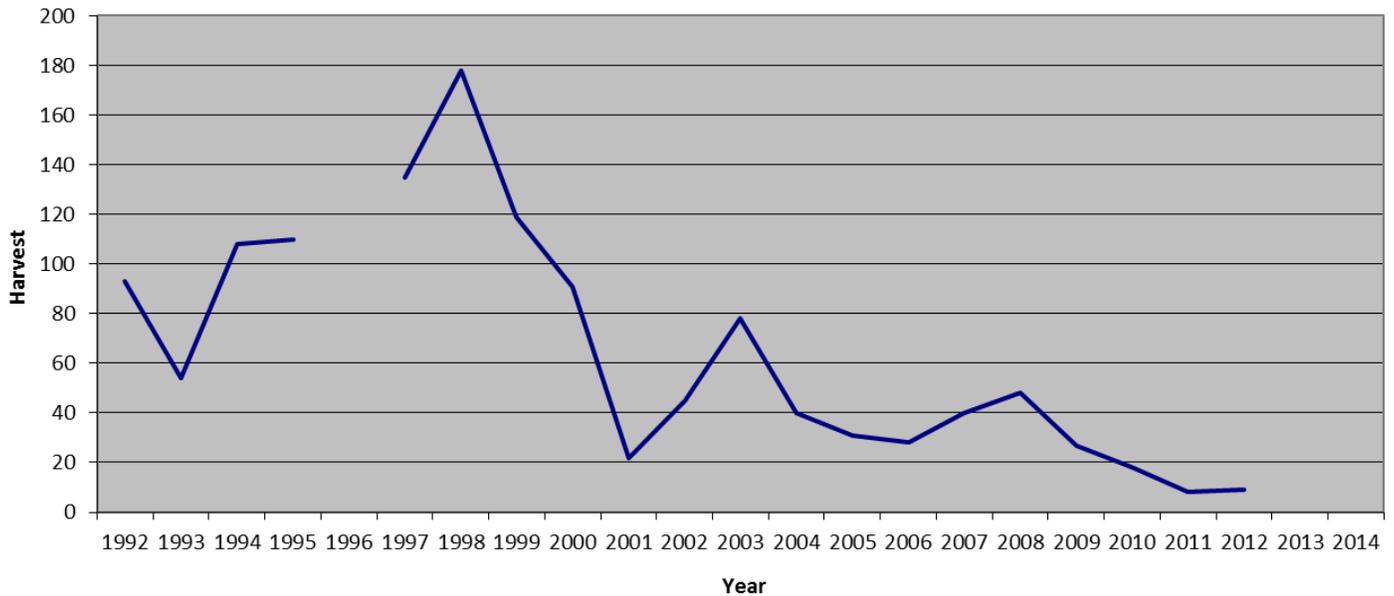


Figure 2. Sharp-tailed Grouse Harvest, 1999-2014.

Table 2. 2008-2012 Sharp-tailed Grouse Reported Harvest & Hunter Survey Results (results for the 2013 and 2014 seasons are not shown as no permits were issued).

Category	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Permits available & issued	875	635	330	250	235
Number of individual permit holders	386	306	231	123	213
Reported harvest ^a	48	27	18	8	9
Number of individuals harvesting multiple birds	6	3	2	2	0
Hunter surveys returned	220 (57.0%)	228 (74.5%)	160 (69.3%)	90 (73.2%)	59 (27.7%)
Surveyed permit holders who hunted ^b	122 (55.5%)	139 (61.0%)	89 (55.6%)	48 (53.3%)	40 (67.8%)
Total trips in the field	269	290	159	97	77
Total hours in the field	1118	1243	784	417	305
Mean trip length (hours)	4.2	4.3	4.9	4.3	4.0
Hunters making only 1 trip ^c	44 (36.1%)	50 (36.0%)	50 (56.2%)	18 (37.5%)	15 (37.5%)
Hunters making 2 trips	43 (35.2%)	55 (39.6%)	21 (23.6%)	17 (35.4%)	14 (35%)
Hunters making 3 trips	16 (13.2%)	19 (13.7%)	11 (12.3%)	9 (18.75%)	6 (15%)
Hunters making 4 or more trips	19 (15.6%)	15 (10.7%)	7 (7.9%)	4 (8.3%)	3 (7.5%)

^aBased on returned harvest registration stubs, not on hunter surveys

^bPercentages are based on total number of returned surveys

^cPermit holders who hunted in each year were placed into one of four categories (1, 2, 3, 4+ trips) based on how many separate days they went into the field to pursue sharp-tailed grouse. Of the 15 hunters who made only one trip in 2012, five harvested a bird on that trip.