

Chapter 5: Plan Implementation

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the actions, funding, coordination, and monitoring to implement the CCP. As noted in the inside cover of this document, this plan does not constitute a commitment for staffing increases, operational and maintenance increases, or funding for future land acquisition. These decisions are at the discretion of Congress in overall appropriations, and in budget allocation decisions made at the Washington and Regional levels of the Service.

New and Existing Projects

This CCP outlines an ambitious course of action for the future management of the St. Croix Wetland Management District. It will require considerable staff commitment as well as funding commitment to actively manage the wildlife habitats and add and improve public use facilities. The District will continually need appropriate operational and maintenance funding to implement the objectives in this plan. A full listing of unfunded District projects and operational needs can be found in Appendix H. A brief description of the highest priority District projects is listed below.

Minimum District Operations Needs

The project will provide funds to operate the District office including expenses for heating, air conditioning, required safety inspections, electrical expenses, and safety improvements. These funds will also allow for the upkeep of District facilities including parking lots, interpretive kiosks, interpretive trails, and water control structures. It is important to provide a quality experience for visitors who come to the District each year. The project will help pay fuel bills, electric bills and the day-to-day costs of operating a District. (First Year Cost: \$106,000, recurring annual cost \$106,000)



Muskrat lodge, St. Croix Wetland Management District. USFWS photo.

Prairie Restoration on WPAs and Easements

Quality prairie grassland on the District's WPAs is essential to meet the waterfowl production goals of the District. In addition, numerous species of migratory birds benefit from native prairie grassland. Only 33 percent of the District's grasslands are native prairie, the remaining grasslands are cool season exotic grasses such as brome that do not provide diverse habitat for wildlife. This project will renovate the remaining cool season grass fields in the District in the next 10 years. This project will address equipment purchase, temporary staff time, chemical, seed and contracts for brush cutting and seed removal. (First Year Cost: \$119,000, recurring annual cost \$35,000)

Enhance Biological Program (District Biologist)

A Biologist position would enable the District to develop a biological program with an emphasis on evaluating and refining management actions to provide quality habitat for wildlife. The Biologist would also be responsible for the coordination of data col-

lection to monitor waterfowl use and recruitment within the District. The data collected from numerous surveys and biological programs would be very useful in making biologically based decisions within the District. Focus areas for acquisition, restoration and management would be developed and refined using this data. (First Year Cost: 149,000, recurring annual cost \$74,000)

Expand District Prescribed Fire and Fuels Removal Program (Lead Range Technician)

A full-time Lead Range Technician is required to adequately administer the District's prescribed fire and hazardous fuels removal program. The current 17 pay period position would be increased to 26 pay periods a year. The District relies on temporary Emergency AD hires for assistance on prescribed fires. Although cost effective from a staffing perspective, this reliance on AD hires also increases administrative time for training, coordination and daily supervision. The District has also significantly increased our mechanical fuels treatment program, coordinating numerous special use permits and programs to meet our fuel treatment goals. Additional staff time is needed to coordinate this program and provide adequate oversight of permittees and contractors. (Recurring annual cost: \$18,000)

Enhance Visitor Services Program (Seasonal Tractor Operator)

The WPAs in St. Croix, Dunn and Polk Counties provide important recreational opportunities for Wisconsin residents. They also provide an opportunity to reconnect people with nature. The purpose of the project will be to construct and maintain entrance signs, boundary signs, wildlife observation platforms, trails, kiosks, parking lots and boundary



Prescribed burning at St. Croix Wetland Management District. USFWS photo

fences on WPAs. Some WPAs will also be developed to provide public opportunities for priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, interpretation and environmental education. (First Year Cost: \$119,000, recurring annual cost \$54,000)

Control of Invasive Species, Noxious Weeds and Woody Invaders

Invasive species are detrimental to plant and animal populations. In addition, grassland habitat on the District is negatively impacted by other noxious weeds and woody invaders such as box elder, maple and cottonwood. The purpose of the project is to control these unwanted plant species and provide quality wetland, grassland and woodland habitat on the District. The project would be in partnership with neighboring landowners and agencies in an effort to take a landscape approach to habitat management. Funds will be used for chemical, contract plant removal and temporary staff. (First Year Cost: \$136,000, recurring annual cost \$45,000)

Replace Facilities (Headquarters and Maintenance Facilities)

The current shop and headquarters facilities are inadequate to meet the needs of the Service. The facilities are not universally accessible and are not of an adequate size to support current staffing levels. Presently, the station headquarters is a converted two story house with little room for interpretive exhibits for visitors. There is also not enough office space to support the current staff level. The maintenance facility consists of a small shop, a pole barn and a calf barn. The shop does not have adequate storage or work areas and does not have a lift. The barns are not large enough to store equipment and supplies and do not have adequate doors and walls for secure storage. It is important to have adequate indoor secure storage to protect the Service's investment in equipment and supplies. The proposed maintenance facility would include a shop and two pole barns which would provide adequate size to store all equipment. (One Time Cost: \$2.9 million)

Staffing

Implementing the vision set forth in this CCP will require changes in the organizational structure of the District. Existing staff will direct their time and

Table 4: Current and Proposed Staffing Under the CCP

| Current Staff- 7.5 FTEs | Proposed Additions – 3.0 FTEs |
|---|--|
| District manager | |
| Wildlife Refuge Specialist | Wildlife Refuge Specialist with emphasis in public use |
| Wildlife biologist (Partners for Fish and Wildlife) | Wildlife biologist |
| Maintenance worker | Seasonal tractor operator |
| Administrative technician | |
| Biological science technician | |
| Prescribed fire specialist | |
| Lead Range Technician (19pp) | Lead Range Technician (7pp) |

energy in new directions and new staff members will be added to assist in these efforts. Table 4 presents current staffing and the increases proposed for the District in this plan. Figure 18 shows the staffing organization at St. Croix WMD.

Partnership Opportunities

Partnerships are an essential element for the successful accomplishment of goals, objectives, and strategies at St. Croix WMD. The objectives outlined in this CCP need the support and the partnerships of federal, state and local agencies, non-governmental organizations and individual citizens. District staff will continue to seek creative partnership opportunities to achieve the vision of the District.

We expect to continue to work with the following notable partners, while developing new partnerships:

- County Agencies
- County Land and Water Conservation Departments
- Ducks Unlimited

- Keeping Youth Involved
- Minnesota Conservation Corps
- National Park Service
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA)
- Pheasants Forever
- St. Croix County Conservation Collaborative
- St. Croix County Sportsmen’s Alliance
- Standing Cedars Land Trust
- Star Prairie Fish and Game
- Star Prairie Land Preservation Trust
- Towns
- Trout Unlimited
- University of Wisconsin Extension
- University of Wisconsin River Falls
- West Wisconsin Land Trust
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

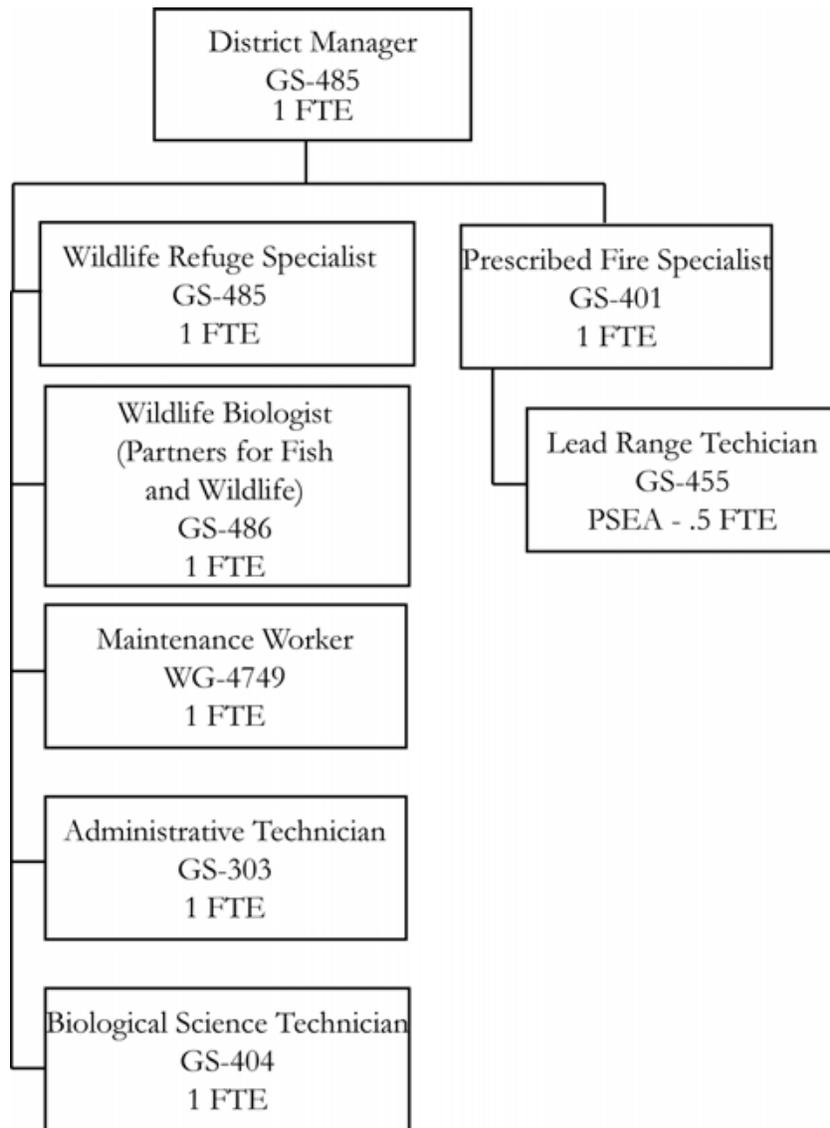
Step-Down Management Plans

The CCP is a plan that provides general concepts and specific wildlife, habitat, and people related objectives. Step-down management plans provide greater detail to managers and employees who will carry out the strategies described in the CCP. The District staff will revise or develop the following step-down plans:

- Habitat Management Plan (within 5 years)
- Visitor Services Plan (within 8 years)
- Habitat and Wildlife Monitoring Plans (within 8 years)

The Fire Management Plan, approved in 2008, provides direction and establishes procedures to guide various wildland fire program activities. The Fire Management Plan covers the historical and ecological role of fire, fire management objectives, preparedness, suppression, fire management actions and responses, fire impacts, use of prescribed fire and fire management restrictions.

Figure 18: Current Staff, St. Croix WMD



Monitoring and Evaluation

The direction set forth in this CCP and specifically identified strategies and projects will be monitored throughout the life of this plan. On a periodic basis, the Regional Office will assemble a station review team whose purpose will be to visit the District and evaluate current activities in light of this plan. The team will review all aspects of District management, including direction, accomplishments and funding. The goals and objectives presented in this CCP will provide the baseline for evaluation of this field station.

Plan Review and Revision

The CCP is meant to provide guidance to District managers and staff over the next 15 years. However, the CCP is also a dynamic and flexible document and several of the strategies contained in this plan are subject to uncontrollable events of nature. Likewise, many of the strategies are dependent upon Service funding for staff and projects. Because of all these factors, the recommendations in the CCP will be reviewed periodically and, if necessary, revised to meet new circumstances. If any revisions are major, the review and revision will include the public.

