From:	Riley, Clint
To:	FW6 RO ARDs
Subject:	Re: FY14 Priorities Document
Date:	Tuesday, September 24, 2013 3:33:20 PM
Attachments:	FY14Priorities V2_Riley.docx

I'm fully 24 hours late, with the weak excuse that I was on AL Fri/Mon. Just in case they'd still be useful, I've added some thoughts/edits to the version with Will and Mike's edits.

Clint Riley
Assistant Regional Director, Migratory Birds and State Programs
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On Mon, Sep 23, 2013 at 4:10 PM, Thabault, Michael <michael_thabault@fws.gov> wrote:

> I was good with all of Will's changes except where I added some commentary in three places.
>
> Michael Thabault
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>
> On Mon, Sep 23, 2013 at 3:42 PM, Will Meeks <Will_Meeks@fws.gov> wrote:
>
> > Matt,
> >
> > See comments/edits attached.
> >
> > Will Meeks
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From: Matt Hogan [mailto:Matt_Hogan@fws.gov]
Sent: Friday, September 20, 2013 10:54 AM
To: FW6 RO ARDs
Subject: FY14 Priorities Document

Attached is the next version of our priorities document. Thanks for everyone's input. We are hoping to have a final draft by next week so we can finalize design and production before Oct 1.

Please review the entire document and provide any suggested edits. Please do not limit yourself to your sections but read the entire document to be sure it makes sense the way it is written as we want all our employees to understand each bullet.

Also, I tried to eliminate acronyms but there were several I missed. Please provide full name for any acronyms in your program area.

Please provide your comments by **COB Monday, September 23rd**. Thanks.

Matt

Matt Hogan

Deputy Regional Director

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FY14 Regional Priorities

OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES

Our People

Invest in our Workforce

Provide Professional Development Opportunities for Our Employees

- Fully implement the new Region 6 Employee Development Program. Continue to research/provide high quality/low cost professional development opportunities and resources to all employees.
- Work with Region 6 supervisors to develop a workplace culture that integrates professional development plans into our mission focused operations.
- Develop appropriate performance metrics to measure our professional development program progress and success.

Ensure Our Employees Have a Safe Work Environment

- Better educate our entire workforce on risk-based analysis. Incorporate user-friendly, risk-based analysis tools into daily activities and decision making at every level of the Region.
- Ensure that every Project Leader/Station manager completes and follows up on their Safety and Environmental Self-Inspection prior to August 15.

Recruit and Retain a Diverse and Highly Engaged Workforce that Reflects the Publics We Serve

- Use, refine and grow our extensive network of professional, academic, non-profit and governmental contacts in our efforts to attract, recruit and retain diverse, highly qualified and engaged employees.
- While ~~protecting~~ safeguarding our current workforce, continue successful efforts by Human Resources and Civil Rights and Diversity Program (e.g., Pathways, special hiring authorities) to recruit and retain skilled and talented employees in the region.
- Work to isolate retention challenges in the region and develop solutions to address them.

Continue to Advance the Principles of Strategic Habitat Conservation as our Conservation Design and Delivery Paradigm

Comment [WAM1]: May consider replacing this phrase with, "a science driven agency." I think that's how Dan has used it.

Work with Partners to Identify and Utilize Surrogate Species to Achieve Self-sustaining Fish and Wildlife Populations in Functional Landscapes

- Identify a geography to develop Version 1.0 Surrogate Species for Region 6, including the identification of potential surrogates, species to be represented and limiting factors for that geography. Development of Version 1.0 will be consistent with the recently developed state/federal framework for surrogate species and be completed by the end of 2013. ~~Version~~

~~1.0 will be developed by the end of calendar year 2013 and will likely occur within a grassland geography.~~

Continue to Build Science Capacity through Our Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC)

- Refine and enhance information flow on FWS regional priorities and the opportunities that LCCs can implement to improve conservation design.
- Establish a~~n~~ cross-programmatic advisory group for the Great Northern LCC and Southern Rockies LCC designed to provide input to R6 LCC Steering Committee representatives to ensure regional priorities are fully incorporated in LCC discussions.
- Develop and test a communication mechanism to provide updated information regarding science support tools developed from regional LCCs for potential use by regional programs.
    - Initiate a process to integrate existing aquatic data with terrestrial information within the LCC GIS framework to support conservation at landscape levels for priority trust aquatic resources by the Service and our partners in the Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership area.

Leverage Other Existing Internal Science Capacity

- Further integrate HAPET to support regional priorities by working with FWS offices and programs to support the development of pilot landscape conservation projects by engaging and providing methodologies, data, and training regarding landscape conservation and the development of decision support tools to address landscape threats and protection efforts.
- Develop a cross-programmatic team to investigate the need for a "Regional Science Hub" that could be developed to share science products, potentially serve data, and coordinate science efforts.
- Integrate Region 6 programs to support, strengthen, and coordinate our priority conservation delivery efforts. Specifically, maintain and enhance an annual inventory of priority research and information needs across programs and develop a database of wildlife and plant species that have been designated as priorities (e.g. focal, surrogate, target, conservation concern, threatened and endangered) in Region 6.
- Maintain efforts to utilize National Fish Passage Program's Geofin and the Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership's Midwest Habitat Assessment to focus and achieve strategic aquatic habitat conservation goals.

Our Partners

Maintain and Increase our Collaboration with State Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Our Primary Partners

- Within each of our eight states, each Service program, or all programs together, will host at least one general coordination meeting to discuss mutual priorities and conservation opportunities with State wildlife agency directors and appropriate agency staff.

Comment [WAM2]: "will likely" seems a little less than affirmative.

Comment [CMR3]: If we're looking for ways to shorten the document, the next bullet seems like a very specific action item for FY14 – perhaps either eliminate this more generate bullet, or combine it with the next one?

Comment [WAM4]: And partners?

Comment [WAM5]: This bullet seems lightly related to the first and third bullet under the LCC heading above. Maybe it can be condensed and included there?

- Each Project Leader will ensure that State wildlife agency directors and appropriate agency staff are apprised in advance of local announcements or initiatives
- For major policy initiatives or decisions (such as ESA listing decisions), the Assistant Regional Director, DRD, or RD will personally communicate decisions to state directors in advance of public release using information provided by the relevant Service program.
- Continue to support our state partner agencies through effective and efficient administration of the Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration (WSFR) program

Maintain and Increase our Collaboration with Tribes

- Each program/station with a nexus with a tribe will schedule at least one coordination meeting (alone or with other programs) with those tribes to discuss issues of mutual importance
- An RDT member will be identified to represent the RDT and the region at important gatherings (at least two annually) of important tribal leaders from the Region. For example, the representative could represent the region at regional gatherings of the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society and/or the Great Plains or Montana-Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council(s).
- Conduct a Tribal Roundtable Meeting-Part II to further the relationship with the Tribes, explore new ways to increase communication~~s~~, enhance consultation, explore overlapping priorities, and provide a training workshop for grants.
- Increase tribal communications and awareness of Service priorities, initiatives, programs and funding opportunities through various communication tools and mechanisms.
- Plan and sponsor Eagle Summit 3 within the region.

Our Public

Enhance Communication~~s~~ Efforts and Further Align Outreach with Regional Priorities

- Build strategic, proactive approaches to public information campaigns and communications around our regional resource priorities.
- Implement visual tools (such as webcams) to capture real-time on-the-ground conservation efforts for regional priority activities.
- Redesign the Region's website to provide increased interactivity, brand consistency, streamlined maintenance, and user-centered focus.
- Strategically engage key Members of Congress, state legislators, and county commissioners on regional priorities.
- Anticipate and respond to emerging issues and policies by monitoring trends, providing issues management, and pursuing opportunities for strategic engagement with our partners.
- Increasing relevance of the Service and Refuges, incorporate the "Urban Standards of Excellence" into planning and daily operations at Rocky Mountain Arsenal (RMA) and Bear River Refuges. These efforts will target non-traditional audiences as well as highlight Denver Urban Bird Treaty activities at RMA.
- In recognition of the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, the Mountain-Prairie Regional Newsletter will feature articles on each of the eight field stations in Region 6 with designated or

Comment [WAM6]: Maybe add that here too?

Comment [CMR7]: Can we define this somehow? A management nexus? Overlapping geographic area or management responsibility? (An example of my concern: Does our MB permit program need to hold 40 tribal meetings because we issue eagle permits to their members?)

Comment [WAM8]: Writing them? Competing for them? Maybe it should read, "grant writing?"

Comment [CMR9]: Seems very vague compared with other items (which are specific ways to do this in FY14), and doesn't say much more than the label above the bullets. Delete, to reduce document length?

Comment [CMR10]: Agree with Will that this seems more like a "principle," and may beg the question about what we're actually planning to do in FY14 to address this principle.

Comment [WAM11]: Not sure this is a priority, rather what we should be doing anyhow????

proposed wilderness area and each of these stations will include information about the anniversary as part of any events they host in 2014.

RESOURCE PRIORITIES

Proactively Identify and Influence Significant Environmental Stressors to Minimize Impacts to Fish, Wildlife and their Habitats

Water, Energy Development and Invasive Species

- Implement a cross-programmatic, non-hierarchical team to address water quality and quantity issues, in light of water's broad-ranging impact on the trust species for which we have responsibility. The team will be authorized to independently identify opportunities and explore measures otherwise unlikely to be pursued through traditional program approaches.
- Continue to reach out to the energy industry to develop conservation strategies that are consistent with State/Federal conservation efforts for sage-grouse.
- Develop an analytical framework utilizing geospatial analysis, incorporating such analysis into Landscape Energy Action Plan (LEAP) and presenting to the energy industry to advance their sage grouse conservation efforts.
- Identify high priority eagle conservation practices and incorporate those in-to existing decision support systems ~~such as LEAP~~ as well as relay to and the energy industry to be implemented in eagle permitting efforts.
- Finalize regional policy to establish processes to prevent invasive species range expansion by Service personnel.
- Update HACCP plans for R6 FAC stations and develop HACCP plans for R6 ES field stations to minimize risk of spreading invasive species through ~~service~~ Service activities. Initiate annual AIS inspections for all hatcheries in R6.
- Conduct baseline water quality assessments for three hatcheries to document existing water quality and to determine if environmental contaminants may be present that could adversely impact fish recovery.

Comment [MGT12]: Can't support striking LEAP. This is being developed as one of our primary interfaces with the development work on BMPS and geospatial stuff for ES. We are working with MB on integrations. The second clause is direct face-to-face interactions with industry to get the conservation ball rolling.

Comment [CMR13]: I get the distinction Mike makes; but agree with Will's comment that a word seems to be missing and I'm not sure what it is.

Comment [WAM14]: ??? Not sure what this means?

Conserve, Restore and Protect Priority Landscapes and the Wildlife that Depend on Them

Grasslands Dependent Species and Native Grassland Ecosystems

- Protect over 40,000 acres of grassland and 8,000 acres of wetlands of highest priority migratory bird breeding habitat at risk of conversion with perpetual conservation easements using Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (MBCF) dollars.
- Develop "Phase II--Crisis on the Prairies" strategic communication campaign on the value of the prairies to further gain public support, attract national attention, and work collaboratively with our partners.

- Continue the collection of BBS data while identifying the need for additional sampling for under-represented species, habitats, and geographies; and ~~while~~ integrate~~ing~~ spatial models derived from BBS to inform landscape conservation delivery actions.

Sage-Grouse and the Sage Steppe Ecosystem

- Lead the Service's participation in the range-wide effort to conserve the greater sage-grouse.
- Working with R1 and R8, develop a mitigation framework that identifies the mitigation tools and principles for both traditional mitigation as well as advancing the principles associated with advanced crediting.
- Lead the efforts regarding sage-grouse conservation ~~and~~ using the Field Management Team as the principle operation advisory group to Service leadership on the adequacy of conservation efforts range-wide.
- Develop the necessary metrics to be used by ~~to be measured which~~ our partner agencies in reporting and measuring their ~~can report~~ conservation efforts ~~against~~.
- Provide direct input to the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service planning efforts regarding sage-grouse conservation.
- Work with and advise State planning efforts regarding sage-grouse conservation
- Accelerate the Sage-Grouse Initiative (SGI) through the Intermountain West Joint Venture's coordination of the multi-partner Strategic Watershed Action Team (SWAT). This involves leveraging potential new funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and partners to support capacity that will continually refine SGI's approach to strategic conservation delivery and quantify outcomes to sage-grouse populations.
- Enhance Greater Sage-grouse partnership conservation efforts through full implementation of our cooperative agreements with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA). Implementation will include but is not limited to the current efforts to complete funded research, facilitate state data ~~exposure to~~integration in LC MAP and the compilation of information and management of the invasive species/fire complex with WAFWA.

Comment [WAM15]: We should be consistent on how this is used. Some places it's capitalized, other places it's not.

Comment [MGT16]: I am OK with this

Comment [WAM17]: Consider this, "Develop the necessary metrics to report measurable biological outcomes for sage grouse conservation efforts."

Comment [CMR18]: Would this edit help to distinguish between the two bullets, by emphasizing state agency reporting (versus generally quantifying results for sage grouse populations)?

Comment [CMR19]: Could this become the intro phrase to the bullet above, re: metrics for state reporting?

Comment [MGT20]: Connected to but slightly different than bullet 4. Maybe could be combined but since we are getting NRCS money wanted to highlight their work with the IMJV specifically.

Comment [WAM21]: This also appears to be what bullet #4 above is saying.

Advance Conservation for Priority Trust Resources

Black-footed Ferret Recovery (BFF)

- Maximize additional reintroduction sites with recently completed Safe Harbor Agreement.
- Implement the Black-tailed prairie dog management plan at Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR which outlines a long-term management strategy, in support of the goals and objectives outlined in the Habitat Management Plan which lays the groundwork for the reintroduction of black-footed ferrets.
- Work with Natural Resource Conservation Service to implement working lands for wildlife program for BFF.

- Work with Animal Plant Health Inspection Service/-Wildlife Services (APHIS WS) and others to implement range-wide boundary control program for BFF.
- Work with U.S. Geological Survey-, APHIS WS, and others to implement range-wide disease management program for BFF.

Grizzly Bear Recovery (GB)

- Finish the White Bark Pine food synthesis for Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE).
- Finalize the revised GYE demographic criteria.
- Finalize the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) Conservation Strategy.
- Utilize food synthesis and Conservation Strategy to develop decision documents on listing status of GB in the NCDE.

Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery

- Finalize a basin-wide aquatic invasive species control strategy that provides a sustainable approach to managing threats of predation and competition to the endangered Colorado River fish.
- Publish a draft Colorado Pikeminnow Recovery Plan.
- Convene a Recovery Team to begin revision of the Humpback Chub Recovery Plan.
- Revise and finalize the Recovery Program's Integrated Stocking Plan with the intent of improving survival of hatchery reared bonytail.

Topeka Shiner

- Fully implement a project plan to evaluate designation of two Distinct Population Segments (northern and southern), and initiate rulemaking to change the status of the northern DPS if appropriate.

Pallid Sturgeon

- Continue monitoring population status to guide habitat protection and restoration and stocking efforts for restoration of pallid sturgeon in the Missouri River.

Aquatic Species

- Working with State, Federal and NGO partners, prioritize and initiate 3 fish passage/habitat projects that will assist target species/populations to be more resilient and adaptive in dealing with the impacts of environmental ~~stresses~~stressors, such as climate change.
- Continue working with state partners to transition propagation programs at Jones Hole National Fish Hatchery to further conservation goals for native fish.
- Continue working with partners, including the States, other Federal agencies and Tribal governments to develop a native cutthroat trout conservation plan.

- Identify highest priority habitat needs for native species and initiate at least 3 National Fish Passage Program and National Fish Habitat Partnership projects to assist target species/populations with resilience and adaptation to the impacts of environmental ~~stresses~~stressors, including climate change.
- Initiate a multi-year project to assess and determine needs and priorities for propagation of native aquatic species in R6.
- Continue cooperative efforts by the Lander FWCO and Garrison Dam NFH, working with the states of North Dakota and Wyoming and the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone Tribes, to restore sauger populations in the Wind River.

Golden Eagles

- Collaborate with USFWS Regions 1, 2, and 8 to initiate landscape-scale conservation planning for golden eagles in relation to impacts from renewable and non-renewable energy development in the western U.S. Specifically, through an appointed team, prioritize landscapes at an appropriate scale and develop a first draft of specific conservation strategies applicable to energy development in those ~~scaled~~ landscapes.
- Develop a research plan and measure environmental contaminants in eagles and other large raptors to evaluate concerns over dietary exposure to rodenticides, mercury and lead.
- Complete one NEPA evaluation concerning potential issuance of a programmatic eagle take permit for a wind energy facility.

Wyoming Toad

- Announce availability of draft revised recovery plan for public comment.
- Fully develop land acquisition as a priority recovery strategy as called for in the revised Wyoming toad recovery plan.
- Support and advocate completion of the Southern Laramie River Conservation Area in 2014 as a priority strategy for Wyoming toad recovery, internally and externally.
- ~~Fully develop land acquisition as a priority recovery strategy as called for in the revised Wyoming toad recovery plan.~~
- Increase captive propagation capabilities.

Utah Prairie Dog

- Finalize low-effect Habitat Conservation Plans (HCP) for Iron and Garfield Counties, UT.
- Establish/protect additional colonies of Utah Prairie Dogs.

Sprague's Pipit

- Develop and support publication of an International model of Sprague's pipit population distributions.

- ~~Support the development and publication [by the University of Montana] of an International international model of Sprague's pipit population distributions.~~
- Collaborate with USGS BBS to analyze Sprague's pipit population trends within population core areas.
- Host a meeting of ~~international~~ Sprague's pipit experts to inform development of multi-organization conservation efforts for the species. Invite other state and federal agencies and conservation organizations to attend and jointly develop plans for conservation projects to benefit Sprague's pipit.

Comment [CMR22]: The first bullet covers this.

Comment [CMR23]: May want to keep "international" as this is the key point – we need to involve experts from Canada.

Continue Existing and Identify New Priority Landscape Conservation Efforts

- Protect an additional 12,000 acres within the Crown of the Continent in Montana through conservation easements to prevent land fragmentation and protect habitat for numerous trust species including grizzly bears, Canada lynx, bull trout and numerous migratory bird species.
- Protect an additional 4,000 acres of prairie in the Dakota Grasslands Conservation Area through easements to protect critical migratory bird habitat from accelerated habitat loss and conversion.
- Protect an additional 3,500 acres of tallgrass prairie habitat in the Flint Hills using perpetual conservation easements.
- Continue to work with partners and Region 1 to officially establish the Bear River Conservation Area through the acceptance of the first easement.
- Secure Director approval to establish the San Luis Valley Conservation Area that will protect up to 280,000 acres of habitat in south-central Colorado through a mix of easements and fee acquisition for key species including the southwestern willow flycatcher, Gunnison sage grouse, and Greater Sandhill cranes.
- Secure Director approval to establish the Southern Laramie Plains Conservation Area in southeast Wyoming that will protect up to 43,299 acres through a mix of easements and fee acquisition of key habitats for the Endangered Wyoming Toad.
- Secure Director approval to protect up to 140,000 acres of habitat along the Missouri River for key species including bald eagle, piping plover, least tern and pallid sturgeon.