

The 2011 August Roadside Report and pheasant hunting prospects map is available online.

## Hunting seasons to open soon; DNR offers helpful reminders

Minnesota's dove, rail and snipe seasons – the first small game hunting seasons of the fall – will open Thursday, Sept. 1, according to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The state's sandhill crane and early goose seasons open Sept. 3, followed by the small game and archery deer seasons on Saturday, Sept. 17. The duck season opens Sept. 24, the pheasant season Oct. 15, prairie chicken (by permit only) Oct. 22 and the statewide firearms deer season on Nov. 5. Youth waterfowl day is Sept. 10. Take a Kid Hunting Weekend is

Sept. 24-25.

"Before long, the crisp mornings and the sight of orange- or camo-clad hunters will be common again," said Dennis Simon, DNR wildlife chief. "Hunters should take a good look at the regulation book this year as a number of season, bag limit, and other changes have been implemented in the name of opportunity and simplicity."

The 2011 Hunting and Trapping Regulations Handbook is available online. Copies soon will be available wherever hunting licenses are sold.

Simon said ruffed grouse,

waterfowl, and deer numbers look good this year. Pheasant numbers, he predicted, will be down from last year. This is due to mortality from last winter's deep snow and tough winter roosting conditions, plus a protracted cool, rainy spring that reduced survival rates of newly hatched chicks.

Other information hunters should know includes:

\* **Walk In Access (WIA) program:** Lands enrolled and posted in this new program will be open to public hunting from Sept. 1 through May 31.

\* **Take a Kid Hunting Weekend:** This annual event will coincide with duck season opener. Adult residents accompanied by a youth under age 16 may hunt small game without a license or Minnesota waterfowl stamp on Sept. 24-25.

\* **Sandhill cranes:** The state's second sandhill crane hunting season will open Sept 3. It is limited to the northwest goose zone in northwestern Minnesota. A valid small game license and sandhill crane hunting permit (\$3) are required. The agency is preparing a sandhill crane management plan to guide the bird's future management in Minnesota. This will include identifying any additional crane breeding monitoring or assessment needs.

\* **Chronic Wasting Disease:** CWD's presence in southeastern Minnesota has prompted several regulatory changes, including the creation of a new CWD management area called Area 602. Deer harvested in this

area will be subject to mandatory sampling for certain deer, as well as additional transportation requirements.

\* **Hunter Choice:** This new deer area designation will allow hunters to take one either-sex deer without having to enter the either-sex deer permit lottery or possess an either-sex permit.

\* **Apprentice Hunter Validation Program:** This program, which previously allowed a one-year exemption from firearms safety certification, has been changed to allow a two-year exemption.

\* **Handgun possession:** The possession of a handgun by a person authorized to carry and possess other firearms not legal for big game is allowed while muzzleloader hunting.

\* **Early antlerless deer season:** This season is not being offered this year. If necessary, it will be offered in 2012.

\* **Deer stands:** The 16-foot height restriction for elevated stands has been removed.

\* **Site Validation coupons:** These will be required for trappers harvesting fisher, pine marten and river otter.

\* **Bear baiting:** Drums may be used on private land.

A complete calendar of hunting and fishing season openers, closings and lottery application deadlines is available online.