



Stearns County Soil & Water Conservation District

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For Immediate Release

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Register for the 25th annual Stearns County Pheasants Forever Banquet

The Stearns County Pheasant Forever Chapter knows how important their annual banquet is to accomplishing their goal for increased pheasant habitat. This year's banquet will be on **Saturday, March 1 at Gerard's Banquet Center** in Sauk Centre. Since 1983, the Stearns County Chapter has raised over \$2.7 Million for conservation and wildlife habitat projects. Ralph Feld, Stearns County Pheasants Forever Chapter president, is excited about having the banquet for the third year at Gerard's. Ralph states, "Gerard's provides a great meal with plenty of space, and has easy access right off of Interstate 94". Last year approximately 400 attended the annual banquet at Gerard's. The doors will open at 5:30 p.m. for the traditional "Crowing Hour", with dinner and prizes starting at 7:30 p.m. To get your tickets go to www.stearnsfpf.org and click on "Get Tickets". Cost is \$50 which includes a one year membership to Pheasants Forever, dinner and all door prizes. Bring a guest for only an additional \$35 or a Ringneck membership for only \$15. Walk-ins are also welcome!

"Guns are back again this year", says Feld. Banquet attendees will have the opportunity to win over 20 guns during the banquet. "The banquet is a fun way to spend an evening, sharing hunting stories, eating an excellent meal, raising money for local conservation and maybe even win a shotgun". The banquet offers many other prizes that can be won thru raffle tickets, games, silent auction and the live auction. Prizes include guns, wildlife prints and much more!

Ralph says "one of the great things about the Pheasants Forever organization is that the money raised locally is used for local conservation projects". These locally raised funds have leveraged state and federal funds resulting in 29 Wildlife Management Areas, encompassing over 3,400 acres. Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are part of Minnesota's outdoor recreation system and are established to protect those lands and waters that have a high potential for wildlife production, public hunting, trapping, fishing, and other compatible recreational uses. The Stearns County Pheasant Forever Chapter does more than just acquire public hunting land. They also support a full-time Pheasants Forever biologist, Jason Selvog. Jason's office is located at the USDA Service Center in Waite Park, MN. Jason works with private landowners to improve wildlife habitat and water quality by promoting the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and related USDA Farm Bill programs. In 2007, Jason assisted with 127 contracts covering 2053 acres in the in Stearns County. Dennis Fuchs, Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District administrator, said "the Continuous CRP program protects our water quality and natural resources by enrolling marginal cropland such as riparian or wetlands, and at the same time provides excellent wildlife habitat. Jason states, "Being co-located with the Stearns County SWCD, Farm Service Agency, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service increases my efficiency and allows me to contact more landowners about the available programs."

Ralph summarizes "If you are interested in protecting, restoring, and enhancing wildlife habitat in Stearns County, we hope to see you at our Pheasant Forever annual banquet." Additional information for the Stearns County Pheasants Forever Chapter banquet is available on the web at www.stearnsfpf.org

Pheasants Forever is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and enhancement of pheasant and other wildlife populations in North America through habitat improvement, land management, public awareness, and education. Nationally, Pheasants Forever has over 100,000 grassroots members and volunteers who have developed more than 3 million acres of pheasant and other wildlife habitat since inception. The Stearns County Chapter is one of over 600 local chapters completing over 25,000 projects annually. More than 4,000 educators promoting conservation through the Leopold Education Project including a vast network of individual and corporate contributors are part of this contribution.

All programs and services of the Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District are available without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status.