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**DEC ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR PHEASANT RELEASE PROGRAMS
Applications For Cooperative Programs Due By March 15**

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) today announced the opening of the application period for its two cooperative programs to enhance opportunities for pheasant hunting in New York State – The Day-Old Pheasant Chick Program and the Young Pheasant Release Program.

The programs provide pheasant hunting opportunities through a partnership amongst DEC, sportsmen and sportswomen, 4-H youth, and landowners who are interested in rearing and releasing pheasants.

In 2009, DEC distributed 50,293 day-old pheasant chicks and 13,880 young pheasants to qualified applicants through the two programs. Applications must be filed with a DEC regional wildlife manager by March 15, 2010.

The Day-Old Pheasant Chick Program began in the early 1900s. In the early days, pheasant eggs and chicks were distributed to farmers and rural youth. Today, day-old chicks are available at no cost to participants who are able to provide a brooding facility, a covered outdoor rearing pen, and an adequate release site. Approved applicants will receive the day-old chicks in April, May, or June.

Daily care is necessary to monitor the health of the birds and to ensure there is adequate feed and water for the rapidly growing chicks. The pheasants may be released when they are eight weeks old or older and no later than the end of the pheasant hunting season, which varies among different regions of the State. All release sites must be approved in advance by DEC and must be open for public hunting.

The Young Pheasant Release Program (YPRP) was developed in 1992 with assistance from organized sportsmen and sportswomen. The program distributes young pheasants (seven to 10 weeks old) free-of-charge to cooperators in June, July, and August. Birds are released into temporary holding pens built by the cooperators, who also provide food and water for two weeks as the birds acclimate to the surrounding habitat. The summer months are ideal for releasing young pheasants

because of stable weather conditions, ample natural foods, and dense vegetative cover that helps the birds hide or escape from predators.

The YPRP is intended to provide a more traditional hunting experience for wild birds and provide an opportunity for hands-on involvement in improving pheasant hunting opportunities. Each release site approved by DEC is eligible to receive 40 young pheasants. No YPRP birds can be released on private shooting preserves and all release sites must provide public pheasant hunting opportunities. The program is funded through the State Conservation Fund from license fees paid by hunters, trappers, and anglers.

For more information in the Allegany County area, please contact Michelle Sloat either by email or ph: at 585-268-7644 ext. 11.