

# ***NOVICE HUNTER PROGRAM NE Region 5-year Pilot Summary***

- Target Audience- Complete Hunter Ed within 3 years, 12+ years old
- Intro to small game through pheasants
  - Lecture
  - Wingshooting Clinic
  - Field Clinic
  - NHP Walk-In and Mentored Hunts



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Novice Hunter Program (NHP) is an outreach program that targets new hunters and uses pheasant hunting as a way to introduce skills that can be used for other hunting interests. The program addresses many challenges a new hunter with little access to mentors must overcome. The target audience focuses on people that have completed hunter ed within 3 years of class, 12 years or older (note this is not a youth outreach program), and have limited access to mentors. NHP is a product of a Wildlife Commission discussion on recruitment and retention and designed to be evaluated after a 5 year pilot program. The evaluation includes looking at license buying patterns and a post-season student survey on core elements of the program.

The program starts with an 8 hour day that includes lecture on pheasant behavior, habitat, behavior, hunting tactics, regulations, and where to hunt. It moves outdoors with a wingshooting clinic and field exercise. Upon completion, the students receive access to NHP WIA fields in NE Colorado for the season after completing the class. For those that need more, we offer mentored pheasant hunts to students during the season. These are wild pheasant hunts and not a game farm hunt.

## *Quick Summary Data*

5 Year Pilot Program- 2013-2017

767 Students

38 Classes

27% Female and 73% Male

40% under 19 years old

46% attended at least 1 Mentored Hunt

458 mentored hunts in 5 years.



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The program began in 2013 and concluded at the end of the 2017/2018 pheasant season. NHP had 767 students complete the class. There were 38 classes across the 5 year pilot program.

A quick look at simple demographics, about one quarter of the students were female and 40% were youth. This is not a youth focused program. Many youth took the class along with one or both parents and siblings.

46% of the students attended at least one mentored hunt. The program focused on pheasant hunts, but also provided dove hunts. There were 458 mentored hunters, however, some of the students attended more than one mentored hunt.

## Participation by Age

Age	Count	%
18 and under	310	40
Adults 19+	457	60
19-29	96	13
<b>30-39</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>21</b>
40-49	139	18
50+	61	8



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Over half the participants are adults. Note that the next highest demographic are adults age 30-39, followed by adults aged 40-49. There are plenty of adults interested in learning how to hunt for various reasons. Many are taking the class with their spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, and kids. Others have always wanted to try hunting but have no family or friends that hunt and this was a way to learn and possibly meet other people.

*Post Evaluation- 35% response*

	<u>Satisfaction</u>	<u>Importance</u>
Overall	98%	
Classroom	97%	97%
Field Simulations	96%	93%
Wingshooting	87%	86%
Instructors/Mentors	98%	
NHP WIA	78%	94%
Mentored Hunts		82%
Given NHP, will hunt again?	95%	



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Each student was asked to fill out a standardized survey of the core program elements after the pheasant season ended. The response rate was 35%.

To simplify this slide, the “Satisfaction” and “Importance” presented is the addition of “Very....” and “Somewhat.....” responses.

Satisfaction and Importance ranked quite high on most of the core elements of the program. NHP WIA scored lowest in satisfaction and high in importance. This may be due to the long drive to NHP WIA and/or unrealistic expectations of just how challenging pheasant hunting can be.

Wingshooting scored next lowest, though still pretty high. Most written comments were positive about the program. Some comments requested more time wingshooting. The wingshooting clinic is one of the higher financial costs to the program, as NHP provides the clays, ammo, loaner shotguns, and throwers.

One of the questions asked- “Given participation in NHP, do you plan to hunt pheasants again? The 95% response from this survey is higher than the average 83% that actually bought a small game license the year they took NHP.

# Evaluation- License Buying

NHP Small Game and Combo								
Class Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	% buy license
2013	4	28	<b>97</b>	61	52	43	43	85.8%
2014	10	17	53	<b>124</b>	72	54	55	81.0%
2015	4	6	28	63	<b>149</b>	85	77	84.7%
2016			10	25	64	<b>168</b>	108	82.0%
2017				7	12	46	<b>98</b>	81.7%
								<b>83.0%</b>

Peak Small Game Licenses during Class Year.  
Pattern of declining license buying.



The records of each student’s license purchases was collected and analyzed for patterns of retention. This simple crosstab shows the number of small game and combo licenses each year, broken up by the NHP class year. Note red boxes that stair step down, indicating the number of small game and combo licenses purchased the year the students took the NHP class. The patterns show the highest number of small game licenses were purchased the year they took the class. 83% of the students actually purchased a license for the hunting season the year they took NHP.

Small game license purchasing, based off of license sales, starts to decline slowly in following years. We did not survey students on reasons for this. The number of licenses purchased after the year the students took their NHP class is higher than the years before.

## Comparison with HE Data

Average money spent by each student each year since taking class.

	HE	NHP	Change	100 Student Factor
Small Game	\$5.55	\$13.41	+\$7.86	\$786
Big Game	\$12.62	\$17.39	+\$4.77	\$477
Turkey	\$0.73	\$1.99	+\$1.26	\$126
Duck Stamps	\$1.14	\$0.65	-\$0.49	-\$49
Fishing	\$5.26	\$4.30	-\$0.96	-\$96
				+\$1244



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Looking beyond recruitment of hunters, we also compared NHP license buying patterns with a similar group of Hunter Education students. NHP is a next step after students gain the base knowledge and interest started in Hunter Education. The data looked at a random 500 students that completed Hunter Ed in the NE Region during the years 2013-2017. Age and gender demographics were similar between the two data sets.

The data was studied in numerous ways. This data set is challenging to quantify since students have had varying numbers of years to purchase licenses depending on when they completed their class. The first year's class has had 5 seasons of buying licenses since completing class, while the 2017 class has had only 1 season. For the sake of simplifying this presentation, this table compares the average money spent by student, each year, since taking their Hunter Education or NHP class, organized by small game/combo, big game, turkey, waterfowl interest through purchase of state and federal duck stamps, and fishing licenses.

Students that participated in NHP spent more money each year after the class than the sample from Hunter Ed alone. The highest increase was in small game, but there was a sizeable increase in both big game and turkey hunting interest. We also compared the interest in waterfowl hunting specifically through the purchases in state and federal waterfowl stamps and there is a small decline in money spent by NHP students over Hunter Education students. Fishing license sales decreased in the NHP data set compared to Hunter Ed data, however, it is assumed that many of the NHP students purchased the small game/fishing combo which was tracked under the small game category, and does not represent a decrease in fishing participation.

The last column of this table provides an estimate of what we would expect for each 100 students that complete NHP over those that only complete hunter education. The data suggests that participation in NHP after completing Hunter Education results in greater participation in hunting (based on money spent) than just Hunter Education alone.

Please note that the targeted audience of NHP are hunters that do not have mentor support, which is a known hurdle to recruitment and retention. While not every NHP student progresses from class to identify as a hunter, the program does address common challenges for potential future hunters. And the data suggests that participation in NHP after Hunter Education is a positive step in recruiting and retaining many of these participants.

## *NHP- Credits for Success*

Regional Manager

DWMs and AWMs- all 5 areas

Habitat Coordinators

State Parks

Dr. Quartuch

Hunter Outreach Coordinators

Hunter Outreach Volunteers

Pheasants Forever



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The Novice Hunter Program is one of the few outreach programs to be evaluated in this way, but it appears it is meeting its goals of recruiting and retaining hunters. The success of pulling off this program credits so much support and effort from a lot of people, from the Regional Manager (past and present), AWM's and DWM's from all 5 areas of the NE Region, Ed Gorman- both in developing so much of the program structure, but also coordinating the NHP WIA fields, State Parks- specifically Barr Lake, Dr. Quartuche for help with evaluating the program, Hunter Outreach and Volunteer Coordinators, and a strong army of Hunter Outreach Volunteers, along with support along the way from Pheasants Forever.

We are nearing the end of the sixth year of the Novice Hunter Program and starting to coordinate the seventh this summer of 2019. The program will continue very similar to past years expecting a target of 80-100 students.