

Chapter 4: Management Direction

Fergus Falls Wetland Management District

This chapter of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan steps down overall guidance to the District through station specific objectives and strategies. The objectives and strategies are unique to the Fergus Falls Wetland Management District and identify activities that achieve the District’s purpose, vision and the National Wildlife Refuge System mission (Chapter 1) and the Comprehensive Conservation Plan Issues and Goals (Chapter 2).

The Fergus Falls Wetland Management District consists of Otter Tail, Grant, Douglas, Wilkin, and Wadena counties (Figure 10). These counties are in the Prairie Pothole Region generally on or west of the prairie-forest transition. Wilkin County is located in the Red River Valley, the flat glacial Lake Agassiz Basin with little topographic relief except for ancient beach ridges. Douglas, Grant, and Otter Tail counties extend into the western morain-prairie rolling topography with its numerous lakes. Wadena County is part of the Mississippi headwaters district, an area of geological complexity.

This region historically was covered by bluestem tallgrass prairie on the west phasing into oak savannah to the east. The woodlands to the east gradually begin as oak savannah phasing into oak-ash communities on the higher sites with willow-tamarack shrub swamps on the lower sites.

The District currently manages 215 Waterfowl Production Areas totaling 43,417 acres, 1,101 wetland easements covering 110,176 acres and six grassland easements covering 783 acres. In addition, 29 conservation easements totaling 2,566 acres cover restored wetlands and farmlands on former Farmers Home Administration property.

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

Native Prairie (virgin)	2,294
Other Grasslands/Farmland	20,881
Forested/Brushland	3,828
Wetlands and Rivers	16,309
Roads, Buildings, Misc.	105
Total:	43,417

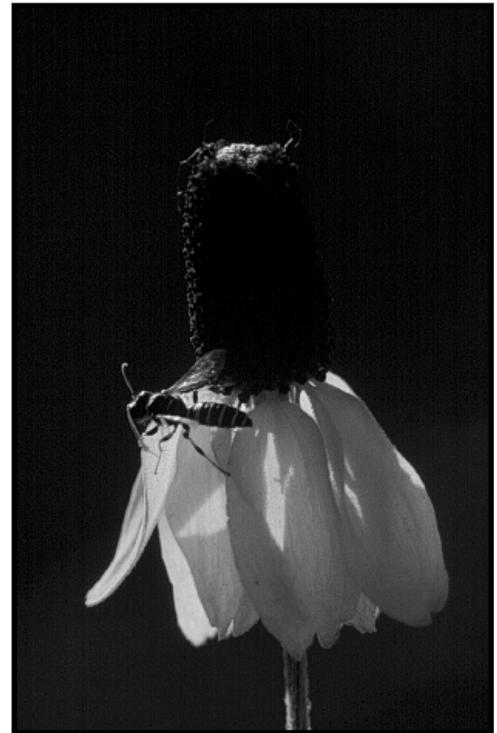
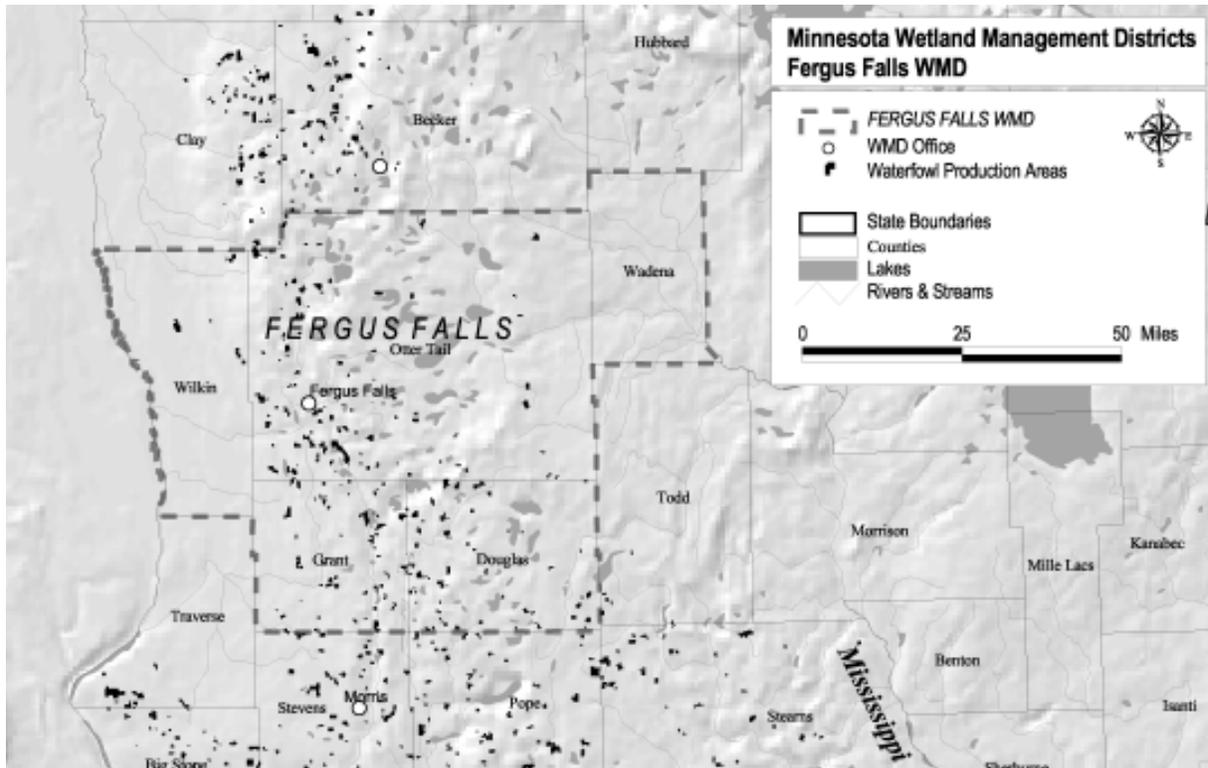


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Figure 10: Fergus Falls Wetland Management District



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 the Multi-Agency Approach to Planning and Evaluation (MAAPE) Process. The District will request that the Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET) review the MAAPE process every 5 years to incorporate monitoring results and reevaluate strategies for increasing waterfowl production within the District.

Strategy 1.1.1: By January 1, 2004, the District will contact the HAPET office at Fergus Falls to set a date for a workshop to update the Fergus Falls Waterfowl Management Strategy Report as well as a deadline to update the report.

Objective 1.2: Alternative Waterfowl Monitoring. The District will develop alternative monitoring techniques by the year 2006 for waterfowl

abundance and productivity estimates in areas of Districts 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: Request funding to conduct a 5-year statewide study of breeding waterfowl habitat preferences, use rates and nest success in the transition/boarder prairie zone of Minnesota.

Strategy 1.2.2: Request funding to conduct a 5-year statewide study of diving duck species habitat preferences, use rates and nest success.

Strategy 1.2.3: Request funding for a study of waterfowl predator population ranges and densities within the five-county District to enhance application of management actions. RONS Project No. 97005

Objective 1.3: Recruitment Rate. As a benchmark for all upland nesting duck species, the District will strive to increase the potential recruitment rate of mallards in an average year from the current level of .42 to .57 by the year 2015 (based on the Mallard model and the MAAPE process).

Strategy 1.3.1: Upland cover management. The District will strive to take the following actions on both public and private lands to meet the recruitment rate goal: convert 52,459 acres of cropland to grassland; maintain the existing 86,000 acres of CRP as well as all other grassland cover; implement delayed haying on 1,807 acres, no-till row crop farming on 85,072 acres and grazing programs on 4,518 acres. RONS Projects Nos. 97013, 97024, 97025

Strategy 1.3.2: Nest Success. The District will strive to provide nesting conditions for waterfowl such that nest success averages 65 percent - 75 percent within predator exclosures and 75 percent - 85 percent on nest structures within the District.

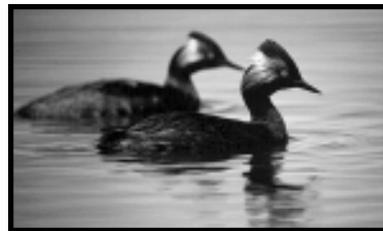


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Strategy 1.3.3: Nest Structures. The District will assemble and place 200 hen house nesting structures in suitable habitats per year until a total 2,524 is reached. The District will continue to maintain and monitor all existing structures and relocate structures that have not been used for 5 successive years. RONS Project No. 97022

Strategy 1.3.4: Predator Exlosures. The District will maintain 10 existing predator exclosures totaling 360 acres and construct additional exclosures totaling 3,372 acres to benefit nesting waterfowl and other ground nesting grassland birds. Predator management activities will involve trapping skunk, raccoon, fox, mink and Franklin's ground squirrels within and adjacent to the exclosures during the mid-March to August nesting season. RONS Project No. 97023

Objective 1.4: Violations. Each year, the District will inspect all WPA, FmHA Conservation Easement and Habitat Easement for compliance to insure protection of migratory waterfowl and other habitats. Any illegal activity will be responded to immediately and action will be taken as soon as possible.

Strategy 1.4.1: Inspect designated District lands on a regular schedule for violations. RONS Project No. 97026

Strategy 1.4.2: Hire a seasonal biological technician to assist the lead enforcement officer in documentation of requested secondary uses, identifying potential impacts to service lands and preparation of documents granting or denying these uses. RONS Project No. 97027

Strategy 1.4.3: Contract to map protected wetlands on all of the District's 341 pre-1976 wetland easements. RONS Project No. 01003

Objective 1.5: Working With Partners. The District will cooperate with all U.S. Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Department of Natural Resource, local agencies, private partners conservation groups and individuals to maintain the existing 202,000 acres of wetlands in the District and to increase waterfowl habitat and production.

Strategy 1.5.1: The station will coordinate with local agencies where resource issues affect waterfowl resources. RONS Project No. 97024

Objective 1.6: 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 1.6.1: The station will minimize the use of food plots, replacing them where possible with cribs or feeders to minimize weed control and to restore food plots to grassland habitat.

Strategy 1.6.2: Tree plantings will be limited to sites where they historically occurred and to indigenous species.

Objective 1.7: Enforcement. The Districts will prohibit the introduction of wildlife species that are not native to the Northern Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem.

Objective 1.8: Develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the Minnesota DNR that clearly articulates the responsibilities of Wetland Districts for responding to landowner complaints about damage by geese from WPA wetlands.

Strategy 1.8.1: In cooperation with the Minnesota DNR and Ducks Unlimited, prevent private lands depredations by geese by hiring staff and purchasing needed equipment and supplies to provide feeding areas on private and/or public lands through mowing, fencing and/or food plot establishment on private land. RONS Project No. 97015

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 250 acres on Service land and 250 acres on private land 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 forbs using ecotypes from the Red River Valley Aspen Parkland Ecoregion. Judiciously use non-native plantings when desirable to meet waterfowl and migratory bird population objectives.

Strategy 2.1.1: Continue to annually restore an average of 250 acres of native grassland on WPAs throughout the District. RONS Project No. 97009

Strategy 2.1.2: Purchase the needed equipment to coordinate an expanded private lands native prairie reestablishment program. RONS Project No. 97013

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

Strategy 2.2.3: Obtain funding to purchase or contract for needed facilities, equipment and seed as well as seedbed preparation, seeding and follow up invasive species control. RONS Project No. 97009

Objective 2.3: Prescribed Burn. Plan and conduct prescribed burns on 5,000 acres, or 32 sites annually, to maintain and restore native prairie plant species to improve waterfowl and wildlife utilization, as well as to prepare selected sites for native seed harvest. Firebase Project



USFWS File Photo

Strategy 2.3.1: Hire a Fire Program Technician and three fire fighters as well as purchase a track truck, two pumpers, other fire equipment and equipment storage facility to meet prescribed fire acreage goals. Firebase Project and RONS Project Nos. 97017 and 01004

Objective 2.4: Wildfire Management. Protect human life, property, natural/cultural resources, real property both within and adjacent to Fish and Wildlife Service administered lands from those fires which start on FWS lands by safely suppressing all wildland fires using strategies and tactics appropriate to safety considerations, values to be protected, management objectives and in accordance with Service Policy.

Strategy 2.4.1: Establish a stronger working relationship with the 20-25 local fire authorities throughout the District by renewing the two or three existing detection and initial attack agreements as well as setting up 20-23 new agreements with these local fire departments. Firebase Project and RONS Project No. 97028

Objective 2.5: Forest Management. Conduct forest management on 3,125 acres of trees on the District to replicate, to the extent possible, the structure, species composition, and processes of native ecological communities to improve migratory bird habitat and improve existing soil and water quality within respective watersheds.

Strategy 2.5.1: Contract a forestry specialist to inventory all timberland as well as prepare a forest management plan. RONS Project No. 97016

Objective 2.6: Wetland Restoration. Strive to restore 7,156 acres of temporary, 7,701 acres of seasonal and 4,832 acres of semi-permanent wetlands throughout the District by restoring an average of 125 wetlands per year both on and off District land to serve migratory birds as migration, breeding and nesting habitat.

Strategy 2.6.1: Seek funding to evaluate, survey, prepare permit applications, supervise contractors and seed down dikes as well as purchase necessary equipment to annually restore 25 drained wetlands on newly acquire WPAs. RONS Project No. 97006

Strategy 2.6.2: Seek funding to purchase the necessary supplies and equipment to annually increase temporary

and seasonal wetland restorations on private lands by 50. RONS Project No. 97011

Strategy 2.6.3: Allow for restoration of one to two large private wetlands (average of 75-plus acres each) annually by seeking funds to conduct the extensive planning, landowner contacts, coordination with partners, design, permitting and monitoring of construction necessary. RONS Project No. 97012

Objective 2.7: Management. Draw the water down on 15 percent of the 40 wetlands totaling 2,011 acres that have built-in water control structures to increase vegetation and nutrient recycling for the benefit of waterfowl.

Strategy 2.7.1: Install drawdown structures on Busko, Kube and Demaree WPAs to enhance wetland habitat. RONS Project No. 97008

Strategy 2.7.2: Install two drawdown structures on Sellevold WPA to enhance wetland habitat. RONS Project No. 97007

Objective 2.8: Monitoring. Inventory and monitor hydrological systems in the Districts as identified in the water management plan, including chemical water analysis, water level, water flow and the interaction of federal lands and private lands within the watershed.

Strategy 2.8.1: Hire a hydrologist and purchase the necessary equipment and supplies to conduct the stations Water Management Program. RONS Project No. 97014

Strategy 2.8.2: 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.

Strategy 2.8.3: Insure compliance with state permits and water laws by reading levels on water control structures monthly and conducting regular surveys of water conditions within the Districts as identified in the Water Management Plan.

Strategy 2.8.4: Monitor the impact of wetlands on hydrology within the watershed as identified in the Water Management Plan.

Strategy 2.8.5: Conduct water analysis to monitor changes in contaminants and other key chemicals over time as identified in the Water Management Plan.

Strategy 2.8.6: Attend and participate in watershed district meetings.

Strategy 2.8.7: Encourage and cooperate in research on hydrological systems within the District. Priority projects include the role of existing, drained and restored wetlands in flood control in the Red River Basin and an intensive state wide study of wetland losses since settlement with emphasis on 1985 to the present. RONS Project No. 97004

Strategy 2.8.8: Have annual meetings for hydrologists throughout the Districts to share information, techniques, and results.

Objectives 2.9: 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 2.10: 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.

Strategy 2.10.1: Work with students, landowners and the general public to implement control and eradication measures throughout the District. This project is under way.

Strategy 2.10.2: Acquire the necessary equipment and supplies to annually support control of plumeless and Canadian thistle on 750 acres of WPAs throughout the District. RONS Project No. 97019

Strategy 2.10.3: Purchase the necessary equipment and supplies to annually control leafy spurge and spotted knapweed on 450 acres using chemical and mechanical methods. Install a chemical wash station to comply with OSHA and state regulations for handling of herbicides. RONS Project No. 97018

Strategy 2.10.4: Contract for control of invasive tree species (box elder, red cedar, buckthorn and cottonwood) on 1,000 acres of native grasslands on WPAs. RONS Project No. 97020

Objective 2.11: Minnow and Carp Control. Reduce or eliminate populations of exotic/invasive fish species on shallow prairie wetland communities within the District. Primary targets include fathead minnows, common carp and buffalo.

Strategy 2.11.1: Conduct a survey to determine the extent of invasive fish species and implement eradication measures as necessary on WPAs within the District. RONS Project No. 97036

Objective 2.12: Grasshopper Control. Conduct limited grasshopper control programs only as mandated by state law to protect infestation of adjacent private properties.

Objective 2.13: Biological Control. Increase emphasis on biological control whenever feasible. The District will continue to release beetles for control of spurge and spotted knapweed.

Strategy 2.13.1: Annually purchase needed equipment and materials to transplant and maintain predatory insects on 400 acres of spurge and knapweed infestations on 40 WPAs. RONS Project No. 97018

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 (revising Norell Wallace memo). 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: Guidelines. Delineations of proposed acquisitions will consider acquisition guidelines that highlight the biological and management factors to be considered.

Strategy 3.1.2: Delineation. Conduct ongoing evaluations of private lands within the District including delineation of specific tracts for purchase or protection. RONS Project No. 01002

Objective 3.2: Goal Acres. Within 5 years conduct a biological assessment to determine if current goal acres will be sufficient to reach waterfowl recruitment objectives for the District.

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: If interested in acquiring a tract, the District staff will notify the Acquisition Office within 1 month of the initial land owner contact of their interest in proceeding with the acquisition.

Strategy 3.3.2: The Acquisition Office will make an offer within 5 months of receiving the statement of interest from the District staff.

Objective 3.4: Acquisition. The District will meet current District goal acres within 15 years by seeking to acquire an average of 2,150 acres in fee title, 800 acres of wetland easements and 150 acres of upland easements per year for waterfowl breeding and use. This objective will be modified as appropriate if the goal acres are modified.

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

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 years.

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

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

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

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.

Objective 4.2: Inventory and Monitoring Plan. Develop an Inventory and Monitoring Plan by 2006 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.

Objective 4.3: Geographic Information System. Increase use of GIS technology in monitoring habitat and wildlife (See operations section for details)

Objective 4.4: 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:



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Strategy 4.4.1: Biologist. Hire a biologist, two full-time and two seasonal technicians as well as purchase the necessary equipments for the District to conduct a full fledged biological monitoring program as identified in the Inventory and Monitoring Plan. RONS Project Nos. 97001, 97003 and 00001

Strategy 4.4.2: Annual Meeting. Have annual meetings for biologists and field personnel to share information, techniques and results of management strategies on target populations.

Strategy 4.4.3: Data Summaries. Summarize data concerning the impact of management strategies on target species and present to management so decisions can be based on monitoring information.

Objective 4.5: Biological Inventory. As part of the Inventory and Monitoring Plan, inventory the biological resources on the Districts by the year 2007.

Objective 4.6: 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.

Objective 4.7: Research. Encourage and cooperate in research that will further our understanding about management and habitat manipulations on the District.

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.

- 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.
- Objective 5.3:** 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 5.3.1:* Increase the station's ability to respond to natural resource technical assistance requests from private landowners. RONS Project No. 97025
- Objective 5.4:** 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 by 2004.
- Objective 5.5:** Management. The Districts will protect and enhance populations of endangered, threatened, and special emphasis species (as identified in the text and appendices C and I) indigenous on District lands. Management applications applied to these areas will be tailored to meet species management needs.
- Objective 5.6:** Cooperation. The Districts will work with partners and other agencies to develop specific plans for target species occurring within the Districts.
- Objective 5.7:** Enforcement. The Districts will enforce all Endangered Species and Migratory Bird Treaty Act regulations within the District through increased contacts with hunters, neighbors and visitors.
- Objective 5.8:** Monitoring. The Districts 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 by 2006.
- Objective 5.9:** 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 within each District will be identified by 2006 and strategies for their protection will be developed by the year 2010.
- Objective 5.10:** Identify, evaluate, and prioritize opportunities to reintroduce native species documenting the needs in a plan by 2007.
- Objective 5.11:** By 2010 begin a reintroduction program to reintroduce one species per year until all goal species identified under Objective 5.10 are reintroduced.

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 2005 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.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Objective 6.1: 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 2010.

Objective 6.2: Each Wetland Management District should have a full-time public use specialist by the year 2005.

Strategy 6.2.1: Monitor public use activities throughout the entire five-county District. RONS Project No. 97033

Objective 6.3: Enhance the visiting public's experience, protect wildlife habitats from damage by users and designate a Waterfowl Production Area in each county that will be handicapped accessible.

Strategy 6.3.1: In each of the five counties, construct accessible interpretive walking trails, board walks, wildlife observation towers hunting and photo blinds as well as update public use leaflets. RONS Project No. 99003

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

Objective 6.5: Promote greater understanding of the District program by implementing the District Public Use Plan by the year 2010.

Objective 6.6: Provide for 30,000 environmental education visits per year on the District by 2006.

Strategy 6.6.1: Convert the existing half-time maintenance person to full-time at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center to allow the Service to meet its minimum obligation to provide environmental education as per the Green Print under the agreement with the City of Fergus Falls. RONS Project No. 99002

Strategy 6.6.2: Enhance the wetland education programming at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center by creating new curricula, environmental education camps, workshops, a newsletter, recruiting user schools, landowner and teacher groups as well as providing tours and promotional events. RONS Project No. 97032

Strategy 6.6.3: Provide additional “hands-on” environmental education opportunities at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center by constructing a greenhouse, aquatics lab and study area, auditorium and other facilities. CONST. Project No. 97223

Strategy 6.6.4: Purchase the 10 wetland education exhibits that have been designed to fill the 3,000-square-foot exhibit space at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center. CONST. Project No. 99004

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: Software Development. Develop and use a GIS customized for Wetland District management.

Objective 7.2: Data Entry. Complete entry of WPA and easement ownership boundaries by 2002. Enter habitat, facility and management accomplishment layers for the District by 2003.

Objective 7.3: Staffing. Hire a full-time GIS administrator and seasonal employee(s) to function as GIS Data Entry Technician by 2004. RONS Project No. 97002

Objective 7.4: The Fergus Falls Wetland Management District will have its own computer support staff by 2006.

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: The staffing needs identified in this CCP are added as identified elsewhere in this plan.

Strategy 8.1.1: As projects in this plan are funded, ensure that this station hires adequate administrative/clerical positions to provide support for the expanded programs.

Objective 8.2: Identify all buildings that do not meet Service standards or needs by 2004.

Objective 8.3: Replace or modify all buildings that do not meet Service standards or needs by 2010.

Strategy 8.3.1: Replace the current Fergus Falls field office building with a new facility including parking garages, access road, parking lot and landscaping. CONST. Project No. 97034

Strategy 8.3.2: Until funding for replacement is available, maintain the current office building in a safe condition. MMS Project No. 91103; RONS Project No. 01001

Strategy 8.3.3: Replace the siding and windows on the visitor contact building (barn) at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center.

Strategy 8.3.4: Repair and/or replace the three storage buildings at this station to bring them up to Service standards.

Strategy 8.3.5: Upgrade and repair the stations maintenance shop facility to meet Service standards.

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

Objective 8.5: Ensure replacement of the Stations' equipment when their normal life expectancy is reached.

Strategy 8.5.1: Replace backlog of worn-out equipment that has exceeded life expectancy. This equipment is necessary for wetland restoration and upland cover establishment and maintenance. MMS Project Nos. 89109 and 95172

Objective 8.6: Maintain a current inventory of all maintenance needs, updating it annually.

Objective 8.7: Bring all station facilities and structures up to Service standards by 2010.

Strategy 8.7.1: Bring all backlogged boundary signing and fencing maintenance needs to Service Standards

by 2015. MMS Projects Nos. 91101, 91100, 91102, 89098, 89107, 89110 and 89111

Strategy 8.7.2: Bring all backlogged repair of station access trails up to service standards. MMS Project No. 93069

Strategy 8.7.3: Repair trail systems at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center to comply with Service and accessibility standards.

Strategy 8.7.4: Perform maintenance on all station water control structures, dikes, dams, ditch plugs, tile risers and breaks to bring them up to Service standards. MMS Project No. 89103

Strategy 8.7.5: Complete backlogged maintenance of 10 predator exclosures.

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 District's 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 lands to O&M budgets

Strategy 9.1.2: Obtain annual funding for habitat restoration on newly acquired lands including building site demolition, fence removal, well sealing and general cleanup. RONS Project No. 99001

Strategy 9.1.3: Conduct four cultural resource investigations each year on newly acquired lands to document any sites in need of study or preservation and to permit other habitat development projects to proceed. RONS Project No. 97029

Strategy 9.1.4: Reclaim 22 gravel pits covering 65 acres and 586 rock piles on 217 WPAs that are safety/environmental hazards for the public. MMS Project No. 98039

Objective 9.2: The Refuge Supervisor will summarize accomplishments combining all Districts to demonstrate the work done through previous funding.

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:** All existing WPAs will have Development Plans developed by 2008.
- 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.
- Objective 10.3:** 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..
- 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.