



State Wildlife Agency Tool Kit for Hunting Recruitment and Retention

Project funded from NSSF's Hunting Heritage Trust Grant Program 2019/2020

Introduction

This is the final report on the pilot project: Tool Kit for Hunting Recruitment and Retention, funded by a Hunting Heritage Grant from the National Shooting Sports Foundation. The project focused on two state fish and wildlife agencies to utilize targeted electronic marketing to increase the percentage of hunter education graduates that purchase a hunting license. The Toolkit project involved three phases:

- 1- Creation of a landing page within the state agency's webpage where a suite of items are housed that are useful to hunters, filling the following five needs: Where to go, How to hunt, What you need to hunt, What to do with game meat? Licenses and rules etc.
- 2- Drive traffic to the landing page using email and supplemented by social media.
- 3- Measure the impact of license sales in comparison to the previous year's data; specifically, the rate of license purchases among hunter education graduates. Utilize this information to improve on the marketing plan in subsequent years.

States Selected

The two state agencies that agreed to implement the pilots are the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency. In Iowa, the pilot focused on their pheasant hunting season, and in Tennessee the focus was on deer gun season.

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Iowa

Iowa's landing page can be found at www.iowadnr.gov/HuntIA. Going forward Iowa would like to reorder the items on the landing page to prioritize "How to Hunt" and "Where to Hunt" resources to the areas of the page where viewers' eyes are most likely to go first.

Iowa's landing page



+ Agency Information

+ Pheasant/Quail Biology, Habitat & History

Pheasants, quail, cottontail rabbits, and squirrels are Iowa's most popular upland game species. The Upland Wildlife Research Unit monitors yearly harvest and populations, as well as providing information to landowners and hunters.

Bobwhite Quail Life History Information PDF

Ring-necked Pheasant Life History Information PDF

The Ring-necked Pheasant in Iowa - Farris 1977 PDF

What We Know About Nesting PDF

Effects of Weather and Habitat on Pheasant Survival PDF

What We Know About Weather PDF

Effect of Hunting Seasons on Populations PDF

Pheasant Hunting Fact Sheet PDF

Pheasant Hunting Checklist

What you need to know before you go!

- A hunting license and habitat fee is required to hunt pheasants in Iowa.
- Iowa requires upland game bird hunters to wear at least one of the following articles of visible, external apparel, of which at least 50% of the surface area is solid blaze orange in color: hat, cap, vest, coat, jacket, sweatshirt, sweater, shirt, or coveralls.
- A pheasant foot, fully feathered wing, or fully feathered head is required to be attached to transport a pheasant.
- Firearms must be cased and unloaded in a motor vehicle.
- You must have permission to hunt on private property.
- The daily bag limit for pheasants is 3 and the possession limit is 12 during the season.

Special Youth Season

- Rooster Pheasant: October 19-20, 2019
- Bag Limit: 1
- Possession Limit: 2

Upcoming Learn to Hunt Opportunities

January 11: Edible Outdoors - Rabbit and Squirrel Hunt (Adult Mentored Hunt)

January 25: Connecting Individuals to the Outdoors - Polk County (Adult Yearlong Workshop)

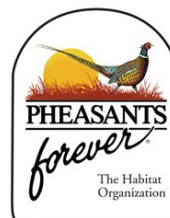
January 25: Field and Vine (21 and Older)

February 22: Wild Game & Wine - Summerset Winery (21 and Older)

Retail & Discounts

JAX Outdoor Gear Hunter Education Graduate Coupon

How to Get Involved



Pheasants Forever is dedicated to the conservation of pheasants, quail and other wildlife through habitat improvements, public awareness, education and land management policies and programs.



Clothing and Gear

Where to Hunt and Shoot

Hunting Methods & Safety

Field Dressing & Cooking

Iowa's Digital Mentor Network



Iowa sent two emails, the first on October 3rd to 11,728 hunter education graduates from 2018. The second email was sent on December 31st to 11,531 people.

Iowa's first email 10/3/19

Congratulations Hunter Education Graduate! Check out this brand new resource website, designed just for new hunters like you. ✕

From: State Of Iowa <StateOfIowa@public.govdelivery.com>

Subject: Congratulations Hunter Education Graduate! Check out this brand new resource website, designed just for new hunters like you.

Having trouble viewing this email? [View it as a Web page.](#)



Experience the Rush of the Flush!

Congratulations Hunter Education Graduate!

Now that you've completed hunter education, we want to make sure you have all the tools you need to make your future hunts a success. Click <http://www.iowadnr.gov/huntia> to check out the Iowa Department of Natural Resource's brand new website, designed just for new hunters like you. It has everything you need to prepare and experience a safe and successful upland bird hunt including the following information:

- What you need to know before you go - licenses, laws, season dates, times, etc.
- Pheasant/quail biology, habitat and history
- Where to hunt and/or shoot
- Pheasant hunting methods and safety
- Field dressing and cooking
- Digital Mentor Network - ask questions to knowledgeable staff and volunteers from your mobile device.
- Upcoming learn to hunt and mentored hunt opportunities (youth & adults)
- Special retail/discount offers just for hunter education graduates
- How to get involved - Pheasants Forever, become a digital mentor, etc.

We hope your first hunting experiences will be enjoyable, safe and provide memories that will last a lifetime!

[Website](#)



Iowa's second email 12/31/19

Start a New Outdoor Tradition in 2020 - Try Pheasant Hunting!

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From: State Of Iowa <StateOfIowa@public.govdelivery.com>

Subject: Start a New Outdoor Tradition in 2020 - Try Pheasant Hunting!

Having trouble viewing this email? [View it as a Web page.](#)



Start a New Outdoor Tradition in 2020 - Try Pheasant Hunting!

Start a new outdoor tradition with your family and friends in 2020 - try pheasant hunting!

Never experienced the rush of the flush? Or just need to further develop your knowledge and skills chasing these wild, Iowa birds? Check out our website that contains everything you need to prepare and experience a safe and successful upland bird hunt.

Information on the website includes:

- What you need to know before you go - licenses, laws, season dates, times, etc.
- Pheasant/quail biology, habitat and history
- Where to hunt and/or shoot
- Pheasant hunting methods and safety
- Field dressing and cooking
- Digital Mentor Network - ask questions to knowledgeable staff and volunteers from your mobile device.
- Upcoming learn to hunt and mentored hunt opportunities
- Special retail/discount offers just for hunter education graduates
- How to get involved - Pheasants Forever, become a digital mentor, etc.

We hope your first hunting experiences will be enjoyable, safe and provide memories that will last a lifetime!

[Website](#)



Iowa Measurements

The first email had an open rate of 55% and a click rate to the landing page of 12%. The second email had an open rate of 33% with an open rate of 11%. Both emails far exceeded normal averages for email solicitations of this type. Overall, there were more than 1,300 visits to the landing page, with 698 of them being first time visitors. During the project, the Iowa DNR completely overhauled their license system. It was projected that it would be in place by the end of the project to facilitate the comparison between 2019 and previous years. Unfortunately, the system was not fully operational until January which prevented the comparison. Overall, the Iowa staff feels strongly that they learned a lot from the pilot and are hopeful to work on the next phase with the Sportsmen's Alliance and National Shooting Sports Foundation to improve using the lessons learned.

"I see great benefits of a targeted email outreach effort to our recent hunter education graduates. We know through both national and local research that the common barriers of not going on to participate in hunting typically stem back to simply not knowing where to go, not knowing what the necessary gear/equipment is to participate, and not having someone to go with. Through our recent efforts in partnership with NSSF and SA, we have been able to create a landing page full of resources new hunters want and need. We have seen great success in regard to our open and click through rates in last fall's campaign.

Current National Averages for Government Emails: 28.77% open rate / 3.99% click through rate

With achieving a 55% and 33% open rate and 12% and 11% click thru rate respectively in our two emails, it proves we were spot on with our target audience (recent hunter education graduates) and that we were providing them with information they were interested in. We look forward to partnering with NSSF and SA on this effort again on 2020!"

Megan Wisecup, Iowa DNR

Tennessee


Where Iowa utilized mostly in state resources for its toolkit, Tennessee pulled from a broad range of sources, including NSSF's Where to Hunt resources, the International Hunter Education Association, National Bowhunter Education Foundation and more to build its page.

The landing page can be found at https://www.tn.gov/twra/hunting/hunter-education/deer-hunting-guide.html?utm_campaign=hunteredgrad&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

Tennessee's landing page


Everything You Need to Know To Go Deer Hunting

Here's some helpful tools to make your hunting trip a success after graduating hunter education.




Before the Hunt

- Licenses, Permit, and Exemptions
- Purchase Licenses
- Want to learn more? Take a class on how to deer hunt.




Tips for the Hunt

- Sighting in your rifle
- Where to sight in your rifle in Tennessee
- Deer can smell you before you can see them. Learn to control your scent.
- Tips for successful deer hunt
- Deer sign – What to look for. What does it mean?
- Gun safety tips
- Essential tree stand safety tips
- Deer Behavior




Where to Hunt

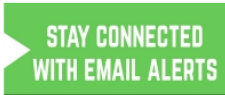
- Link to Wildlife Management Areas WMA
- Public Hunting Areas PHA
- Hunting on Tennessee's National Wildlife Refuges
- Hunting Guide
- Hunting by written permission
- Apply for a Learn to Hunt Class



After the Hunt

- Big Game Check-In
- Field Dressing a deer with Meateater
- Field dressing and Skinning
- Quartering the deer
- Cut Selection and Packaging
- Preparing venison





The original intent was to launch the campaign the first week of November, coinciding with the bulk of state's deer gun season. However, a reorganization of staff within the agency delayed the creation of the website for several weeks. The promotional email was sent on January 3rd. To compensate for a smaller potential audience, Tennessee targeted all Hunter Education Graduates from the previous three years who had not purchased a license, and current hunter education graduates. The promotion reached 22,347 people.



Getting the Most Out of Your Hunt!

Congratulations on being a Hunter Education Graduate!

Since you've completed hunter education, we want to make sure you have all the tools you need to help you hunt with success. [Check out the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency's brand new webpage.](#) It has everything you need to prepare and experience a safe and successful deer hunt including the following information:

- What you need to know before you go - licenses, laws, season dates, times, etc.
- Where to hunt and/or shoot
- Tips on scouting for deer
- Setting up tree stands and tree stand safety
- Sighting in your rifle for hunting season
- The importance of scent control
- Field dressing and cooking
- And more...

If you would like to come to a program to learn to hunt or shoot, [apply for the Hunting and Fishing Academy today!](#)

We hope your hunting experiences will be enjoyable, safe and provide memories that will last a lifetime!



Tennessee Measurements

The email had a 29% open rate with 3% of recipients clicking through to the landing page, a smaller rate likely attributable to the timing of the email which was during the final weeks of Tennessee's deer gun season which lasts several months. However, TWRA reported that the email produced 116 financial transactions, suggesting that although the click rate was lower, many of those utilizing the tool kit were purchasing a license. Ultimately Tennessee did not feel it was useful to pull the data from previous years to evaluate the success of the pilot since the timing greatly reduced its potential. But the agency was extremely pleased with the transactions and the open rate. They received positive feedback on the landing page and are very hopeful to work with the Sportsmen's Alliance and NSSF again to do a second phase of the project.

"We used the toolkit and will continue doing so. Unfortunately, due to some internal issues, we did not get to use it to its fullest potential regarding timing around hunting season. We did see good engagement with the content even though it was used at the end of deer season.

Next year, we're planning to use the toolkit concept again in a way that will be much more effective. We have the landing pages built now and they continue to get engagement. We envision emailing hunter ed grads in a more timely way before the season to be more effective. The transactions from this project suggest we will see an increase in the percentage of hunter education graduates who ultimately purchase a license. We look forward to working with the Sportsmen's Alliance and National Shooting Sports Foundation to design and implement a successful follow-up to our work this year."

Jenifer Wisniewski, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency

Project Summary

There is little doubt that both state agencies learned new tools that will be useful in their overall R3 efforts and the pursuit of their targets, hunter education graduates. While there were some unanticipated hiccups in the project, both states saw results that have convinced their agencies that the tool kit concept is worth exploring further.

The Sportsmen's Alliance is grateful for their partnership on this project, and greatly appreciative for the Hunting Heritage Partnership Grant that made it possible. We look forward to working with NSSF to improve upon what has been learned during this successful pilot project.