

June 18, 2024

**Subject: Senate Bill 860: A Bill to Amend 1994 PA 451**

Sen. Sue Shink, Chair: Committee on Natural Resources and Agriculture  
Sen. John Cherry, Majority Vice Chair: Committee on Natural Resources and Agriculture  
Sen. Kevin Daley, Minority Vice Chair: Committee on Natural Resources and Agriculture  
Sen. Sam Singh, Committee on Natural Resources and Agriculture  
Sen. Dayna Polehanki, Committee on Natural Resources and Agriculture  
Sen. Roger Victory, Committee on Natural Resources and Agriculture  
Sen. Michele Hoytenga, Committee on Natural Resources and Agriculture

Dear Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Agriculture,

Established in 1961, the Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) is North America's foremost conservation organization dedicated to creating healthy forests, fostering abundant wildlife and promoting a conservation ethic. Together with the American Woodcock Society (AWS) (established in 2014), RGS & AWS work with private landowners, forest products industry partners, and government agencies to establish critical wildlife habitat utilizing scientific management practices.

RGS & AWS members and staff recognize the numerous wildlife, economic, recreational, social, climate resiliency and aesthetic values that are generated from managing our lands for wildlife conservation. That is why RGS & AWS members **strongly support** Senate Bill No. 860 that would direct the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to create a plan to restore American woodcock (*Scolopax minor*) populations in alignment with the American Woodcock Conservation Plan.

American woodcock, a migratory upland gamebird, is a species of concern in 30 states across the United States. That includes Michigan and all neighboring states in the Great Lakes Region and northeast United States. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Woodcock Singing Ground Survey indicates woodcock populations have declined 0.67% annually from 2009-2019 and 1.01% annually from 1968-2019. Michigan's forests and uplands have the potential to be leveraged for optimal woodcock habitat to help restore populations and reverse the trend. Its areas of prime habitat positions Michigan as a potential leader in American woodcock within the Great Lakes States.

We know that past criticism of similar bills has focused on the lack of discrete funding to underwrite a restoration plan. RGS & AWS and other conservation organizations feel that this view is shortsighted. Like many other conservation organizations, we believe drafting such a plan is well within the directive of the DNR and, furthermore, is something the DNR should be actively engaged in as part of normal business operations. Therefore, we do not see additional funding stipulated within the bill as necessary.

In addition, RGS & AWS conservation staff have worked with other state agencies to draft similar plans for other upland game species as part of similar collaborative efforts. RGS & AWS and other organizations lent resources and professional expertise to offset those agencies' costs. Through those



efforts, our partners were able to assist in identifying funding sources and strategies that helped focus, leverage, and grow funding for conservation work to implement those plans. To that end, these collaborative efforts actually helped generate additional funding to those states.

Senate Bill No. 860 would allow the state of Michigan and conservation partners to collaborate and communicate more effectively on American woodcock management. This would benefit not only American woodcock but also a host of other game and non-game species across Michigan.

RGS & AWS appreciates the opportunity to comment on this bill. We are eager to lend a hand in drafting the plan if it is passed. We thank you for your time and consideration.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jon Steigerwaldt', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jon Steigerwaldt  
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