

# Chapter 4: Management Direction

## Morris Wetland Management District

This chapter of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan steps down overall guidance to the Morris Wetland Management District through station-specific objectives and strategies. The objectives and strategies are unique to the Morris Wetland Management District and identify activities that achieve the Plan's goals, the District's purpose and the National Wildlife Refuge System mission (Chapters 1 and 2).



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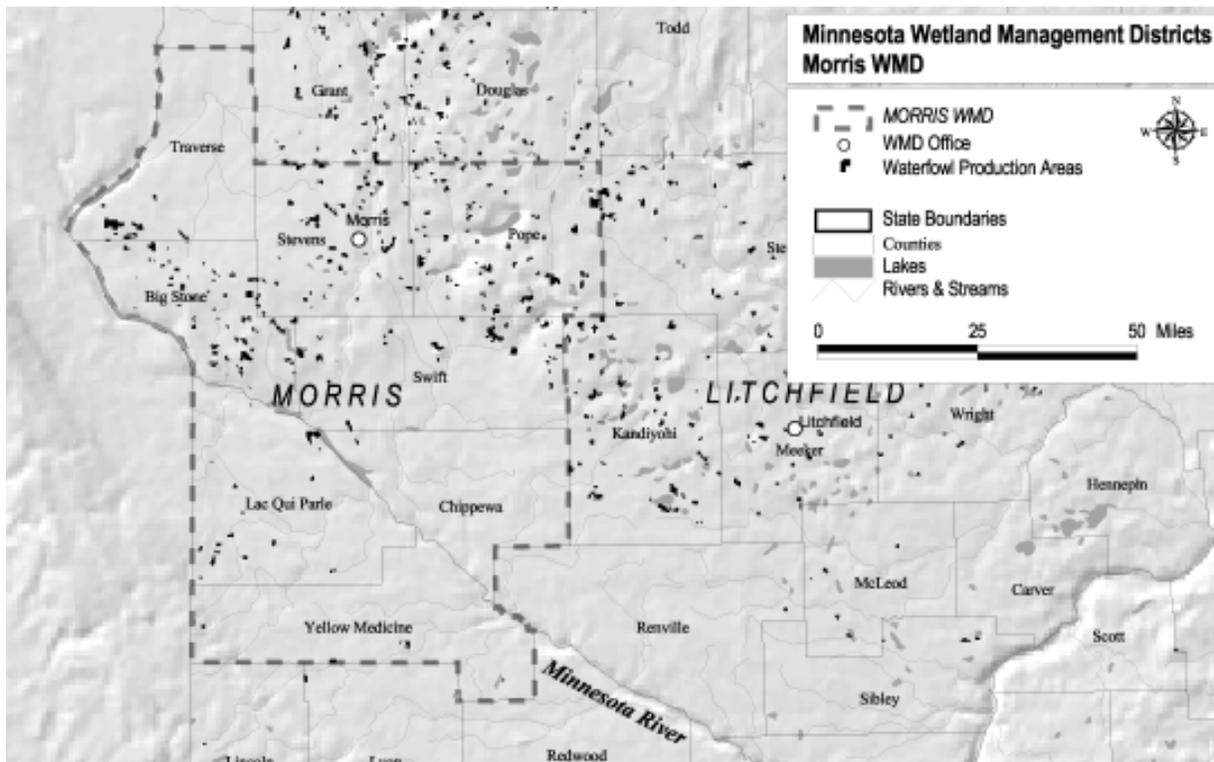
The Morris Wetland Management District, originally established in 1964 as the Benson Wetland Management District, includes the following Federal property: 246 WPAs totaling 51,208 acres in fee title ownership and 595 wetland easements encompassing 20,074 wetland acres, 27 habitat (grassland) easements covering 1,787 acres, 22 conservation easements covering 1,211 acres on property formerly controlled by the Farmers Home Administration, and two easement units of the Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge covering 110 acres. Both fee and easement areas are scattered throughout Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac Que Parle, Pope, Stevens, Swift, Traverse, and Yellow Medicine counties. The total surface area of the eight-county district is 3,334,580 acres. The total Fish and Wildlife Service property interest of 74,390 acres (excluding Big Stone NWR) represents 2.2 percent of the total area of the District.

The topography of west-central Minnesota is extremely diversified, ranging from the granite outcrops of the Minnesota River bottoms to the rolling hills of Pope County. The flat agricultural land of the Red River Valley of the north blends into the transition zone between the tall grass prairie and the eastern deciduous forest. Soils of the region are generally productive, which contributed to the historically high concentrations of breeding waterfowl.

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

Native Prairie (virgin)	7,035
Other Grasslands/Farmland	23,969
Forested/Brushland	2,268
Wetland/Riverine	17,936

**Figure 10: Morris Wetland Management District**



## Goals, Objectives and Strategies

### 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 the Fergus Falls Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET) to 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:* Update MAAPE in 2004: Contact HAPET office in 2003 to schedule a review of MAAPE waterfowl production issues and opportunities for 2004. RONS Project No. 99001

**Objective 1.2:** Alternative Waterfowl Monitoring. The District will develop alternative monitoring techniques by the year 2007 for waterfowl abundance and productivity estimates in areas of Districts that

are not well-covered by the four-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:* Improve Population Monitoring Techniques: Work with HAPET office to identify information gaps inhibiting waterfowl abundance and productivity estimates. RONS Project No. 99004

*Strategy 1.2.2:* Improve Population Monitoring: Obtain information to allow monitoring of waterfowl abundance and productivity for species not covered by 4-square-mile survey. RONS Project No. 99004

**Objective 1.3:**

Recruitment Rate. The District will strive to increase potential recruitment rate of mallards in an average year from the current level of 0.52 to 0.60 by 2015.

*Strategy 1.3.1:* Nest Structures on WPAs: Annually maintain 300 hen-house nesting structures and 100 wood duck boxes on WPAs. RONS Project No. 97001

*Strategy 1.3.2:* Nest Structures on Private Land: Annually provide 300 hen-house nesting structures and 100 wood duck boxes for use on private land until 7,750 hen houses are maintained and used on private and public land. RONS Project No. 97001

*Strategy 1.3.3:* Intensive Nesting Site Management: Conduct comprehensive analysis of district for islands, peninsulas, and other sites with high potential for intensive management, including predator control. Strive for 100 acres of peninsula cutoffs, 1,218 acres of predator exclosures, and four managed natural islands. RONS Project No. 97024

*Strategy 1.3.4:* Construct Nesting Islands: Create 13 nesting islands on existing WPAs on previously identified sites. RONS Project No. 99002

*Strategy 1.3.5:* Remove Hostile Habitat: On WPAs, remove rock piles, junk piles, and woody cover identified as hostile habitat for waterfowl and not essential for resident wildlife. RONS Project No. 98030

*Strategy 1.3.6:* Promote Coyote Populations: Work with sporting and agricultural communities to promote stable, viable coyote populations in suitable parts of the District. RONS Project No. 99003

**Objective 1.4:**

Violations. Each year, the District will inspect all WPA, FmHA Conservation Easement and Habitat Easement for compliance to

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insure protection of migratory waterfowl and other habitats. Any illegal activity will be responded to immediately and restored as soon as possible.

*Strategy 1.4.1:* WPA and Easement Enforcement: Obtain adequate staff to monitor WPAs and easements. RONS Project No. 97012

**Objective 1.5:** Working With Partners. The District will cooperate with all USDA, Minnesota DNR and any other local agency programs as well as participate as a partner with local conservation groups which would increase waterfowl habitat and production.

*Strategy 1.5.1:* Fully Participate in Partnership opportunities. Increase staff ability to participate financially and technically in partnerships leading to improved waterfowl habitat and production. RONS Project No. 99020

**Objective 1.6:** Identify, evaluate, and prioritize opportunities to reintroduce native species documenting the needs in a plan by 2007.

*Strategy 1.6.1:* Organize coordination meeting with partners for 2006. RONS Project No. 97005

**Objective 1.7:** By 2010 begin a reintroduction program to reintroduce one species per year until all goal species identified under Objective 1.6 are reintroduced.

*Strategy 1.7.1:* Develop reintroduction plan for species and implement. RONS Project Nos. 99023, 99035

**Objective 1.8:** Develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the Minnesota DNR which clearly articulates the responsibilities of Wetland Districts for the handling of landowner complaints originating from geese on WPA wetlands.

*Strategy 1.8.1:* Participate in actions as outlined in MOU. RONS Project No. 99024

**Objective 1.9:** Cooperation. The Districts 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 1.9.1:* Identify Needs: By 2004, identify with DNR crucial resident wildlife winter food needs on WPAs. RONS Project No. 99022

*Strategy 1.9.2:* Identify Options: By 2004, identify with DNR viable winter food options for resident wildlife on WPAs. RONS Project No. 99022

*Strategy 1.9.3:* Identify Unit Management Actions: By 2005, identify management actions on units with critical resident wildlife winter food needs. Eliminate food plots on non-critical areas.

## 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 in fee title to native seeded grassland species each year. Begin the process on all new acquisitions within 5 years of purchase. Seed a diverse mix of predominantly native grasses and forbes using the ecotype recommendations of the Mississippi Headwater Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem Team. Replicate, to the 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:* Plant Native Grasslands: Convert an average of 500 acres per year of cropland to native vegetation. RONS Project Nos. 97011, 97017, and 97019

*Strategy 2.1.2:* New Seeding Technique: Experiment with new seeding techniques including fall seeding and broadcast seeding and broadcast seeding minimally cleaned seed. RONS Project No. 99006

*Strategy 2.1.3:* Local Ecotype Seed: Working with others, by 2008 produce or have access to eight grass and 30 forb species that are all local genotype tallgrass prairie natives in sufficient quantity to seed 1,000 acres per year. RONS Project No. 99006

**Objective 2.2:** Grassland Management. Renovate and seed or interseed 500 acres of existing grasslands to improve diversity and vigor.

*Strategy 2.2.1:* Replace Poor Cover on WPAs: Reseed or interseed 500 acres per year of existing inferior cover on WPAs to a diverse mix of native species. RONS Project Nos. 97015, 97016

**Objective 2.3:**

Prescribed Burn. Plan and conduct prescribed burns on 3,000-5,000 acres annually 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:* Expand Burning Season: Expand burning season beyond current spring season to include summer and fall. Maintain program if monitoring confirms that alternate seasons produce desired effects. RONS Project No. 99007



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*Strategy 2.3.2:* Employ Two Prescribed Fire Crews: Employ and equip two trained prescribed fire crews to allow two simultaneous prescribed fires. RONS Project No. 98010

*Strategy 2.3.3:* Hire Contract Prescribed Fire Crews: Identify and implement opportunities for accomplishing prescribed fires through contractors. RONS Project No. 99008

**Objective 2.4:**

Manage existing WPA and easement grasslands so that each acre is treated at least once every 7 years by burning, mowing, haying, grazing, or other management.

*Strategy 2.4.1:* Increase acres managed by mowing. RONS Project No. 99009

*Strategy 2.4.2:* Increase acres managed by grazing. RONS Project No. 97015

*Strategy 2.4.3:* Increase acres managed by haying. RONS Project No. 97015

*Strategy 2.4.4:* Identify and eliminate woody cover that is hostile to grassland species and which is not critical for resident wildlife. Woody cover will include old farm groves, field windbreaks, and woody species invading grasslands. RONS Project Nos. 97008, 99021

**Objective 2.5:**

Restoration. Restore an average of 100 wetlands per year both on and off refuge system land to serve migratory birds as migration, breeding and nesting habitat.

*Strategy 2.5.1:* Increase outreach effort to identify and restore wetlands. RONS Project No. 97021

- Objective 2.6:** Management. Manage water levels on 100 percent 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:* New Water Control Structures: Install water control structures on 10 appropriate wetlands that now have fixed spillways. RONS Project No. 99010
- Strategy 2.6.2:* Remove existing water control structures from sites where they are not functional.
- 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 lands and private lands within the watershed.
- Strategy 2.7.1:* Inspect all water control structures and determine management needs on an annual basis to improve marsh productivity as brood rearing and breeding habitat for migratory birds. RONS Project No. 99010
- Strategy 2.7.2:* Conduct regular surveys of water conditions within the Districts as identified in the Monitoring Plan. RONS Project No. 99011
- Strategy 2.7.3:* Monitor the impact of wetlands on hydrology within the watershed as identified in the Monitoring Plan. RONS Project No. 99011
- 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 No. 99016
- Objective 2.8:** Cooperation. Attend and participate in watershed district meetings.
- Strategy 2.8.1:* Watersheds: Continue regular participation in Bois de Sioux and Upper Minnesota River watershed district activities and participate in other watersheds as appropriate. RONS: None
- Objective 2.9:** Research. Encourage and cooperate in research on hydrological systems within the District.
- Strategy 2.9.1:* Research: Continue to cooperate with others on hydrological research and offer Federal lands as potential research sites. RONS Project No. 99017
- Strategy 2.9.2:* Pattern Tiling: Offer to participate with watershed and other groups to determine the water-

shed impact of increased pattern tiling. RONS Project No. 99011

**Objective 2.10:** Management. Increase use of hydrological data gathering in the overall management of the Districts following the guidance developed in the Monitoring Plan.

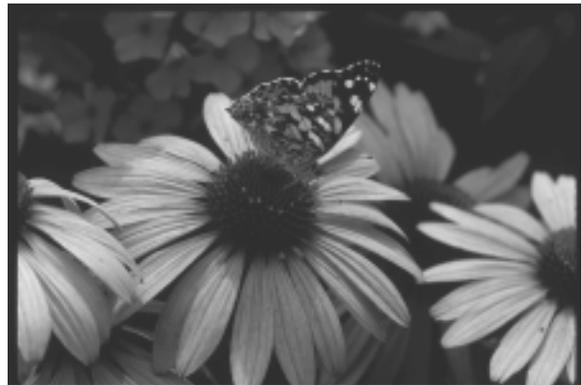
*Strategy 2.10.1:* Follow guidance developed in water monitoring plan.

**Objective 2.11:** Hydrologist. Hire a hydrologist to conduct hydrological monitoring program, analyze the data and present the information to management in a usable form.

*Strategy 2.11.1:* Have annual meetings for hydrologists throughout the Districts to share information, techniques, and results. RONS Project No. 99011

*Strategy 2.11.2:* The hydrologist 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. RONS Project No. 99011

*Strategy 2.11.3:* Hydrologist should monitor contaminants in the wetlands within the District on a regular basis as outlined in the Monitoring Plan. RONS Project No. 99016



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**Objective 2.12:** Plant Control. Reduce exotic plants including noxious weeds on state and county lists through an aggressive program including burning, mowing, chemical treatment, hand cropping, and interseeding. Primary targets include purple loosestrife, Canada thistle, and leafy spurge.

*Strategy 2.12.1:* Improve mechanical and chemical weed control. RONS Project Nos. 98031, 97004, and 97008

**Objective 2.13:** Minnow and Carp Control. Working with partners, by 2010 carp and undesirable minnow populations will be controlled on 90 percent of infested WPA wetlands through water level control, reduced minnow stocking, barriers, and chemical control.

*Strategy 2.13.1:* Monitoring and Control Plan. Work with Service and Minnesota DNR fisheries biologists to develop a control strategy and monitoring plan. RONS Project No. 99015

**Objective 2.14:** Grasshopper Control: We will work with Minnesota Department of Agriculture to devise an appropriate emergency grasshopper control plan by 2008 so that future infestations are handled effectively and in a way that minimizes or eliminates insecticide use on WPAs for grasshopper control.

*Strategy 2.14.1:* Grasshoppers: Contact Minnesota Department of Agriculture in 2006 to begin planning process. RONS Project No. 97005

**Objective 2.15:** Biological Control: Increase emphasis on biological control whenever feasible. The District will continue to release beetles for control of spurge and loosestrife as appropriate.

*Strategy 2.15.1:* Promote and use biological control. RONS Project Nos. 98031, 97004, and 97008

*Strategy 2.15.2:* Spurge: By 2003, eliminate chemical control of leafy spurge by releasing control beetles on 100 percent of known WPA infestations.

### 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 by the year 2003. 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:* Land Acquisition Guidelines: Staff making land acquisition decisions will consider issues presented in an acquisition form that highlights biological and management factors affecting acquisition decisions. RONS: None

**Objective 3.2:** Goal Acres. By 2005, 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:* Biological Assessment: Work with other districts to complete biological assessment. RONS Project No. 99004

**Objective 3.3:** Coordination. The District will coordinate with the District Acquisition Office to insure rapid response to willing seller offers that meet the acquisition priorities. An offer will be made to the seller within 6 months of the decision to acquire the tract.

*Strategy 3.3.1:* Rapid Decision : If interested in acquiring a tract, the WMD staff will notify the Acquisition Office within 1 month of the initial land owner contact of their interest in proceeding with the acquisition. RONS Project No. 99005

*Strategy 3.3.2:* Rapid Offer: The Acquisition Office will make an offer within 5 months of receiving the statement of interest from the WMD staff. RONS: None

*Strategy 3.3.3:* Delineations on GIS: By 2004, all existing delineation information will be incorporated into the GIS, allowing better and faster delineation decisions. RONS Project No. 99005



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**Objective 3.4:** Acquisition. The District will meet current District goal acres within 15 years by acquiring an average of 1,630 acres in fee title, 3,335 acres of wetland easements and 1,660 acres of upland easements per year, for waterfowl breeding and use. This objective will be modified as appropriate if the goal acres are modified.

*Strategy 3.4.1:* Use GIS for Acquisition: Use GIS capabilities to analyze historic and current information to assist with identifying acquisition focus areas. RONS Project No. 99005

*Strategy 3.4.2:* Identify Willing Sellers: Contact landowners of key parcels to establish relationship and inform them of our interest in fee or easement acquisition if they are interested. RONS Project No. 97022

*Strategy 3.4.3:* Communicate with Counties: Improve communication with counties concerned about federal land acquisition. RONS Project No. 97022

**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:* Briefing: Regions 3 and 6 will participate in a briefing of top Fish and Wildlife Service leaders in 2003 to discuss revenue sharing issues. RONS: None

*Strategy 3.5.2:* Lump Sum Trust Payment: Inform agency leaders and outside parties that a one-time, lump

sum trust fund payment to counties is a potential solution to revenue sharing problem. RONS: None

- 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:
- 1) A graph of revenue sharing for the last 20 years.
  - 2) A detailed explanation of the impact of federal ownership on school taxes.
  - 3) A detailed study of the trust fund payments to the state in relation to the revenue sharing shortfall.
  - 4) How much money do we really need to make up the trust fund from 1993 and prior.
- Strategy 3.6.1:* Support Realty Search: Encourage and support examination of revenue sharing details to be conducted by regional realty office.
- Objective 3.7:** Determine local economic value of Federal land ownership.
- Strategy 3.7.1:* Support research: Support ongoing research on economic effects of public land ownership.
- Objective 3.8:** Demonstrate the hydrologic benefits of restored wetlands; determine cash value of wetland values.
- Strategy 3.8.1:* USGS and Red River Watershed Study: Participate in planned research by USGS and Red River Watershed working group to measure flood control values of wetlands. RONS Project No. 99017
- Objective 3.9:** Determine social value of natural habitat in the landscape. Determine importance of wildlife to people in a community.
- Strategy 3.9.1:* Measure WPA Aesthetic Values: By 2008, estimate economic benefit of aesthetic values provided by public lands. RONS Project No. 99003

## Goal 4: Monitoring

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 by 2005 with recognized researchers in the field to identify monitoring needs, approaches, strategies and target species.

*Strategy 4.1.1:* Coordinate workshop with Regional Biologist.

**Objective 4.2:** Inventory and Monitoring Plan. Develop an Inventory and Monitoring Plan by 2007 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.



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*Strategy 4.2.1:* Biologist will develop plan. RONS Project No. 97005

**Objective 4.3:** Geographic Information System. Increase use of GIS technology in monitoring habitat and wildlife (See operations section for details). RONS Project No. 97009

**Objective 4.5:** 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 4.5.1:* Annual Meeting. Have annual meetings for biologists and field personnel to share information, techniques and results of management strategies on target populations. RONS Project No. 97005

*Strategy 4.5.2:* Data Summaries. 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. RONS Project No. 97005

**Objective 4.6:** Biological Inventory. As part of the Inventory and Monitoring Plan, inventory the biological resources on the Districts by the year 2010.

*Strategy 4.6.1:* Biological Monitoring: Conduct inventory and monitoring annually according to plan. RONS Project No. 99013

**Objective 4.7:** 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 4.7.1:* Hire Technician to assist with monitoring. RONS Project No. 99013

**Objectives 4.8:** 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.

*Strategy 4.8.1:* Contract Monitoring: Hire contaminants monitoring firm to conduct a thorough investigation of impacts to WPAs over a 4-year period. RONS Project No. 99016

#### 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.

*Strategy 5.1.1:* Incorporate surveys into monitoring plan and implement. RONS Project Nos. 97005, 99013

**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:* Incorporate surveys into monitoring plan and implement. RONS Project Nos. 97005, 99013

**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:* Collaborative Research: We will encourage collaborative projects with research institutions. RONS Project No. 97005

**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:* Help develop guidance and implement upland and riparian restoration work. RONS Project No. 99014

**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 District will obtain baseline data including maps of all federally endangered and threatened species by 2005.

*Strategy 5.5.1:* Priority Inventory: Make threatened and endangered species inventories a high priority within District monitoring plan being developed.

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

*Strategy 5.6.1:* Habitat Management: Examine habitat management practices and management unit block size for all units with endangered, threatened, or special emphasis species present. RONS Project No. 97005

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

*Strategy 5.7.1:* Special Concern Work Groups: Promote one or more multi-agency work groups to identify and promote management needs for special concern species. RONS Project No. 97005

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

*Strategy 5.8.1:* Hire enforcement officer. RONS Project No. 97012

**Objective 5.9:** Monitoring. The Districts will obtain baseline data including maps of all federally endangered and threatened species as well as all native prairie tracts, calcareous fens and oak savannah by 2005.

**Objective 5.10:** Cooperation. The Districts will identify threatened Northern Tallgrass Prairie unique communities and work through the Tall Grass Prairie Habitat Preservation Area project partners or other agencies and partners to acquire in fee title or protect through easement where the Small Wetlands Acquisition Program is not appropriate. All remaining native prairie remnants larger than 5 acres will be identified by 2005 and strategies for their protection will be developed by the year 2005.

*Strategy 5.10.1:* Scorecard Team: Serve on existing multi-agency “scorecard team” which identifies prairie remnants, ranks them, and assigns a responsible partner for action. RONS: None

**Objective 5.11:** Enforcement. The Districts will prohibit the introduction of wildlife species that are not native to the Northern Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem.

*Strategy 5.11.1:* Maintain policy of prohibiting introduction of exotics on WPAs. RONS: None

**Objective 5.12:** Develop priority actions to be implemented by the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program with the strategies to be developed in a joint effort by all districts by 2004 with the Morris Wetland Management District taking the lead and responsible for the documentation.

*Strategy 5.12.1:* Identify Actions: Participate in a statewide Partners for Fish and Wildlife Meeting in 2003 which identifies priority actions. RONS: None

## **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:** Each Wetland Management District will strive to meet the National Visitor Service Standards for the Refuge System by the year 2005:

*Strategy 6.1.1:* Develop a Visitor Services Plan by 2005. RONS Project No. 99003

*Strategy 6.1.2:* Interpret key resources and issues by updating visitor center displays by 2004. RONS Project No. 97014 plus existing MMS project proposal.

*Strategy 6.1.3:* Provide quality wildlife observation and photography opportunities through continued trail development and at least one photographic blind on a WPA. RONS Project No. 97002

*Strategy 6.1.4:* Improve hunter access through parking area upgrades and informational signs. RONS Project No. 98018

*Strategy 6.1.5:* Investigate opportunities for improved recreational fishing opportunities by monitoring fish populations in each WPA. RONS Project No. 99015

*Strategy 6.1.6:* By 2003, cultivate a Friends Group focusing on the relationship between the City of Morris and the Long Lake-Edwards WPA. RONS Project No. 97006

**Objective 6.2:** Each Wetland Management District should have a full-time public use specialist by 2004.

*Strategy 6.2.1:* By 2004, hire an Outdoor Recreation Planner to develop and implement a quality environmental education program. RONS Project No. 97006



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**Objective 6.3:** Each Wetland Management District should designate a Waterfowl Production Area in each county that will be handicapped accessible.

*Strategy 6.3.1:* Accessible WPAs: By 2010, provide enhanced accessibility to one WPA in each county and inform public. RONS Project No. 98033

**Objective 6.4:** Develop maps for each Wetland Management District that can be easily provided upon request by the public by 2003.

*Strategy 6.4.1:* Implement GIS generated maps in 2003.

**Objective 6.5:** Develop an outreach plan for the Morris Wetland Management District, following the Public Use Plan developed by Fergus Falls Wetland Management District. Address internal (within the Service) and external audiences by 2003.

*Strategy 6.5.1:* Write an Outreach Plan for the Morris WMD by 2005. RONS Project No. 99003

**Objective 6.6:** Promote greater understanding of the WMD program; implement the Public Use Plan for each District by 2006.

*Strategy 6.6.1:* Coordination Meeting: Identify outreach needs and opportunities during cross-regional wetland management district coordination meeting.

*Strategy 6.6.2:* Agency Leaders: Coordinate with other offices to invite and encourage current and future Service Directors, Deputy Directors, Refuge Division Chiefs, Regional Directors, and Refuge Programmatic Assistant Regional Directors to visit at least one wetland management district within one year of assuming their leadership position.

**Objective 6.7:** Increase environmental visits to WMD headquarters by 2006.

*Strategy 6.7.1:* Schools: Maintain and seek to increase environmental education visits by nearby elementary and secondary school students. Enhance use of headquarters area by University of Minnesota-Morris students for scholastic and recreational visits. RONS Project No. 97014

## **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:** The WMD will have computer support staff by 2005.

*Strategy 7.1.1:* Hire Computer and GIS Support: By 2005, hire a computer support specialist to oversee GIS and other office computer support and data entry. RONS Project No. 97009

### Goal 8: 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:** The staffing needs identified in this CCP are added as identified elsewhere in the plan.

**Objective 8.2:** Identify all buildings that do not meet service standards or needs by 2005.

*Strategy 8.2.1:* Space Needs Analysis: By 2005, conduct a comprehensive analysis of shop, storage, and office space and configuration needs expected for the next 15 years. RONS Project No. 99019

**Objective 8.3:** Construct, replace or modify buildings so that all buildings meet service standards and needs by 2010. RONS Project No. 99019

**Objective 8.4:** Ensure that all Wetland District vehicles are replaced when their mileage reaches normal industry replacement standards (6 years or 60,000). RONS: Existing MMS projects.

**Objective 8.5:** Ensure that Wetland Management District office and field tools and equipments are adequate to fulfill this plan. RONS: Existing MMS projects.

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.



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**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:* By 2004, identify costs of adding new lands to O&M budgets and communicate information. RONS Project No. 99036

**Objective 9.2:** Maintain a current inventory of all maintenance needs, updating it annually.

*Strategy 9.2.1:* Maintenance Management System: Analyze and modify maintenance management system lists of identified maintenance backlog. RONS: None

*Strategy 9.2.2:* Erase Maintenance Backlog: By 2015, eliminate backlog of maintenance needs. RONS: Existing MMS list

**Objective 9.3:** The Refuge Supervisor will summarize accomplishments combining all districts to demonstrate the work done through previous funding. RONS: None

Goal 10: Consistency Goal

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:** All existing WPAs will have Development Plans completed by 2008.

*Strategy 10.1.1:* Shift 100 percent of manual plans to GIS by 2005. RONS Project No. 97009

**Objective 10.2:** Ensure that newly acquired land receives timely, effective unit planning to meet trust responsibilities within 2 years of taking possession of area.

*Strategy 10.2.1:* Shift to GIS based planning. RONS Project No. 97009

**Objective 10.3:** Quarterly coordination meetings for the WMDs will be held to discuss common issues and practices. The meetings will include all District managers and District supervisors.

*Strategy 10.3.1:* Attend and assist with coordination.

**Objective 10.4:** 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 10.4.1:* Coordinate 2002 cross-regional meeting.