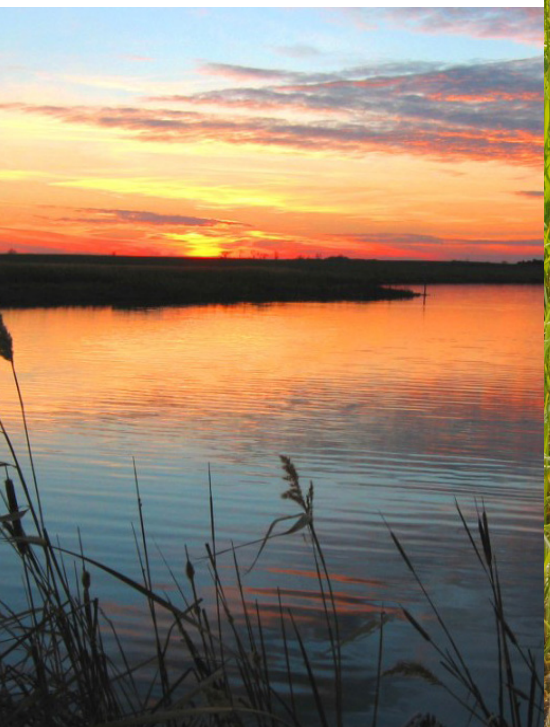


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Mountain-Prairie Region

FY13 Regional Priorities

Operational Priorities

Our People

Invest in Our Current and Future Workforce

Provide Professional Development Opportunities for our Employees

- Develop and begin testing a pilot employee development program for all employees that capitalizes on current regional resources. The program will be low cost, highly tailorable to individual employee needs, and easily accessible.

Ensure our Employees Have a Safe Work Environment

- Successfully prepare for and participate in the combined DOI/FWS 2013 Safety Assessment.
- Every Project Leader/Station Manager will complete and follow 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

- Build and utilize an effective network of professional, academic, non-profit and governmental contacts that will enhance the region's ability to attract diverse, highly qualified applicants; capitalize on technology and social media to advance our marketing.
- In coordination with all regional programs, begin an analysis on retention rates to determine if there are trends or concerns that regional leadership should address.

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

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

- Working with our partners (particularly state fish and wildlife agencies), we will select surrogate species to help design functioning landscapes.

Continue to Build Science Capacity Through our Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC)

- Ensure Region 6 representatives on LCCs are aware of regional priorities within the reach of each LCC and develop a mechanism to ensure LCCs develop scientific support tools Region 6 program staff need to conserve priority trust resources.

Leverage Other Existing Internal Science Capacity

- Charter a team to look at the future role of the Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET) in supporting conservation of priority trust resources, including aiding in the selection of surrogate species.
- Integrate the Refuges Inventory and Monitoring program, LCCs, surrogate species and other science based efforts to inform, support and strengthen our priority conservation delivery efforts.

Our Partners

Invest in Improving our Relationship with Key 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.
- Regional Director (RD) and Deputy Regional Director (DRD) will meet personally with each State wildlife agency director at least once per year to discuss priorities and opportunities for collaboration.
- Each project leader will ensure that State wildlife agency directors 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.

Maintain and Increase our Collaboration with Tribes

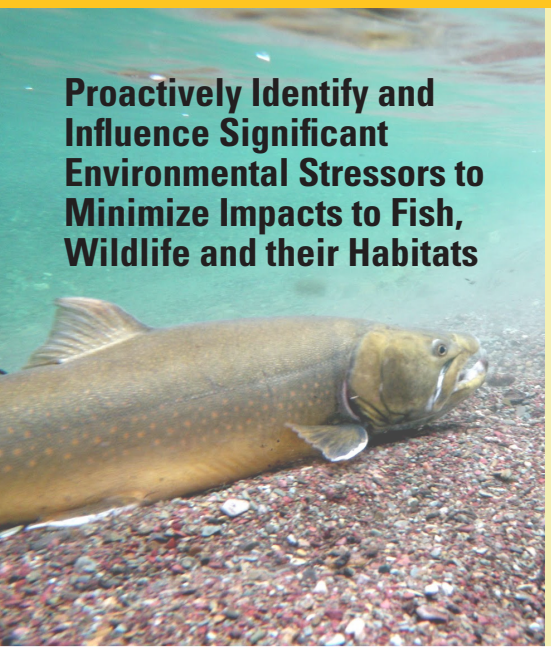
- Establish Tribal Advisory Board concerning issues of mutual interest.
- Develop mutually beneficial relationships with tribes and the Service focused on joint priorities.
- Establish at least one new tribal partnership on a project of mutual interest.

Our Public

Enhance Communications Efforts and Further Align Outreach with Regional Priorities

- Build strategic public information campaigns around our regional resource priorities.
- Strategically engage key Members of Congress and state legislators on regional priorities.

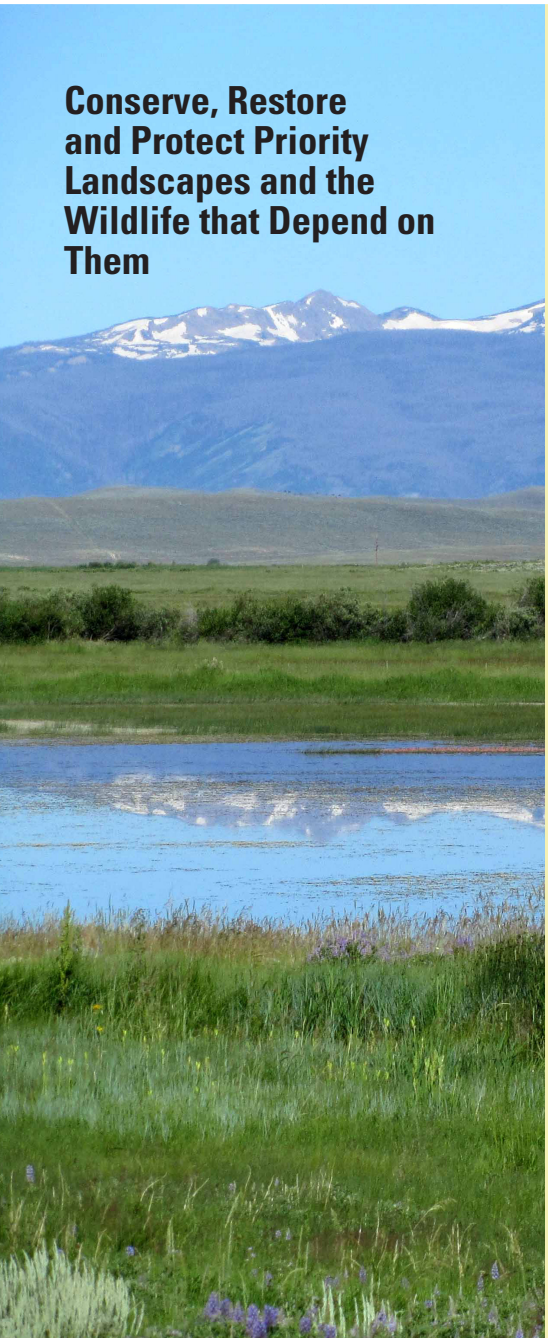
Resource Priorities



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

Energy, Water, Food Production

- Develop a cross-programmatic team that will identify future challenges from stressors and how to address them.
- Identify priority landscapes and develop applicable conservation measures for golden eagles and sage-grouse that may be implemented by oil, gas and wind development projects.
- Inspect our hatcheries in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming for possible infection by New Zealand mudsnails, and quagga and zebra mussels and mitigate if found.
- Draft regional policy to establish processes to prevent invasive species transport by Service personnel.
- Co-host along with the National Conservation Training Center, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) training for Region 6 in June 2013.



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

Grassland Dependent Species and Native Grassland Ecosystems (including aquatic resources)

- Using Migratory Bird Conservation Funds, protect over 50,000 acres of grasslands and 10,000 acres of wetlands of highest priority migratory bird breeding habitat with perpetual conservation easements.
- Develop strategic communication campaign on value of prairies to gain public support of grassland conservation efforts.
- Increase the effectiveness of our land protection efforts for priority grassland nesting birds by improving the effectiveness of the Breeding Bird Survey by increasing survey routes in those habitats.
- Initiate funding for at least 2 total fish passage projects in the Flint Hills area in Kansas, Sandhills area of Nebraska and areas of North and South Dakota grasslands to mitigate fragmentation of habitat for listed and species of concern.

Sage-Grouse and the Sage Steppe Ecosystem

- Lead the Service's participation in the range-wide effort to conserve the greater sage-grouse.
- Assess opportunities for sage steppe ecosystem habitat protection including potential for easements, fee, mitigation banking and other tools.
- Lead a cross regional team to identify and implement sage-grouse conservation across the range in concert with partners.
- Support the Intermountain West Joint Venture in coordinating the multi-agency and multi-partner Strategic Watershed Action Team (SWAT) to maximize the effectiveness and durability of the $50 million in Natural Resources Conservation Service funding for the Sage-Grouse Initiative.

Advance Conservation for Recovery of Priority Threatened and Endangered Species

Black-footed Ferret Recovery

- Develop at least three new reintroduction sites in the field.
- Finalize the Rangewide Safe Harbor Agreement.
- Publish the Draft Recovery Plan.
- Meet or exceed our Expected Productivity Rate for captive-bred ferrets at the National Black-footed Ferret Conservation Center.
- Develop a timeline outlining steps and milestones for possible reintroduction of black-footed ferrets at Rocky Mountain Arsenal (RMA) National Wildlife Refuge, including the completion of the RMA Habitat Management Plan.

Grizzly Bear Recovery

- Revise Yellowstone demographic standards in the Recovery Plan and the Conservation Strategy and release the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem Conservation Strategy for public comment and peer review and develop the necessary proposed changes if appropriate.

Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery

- Work with State partners to finalize a basin wide aquatic invasive species control strategy targeting source areas of non-native fish and develop a more forward looking preventive approach to containing non-native fish.
- Assist Bureau of Reclamation in developing instream flow strategies out of Flaming Gorge and Aspinall to assist in juvenile fish survival.
- Invite state experts to recovery planning teams to develop revised recovery plans.

Topeka Shiner

- Draft a proposal for delisting a northern Distinct Population Segment for Topeka shiner by the end of the fiscal year.

Advance Conservation for Other Priority Trust Resources

Native Salmonids

- Initiate a minimum of three projects to restore connectivity and enhance habitat for native salmonids in Utah, Colorado, Wyoming and Montana.
- Explore opportunities with state partners to utilize Jones Hole National Fish Hatchery to further conservation goals for a variety of native cutthroat trout.

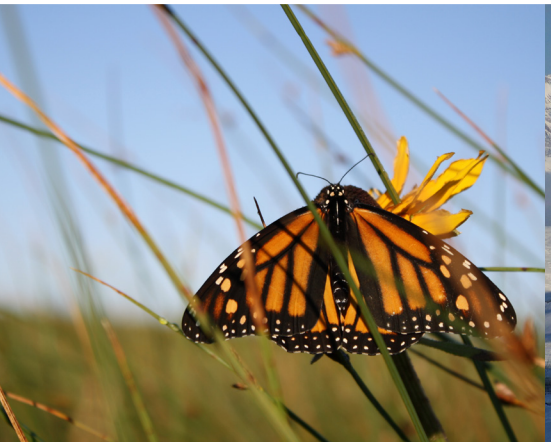
Golden Eagle

- Coordinate with Headquarters, various eagle teams, our partners, and industries on research addressing key mortality factors, movement patterns, and productivity via satellite telemetry and nest monitoring.
- Complete 3rd party review of golden eagle fatality prediction model for proposed wind development projects.

Continue Existing and Identify New Priority Landscape Conservation Efforts

- Secure Director approval to establish the Bear River Watershed Conservation Area that will protect up to 920,000 acres within the watershed using conservation easements and protect key habitat for species including Bonneville cutthroat trout, Greater sage-grouse, sage thrasher and American avocet.
- Secure Director approval to establish the Niobrara Confluence and Ponca Bluffs Conservation Areas that will protect up to 140,000 acres of habitat along the Missouri River through a mix of fee acquisition and easements for key species including bald eagle, piping plover, least tern and pallid sturgeon.
- Using Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) dollars, protect an additional 30,000 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.
- Using LWCF dollars, protect an additional 6,500 acres of grassland and 500 acres of wetlands in the Dakota Grasslands Conservation Area through conservation easements to stem significant rate of grassland conversion and provide critical migratory bird nesting habitat.
- Finalize our first easement of 2,400 acres and protect an additional 4,000 acres of tallgrass prairie in the Flint Hills Conservation Area through conservation easements providing key habitat to numerous grassland nesting bird species.
- Develop a cross programmatic approach to determine where potential large landscape conservation projects are needed for conservation of priority trust resources to assist future land protection efforts.

Cover photos: American avocet, Purple iris, Juvenile pallid sturgeon, Sunset at J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge, Wetlands and mountains in Montana

Photos: Service employee Jackie Fox holds a short-eared owl, Service employee Dan Mulhern releases a black-footed ferret in Kansas, Service employee on a fish study at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge / Courtesy of U.S. Army, *Dwarf bear poppy, YCC crew at work at Kicking Horse Reservoir in Montana, Bird banding at Devil's Lake Wetland Management District, Visitors fly kites at Huron Wetland Management District, Youth at D.C. Booth National Fish Hatchery, Bull trout underwater, Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge landscape, Grizzly bear, Golden eagle, Ouray National Wildlife Refuge, Monarch butterfly rests on a Black-eyed Susan, Bison on the National Elk Refuge in Wyoming, School of endangered bonytail fish*

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