

Full Circle Farms Pheasantennial That's a wrap.....for now!

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Redfield Press
605-472-0822

During the Pheasantennial planning, in conjunction with the State push on Pheasant Hunting this year, Redfield had the unique opportunity to honor its heritage and celebrate Statewide the distinct honor of having the first successful pheasant release in Redfield. 100 years ago. H.P. Packard, H.J. Shackle, and H.A. Hagman released six birds at Hagman's Grove.

This pheasant season several different activities were planned for citizens in the Redfield area and visiting pheasant hunters. During the course of planning, it was decided to create a Pheasantennial Park on the east side of the Spink County Courthouse to honor this heritage. While many people worked to make this happen, perhaps the most significant memorial came from Richard Emmerich of Full Circle Farms.

Emmerich, born in SD, has many memories of hunting here and currently owns 7000 acres that he, his family, and Dan Sovinski, a friend who Emmerich says has been there since the beginning, have turned into pheasant habitat. Recently, on November 11, Richard welcomed a large group hunt on his property made up of state officials, city officials, and two winners of the Full Circle Farms Pheasantennial Hunt.

While Emmerich had spoken at the dedication for the park, it was interesting to have the opportunity to meet the man in person and see what he has done for the pheasant. The hunters were greeted by Mr. Emmerich who explained how the hunt would be. They then loaded into Full Circle Farm trucks and enjoyed a drive on the roads that Emmerich, his son James and Dan Sovinski, have constructed in the habitat.

Along the way to the first field they would hunt, wildlife flushed out of the native grasses and crops that Emmerich has worked hard to re-establish on the property. Geese settled in the fields, jackrabbits and deer ran the ground, and one buck ran with the trucks for about a quarter of a mile. While driving, Emmerich, James, and Dan told their vehicle passengers the history of the area they were traveling. Although the wind was a bit cold, those in the trucks were more focused on the beauty of the property.

As the first field was approached, one truck veered a different direction to drop the strategically placed blockers. A second truck dropped off those who would walk the fields and then made a few more stops for more blocks on the outside of the field. The group entered the sorghum and at first all was quiet. Suddenly it seemed the sky was full of pheasant and shouts of "Rooster" as the shots rang out. The process continued for 45 minutes at the most. The walkers took the field slowly while their dogs worked the ground. The pheasant were sitting tight not wanting to take to the air, but still they did. It was difficult to count the number and Richard Emmerich smiles as he says "That's a 50's hunt.

The sight of the pheasants that flushed and filled the sky was incredible. Such numbers surely are not normal.

The last of the hunters leaves the field. All carry birds, and these are quickly piled and the happy group talks about shots, and the thrill of the field. Through it all Richard Emmerich smiles and pats some on the back.

The group, with one pass of the field and sixteen guns has filled their limit. Now it's time for the pictures and bragging. And bragging surely there should be with that experience. Richard Emmerich, by creating this habitat over the last 15 years, has made it a place where pheasants can live and repopulate. Pheasant, deer, geese, etc.

The group reassembles at the "lodge" where Richard Emmerich talks of the future of the pheasant and the role that can be taken to preserve this way of life. He speaks of the other towns that claim to be capital but reminds those there, Redfield is the birthplace. He speaks of the future of children hunting and appreciating their heritage.

Richard Emmerich firmly believes in these things. Perhaps that is part of the reason that Richard Emmerich has donated \$50,000 for the Pheasantennial Park, habitat, and Hunt Safe for the future of hunting.

Emmerich says, "Ten years ago, the land you hunted today did not have pheasant. South Dakota faces many major challenges in the future. Lots of CRP land will be coming out. What will happen then? The pheasant needs shelter, water and food to survive. Will that be available? Access to the birds is another issue. Folks from South Dakota want to hunt and folks from out of state want to hunt. Will there be the numbers to support that? The challenges South Dakota faces are daunting. It is time for people to seriously consider these points and take action. What about hunter replacement to control the numbers. Is there youth being taught to hunt and how does the future of hunting look for them?" Emmerich posed these questions to a quiet group who sat there reflective.

Such questions to ponder on this beautiful day, with a great man whose dedication to the Pheasant and an older way of life is apparent. Thank you Mr. Emmerich for the chance to go, and for supporting the future of pheasants in SD.

For those of you who were unable to attend the groundbreaking at the courthouse lawn, the artists rendering of that project is available for viewing on the first floor of the Spink County Courthouse. (The artist rendering of the project is currently displayed at Redfield City Hall.)