U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Hamden Slough

National Wildlife Refuge

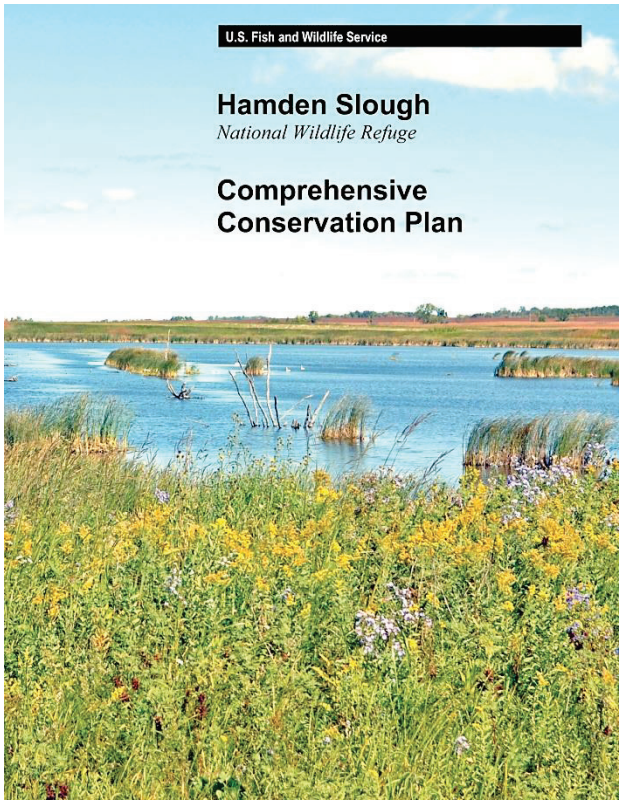
SUMMARY
Comprehensive Conservation Plan

October 2012

Comprehensive Conservation Plan Completed

The Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for Hamden Slough National Wildlife Refuge (NWR, Refuge) was approved on October 9, 2012, completing a planning process that began in 2010. The draft CCP was released for public review and comment in August 2012.

The completed CCP describes goals, objectives, and strategies that will guide Refuge management for the next 15 years and will ensure that the Refuge fulfills its established purposes and contributes to the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.



Hamden Slough NWR CCP cover page

Throughout the comprehensive conservation planning process, many people contributed time and ideas to make this a better document. We are grateful to everyone who cared enough about Hamden Slough NWR and its future to participate in this planning effort. Through your participation, you contributed to improving habitat for waterfowl, grassland birds, and other wildlife that depend on the prairie pothole ecosystem. We will continue to welcome your input.

Contents

Comprehensive Conservation Plan Completed 1
Where to See the CCP 2
Refuge Background 2
Refuge Vision 3
Refuge Goals 3
What the CCP Calls For 4
Who We Are 6

Where to See the CCP

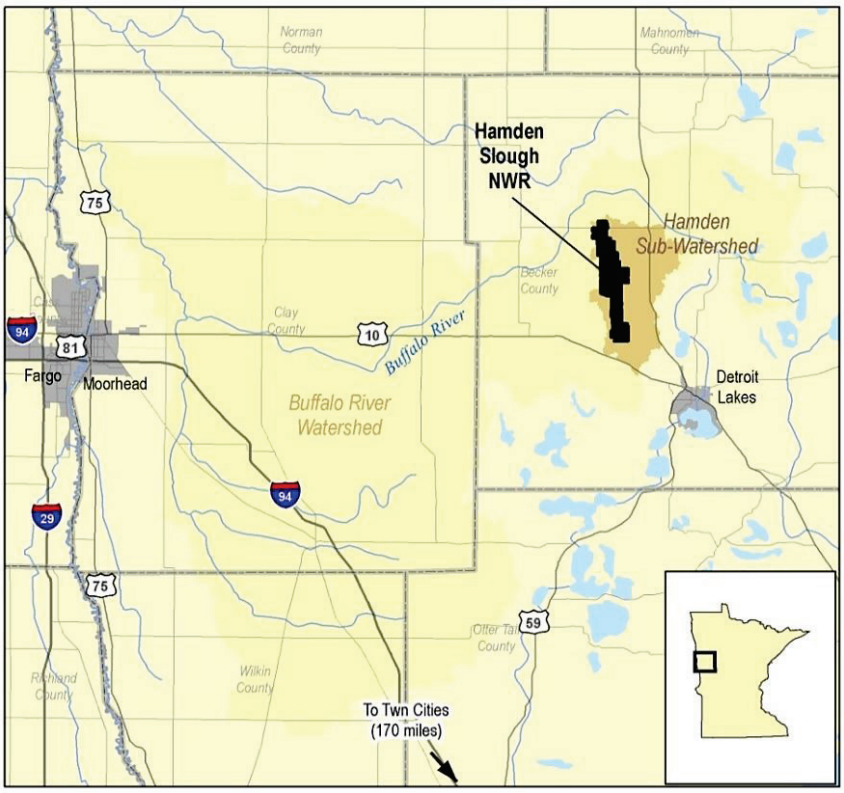
You can view and download the full CCP at: **http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/HamdenSlough**.

We will send you a CD or paper copy of the CCP on request through either of the following:

- *Email*: r3planning@fws.gov (Please enter "Hamden Slough CCP" in the subject line.)
- *Mail/Telephone*: Hamden Slough NWR; c/o Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District; 26624 N. Tower Road; Detroit Lakes, MN 56501 / (218) 847-4431

Refuge Background

Location of Hamden Slough NWR



Located about seven miles northwest of Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, Hamden Slough NWR was approved in 1989 by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. The Service is authorized to acquire 5,944 acres of land within the Buffalo River watershed to restore a piece of the prairie-wetland ecosystem that historically existed there. About 3,200 acres of Hamden Slough NWR have been acquired so far.

More than 200 temporary and seasonal wetlands have been restored by scraping sediment deposits and plugging surface ditches. Two major wetland restoration projects added significant semi-permanent and permanent wetland habitat back to the Refuge. More than 1,500 acres of former crop fields have been planted to native grasses and forbs. The area once again is recognized as an outstanding place to see migratory birds. More than 200 species have been recorded including 20 species of shorebirds, nearly every major waterfowl species, and many grassland-dependent birds.

Refuge staff was located onsite until 2006, headquartered in a farmhouse at the south end of the Refuge. At that time, due to budget cuts and reorganization, responsibility for Hamden Slough NWR was transferred to the Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District.

Refuge Vision

"In the morning if it was still and a little foggy, my grandfather said you could hear the prairie chickens drumming, also the trumpet swans, whooping cranes, geese, loons and many species of ducks. He said it sounded like a symphony." *(by Donald P. Larson)*

Hamden Slough NWR has a rich history defined by its remarkable abundance of wildlife and deep connection with the people who visited the area and called Hamden their home. The Refuge was established to provide habitat for a diversity of migratory birds and native wildlife. The vision for Hamden Slough NWR is a fulfillment of this purpose—a lasting legacy bestowed upon future generations.

Density of wetlands

Hamden Slough NWR is located on the eastern edge of the Prairie Pothole Region in the Northern Tallgrass Prairie ecosystem. Wetlands and shallow lakes surrounded by tallgrass prairie are nestled within a working landscape rich in agriculture, industry, conservation and tight-knit communities. We will continue to restore, protect, and manage habitats for wildlife, resulting in shared benefits that are relevant in the daily lives of our Refuge neighbors and local communities. This collaboration will foster an appreciation for a landscape in balance and deepen their personal connection with nature.

Refuge Goals

Wildlife and Habitat

Habitats on Hamden Slough National Wildlife Refuge will be restored, protected, and actively managed to provide a diversity of native wetland and grassland habitats. These efforts will be further leveraged by partnerships and conservation actions outside the Refuge, resulting in a resilient and balanced landscape, meeting the needs of migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, and other wildlife in an uncertain future.

People

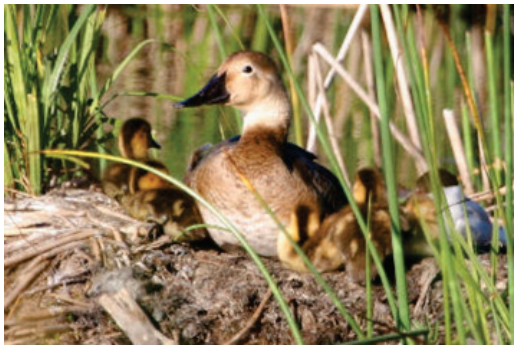
The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will engage the public, build relationships, and encourage awareness of a landscape in balance. The Refuge will provide compatible wildlife-dependent recreation that connects people to the land and demonstrates the societal benefits of a restored prairie-wetland system.

What the CCP Calls For

The CCP establishes two goals and 22 objectives for meeting those goals. Some of the objectives are departures from current management. Below is a summary of significant management changes. Please see chapter 4 of the CCP for more information on these changes, a description of all of the objectives and strategies being proposed, and the rationale behind each objective.

Wetlands

- Work with partners to complete the full restoration of Pierce Lake through land acquisition, easements, and conservation programs.
- In managed wetlands, emulate the natural seasonal and long-term water level variability that historically sustained diverse plant and wildlife communities.
- Restore the natural hydrology of all prairie pothole wetlands.



Canvasback (Aythya valisineria)

Tallgrass Prairie

- Increase the diversity of native plants on Refuge prairies.
- Convert all cropland to native prairie; use short-term farming to prepare seedbeds on restoration sites.
- Use an integrated program of fire, grazing, haying, and tree removal to emulate historic disturbance patterns and maximize the wildlife benefits of Refuge habitat.
- Maintain a mix of tall, medium, and short habitat structure to meet the diverse needs of grassland-dependent birds and nesting waterfowl.

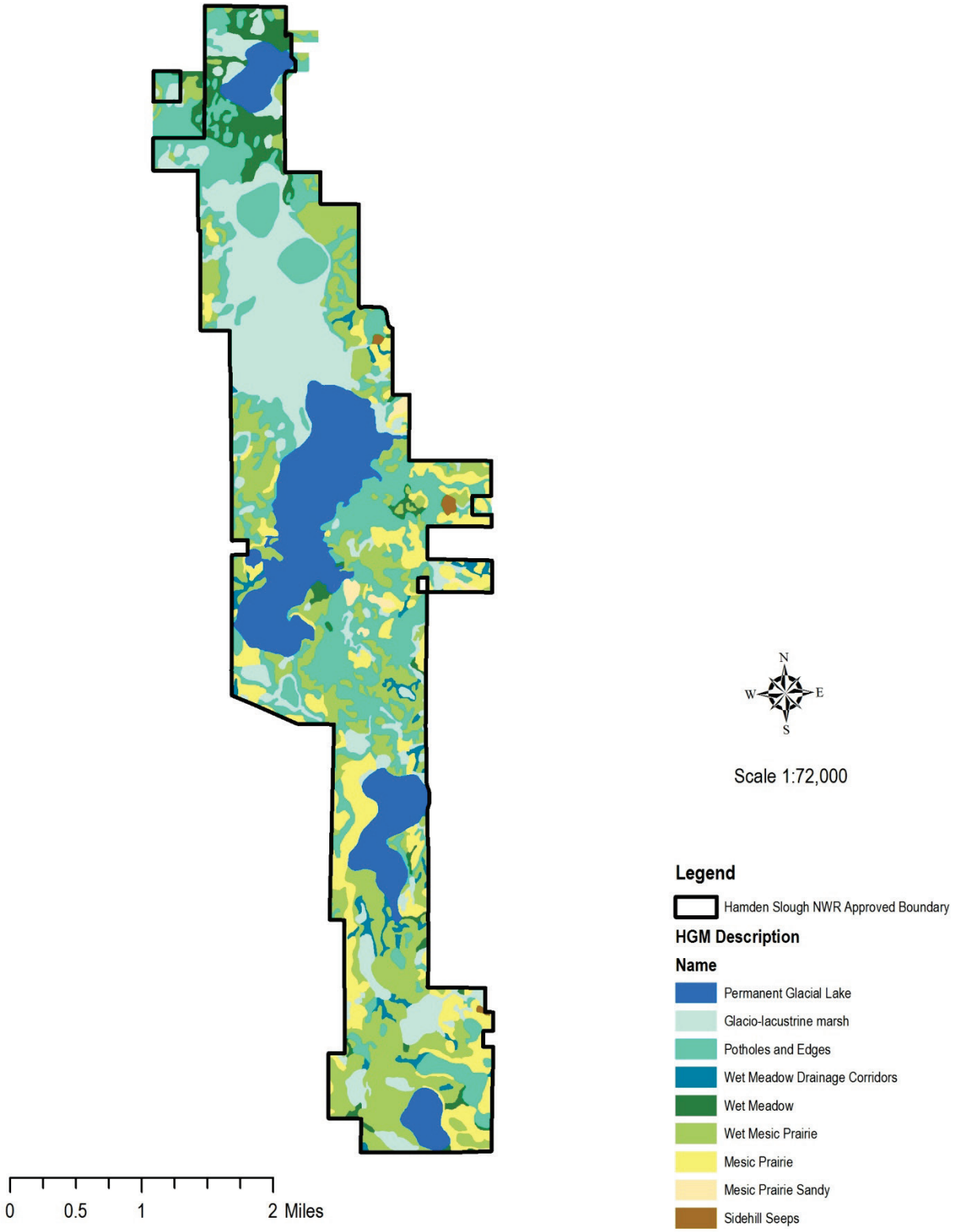
Watershed

- Focus Refuge conservation partnership efforts on increasing soil and water retention and restoring natural water flow corridors in the Hamden Slough watershed.

People

- Expand environmental education opportunities in partnership with local schools and community groups.
- Continue the youth waterfowl and muzzleloader deer hunting programs; look for opportunities to improve hunt quality.

Potential future vegetation communities at Hamden Slough NWR



Who We Are

The Refuge is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the primary federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing the nation's fish and wildlife populations and their habitats. The Service oversees the enforcement of federal wildlife laws, management and protection of migratory bird populations, restoration of nationally significant fisheries, administration of the Endangered Species Act, and the restoration of wildlife habitat such as wetlands. The Service also manages the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System), which was founded in 1903 when President Theodore Roosevelt designated Pelican Island in Florida as a sanctuary for Brown Pelicans.

Welcome to Hamden Slough NWR

Today, the Refuge System is a network of more than 550 refuges covering over 150 million acres. Most these public lands and waters (over 80 percent) are in Alaska. Approximately 16 million acres are located in the lower 48 states and several island territories. Overall, the Refuge System provides habitat for more than 5,000 species of birds, mammals, fish, and insects. Refuges also provide unique opportunities for people. When it is compatible with wildlife and habitat conservation, they are places where people can enjoy wildlife-dependent recreation such as hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation.

The mission of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.