

Appendix G: Existing Partnerships

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All the Wetland Management Districts have an extensive network of partnerships covering the counties within their management areas. Partners include:

- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
 - Area Wildlife Managers
 - Area Fisheries Managers
 - Area Hydrologists
 - Trails and Waterways Specialists
 - Waterfowl Specialists
 - Prairie Biologists
 - Ecological Services Specialists
- County Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- USGS - Biological Resources Division
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Local Watershed Districts
- Farm Service Agency
- County Commissions
- County Land and Resource Offices
- Township Boards of Supervisors
- City Governments
- Ducks Unlimited
- Minnesota Waterfowl Association
- Pheasants Forever Chapters
- Minnesota Deer Hunters Chapters
- Izaak Walton League
- The Nature Conservancy
- Minnesota Wildlife Federation
- White Earth Chippewa Tribe
- Lake Associations
- Local Sportsmen and Conservation Organizations
- Local School Districts
- Regional Universities and Colleges

Other Programs

The Wetland Management Districts support and benefit, or are benefitted by other programs which are presented under the categories of: Federal, State, Local, and Private Habitat Restoration and Preservation Mechanisms.

Federal Mechanisms

North American Waterfowl Management Plan (Prairie Pothole Joint Venture)

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), signed in 1986, outlines a broad framework for waterfowl management strategies and conservation efforts in the United States, Canada, and Mexico (for additional information see section 3.9.3.1). The NAWMP is designed to reach its objectives through key joint venture areas and state implementation plans within these joint ventures. The Wetland Management

Districts of Western Minnesota (Districts) are located in the U. S. Prairie Pothole Joint Venture (PPJV) area. The PPJV was identified in the NAWMP as the highest priority Joint Venture area in the United States and Canada.

Partnerships play a key role in funding the PPJV. During the PPJV's first seven years, partners raised more than \$139,386,609 to protect, restore, or enhance more than 1,896,310 habitat acres. Additionally, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) has been a major source of funding for PPJV projects and has provided 20 grants to projects in Minnesota and Iowa from 1991 through 1996. The two recent projects that fall within the Districts are described in the following paragraphs.

A 1996 NAWCA \$1 million grant and \$2.3 million in partner funds to aid restoration of tallgrass prairie and wetlands in 19 northwestern Minnesota counties of the Red River Basin. The 10 year project will be administered by The Nature Conservancy.

Prairie Heritage Project - Proposal for \$1 million NAWCA grant in April 1997 for the acquisition of native grassland tracts that are adjacent or in proximity to existing and/or restorable wetlands in Minnesota. If approved, Pheasants Forever would administer the grant along with partner dollars totaling \$2.15 million in late 1997.

Endangered and Threatened Species Recovery Program

Partners in Flight Program for Migratory Neotropical Birds

USFWS Ecosystem Planning

The northern tallgrass prairie has been identified as one of its top priorities within the Service's Upper Mississippi/Tallgrass Prairie and Mississippi Headwaters/Tallgrass Prairie ecosystem plans. These plans are intended to assist the Service identify resource priorities and action strategies necessary to meet trust responsibilities within specified geographic areas.

COE Red River EIS

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is involved in a major Environmental Impact Statement involving water retention sites in the Red River Watershed working with the Red River Watershed Management Board and member watershed districts in Minnesota.

National Water Quality Assessment

The Red River Basin is one of 60 hydrologic systems being assessed by the U.S. Geological Survey through the National Water Quality Assessment program (NAWQA). The basin was selected because its water is of vital importance to the region's economy, and of international concern. NAWQA is using a multidisciplinary approach to assess water quality. The ecology of aquatic biological communities is one of the disciplines for the assessment.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Pursuant to the Conservation Title of the Food Security Act of 1985 (Farm Bill) and later versions of that bill, the program sponsors activities designed to provide protection of soil and water quality through direct payments to farmers for retiring eligible cropland and environmentally sensitive lands for a period of 10 to 15 years. The program encourages protection of highly erodible uplands and filter strips along wetlands, which can reduce pesticide and sediment runoff.

FSA CRP Conservation Priority Areas

The Minnesota State FSA Committee, in conjunction with the State Technical Committee, received approval for the Lake Agassiz Interbeach Area to be designated a State Conservation Priority Area (CPA) for implementing the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in Minnesota. Approval came in accordance with guidance provided in FSA CRP Notice 269. A National CPA was designated for the prairie pothole area bordering the Lake Agassiz Interbeach Area. The CPA's will maximize benefits to wildlife and their associated habitats by protecting and enhancing state, Federal, and locally threatened, endangered or candidate listed species of concern, and native plant communities, and, by restoring and enhancing biologically significant terrestrial and aquatic habitats.

Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The 1996 re-authorization of the Farm Bill reestablished a Wetlands Reserve Program that provides financial incentives for restoration and protection of up to 975,000 acres through long-term agreements. Easements are for 30 years or more, depending on the maximum amount of time allowed by state law, and provide landowners with 75 percent to 100 percent cost-sharing for permanent easements, 50 percent to 75 percent for 30 year easements and restoration cost-sharing agreements.

Set-aside Programs

Farmers participating in Federal price support programs have been required to set aside a certain percentage of their base acreage in most years. Conservation measures are required to provide soil erosion protection, water quality enhancement, wildlife production, and natural beauty. Millions of acres of cropland are retired each year often benefiting wildlife.

Environmental Quality Incentives

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). A new program which combines the functions of the Agricultural Conservation Program, Water Quality Incentives Program, Great Plains Conservation Program, and the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program. EQIP is funded at \$200 million annually to encourage the establishment of long-lasting conservation practices that will conserve soil, water, forest, and wildlife resources. Livestock-related conservation practices will receive 50 percent of program funding. The program provides cost-sharing to farmers up to 75 percent of the cost of conservation practices with a maximum payment to any one person of \$10,000 annually, and to \$50,000 for the life of the contract.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

USDA. WHIP, authorized in the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act, is a new voluntary program for people to develop and improve wildlife habitat on private lands. It provides both technical assistance and cost sharing to help establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat. Participants who own or control land work with the USDA (Natural Resources Conservation Service) to prepare and implement a wildlife habitat development plan. The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical and financial assistance for the initial establishment of wildlife habitat development practices. In addition, if the landowner agrees, State wildlife agencies or private organizations may also provide expertise or additional funding to help complete a project.

FmHA Wetland-Related Programs

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farmers Home Administration. Building on an earlier program prompted by E.O. 11990, the 1990 Farm Bill requires the USDA to

establish perpetual conservation easements on wetlands in the FmHA inventory of foreclosed farmland. The act also allows for cancellation or reduction of debt in exchange for conservation easements on wetlands.

Partners for Wildlife Program

U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). Drawing on several legal authorities, the Service effort assists private landowners voluntarily restore converted and degraded wetlands and associated upland habitats. The Service provides technical assistance and cost-sharing to complete the work if the landowner agrees to maintain the area for a period of 10 years. The program focuses on restoring and enhancing habitats that provide wildlife, fisheries, water quality, aesthetic, and recreation benefits.