



Press Release

For Immediate Release
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Conservation on a Roll with Pheasants Forever's Wheel Initiative in Illinois *313-Acre Cranfill property protected for wildlife habitat and opened for outdoor recreation*

Hillsboro, Ill. - July 14, 2006 - Pheasants Forever (PF) and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources have joined together in the acquisition of 313 acres for a new Habitat Wheel Initiative. The 313-acre Cranfill property is the third tract of land acquired for the Habitat Wheel Initiative through the work of PF and partners. The property, acquired with grant support from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, will be managed and maintained by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and opened for outdoor recreation.

"The Habitat Wheel Initiative was implemented by Pheasants Forever in 2003 as a way to build wildlife habitat on government and private lands," remarked Tom Schwartz, PF's Illinois director of conservation programs. "We hope this new concept will dramatically increase wildlife populations in the focus area. PF looks forward to continuing this successful initiative with its partners and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources."

"The Trustees of the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation are delighted to assist with this and other projects that expand wildlife habitat and provide opportunities for sportsmen to enjoy Illinois's great outdoors," said Chair of the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation Phil Novak.

"This acquisition is a great example of the value of partnerships among landowners, dedicated conservation organizations like Pheasants Forever and the Clean Energy Community Foundation and state agencies like the Illinois Department of Natural Resources," said Illinois Department of Natural Resources Acting Director Sam Flood. "We all know the importance of habitat restoration for wildlife. If there are no grasses, there are no birds. With well-planned habitat restoration like that which we have seen and will continue to see on this parcel, we're making a great investment in wildlife and outdoor recreation enhancement."

The Habitat Wheel Initiative uses the land obtained as a way to create a hub within a community. This hub, open to public hunting, becomes the main location for all wildlife activity throughout the area. PF then works with private landowners to enroll acres adjacent or beyond the hub within various conservation programs, such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Enrolling private land near the hub allows for wildlife movement and distribution throughout the region. The Habitat Wheel Initiative is an Illinois DNR approved landscape scale method for improving and sustaining pheasant, quail and additional wildlife populations. The two other Illinois Habitat Wheel Initiatives are the 635-acre Sibley property located in Ford County and the 118-acre WhiteField property located in Marshall County.

The Cranfill property was purchased through funding from five local Illinois PF chapters including Iroquois County PF, DeKalb County PF, Grand Prairie PF, McHenry County PF and DuPage County PF. Additional funding came from a state wildlife incentive grant equaling \$250,000 with matching funds from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources habitat stamp and a donation of \$280,000 from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation.

"The land acquired by Pheasants Forever on the Cranfill property is one of the best habitat partnership acquisitions the Illinois Department of Natural Resources has been a part of," commented Connie Waggoner, Illinois Department of Natural Resources manager, division of reality and planning. "Mr. Cranfill's acres are perfect for this initiative, as he had already placed a majority of his acres into the CRP. The property already has thriving wildlife habitat for pheasants and bobwhite quail and will require little maintenance before it is open for public use."

"I purchased the land 15 years ago and have steadily worked to make it wildlife friendly through planting food plots and establishing travel lanes," explained Don Cranfill, previous owner of the property and vice president of the Montgomery County PF Chapter. "PF was searching for land in our county and this was the best pheasant terrain around. I am proud of the accomplishments that I have achieved with wild game numbers on the land and expect this to continue under PF, its partners and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources."

Illinois's 43 PF and 10 Quail Forever chapters account for over 7,600 members statewide. Those chapters have spent more than \$8.8 million to complete over 25,000 habitat projects since the first Illinois PF chapter was formed in 1985. Those projects have benefited more than 200,000 acres for wildlife. PF and Quail Forever apply a unique and successful model of empowering local chapters with the responsibility to determine how 100% of their locally raised conservation funds will be spent. PF and Quail Forever are the only national conservation organizations to employ this unique locally-driven chapter model.

PF and Quail Forever are non-profit conservation organizations dedicated to the protection and enhancement of pheasant, quail and other wildlife populations in North America through habitat improvement, land management, public awareness and education. Such efforts benefit landowners and wildlife alike. PF has more than 110,000 members in over 600 local chapters across the continent. In Quail Forever's first 11 months of existence, 63 chapters have formed in 23 different states.

The Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation is a non-profit organization that supports clean energy development and land conservation efforts for people in communities across Illinois. Since its inception, Illinois Clean Energy has awarded more than 2,100 grants totaling more than \$106,000,000. Its land conservation grants have helped protect more than 8,300 acres of natural habitat in the state.

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*For additional information about Pheasants Forever, please visit www.pheasantsforever.org
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