

Chapter 4: Management Direction

Litchfield Wetland Management District

This chapter of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan steps down overall guidance to the District through station specific objectives and strategies. Some objectives and strategies are unique to the Litchfield Wetland Management District while others are shared in common with the other Minnesota Districts. All objectives and strategies were developed to achieve the Plan's goals, the District's purpose and the National Wildlife Refuge System's mission (Chapters 1 and 2).

The Litchfield Wetland Management District was established in 1978 to manage tracts purchased under the Small Wetlands Acquisition Program. The District manages 148 WPAs covering more than 33,000 acres of fee title lands and 417 easements covering 33,213 acres (Figure 10). These tracts are scattered throughout seven central counties of Minnesota. The District has proposed 102 Conservation Easements on land on the inventory of the Farmers Home Administration in 16 counties covering 7,166 acres to date; 36 of these easements totaling 2,871 acres have been recorded.

District lands include portions of the northern mixed forest, eastern hardwood forest, oak savanna, and tallgrass prairie biomes. Soils, precipitation, climate, water quality, and land use vary greatly but essentially all areas have been significantly altered and degraded by human activities.

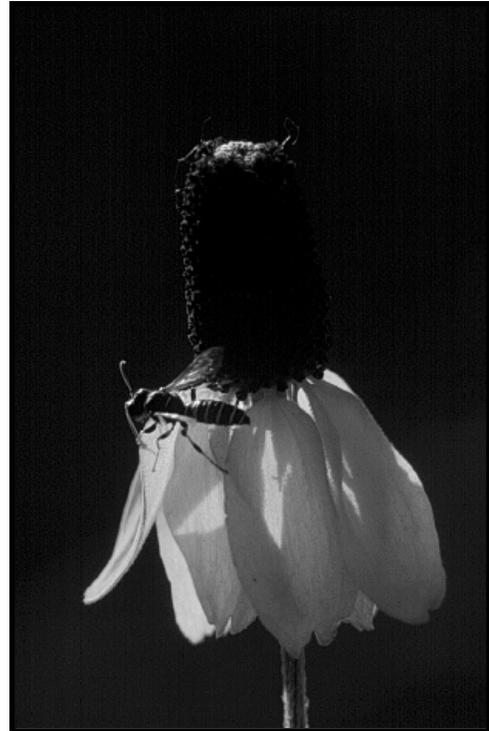
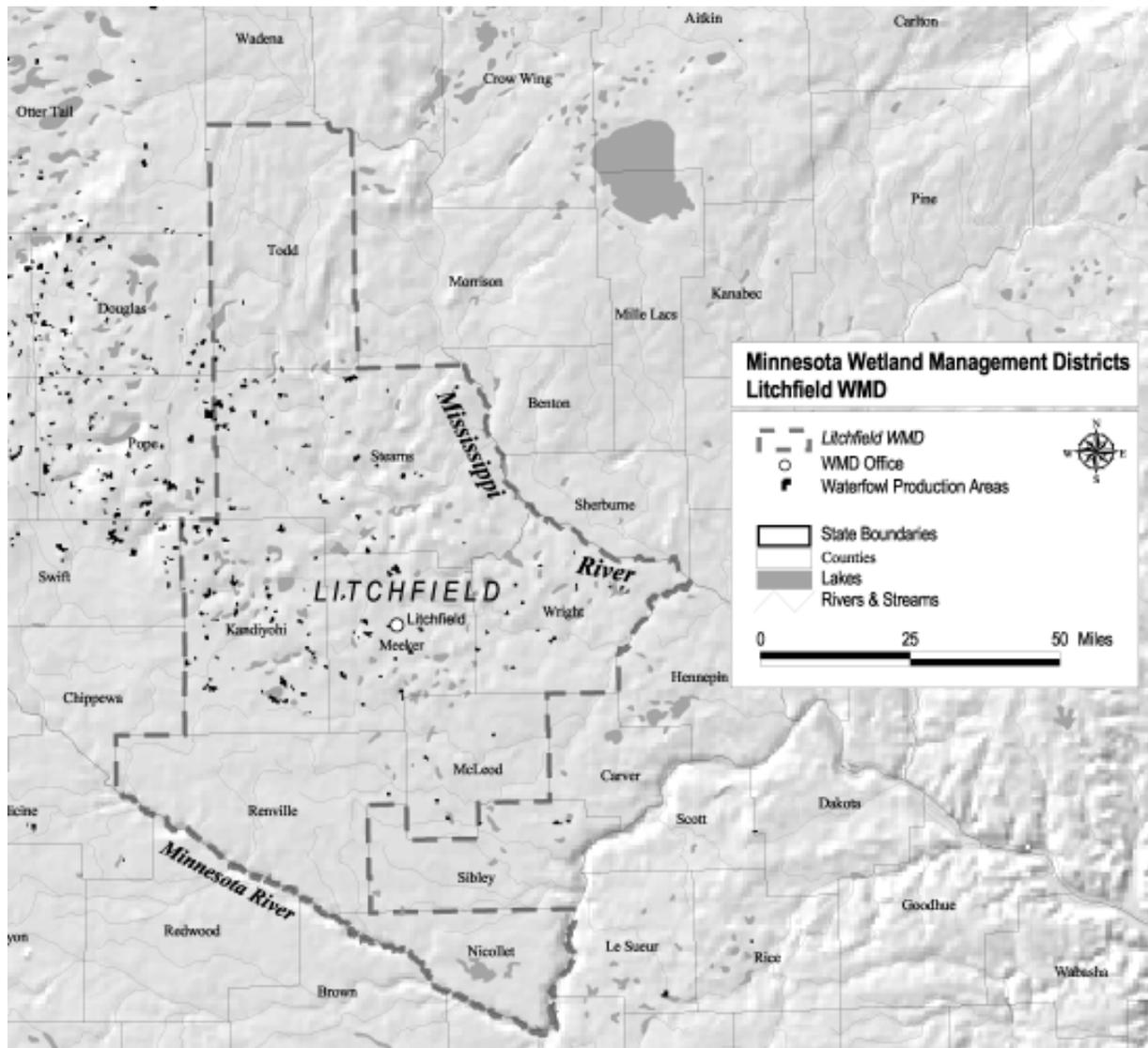


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Major Habitat Types of Waterfowl Production Areas in the Litchfield Wetland Management District (in acres)

Native prairie (virgin)	2,653
Other grasslands/farmland	14,310
Forested/brushland	2,969
Wetland/riverine	13,281
<i>Total</i>	<i>33,213</i>

Figure 10: Litchfield Wetland Management District



Management Direction

Wildlife and Habitat

Goal 1: Wildlife

Strive to preserve and maintain diversity and increase the abundance of waterfowl and other key wildlife species in the Northern Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem. Seek sustainable solutions to the impact of Canada Geese on adjacent private croplands. Preserve, restore, and enhance resident wildlife populations where compatible with waterfowl and the preservation of other trust species.

Objective 1.1: Update MAAPE Process. The District will request that the Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET) review the Multi-agency Approach to Planning and Evaluation (MAAPE)

process every 5 years to incorporate monitoring results and reevaluate strategies for increasing waterfowl production within the Districts.

Strategy 1.1.1: Contact HAPET within 1 year of Plan approval and formally request that the 4-square-mile study be revised to include all of the District.

Strategy 1.1.2: Contact HAPET within 1 year of Plan approval and formally request that the 4-square-mile study output reports be modified so waterfowl production estimates reflect actual production within the Wetland Management District, not non-District areas and counties.

Objective 1.2: Alternative Waterfowl Monitoring. The District will develop alternative monitoring techniques within 3 years of Plan approval for waterfowl abundance and productivity estimates in areas that are not well-covered by the 4-square-mile monitoring program. These estimates should be developed in cooperation with the HAPET office since the current 4-square-mile data is used in the mallard model and forms the basis of the MAAPE process.

Strategy 1.2.1: Hire a wildlife biologist to initiate and conduct a monitoring program for the District with specific emphasis on biologically sound monitoring of waterfowl populations. RONS Project No.0042

Strategy 1.2.2: Work with other districts and appropriate partners to develop Flexible Fund project proposal(s) through the Headwaters Ecosystem Team for a 3-year study of dabbling duck habitat preferences, use rates, and nesting success. Submit to appropriate fund managers for review within 3 years of Plan approval.

Strategy 1.2.3: Work with other districts and appropriate partners to develop a Flexible Fund project proposal through the Headwaters Ecosystem Team for a study of waterfowl predator population ranges and densities within the tallgrass prairie area of western Minnesota. Submit to appropriate fund managers for review within 6 years of Plan approval.

Strategy 1.2.4: Develop and implement a comprehensive inventory/monitoring plan for waterfowl and grassland birds of concern in the District. RONS Projects No. 00034 and No. 0042.

Objective 1.3: Recruitment Rate. Litchfield Wetland Management District staff will strive to increase the recruitment rate for mallards and blue-wing teal on District WPAs by 10 percent by the year 2010.

Strategy 1.3.1: A request will be made to HAPET within 1 year of Plan approval to determine average recruitment rates for mallards and blue-wing teal on District WPAs.

Strategy 1.3.2: Recruitment rates will be increased by annually converting 500 acres of cropland to grassland within the District. RONS Project Nos. 00025, 00004, 00006, 00061

Strategy 1.3.3: The District will strive to provide secure nesting conditions for waterfowl such that average nest success exceeds 15 percent Mayfield Index on District WPAs.

Strategy 1.3.4: Implement other methods of increasing recruitment rates and nest success that are supported by scientific studies.

Strategy 1.3.5: The District will continue to maintain and monitor all existing structures and relocate structures that have not been used for 5 successive years.

Objective 1.4: Violations. Each year, the District will inspect all WPA, FmHA Conservation, Habitat, and Waterfowl Production Easements for compliance to insure protection of migratory waterfowl and other habitats. Any illegal activity will be responded to within 2 weeks of discovery. Any illegal modifications to wetlands, habitat, boundaries, or facilities will be restored as soon as possible.

Strategy 1.4.1: Additional enforcement staff and funding for support services such as aircraft rental and photographs will be requested. RONS Project Nos. 97026, No. 98015, No. 00009

Strategy 1.4.2: A volunteer, volunteer coordinator will be recruited. If an appropriate person is found, a program to find, train, and support a team of volunteers who will inspect designated WPAs on a regular schedule will be implemented.

Objective 1.5: Working With Partners. The District will cooperate with USDA, Minnesota DNR and other local, watershed, lake owner, and conservation groups in projects and programs that increase waterfowl habitat and production.

Strategy 1.5.1: Continue existing partnerships and programs that benefit Service goals.

Strategy 1.5.2: Expand District activities by finding new partners and projects that benefit Service goals. RONS Project No. 00009

Objective 1.6: Develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Minnesota DNR that clearly articulates the responsibilities of Wetland Management Districts for the handling of landowner complaints originating from geese on WPA wetlands.

Strategy 1.6.1: Allocate staff resources to work cooperatively with the Minnesota DNR to address goose complaints originating from Service lands as outlined in the agreed-to Memorandum.

Goal 2: Habitat

Restore native prairie plant communities of the Northern Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem using local ecotypes of seed and maintain the vigor of these stands through natural processes. Restore functioning wetland complexes and maintain the cyclic productivity of wetlands. Continue efforts for long-term solutions to the problem of invasive species with increased emphasis on biological control to minimize damage to aquatic and terrestrial communities. Continue efforts to better define the role of each District in assisting private landowners with wetland, upland and riparian restorations.

Objective 2.1: Prairie Restoration. Restore an average of 500 acres of recently acquired fee title land to native seeded grassland species each year. Begin seeding all new acquisitions within 2 years of purchase. Seed a diverse mix of predominantly native grasses and forbes using the ecotype recommendations of the Ecosystem sub-team. Replicate, to the greatest extent possible, the structure, species composition, and processes of native ecological communities in the tallgrass prairie to improve migratory bird habitat and improve existing soil and water quality within respective watersheds. Judiciously use non-native plantings when desirable to meet waterfowl and migratory bird population objectives.

Strategy 2.1.1: Obtain sufficient funding through Service programs and Partner contributions to establish harvestable fields capable of annually providing enough native ecotype grass and forb seed to plant 800 acres. RONS Project Nos. 00025, 00004

Strategy 2.1.2: Obtain sufficient funding to provide adequate staff, equipment, and facilities to annually harvest, clean, and store enough grass and forb seed to plant 800 acres.

Objective 2.2: Grassland Management. Renovate and seed or interseed 300 acres of existing grasslands to improve diversity and vigor.

Strategy 2.2.1: Obtain sufficient funding to obtain enough staff, equipment, and herbicide to renovate or interseed 300 acres of existing grasslands to a native ecotype grasses and forbes. RONS Project Nos. 00027, 00061, 00025, 00044, 00004

Objective 2.3: Prescribed Burn. Annually plan and conduct prescribed burns on 2,000 acres to maintain and restore native prairie plant species, to improve waterfowl and wildlife utilization, and to prepare selected sites for native seed harvest.

Strategy 2.3.1: Develop cooperative agreements with local fire departments to assist the District in achieving annual burn goals.

Objective 2.4: WPA Wetland Restoration. Restore all non-co-owned wetlands on WPAs within 1 year of Service purchase. Restore an average of 175 wetland basins on District and private land annually to serve migratory birds as migration, breeding, and nesting habitat.



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Strategy 2.4.1: All potential wetland restoration sites on newly acquired tracts will be surveyed no later than 6 months after Service take over.

Strategy 2.4.2: Obtain sufficient funding to provide adequate staff, equipment and money to restore all WPA wetlands. RONS Project Nos. 00017, 00003, 00045

Strategy 2.4.3: Allow for restoration of one or two large private wetlands (average of 75-plus acres each) annually by seeking funds and hiring staff to conduct the extensive planning, landowner contacts, coordination with partners, design, permitting and monitoring of construction necessary for successful completion. RONS Project No. 00036

Objective 2.5: Co-owned Wetland Restoration. Restore as many co-owned wetlands adjacent to WPAs as possible.

Strategy 2.5.1: All landowners who own more than 3 acres of restorable wetlands that are co-owned with a newly acquired fee title tract and all landowners who co-own any portion of restorable wetlands larger than 3 acres that are partially located on a newly acquired fee title tract will be contacted and offered wetland and upland easements within 2 years of Service take over. RONS Project Nos.00017, 00045

Objective 2.6: Management. Annually draw the water down on at least one-fourth of the wetlands that have built-in water control structures to increase vegetation and nutrient recycling for the benefit of waterfowl.

Strategy 2.6.1: Inspect and repair all District water control structures with draw down capability.

Strategy 2.6.2: Obtain bottom contours and watershed maps for all wetlands with draw down capability. RONS Project No.00001

Strategy 2.6.3: Develop and implement a plan of rotational drawdowns for all wetlands where drawdowns would increase wetland value to waterfowl or threatened or endangered species.

Objective 2.7: Monitoring. Inventory hydrological systems in the Districts as identified in the monitoring plan, including chemical water analysis, water level, water flow and the interaction of Federal land and private land within the watershed.

Strategy 2.7.1: Annually inspect wetlands with water control structures and determine management actions needed to improve marsh productivity as brood rearing and breeding habitat for migratory birds.

Strategy 2.7.2: Conduct regular surveys of water conditions within the Districts as identified in the Monitoring Plan. RONS Project No. 00034

Strategy 2.7.3: Monitor the impact of wetlands on hydrology within the watershed as identified in the Monitoring Plan. RONS Project Nos. 00034, 00013

Strategy 2.7.4: Conduct water analysis to monitor changes in contaminants and other key chemicals over time as identified in the Monitoring Plan. RONS Project Nos. 00034, 00013

Objective 2.8: Management. Increase use of hydrological data gathering in the overall management of the Districts following the guidance developed in the Monitoring Plan.

Strategy 2.8.1: Have annual meetings for Managers and Biologists throughout the Districts to share information, techniques, and results.

Strategy 2.8.2: The District Biologist should summarize hydrological data in an annual report and identify how the hydrological data can be incorporated in management decisions for the benefit of waterfowl and other target populations.

Strategy 2.8.3: The District Biologist should monitor contaminants in the wetlands within the District on a regular basis as outlined in the Monitoring Plan. RONS Project No. 00034

Objective 2.9: Plant Control. Reduce exotic plants including noxious weeds on all state and county lists through an aggressive program including biological control, burning, mowing, chemical treatment, hand

cropping, and interseeding. Primary targets include purple loosestrife, Canada thistle, and leafy spurge.

Strategy 2.9.1: Dedicate sufficient amounts of District staff, funding, and equipment so that 90 percent of weed complaints are responded to within 1 working day.

Strategy 2.9.2: Obtain sufficient staff, funding, and equipment so that the sites of all valid weed complaints receive appropriate long-term corrective actions no later than 12 months after the complaint is received.
RONS Project No. 00044

Objective 2.10: Biological Control. Increase emphasis on biological control whenever feasible.

Strategy 2.10.1: The District will continue to release beetles for control of spurge and loosestrife until all problem areas have sufficient self sustaining populations to control invasive species.

Strategy 2.10.2: The District will monitor ongoing experimental biological control studies for Canada thistle and actively lobby for release/study sites on suitable WPA locations.

Goal 3: Acquisition

Within current acquisition acreage goals, identify the highest priority acres for acquisition taking into account block size and waterfowl productivity data. These priority areas should drive acquisition efforts whenever possible. Service land acquisition should have no negative impact on net revenues to local government. Understand and communicate the economic effects of federal land ownership on local communities.

Objective 3.1: Evaluating Acquisition Priority. Review and update the current acquisition guidelines within 18 months of Plan approval. Acquisition strategies for future acquisitions within the Districts will be based on site potential. Consideration should be given to size, quality, key species affected, habitat fragmentation, landscape scale complexes, potential productivity of restored wetlands, etc.

Strategy 3.1.1: Delineations of proposed acquisitions will consider acquisition guidelines that highlight the biological and management factors to be considered.

Strategy 3.1.2: Delineation Biologist. Hire a wildlife biologist to conduct ongoing evaluations of private lands within the WMD including delineation of specific tracts for purchase or protection. RONS Project No. 00036

Objective 3.2: Goal Acres. Within 10 years of Plan approval, conduct a biological assessment to determine if current goal acres will be sufficient to reach waterfowl recruitment objectives for the District.

Strategy 3.2.1: Work with interested partners to develop a research project to determine relationship of goal acres to recruitment objectives and submit for Challenge Grant or North American funding.

Objective 3.3: Coordination. The District will coordinate with the District Acquisition Office to insure rapid response to willing sellers with property that meets acquisition priorities. An offer will be made to the seller within 90 days of the seller providing all necessary information to the Wetland Acquisition Office.

Strategy 3.3.1: The Wetland Manager will ask the Acquisition Office to initiate a Realty action no later than 30 days after being contacted and provided with all necessary information by a person who owns land that the Manager wishes to purchase.

Strategy 3.3.2: The District will request the Regional Office to provide the Wetland Acquisition Office with sufficient staffing and support so they are able to make offers to willing sellers no more than 60 days after receiving a request for a realty action from Wetland Managers.

Objective 3.4: Acquisition. The District will meet current goal acres within 30 years by annually acquiring an average of 1,800 acres in fee title and 1,700 acres of wetland easements. This objective will be changed as appropriate if goal acres are modified.

Strategy 3.4.1: The District will work with the Litchfield Wetland Acquisition Office and the Regional Office to develop efficient systems to identify and delineate priority tracts, contact and negotiate with owners, initiate appraisals, track progress, and close cases in a timely, customer service oriented manner.

Strategy 3.4.2: The District will work with neighbors and local governmental units to resolve objections to Service acquisitions.

Objective 3.5: Advocate 100 percent of revenue sharing and a lump sum payment for past underpayment through a trust fund to the counties.

Strategy 3.5.1: Work with the Washington Office and External Affairs to develop a one-page fact sheet about Revenue Sharing to hand out to the public.

Objective 3.6: Conduct a study that would provide the following information to managers so that they can better communicate the issue to the public:

- A graph of revenue sharing for the last 20 years.
- A detailed explanation of the impact of Federal ownership on school taxes.

Strategy 3.6.1: Work with the Regional Realty Office to research and prepare reports on the above topics within 2 years of Plan approval.

Objective 3.7: Determine local economic value of Federal land ownership.

Strategy 3.7.1: Work with the Regional Realty Office to research and prepare a report on this topic. Seek Flexible Fund funding with support from interested partners if contracted experts are required.

Objective 3.8: Demonstrate the hydrologic benefits of restored wetlands; determine cash value of wetland values.

Strategy 3.8.1: Work with interested partners such as Ducks Unlimited and the Minnesota Waterfowl Association to develop Flexible Fund proposals for this project.

Objective 3.9: Determine social value of natural habitat in the landscape. Determine the importance of wildlife to people in a community.

Strategy 3.9.1: Work with University of Minnesota researchers and professors to determine a cost effective method for collecting, analyzing, and reporting these data.

Goal 4: Monitoring Goal

Collect baseline information on plants, fish and wildlife and monitor critical parameters and trends of key species and/or species groups on and around District units. Promote the use of coordinated, standardized, cost effective, and defensible methods for gathering and analyzing habitat and population data. Management decisions will be based on the resulting data.

Objective 4.1: Inventory and Monitoring Workshop: Conduct an inventory and monitoring workshop within 3 years of Plan approval with recognized researchers in the field to identify monitoring needs, approaches, strategies and target species.

Strategy 4.1.1: Work with Mississippi Headwaters/Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem Team and the Biological Resources Division of USGS to plan workshop.

Objective 4.2: Inventory and Monitoring Plan. Within 18 months of Plan approval (or the hiring of a wildlife biologist), develop an Inventory and Monitoring Plan that will identify census needs and appropriate techniques as part of a coordinated monitoring program that will be used to evaluate species richness within the Districts by developing species data and accounts on selected sites.

Strategy 4.2.1: Hire a wildlife biologist to assume responsibility of the increased inventory and monitoring program for the District. RONS Project No. 00042

Objective 4.3: Increase the use of biological data in the overall management of the Districts by fulfilling the actions identified in the Inventory and Monitoring Plan and the following:

Strategy 4.3.1: Obtain a GS-11/12 wildlife biologist and sufficient funding and support staff to develop and implement plans. RONS Project Nos. 00042, 00002

Strategy 4.3.2: Have annual meetings for biologists and field personnel to share information, techniques and results of management strategies on target populations.

Strategy 4.3.3: The biologist should summarize data concerning the impact of management strategies on target species and present to management so decisions can be based on monitoring information.

Objective 4.4: Biological Inventory. As part of the Inventory and Monitoring Plan, inventory the biological resources on the Districts within 7 years of Plan approval. RONS Projects Nos. 00042, 00034

Objective 4.5: Breeding Birds. Conduct regular surveys of breeding grassland and wetland migratory birds. Include information on reproductive success as well as abundance following techniques identified in the Inventory and Monitoring Plan.

Strategy 4.5.1: Hire biologist and temporary biological technicians to oversee increased inventory and monitoring programs. RONS Project Nos. 00042, 00034

Goal 5: Endangered Species / Unique Communities

Preserve enhance, and restore rare native northern tallgrass prairie, flora and fauna that are or may become endangered. Where feasible in both ecological and social/economic terms, reintroduce native species on WPAs in cooperation with the Minnesota DNR.

Objective 5.1: Threatened and Endangered Species. Identify and survey threatened and endangered species within the District looking specifically for species of special interest to the Service.

Strategy 5.1.1: Hire biologist and temporary biological technicians to oversee increased inventory and monitoring programs. RONS Project Nos. 00042, 00034

Objective 5.2: Invertebrates. Conduct regular surveys of invertebrate communities in grassland and wetland communities following the approaches identified in the Inventory and Monitoring Plan.

Strategy 5.2.1: Hire biologist and temporary biological technicians to oversee increased inventory and monitoring programs. RONS Project Nos. 00042, 00034

Objective 5.3: Research. Encourage and cooperate in research that will further our understanding about management and habitat manipulations on the District.

Strategy 5.3.1: Hire biologist and temporary biological technicians to oversee increased inventory and monitoring programs. RONS Project Nos. 00042, 00034

Objective 5.4: Partners for Fish and Wildlife. With the Partners for Fish and Wildlife staff in the Regional Office, develop clear guidance for upland and riparian restoration work so each District is managing the program consistently.

Strategy 5.4.1: Develop and adhere to written guidance for cost sharing, force account work, weed control, and other Service expenditures on private land.

Objective 5.5: Inventory and Monitoring. The District will identify the location of endangered and threatened species within the District boundaries through the Inventory and Monitoring Plan. The Districts will obtain baseline data including maps of all federally-listed endangered and threatened species as soon as sufficient funding is received.

Strategy 5.5.1: Hire a biologist and temporary biological technicians to oversee increased inventory and monitoring programs. RONS Project Nos. 00042, 00034

Objective 5.6: Management. The Districts will protect and enhance populations of endangered, threatened, and special emphasis species that are indigenous on District land. Management applications applied to these areas will be tailored to meet species management needs.

Strategy 5.6.1: Conduct annual meetings for biologists and field personnel to share information, techniques and results of management strategies on target populations.

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Strategy 5.6.2: The biologist should summarize data concerning the impact of management strategies on target species and present data to management so decisions can be based on monitoring information.

Objective 5.7: Cooperation. The Districts will work with partners and other agencies to develop specific plans for target species occurring within the Districts.

Objective 5.8: Enforcement. The District will enforce all Endangered Species and Migratory Bird Treaty Act regulations within the District through increased contacts with hunters, neighbors and visitors.

Strategy 5.8.1: Additional enforcement staff and funding for support services such as aircraft rental and photographs will be requested. RONS Project Nos. 97026, 98015

Strategy 5.8.2: Locations of endangered plant species and areas used by or critical to endangered plant or animal species will be entered into the GIS data base. Maps of these locations will be provided to all District staff members so frequent monitoring can occur. RONS Project No.00001

Objective 5.9: Monitoring. The District will obtain baseline data including maps of all federally-listed endangered and threatened species as well as all native prairie tracts, calcareous fens and oak savannah within 2 years of Plan approval.

Objective 5.10: Cooperation. The District will identify threatened Northern Tallgrass Prairie unique communities and work through the Tallgrass Prairie Habitat Preservation Area project partners or other agencies and partners to acquire in fee title or protect through easement lands where the Small Wetlands Acquisition Program is not appropriate. All remaining native prairie remnants within the District will be identified within 3 years of Plan approval and strategies for their protection will be developed within 5 years of Plan approval.

Objective 5.11: Identify, evaluate, and prioritize opportunities to reintroduce native species documenting the needs in a plan within 4 years of Plan approval.

Objective 5.12: Within 8 years of Plan approval, begin a reintroduction program to reintroduce one species per year until all goal species identified under Objective 13A are reintroduced.

Objective 5.13: Monitoring. Monitor the levels of external threats to the Waterfowl Production Units such as soil erosion, incoming water quality, pesticide use, and contaminants as identified in the Inventory and Monitoring Plan.

Objective 5.14: Cooperation. The District will cooperate with state wildlife offices and local organizations to provide winter food sources on documented wintering areas to benefit resident species of wildlife.

Strategy 5.14.1: Feeders authorized under special use permits will be allowed on WPAs where a demonstrated need for supplemental feeding exists.

Strategy 5.14.2: Woody plantings may be authorized under special use permits on sites not suitable for native ecotype prairie plantings. Only woody species that will not invade prairie habitats will be allowed.

Objective 5.15: Enforcement. The Districts will prohibit the introduction of wildlife species that are not native to the Northern Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem.

Objective 5.16: Develop priority actions to be implemented by the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program with the strategies to be developed in a joint effort within 3 years of Plan approval with the Regional Office taking the lead and responsibility for the documentation.

People

Goal 6: Public Use / Environmental Education

Provide opportunities for the public to use the WPAs in a way that promotes understanding and appreciation of the Prairie Pothole Region. Promote greater understanding and awareness of the Wetland Management District's programs, goals, and objectives. Advance stewardship and understanding of the Prairie Pothole Region through environmental education, outreach and partnership development.

Objective 6.1: The Wetland Management District will strive to meet the National Visitor Service Standards for the Refuge System within 5 years of Plan approval.

Strategy 6.1.1: Prepare and submit a construction project submittal to provide an office/visitor center with appropriate funding for exhibits, supplies, and equipment to meet the National Standards.

Strategy 6.1.2: Develop a Visitor Services Plan and Public Use Plan for the District within the 12-month period preceding construction of the new office/visitor contact center.

Objective 6.2: By June 2002 designate a Waterfowl Production Area in each county that can provide a handicapped-accessible hunting or wildlife viewing facility.

Strategy 6.2.1: Work with interested partners to develop a Flexible Fund proposal and develop at least one



USFWS Photograph

facility on a District WPA that meets all Service standards 18 months after adequate funding is obtained.

Strategy 6.2.2: Advocate for a full-time Public Use Specialist to develop and administer a quality public use program on the District. RONS Project No.00029

Objective 6.3: Develop maps for each Wetland Management District that can be easily provided upon request by the public within 2 years of Plan approval.

Strategy 6.3.1: Adapt the Windom GIS-generated maps as the standard for all Minnesota Districts. RONS Project No.00001

Strategy 6.3.2: Obtain printers and computers that are capable of quickly making full-sized maps at a reasonable cost.

Objective 6.4: Develop an outreach plan for each District following the Public Use Plan developed by Fergus Falls Wetland Management District 12 months after a Public Use Specialist/Outdoor Recreation Specialist reports to the District. RONS Project No.00029

Objective 6.5: Promote greater understanding of the District program; implement the Public Use Plan for each District 18 months after a Public Use Specialist/Outdoor Recreation Specialist reports to the District. RONS Project No.00029

Objective 6.6: Provide 2,500 environmental education visits per year on the District within 10 years of Plan approval.

Operations

Goal 7: Development Plan

Preparation of WPA Development Plans: Complete Geographic Information System (GIS) based WPA Development Plans for each unit in each District. Provide Districts with GIS to assist with acquisition, restoration, management and protection of public and private lands.

Objective 7.1: All existing WPAs will have GIS-based Development Plans completed by within 7 years of Plan approval.

Objective 7.2: All newly acquired land is covered by a GIS-based Unit Plan within 2 years of the Service taking possession of the area.

Strategy 7.2.1: Train all District management staff in appropriate GIS techniques and mid-level computer skills through formal classes and informal, staff-led instruction.

Objective 7.3: Increase use of GIS technology in monitoring habitat and wildlife.

Strategy 7.3.1: Train all District management staff in appropriate GIS techniques and mid-level computer skills through formal classes and informal staff led instruction.

Objective 7.4: Complete entry of WPA and easement ownership boundaries within 2 years of Plan approval. Enter habitat, facility and management accomplishment layers for all Districts within 4 years of Plan approval and update future inventory and management information in a timely manner.

Strategy 7.4.1: Hire or extend seasonal employee(s) to function as GIS Data Entry Technician by 2002. RONS Project No. 00002

Objective 7.5: Maintain District computers and provide computer training to District staff.

Strategy 7.5.1: Hire a full-time Computer Support/GIS Administrator by 2003.

Goal 8: Support Staff, Facilities and Equipment

Provide necessary levels of maintenance, technician and administrative support staff to achieve other Wetland Management District goals: Provide all Districts with adequate and safe office, maintenance and equipment storage facilities. Acquire adequate equipment and vehicles to achieve other District goals. Maintain District equipment and vehicles at or above Service standards.

Objective 8.1: Identify all buildings that do not meet Service standards or needs by 2002.

Objective 8.2: Replace or modify all buildings that do not meet Service standards or needs within 15 years of Plan approval.

Strategy 8.2.1: District staff will survey all District buildings and prepare RONS, construction and/or MMS requests to replace or repair all buildings that do not meet Service standards or needs. RONS Project Nos. 00045, 00046

Objective 8.3: Ensure that all Wetland District vehicles are replaced when their mileage reaches normal industry replacement standards (6 years or 60,000).

Strategy 8.3.1: District staff will monitor vehicle mileages and prepare MMS requests to replace worn vehicles at appropriate intervals.

Goal 9: Annual Capital Development Funds

Ensure that annual capital development funds are large enough to meet necessary development of new WPA land: Have adequate funds available each year to permit completion of maintenance needs for each Wetland Districts current land base of Waterfowl Production Areas.

Objective 9.1: Educate and provide adequate information to Regional, Washington, departmental and congressional staffs of need for capital improvement funding of an ongoing acquisition program.

Strategy 9.1.1: Identify costs of adding new land to Operating and Maintenance budgets and submit report to Program Supervisor within 2 years of approval.

Strategy 9.1.2: A Filemaker Pro data base template will be developed for Project leaders to track and report the costs associated with new acquisitions.

Strategy 9.1.3: Obtain annual funding for habitat restoration on newly acquired lands including building site demolition and cleanup, fence removal, well sealing, and habitat restoration. RONS Projects Nos. 00022, 00025, 00012, 00017

Objective 9.2: Maintain a current inventory of all maintenance needs and estimated costs.

Strategy 9.2.1: A Filemaker Pro data base template will be developed for Project leaders to track and report maintenance needs and costs.

Strategy 9.2.2: District maintenance data bases will be posted on the Service intranet no later than 2 years following Plan approval and in preceding years will be annually updated and posted no later than February 28 each year.

Goal 10: Consistency

Develop and apply consistent policies for habitat, public use, and resource protection and ensure frequent coordination among Districts, both in Minnesota and in neighboring states with WPAs (North and South Dakota, Iowa, and Wisconsin).

Objective 10.1: Quarterly coordination meetings for the Districts will be held to discuss common issues and practices. The meetings will include all District managers and District supervisors.

Strategy 10.1.1: To minimize scheduling conflicts, meeting dates and locations will be set one year in advance (suggest Wednesday afternoon and Thursday morning on last week in January, April, July, and October, at Alexandria with one District “hosting” each meeting.)

Objective 10.2: Once a year a regional meeting will be held to compare notes with managers in Region 6 and other Wetland Management Districts in Region 3 that are not included in this Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Strategy 10.2.1: Set meeting on a standard date and location to minimize scheduling conflicts.