



MINNESOTA PRAIRIE CHICKEN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Volume 52 No's. 2/3 Spring-Summer 2026

Big Boomer Turns 50!

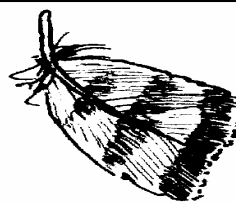
By Ross H. Hier

The city of Rothsay, also known as “The Prairie Chicken Capital of Minnesota”, held several days of festivities in late June of 2026. It was a celebration of Big Boomer’s 50th birthday. The very distinctive statue was created by Art Fosse and his crew of young men. Big Boomer is one of the most distinctive and accurately created “big statues” that can be seen in many towns throughout the Upper Midwest and Prairie Canada. He has held up very well over his 50 years; requiring a new plumage (i.e. fresh paint) only once or twice. He last refreshed his plumage in 2008 with a couple “touchups” of his combs and neck sacs since then. Rothsay also created “Little Boomer”; a smaller Greater prairie chicken statue that resides on a trailer and can be exhibited at parades and other celebratory occasions.

Festivities varied from a competitive mini-marathon to softball games, craft and art vendors and various food and drink sales. The Saturday afternoon highlight was the opening of the 50-year Time Capsule. They did such a great job of sealing the capsule in cement, that it took many hours to “break” into it! Fortunately, the event organizers thought this may be a possibility so they started working-on getting the capsule out of the concrete many hours ahead of the opening. The capsule held many items from Rothsay which were commonplace 50 years ago ... it also held some items that can no longer be found in Rothsay (e.g. items from local businesses that no longer exist). Some of the distinctive “prairie chicken lapel pins” made in 1976 were part of the treasure (cont’d on Pg 2).

Editor’s Note:

After a rather chilly May, June brought about timely rains throughout Minnesota’s prairie chicken range but near and/or record heat and strong winds throughout July has put much of the state back into drought conditions. It’s hard to know at this time how reproduction went for many upland bird species. **RHH**



FEATHER FEATURES

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The Time Capsule opening was overseen by Mayor Shane Balken. It took over 30 minutes to take all the items out of the approximately 1 1/2-ft by 3-ft capsule. Prior to the opening several local residents who had been instrumental in creating the idea of Rothsay being “The Prairie Chicken Capital of Minnesota” spoke. There are very few still living. This portion of the ceremony was highlighted by Janice Rudh. Rudh, now 88 years old, spoke for about 15 minutes on how the city pushed to create their unique image tied to native prairies, Greater prairie chickens, and agriculture. She was part of a “dynamic duo”; the other member being the late Roberta Ouse. Janice mentioned an individual who planted the idea in their brains; although she did not mention him by name, that individual would be one of MPC’s Director’s-At-Large ... Dr. W. Dan Svedarsky. It is amazing to see what an idea combined with the passion and vigor of a few community members can do for a small, rural town. Post-ceremony, all participants were treated to delicious “birthday cake”.

Today, the silhouette of a Greater prairie chicken can be seen on Rothsay city vehicles, letterhead and more.

Your Editor thoroughly enjoyed participating in the celebration for Big Boomer. He was just one of a very large gathering of people on that sunny Saturday in Rothsay. Here’s hoping for another 50 years for Big Boomer; the city that created him, and the grasslands and prairie creatures (including prairie chickens) that require those local grasslands for survival.



The crowd gathering near the 50-year-old Rothsay Time Capsule.
Note “Little Boomer” in the back ground.



Mayor Balkan telling the crowd about the soon-to-be opened Time Capsule.



Janice Rudh telling the crowd about the history of Big Boomer and the Time Capsule.



Committee Member for Big Boomer's 50th Bash, Stephanie Curtis, sporting the fantastic T-shirt created for committee members.

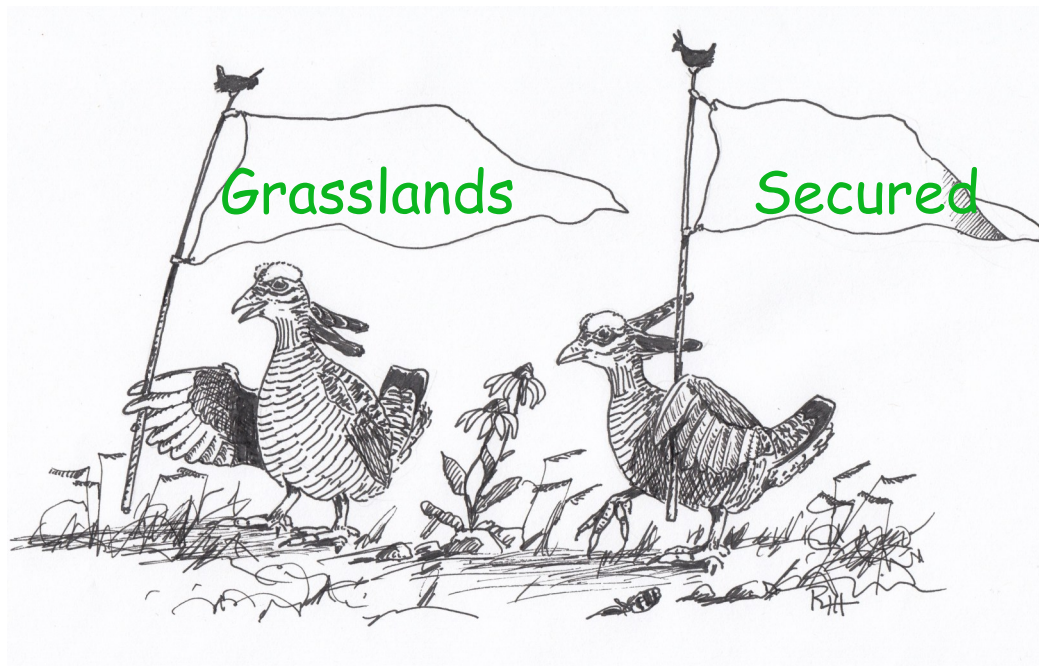


The new sign created by your Editor and set-up by Rothsay city personnel.



The new sign that was erected near Big Boomer and the new information kiosk in Rothsay, Minnesota ... Summer 2026.





Conservation Groups Work Together To Secure 1,900 acres of Grassland Habitats In Clay County, Minnesota

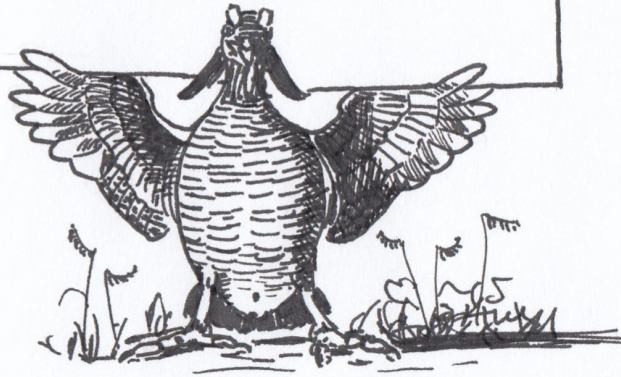
This past May, several conservation groups worked together to acquire 1,900 acres on the Glacial Lake Beachline near Felton, Minnesota. This acquisition ties into numerous protected and private lands that provide habitat for Greater prairie chickens and many other native flora and fauna in that area. A partnership between Pheasants Forever, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society came together to purchase a substantial tract that has been sought after for sometime. Minnesota's Outdoor Heritage funding played a major role in this acquisition.

There are many acres of native prairie on this tract along with some tilled land on rather marginal soils that will undergo prairie restoration efforts. Typical of many beachline grasslands, this tract contains much "dry prairie". It is an extremely important part of the regional grasslands between Ulen and Felton.

The tract will be divided into various parcels; TNC receiving 480 acres adjacent to its existing Blazing Star Prairie Preserve, 320 acres to the new Keene Wildlife Management Area (MNDNR) and 1,100 acres to the USFWS as part of the Flickertail Prairie Waterfowl Production Area. These lands will be open to the public for hunting.

Members of our organization can be extremely proud of their part played in this acquisition.

MPCS Board has a New President!



Brian Winter, our intrepid leader for over 33 years decided to step down from the role of MPCS Board President last Fall. Brian's leadership oversaw so many positive changes during his tenure ... so many accomplishments. A much stronger Treasury, our Website and e-Newsletter but the greatest of these being the society's plunge into land acquisition in partnership with Pheasants Forever. Brian's vast network of people, acquired through years of working with and treating folks with dignity, kept our society running at a very high level. He is such a great human and it has been the board's honor to serve under his leadership! Thankfully, Brian will remain on the board.

MPCS's new President is long time supporter (and often board member), Doug Wells of Fergus Falls. He is a retired wildlife biologist who spent his career on the prairies of west-central Minnesota with the MNDNR and USFWS. Doug's thoughtful, diplomatic approach to life will serve MPCS well. He will serve a limited term as the MPCS Board has decided the presidency needs to have more turnover so as not to burden the incumbent for too many years. The board is so grateful to Doug for stepping-up at this time of presidential transition.





Former MPCS President, Brian Winter with Little Boomer in 2021



Doug Wells at the Annual MPCS meeting in Rothsay in 2023



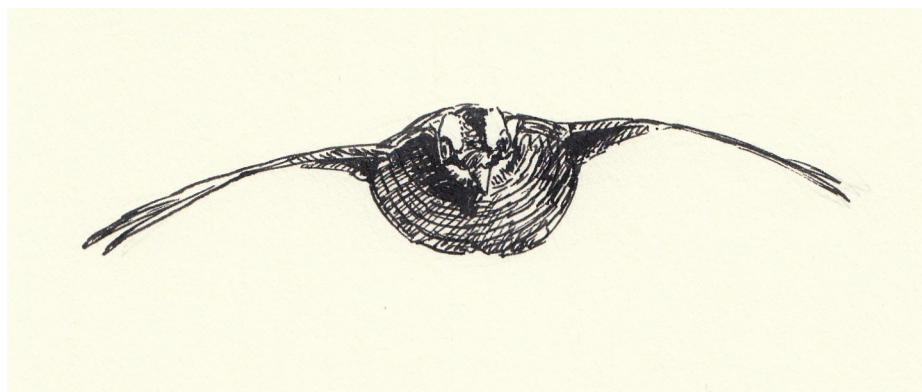
New Board Members Join Our Flock

By Ross H. Hier

The MPCS Board has had to make some changes to board membership as a result of recent announcements by certain Minnesota state agencies. The board is very happy to announce the additions of 2 new board members. Bill Pettit is a retiree who spent much of his working career in sales. I met him for the first time at Pheasant Fest; little doubt he knows how to sell as he added several new memberships to our group in the time he was in the MPCS booth. I believe Bill is also a Life Member of MPCS. Our other new board member is Derek Savage. Derek currently works for TNC and will bring good energy to the board. We are thrilled to have these 2 individuals join the MPCS Board. “Welcome Aboard the Prairie Schooner”!

The Adventures of Tympie Nuchus

By Ross H. Hier





MPCS Board Members

(Updated 6 August 2026)

Officers:

Board Members:

Terms Expiring in 2027

Terms Expiring in 2028

Terms Expiring in 2029

President:

Doug Wells

William E. "Bill" Faber
Matt Mecklenburg

Luke Anderson
Phil Doll

Bill Pettit
Travis Issendorf

V-P/Secr/ Archivist:

Ross H. Hier

Chris Merkord

Doug Hedtke

Stacy Salvevold

Derek Savage

Sara Vacek

John Voz

Treasurer:

Phil Doll

Ross H. Hier

Neal Feeken

Brian Winter

Newsletter Editor:

Ross H. Hier

Director-At-Large: Terry Wolfe and Dan Svedarsky

Website/Facebook Coordinator: Sonia Winter; Mpcs.web@gmail.com

Twitter Coordinator: Phil Doll; [@M_P_C_S](https://twitter.com/M_P_C_S)

Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society Membership

Your gift membership will help! Any tax deductible contribution or donation will bring you the MPCS Newsletter and supports the Society's efforts to save Minnesota's prairie chickens and their habitats. Renew your membership today!

The Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society is a non-profit wildlife conservation organization exempt from Federal Income tax as described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions made to the Society are deductible by donors as provided in Section 170 of the Code. The Society's Federal Identification number is #41-1327954.

- ☐ I would like to make a membership contribution.
- ☐ I would like to contribute to Prairie Chicken Habitat Improvement.
- ☐ I would like to renew my membership.

Or RENEW ONLINE with PayPal at: <https://www.prairiechickens.org/donate>

Name: _____

Address/City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

MPCS e-Newsletters

Take a look.

www.prairiechickens.org

