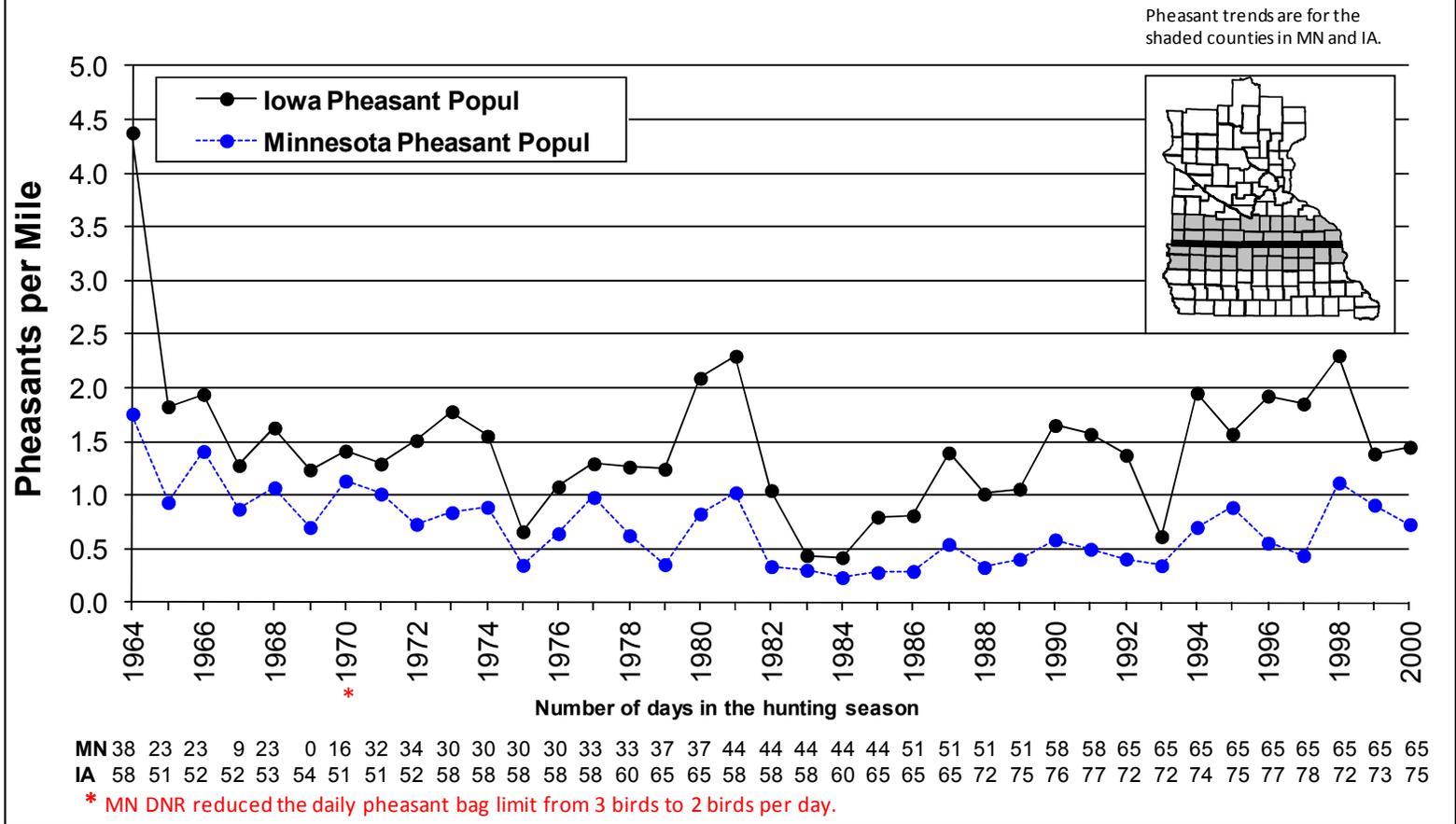


Impact of Rooster Only Hunting on Pheasant Populations

Biologists have long recognized there is little danger of overharvesting males with a roosters-only hunting season because the polygamous breeding habits of pheasants ensure that only a small percentage of the males are actually needed for reproduction.

Public response to declining pheasant populations is often manifested in demands for reduced harvest to speed population recovery.

Iowa DNR along with Minnesota DNR's tested this concept along our joint border in the early 1970's.



Following severe winters MN severely reduced (1967) or closed (1969) their pheasant season. Iowa maintain regular season lengths and bag limits. The MN DNR in addition reduced their daily pheasant limit from 3 to 2 roosters in 1970 and this remained in effect through 2000. Iowa's daily bag limit has always been 3 roosters. Population trends both sides of the border showed the same pattern even though MN has consistently been more restrictive with hunting regulations. Pheasant populations are regulated by habitat and weather, not by hunting.

Iowa's pheasant counts have always averaged higher because the Iowa DNR has acquired a lot of top quality public land along the MN border. Pheasant populations in both states crashed from 1981-84 following 3 severe winters. Both states showed a steady increasing trend in pheasant populations from 1985 onward – the Conservation Reserve Program started in 1985 and added significant pheasant habitat to both states. Note Iowa's pheasant population increased at a faster rate than Minnesota's even though Iowa had consistently longer pheasant hunting seasons and a higher daily bag limit from 1985 thru 2000.