



Meadowlark
Credit: USFWS

Upland Sandpiper
Credit: Tony Iffland

Tallgrass Prairie
Credit: Jim Minnerath

Greetings,

I'm excited to announce our first selection of a surrogate species **landscape** in the Flint Hills of Kansas! This geography is going to serve as the initial "*proof of concept*" for a surrogate species approach in our region. Throughout the planning and development processes we expect to learn much and, thereby, improve the surrogate approach as we prepare to implement it in additional areas in the future.

As we develop this landscape approach for the **tallgrass prairie** and the species that depend on it, we know that success can only be achieved with the dedication and partnership of Service employees and Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) employees. This strong partnership and the expertise and engagement of our partners at the KDWPT will be vital to a successful approach. I'm confident that by working together we can achieve more than either agency could alone in these important native grasslands, and I appreciate Keith Sexson's willingness to explore this approach with us.

We will be navigating this effort at the Regional level through the Office and Science Applications, under the leadership of Steve Torbit, ARD – SA, which is overseeing three separate teams. Each team requires commitment, interaction and input of all regional programs to ensure the success of our regional surrogate species effort. The three teams under development (or already in place) are:

Regional Oversight Team

- Composed of each program ARD or their designee and KDWPT leaders to oversee this surrogate species effort.

Regional Technical Team

- Composed of the technical experts from the region and our partners necessary to provide expertise in ecology for the surrogate effort.

Region 6 Science Team

- This existing team is composed of regional program representatives with scientific expertise. This team will support the effort by reviewing and commenting on technical team products, assisting with engagement of outside reviewers or experts, and serve as an arbiter in finalizing the work products of the technical team.

Before the end of calendar year 2013, these teams and many other individuals will be working to deliver the following objectives:

1. Define the geographic boundary for the Flint Hills surrogate species landscape.
2. Create a list of potential or preliminary surrogate species for this landscape.
3. Identify desired population objectives.
4. Develop and define the deliverable conservation actions.
5. Discuss any necessary alignment of organizational infrastructures to achieve those conservation objectives.
6. Lay a foundation that will be further refined for the surrogate species approach.

Given that our first foray into surrogate species is in this defined landscape, there will be many FWS Region 6 employees not involved in this initial “*proof of concept*” stage. However, we will be learning many things about developing and implementing this effort and we want to keep you up to date with status reports, information requests or other learning opportunities.

Keep in mind, the entire Region will be implementing a surrogate approach in the future and it will be helpful for us all to learn from this expedition into the Flint Hills. That’s why we will want to keep you all involved and informed, all of us learning as we go, to improve and build upon our initial effort. In addition, we will undertake the beginnings of an effort to identify federal trust species that could serve as surrogates on an additional larger landscape during the last few months of 2013. Stay tuned and look for more information to follow as it becomes available.

Noreen

Noreen Walsh
Regional Director
Mountain-Prairie Region
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Mountain-Prairie Region of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service: We provide conservation stewardship of some of America’s most scenic lands, to ensure healthy fish and wildlife for the enjoyment and benefit of all people.