

RESPONSIBLE AGENCY:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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In response to the declining status of numerous grassland and wetland dependent wildlife, an increased demand for wildlife-dependent public use, and a need to better define what the Refuge must be to satisfy the needs of citizens and agencies having a vital interest in what and how the Refuge performs, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has developed a Comprehensive Management Plan (Plan) for the Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge).

The Plan articulates management direction (goals, objectives, strategies) that would (1) intensify and concentrate federal, state, local, and private habitat restoration and preservation mechanisms in the Union Slough Refuge and portions of its watershed, (2) improve the quality of water entering the Refuge, and (3) provide the public with additional high quality wildlife-dependent environmental education and recreation opportunities at the Refuge (see attached CMP).

Implementation of the Plan would rely on partnerships formed with landowners in the watershed, volunteers and interested citizens, farm and conservation organizations, and with appropriate government agencies. Cooperating landowners within the Refuge watershed would be offered incentives and/or compensated through cost-sharing agreements for applying conservation and environmental farming practices on their lands and for creating, maintaining, or enhancing habitat for wildlife.

Over the next 15 years the Service would facilitate the restoration and preservation of 8,325 acres within the Refuge watershed (see CMP Figure 6). Of this acreage, the Service would acquire approximately 3,750 acres from willing sellers. The Service would purchase fee-title interest in lands only if lesser property interests are not available, appropriate, or effective. Tracts in which less than fee-title agreements are negotiated would remain in private ownership. Funding for Service land acquisition would be the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (proceeds from the sale of federal duck stamps) using the authority of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act.

The Plan supports the National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan - U.S. Prairie Pothole Joint Venture and the Iowa Prairie Pothole Joint Venture Implementation Plan, the Service's Regional Wetlands Concept Plan, the Service's Ecosystem Plan for the Upper Mississippi River/Tallgrass Prairie ecosystem, and strategic planning efforts of Kossuth County.