



DEC accepting applications for annual Pheasant Release Program

ALBANY—The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has announced that applications are now available for DEC's cooperative Day-Old Pheasant Chick Program, which allows people to participate in raising and releasing pheasants to enhance the state's fall hunting opportunities. The program is provided through DEC's partnership with hunters, 4-H youth, and interested landowners.

“For more than a century, volunteers have been working with DEC to successfully raise and release pheasant chicks to bolster hunting opportunities in New York State,” Commissioner Basil Seggos said. “The Day-Old Pheasant Chick Program is a great way to learn about animal husbandry and wildlife management.”

The Day-Old Pheasant Chick Program began in the early 1900s. At that time, the state Conservation Department (precursor to DEC) distributed pheasant eggs and chicks to farmers and rural youth, a tradition that continues to this day.

In 2020, DEC distributed more than 31,500

day-old pheasant chicks to qualified applicants.

Day-old chicks are available at no cost to participants that can provide a brooding facility, covered outdoor rearing pen, and an adequate release site. Approved applicants will receive the day-old chicks in April, May, or June. No chicks obtained through the Day-Old Pheasant Chick Program can be released on private shooting preserves and all release sites must be approved in advance by DEC and be open for public pheasant hunting opportunities.

The program is funded through the State Conservation Fund from license fees paid by hunters, trappers, and anglers.

Applicants are required to provide daily care to the rapidly growing chicks, monitor the birds' health, and ensure the chicks have adequate feed and water. The pheasants may be released beginning when they are eight weeks old and must be released no later than December 1.

Applications must be filed with a DEC regional wildlife manager by March 25. For questions about the program or eligibility, call 607-273-2768.

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