

3 Alternatives



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The willet finds an important food source in district wetlands in North Dakota.

Alternatives are different approaches for management of the nine wetland management districts that are designed to resolve issues; achieve the districts' purposes, vision, and goals; and help fulfill the mission of the Refuge System while complying with current laws and regulations and policies. The NEPA requires an equal and full analysis of all alternatives considered for implementation.

This chapter describes three management alternatives for the districts: alternative A (current management, "no action"); alternative B (moderately enhanced management, proposed action); and alternative C (enhanced management).

This draft CCP and EA was completed at the programmatic level (overall guidance covering multiple units), rather than as a management plan for each district. This was the most logical approach given the following circumstances:

- Nine wetland management districts are addressed in the plan.
- There is a mixture of fee-title and conservation easement authorities.
- There is a similar purpose, vision, and goal for each district.
- All units are located throughout the state of North Dakota.

3.1 Alternatives Development

Alternatives were formulated to address the significant issues, concerns, and problems identified by the Service, the public, and the governmental partners during public scoping and throughout the development of the draft plan.

This chapter contains the following sections:

- elements common to all alternatives
- description of alternatives
- summary of alternatives and environmental consequences (table 2)

The three management alternatives represent different approaches to protect and restore fish, wildlife, plants, habitats, and other resources. Alternative A, no-action alternative, describes ongoing district management. The no-action alternative is a basis for comparison with alternatives B and C. Alternative B is the Service's proposed action and basis for the draft CCP in chapter 6.

The planning team assessed biological conditions and external relationships affecting the districts. This information contributed to the development of alternatives, each of which presents a unique approach for addressing long-term goals. Each alternative was evaluated based on expected progress in meeting the vision and goals of the districts and how it would address core habitat and wildlife issues and threats. Where data are available, trends in habitat and wildlife are evaluated, and the environmental consequences of each alternative are projected.

3.2 Elements Common to All Alternatives

A number of elements are common to all three alternatives. The need to maintain suitable habitat for a wide range of migratory bird species, especially

those species of management concern, is common throughout.

Management of upland habitats includes the potential use of an array of practices (fire, grazing, chemicals, and biological control) in all alternatives. Across all alternatives, management of disturbed uplands (lands that have been, or are currently being, cropped, farmed, broken, or seeded to a native or tame grass mixture) focuses on improved habitat quality for migratory birds.

The Service has developed criteria, applicable to all alternatives, to determine priorities for management of WPAs. Because each district is unique, specific thresholds will need to be developed for each criterion. These criteria are described in chapter 4 (4.2 Biological Resources, Wildlife, Strategic Planning for Waterfowl).

The Service recently completed a “decision tree” that outlines how the Service will set priorities for grassland and wetland acquisitions (see chapter 6, 6.3 Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Rationale; Wetlands in Easements Objective 1; Uplands in Easements Objective 1). These priorities apply to all alternatives.

The alternatives include cultural resource evaluations in response to activities that are “undertakings” under section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The Service would comply with the NHPA and other pertinent cultural resource laws. In addition, the Service would protect where possible resources eligible to the National Register of Historic Places.

Visitor services, such as workshops and enhanced outreach, would be provided to area schools and the public to as full an extent as possible. Maintaining support for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation are common to all the alternatives.

The monitoring and research efforts in all alternatives focus on improving the Service’s knowledge of how best to control invasive plants and increasing the intensity and extent of upland and wetland vegetation monitoring.

3.3 Description of Alternatives

Management actions to advance the mission of the Refuge System and the purpose and vision of the nine wetland management districts are described below. The alternatives reflect options to address significant threats, problems, and issues raised by public agencies, private citizens, and interested organizations.

Each alternative differs in its ability to achieve long-term habitat and wildlife goals. However, each is similar in its approach to managing the districts.

Each alternative

would pursue the goals outlined in chapter 2;

would protect and enhance a diverse assemblage of habitats;

would be consistent with the purpose of the districts and mission and goals of the Refuge System.



Donna Dewhurst/USFWS

A green-winged teal rests on its travel north to nest during the spring.

ALTERNATIVE A—CURRENT MANAGEMENT (NO ACTION)

Under alternative A, management activities being conducted by the Service throughout the nine districts would not change. It provides the baseline against which to compare other alternatives. It is also a requirement of the NEPA that a no-action alternative be addressed in the planning process.

The Service would not develop any new management, restoration, or visitor services programs for the districts. Staffs would not expand or change current habitat and wildlife management practices conducted for the benefit of waterfowl, migratory birds, and other wildlife. Staffs would conduct monitoring, inventory, and research activities at their current level (limited, issue-driven research and limited monitoring and inventory of birds and vegetation). Funding and staff levels would not change and

programs would follow the same direction, emphasis, and intensity as they do at present.

Habitat and Wildlife

The current management of wildlife habitat and associated species is based on high-, medium-, and low-priority areas at the WPAs. Currently, only high-priority WPAs receive consistent management. Service staffs monitor all conservation easements; however, only the high-priority easement violations are consistently enforced. Acquisition efforts by the division of realty focus on high-priority tracts, and those are mostly to secure easements from willing private landowners.

There is a concerted control effort for invasive plants recognized by the state and county. Habitat management at high-priority WPAs addresses invasive plants of ecological concern. District staffs use prescribed fire, farming and grazing (see appendix D), and invasive plant control to maintain and improve native prairie and tame grass units.

District staffs would continue to monitor energy development and evaluate road and pad development on a case-by-case basis. Staffs would monitor for contaminant spills and direct cleanup by the power company.

Under this alternative, the staffs would continue to monitor and document the presence and use of district lands by federally listed species such as piping plovers and whooping cranes. The staffs would continue to close areas to public use in order to protect federally listed species using district lands, especially during nesting season.

Monitoring and Research

Staffs would complete Service-mandated surveys on habitat and wildlife within specified timeframes and would continue to conduct baseline monitoring on high-priority tracts.

The current wildlife-monitoring efforts would continue: (1) annual surveys of various bird groups (for example, breeding waterfowl and migrant shorebirds); (2) periodic monitoring of waterfowl- and colonial waterbird-nesting effort and success; and (3) 4-square-mile waterfowl pair counts.

Monitoring and inventory of vegetation—through belt transect monitoring of management effects and “Refuge Lands Geographic Information System” (RLGIS) habitat mapping—would continue. Vegetation line transects would continue periodically on a limited number of district units to track trends in progress being made using management activities to improve native prairie habitat.

Cooperative research efforts with other agencies and organizations would continue. Staffs would continue to use available information and sound science to make informed management decisions.

Cultural Resources

The effect on cultural resources would be evaluated in response to activities that are “undertakings” under section 106 of the NHPA. The Service would comply with the NHPA and other pertinent cultural resource laws. In addition, the Service would protect where possible resources eligible to the National Register of Historic Places.

Visitor Services

The districts’ hunting, trapping, and fishing programs would continue with season dates paralleling the regular statewide seasons. WPAs would continue to be open to all waterfowl, small game, and furbearer hunting, consistent with state regulations. Access would continue to be limited to foot traffic on all Service lands, with the exception of identified motorized vehicle trails at specific WPAs. Recreational trapping is available at all WPAs, in accordance with state trapping regulations (authorized by 50 CFR, part 31.16, recreational trapping is administered by the Service).

Currently, visitor services events and workshops with such groups as school districts, youth groups, and conservation groups are conducted on a multiyear rotation among districts.

District informational brochures and publications would continue to be updated periodically. Visitor service facilities including displays and signs, along with brochures, would be maintained at each district’s headquarters and throughout each district.

Media outreach through newspaper articles and radio announcements would continue to be occasionally made.

Partnerships

The district staffs would work to preserve existing partnerships need to address resource information needs, protect and enhance habitat (both public and private), and promote public use, education, and outreach. Current partners include local private landowners—for management, acquisition of grassland and wetland easements, weed initiatives, and outreach.

The districts also would continue their partnerships for biological and public outreach with government agencies such as U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and NDGF and with nongovernmental organizations such as Ducks Unlimited.

Operations

The funding and staff resources would remain at current levels to meet the necessary legal and obligated mandates and to provide management at the high-priority WPAs. Operations for the districts would continue to include maintenance of vehicles and other equipment in good working condition to achieve management goals. An adequate law enforcement

presence would be provided for visitor safety and facility and wildlife protection.

ALTERNATIVE B—MODERATELY ENHANCED MANAGEMENT (PROPOSED ACTION)

Under alternative B, wildlife habitat management would provide for enhanced wetland and upland management, where warranted, on district lands. Management objectives for various habitat types would be based on habitat preferences of groups of target species such as waterfowl, migratory shorebirds, grassland bird species, and threatened and endangered species. District staffs would focus on high-priority properties, also known as tracts, and on medium-priority tracts. The district staffs would carry out compatible production enhancement techniques for targeted migratory bird populations.

The district staffs would expand existing environmental education and visitor services programs, with additional waterfowl emphases.

Habitat and Wildlife

Management of wetland and upland habitats would be driven by the habitat needs of a group of target species (for example, waterfowl, migratory shorebirds, grassland bird species, endangered species). The focus of the district staffs would be to maintain and enhance native prairie through enhanced management at high- and medium-priority WPAs to address invasive plants of ecological concern, in order to provide quality habitat.

Old croplands would be managed for the same target species. Management would be an ongoing process to convert unsuitable nesting habitat (such as cropland; degraded dense, nesting cover [DNC]; monotypic cool-season tame grass stands) to a diverse native plant mixture. Species included in the plant mix would be based on historical vegetative composition, soil structure, and requirements of the target species. Established native grass stands and the remainder of the disturbed uplands would be periodically managed to rejuvenate grass, reduce litter accumulations, and control invasive plants through (1) haying and grazing (see appendix D), (2) prescribed burning, and (3) chemical or biological treatments.

Invasive and planted woody vegetation would be managed in a way that provides the greatest overall benefit to a select group of targeted species. This alternative would allow for the removal of trees and shrubs if district staffs decided that it is the most appropriate management for the benefit of target species.

Under this alternative, the HAPET would help district staffs to identify high- and medium-high-priority habitats for target species. The Service's division of realty would focus acquisition efforts on high-priority conservation easements and some of the highest priority fee tracts, such as "roundouts" (odd shapes

in boundaries that are "straightened" by the purchase of land), from willing selling landowners.

For targeted migratory bird populations, the district staffs would incorporate compatible production enhancement techniques such as island trapping for predators and artificial nesting structures.

As in alternative A, the district staffs would continue to monitor and document the presence and use of district lands by federally listed species such as piping plovers and whooping cranes. The staffs would continue to close areas to public use in order to protect federally listed species using district lands, especially during nesting season.

Monitoring and Research

Current monitoring and research would continue as described for alternative A. District staffs would also complete some baseline monitoring at high- and medium-priority tracts. The staffs would participate in landscape-level analysis to (1) guide acquisition, (2) promote management-level research to improve habitat management practices, and (3) monitor for improved success of seeded areas to native grasses (both in composition and structure), as well as monitoring control of nonnative grasses (such as Kentucky bluegrass and smooth brome) and other invasive plants.

Cultural Resources

As in alternative A, the effect on cultural resources would be evaluated in response to activities that are "undertakings" under section 106 of the NHPA. The Service would comply with the NHPA and other pertinent cultural resource laws. In addition, the Service would protect where possible resources eligible to the National Register of Historic Places.

Visitor Services

This alternative would expand the current level and quality of opportunities and facilities for environmental education and interpretation to meet the needs of a wide array of target audiences of all abilities. Hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, and photography uses would be similar to alternative A.

Visitor services events and workshops with such groups as school districts, youth groups, and conservation groups would be conducted on a 3-year rotation among districts (every 3 years, a different district would conduct these activities). Workshops would emphasize waterfowl and migratory bird identification with school groups and teachers.

Media outreach with local newspapers and radio stations would be conducted annually. District brochures and publications would be reviewed annually and updates completed as needed.

All visitor services facilities would be reviewed and, if necessary, upgraded to meet Service standards.



Duck hunting is permitted at all WPAs within a district.

The Service proposes, at a future date, (1) one new administrative and visitor center facility each for Audubon and Kulm wetland management districts, and (2) one new visitor contact station each for Arrowwood, Devils Lake, Lostwood, and Valley City wetland management districts. An administrative and visitor center facility is a building with office space for district and refuge staffs, along with space that provides visitors with interpretive and brochure information. A visitor contact station is a small space that provides visitor information such as a free-standing kiosk, brochure rack, or small room attached to the main district office.

Partnerships

Under this alternative, existing partnerships would be expanded to address resource information needs for a broad group of wildlife species such as waterfowl, shorebirds, and songbirds. This alternative would encourage continued work with local, state, and federal agencies to explore new avenues to meet the goals. Neighboring, private landowners would be targeted for partnerships, which the Service would expand to enhance waterfowl habitats within the districts. This alternative would also promote developing and fostering partnerships with local communities, such as “friends groups,” to inform the public of district programs and special events.

Operations

This alternative would necessitate an increase in district operations to address program needs for the “modified management” strategy. Increased funding for staff, equipment, and supplies would be needed to support management of priority resources. Law enforcement would be provided for visitor safety and facility and wildlife protection.

ALTERNATIVE C—ENHANCED MANAGEMENT

Under alternative C, district staffs would apply more intensive and widespread management of the native prairie and wetland complexes. District staffs would seek out restoration projects that expand and return native grasslands to quality native prairie. This alternative has the potential to provide management

options that address habitat requirements and needs of specific groups of water-dependent birds (for example, waterfowl and shorebirds).

The staffs would develop new environmental education and visitor services programs.

Habitat and Wildlife

All WPAs would receive consistent management. The staffs would intensively manage the most intact ecosystems of native prairie and wetland, which are more likely to support a wide range of migratory bird species, especially those of management concern such as northern pintail and marbled godwit. Returning grasslands to quality native prairie would be a priority. Management would emphasize restoration of representative examples of native mixed- and tall-grass prairies, including healthy grasslands to benefit ground-nesting species of migratory birds.

Management of disturbed upland habitats would be driven by the needs of waterfowl and shorebirds. Under this alternative, old cropland sites and badly degraded native prairies would be lowest priority, but would be managed to attract high densities of waterfowl species that use DNC; efforts to increase nest and brood survival would focus on these tracts.

The Service would continue and expand acquisition of conservation easements, along with enforcement through mapping and strong enforcement. Acquisition efforts would be directed at high-priority conservation easements, fee-title WPAs, and “roundouts.” The acquisition of easements on native prairie and wetlands would be of highest priority.

Legally identified, nonnative, invasive plants would be managed on priority tracts, allowing for management actions that benefit a specific wildlife group. This alternative would allow for the removal of existing nonnative trees and shrubs for the benefit of another wildlife group such as grassland-dependent songbirds, upland-nesting shorebirds, and waterfowl.

As in alternative A, the district staffs would continue to monitor and document the presence and use of district lands by federally listed species such as piping plovers and whooping cranes. The staffs would continue to close areas to public use in order to protect federally listed species using district lands, especially during nesting season.

Monitoring and Research

The districts’ monitoring and research activities would parallel those in alternative B, with the addition of answering specific management questions. Research money would be available for graduate student work and self-directed research projects.

The following research would be conducted:

- Annually conduct vegetation transects on native prairie habitats.



- Conduct a research project on reseeding uplands to native mixes.
- Monitor water quality; specifically assess upstream threats (concentrated animal-feeding operations, air base).
- Conduct waterfowl population and density surveys.
- Conduct cooperative (with NDGF) upland bird and deer surveys.
- Conduct research on migratory bird response (especially of shorebirds, waterbirds, and waterfowl) to large-scale wind farms.
- Conduct a reptile and amphibian inventory.

Cultural Resources

As in alternatives A and B, the effect on cultural resources would be evaluated in response to activities that are “undertakings” under section 106 of the NHPA. The Service would comply with the NHPA and other pertinent cultural resource laws. In addition, the Service would protect where possible resources eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, the district staffs would develop educational programs and interpretive opportunities for the public.

Visitor Services

The current level and quality of environmental education and interpretation opportunities and facilities would be expanded to meet the needs of a wide array of target audiences of all abilities. The district staffs would develop programs to enhance public use, outdoor classroom activities, and interpretive exhibits and displays.

Visitor services events such as teacher workshops and waterfowl identification would be expanded over

current levels and would be conducted annually by district staffs. Brochures and publications would be reviewed and renewed annually. New publications and educational materials would be developed to aid in the interpretation of the sights and sounds within WPAs.

Outreach would include the media and partner groups such as wildlife clubs and nonprofit conservation groups. Efforts to give presentations to the area public and schools would be a priority.

As in alternative A, the Service proposes, at a future date, (1) one new administrative and visitor center facility each for Audubon and Kulm wetland management districts, and (2) one new visitor contact station each for Arrowwood, Lostwood, and Valley City wetland management districts.

Partnerships

Partnership development and management would parallel that in alternative B. Additionally, existing partnerships with the local public and NDGF would be expanded. New partnerships would be developed to further partnerships with community members (“friends groups”) who have an appreciation for and interest in the welfare of the districts.

Operations

As in alternative B, monitoring and enforcement would be expanded at all conservation easements. Conservation easement enforcement would be increased through projects such as landowner notification letters.

3.4 COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES

Table 2 summarizes the actions and predicted consequences of each alternative.

Table 2. Comparison of Alternatives for the Nine Districts, North Dakota.

<i>ALTERNATIVE A</i>	<i>ALTERNATIVE B</i>	<i>ALTERNATIVE C</i>
<p><i>Current Management (No Action): Current funding, staff, and programs. Only the highest priority actions are addressed.</i></p>	<p><i>Moderately Enhanced Management (Proposed Action): Management of high- and medium-priority habitats. Production enhancement for targeted migratory bird populations.</i></p>	<p><i>Enhanced Management: Widespread management of native prairies and wetland. Expanded restoration of grasslands. New visitor services programs.</i></p>
Habitat and Wildlife—Actions		
<p>Prioritize WPA management, with only high-priority WPAs receiving consistent management.</p> <p>Monitor all conservation easements; only enforce high-priority violations.</p> <p>Focus acquisition on high-priority tracts; use mostly conservation easements.</p> <p>Manage legally identified invasive plants at high-priority WPAs.</p> <p>Use prescribed fire, grazing, farming, and invasive plant control to maintain and improve native prairie and tame grass units.</p>	<p>Manage only medium- and high-priority WPAs.</p> <p>Monitor and enforce all conservation easements.</p> <p>Monitor the effects of management and restoration on migratory birds.</p> <p>Focus acquisition on high-priority conservation easements and some of the highest priority fee tracts.</p> <p>Manage legally identified invasive plants at high- and medium-priority WPAs.</p> <p>Apply compatible production enhancement techniques for targeted migratory bird populations.</p>	<p>Manage all WPAs.</p> <p>Apply intensive management on native prairies and wetlands in the most intact ecosystems, which are more likely to support a wide range of migratory bird species.</p> <p>Emphasize restoration of representative examples of native mixed- and tall-grass prairies, to benefit ground-nesting species of migratory birds.</p> <p>Manage the low-priority old cropland and degraded prairies to increase nest and brood survival for high densities of waterfowl species that use DNC.</p> <p>Expand conservation easement acquisition and enforcement through proactive mapping and strong enforcement. Direct acquisition efforts at high-priority conservation easements (native prairie and wetlands), fee-title WPAs, and “roundouts.”</p> <p>Manage legally identified invasive plants at all fee tracts.</p>
Habitat and Wildlife—Environmental Consequences		
<p>The current productivity of wetland and upland vegetation communities would be maintained at high-priority WPAs.</p> <p>The current support of waterfowl, shorebird, and upland species use would be maintained.</p> <p>There would be a gradual long-term deterioration of habitats at medium- and low-priority WPAs.</p>	<p>The productivity of vegetative wetland and upland communities would be improved at all WPAs for bird species migration, breeding, and recruitment.</p> <p>Waterfowl recruitment would be increased through improved habitat conditions and control of predators.</p> <p>Additional habitat at high-priority WPAs would be protected through acquisition. Native prairie grasses and forbs conditions for targeted species would improve.</p>	<p>The productivity of vegetative wetland and upland communities would be improved at all WPAs for bird species migration, breeding, and recruitment.</p> <p>Management of intact landscapes would provide a structural mosaic of native vegetative communities with less fragmentation, which would lead to less invasive plant species.</p> <p><i>(continued)</i></p>

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<i>Current Management (No Action): Current funding, staff, and programs. Only the highest priority actions are addressed.</i>	<i>Moderately Enhanced Management (Proposed Action): Management of high- and medium-priority habitats. Production enhancement for targeted migratory bird populations.</i>	<i>Enhanced Management: Widespread management of native prairies and wetland. Expanded restoration of grasslands. New visitor services programs.</i>
Habitat and Wildlife—Environmental Consequences (continued)		
		<p>Additional WPAs with high-priority habitat would be acquired using progressive HAPET mapping.</p> <p>The occurrence of all invasive plants on all district lands would be mapped.</p>
Monitoring and Research—Actions		
<p>Conduct mandated surveys and some baseline monitoring on high-priority tracts.</p> <p>Periodically complete vegetation line transects at a limited number of WPAs to track progress of management activities to improve native prairie.</p> <p>Complete 4-square-mile waterfowl pair counts.</p>	<p>Conduct mandated surveys and some baseline monitoring on high- and medium-priority tracts.</p> <p>Periodically complete vegetation line transects at a limited number of WPAs to track progress of management activities to improve native prairie.</p> <p>Complete 4-square-mile waterfowl pair counts.</p> <p>Support landscape-level analysis to guide acquisition.</p> <p>Promote management level research to improve habitat management practices.</p>	<p>Conduct mandated surveys and baseline monitoring.</p> <p>Conduct specific research to answer management questions (money is available for graduate student work and self-directed research).</p> <p>Increase monitoring of grasslands, wetlands, and wildlife:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Expand vegetation transects on native prairie to include more district units and do annually. ■ Conduct research on reseeded uplands to native mixes. ■ Monitor water quality to assess upstream threats. ■ Conduct waterfowl population and density, upland bird, and deer surveys. ■ Conduct research on migratory bird response to large-scale wind farms. ■ Conduct a reptile and amphibian inventory.
Monitoring and Research—Environmental Consequences		
<p>Although limited, any information gathered would be beneficial to the staffs in analysis of management needs.</p>	<p>The additional monitoring and research would lead improved habitat conditions and health of migratory and resident species that use district lands.</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative B.</i></p>

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Cultural Resources—Actions		
<p>Conduct cultural resource evaluations in response to activities that are “undertakings” under section 106 of the NHPA.</p> <p>Comply with cultural resource laws including protection, when possible, of resources eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative A.</i></p>	<p><i>Same as alternatives A and B, plus the following.</i></p> <p>Develop educational programs and interpretive opportunities for the public.</p>
Cultural Resources—Environmental Consequences		
<p>Cultural resources that would be potentially affected by an undertaking would be identified and, if significant, preserved when possible.</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative A.</i></p>	<p><i>Same as alternatives A and B, plus the following.</i></p> <p>More of the public would learn about cultural resources in the districts.</p>
Visitor Services—Actions		
<p>Conduct visitor services events such as teacher workshops on a multiyear rotation among districts.</p> <p>Occasionally update brochures and publications.</p> <p>Occasionally do media outreach.</p>	<p>Conduct visitor services events such as teacher workshops and waterfowl identification on a 3-year rotation among districts.</p> <p>Annually conduct media outreach.</p> <p>Annually review brochures and publications; complete updates as needed.</p> <p>Construct new administrative and visitor center facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Audubon WMD <input type="checkbox"/> Kulm WMD <p>Construct new visitor contact stations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Arrowwood WMD <input type="checkbox"/> Devils Lake WMD <input type="checkbox"/> Lostwood WMD <input type="checkbox"/> Valley City WMD <p><i>(continued)</i></p>	<p>Enhance visitor services.</p> <p>Develop outdoor classroom activities.</p> <p>Add interpretive exhibits and displays.</p> <p>Annually conduct visitor services events such as teacher workshops and waterfowl identification.</p> <p>Annually review and renew brochures and publications. Develop new publications and educational materials.</p> <p>Do outreach with the media and partner groups such as wildlife clubs and nonprofit conservation groups. Make presentations to the area public and schools.</p> <p>Construct visitor center and contact station facilities (<i>same as alternative B</i>).</p>

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Visitor Services—Actions (continued)		
	<p>Redesign the visitor contact station at Crystal Springs WPA in the Chase Lake WMD.</p> <p>Construct a new interpretive sign for the auto tour route at Chase Lake WMD.</p> <p>Develop an interpretive display for Crosby WMD.</p>	
Visitor Services—Environmental Consequences		
Opportunities would continue at or near existing levels.	<p>Through the development of additional workshops, brochures, and exhibits, the public and school groups would better understand the species and habitat relationships and the general mission of the Refuge System.</p> <p>The establishment of visitor centers and contact stations would increase public visitation and knowledge of the districts. There may be irreversible damage to relatively small areas of vegetation due to facility construction. Construction equipment may cause short-term disturbance to wildlife.</p>	<i>Same as alternative B.</i>
Partnerships—Actions		
<p>Use partnerships with the public, primarily landowners adjacent to the WPAs, to cooperatively manage district habitats.</p> <p>Continue coordination with the NDGF to manage hunting at WPAs.</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative A, plus the following.</i></p> <p>Develop “friends” groups, expand partnerships with universities, and improve relations with neighbors.</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative B, plus the following.</i></p> <p>Expand and improve existing partnerships with the local public and NDGF. Develop new partnerships to benefit mutual programs.</p>
Partnerships—Environmental Consequences		
Without new partnerships, the districts would be unable to meet future demands from the public for visitation and public education. Monitoring and research would remain at the current level without the ability to expand into needs analyses.	<p>Expanded partnerships would enable the districts to meet the needs of visitors.</p> <p>Partners would assist staff in monitoring and research, which would expand knowledge about habitat management and restoration.</p>	<i>Same as alternative B.</i>

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Operations—Actions		
Maintain current staff, equipment, and other resources.	<p>Increase resources necessary to (1) meet legal and obligated mandates, (2) provide management at high- and medium-priority WPAs, and (3) provide limited resources to other projects.</p> <p>Provide law enforcement for visitor safety and facility and wildlife protection.</p>	<p>Increase resources to accomplish all mandates and other projects to enhance the mission of the Refuge System.</p> <p>Increase resources to be able to monitor and enforce all conservation easements. Enhance enforcement of conservation easements through projects such as landowner notification letters.</p>
Operations—Environmental Consequences		
<p>Current levels of operation would be maintained.</p> <p>Property and equipment would be safe and workable, but districts would lack state-of-the-art equipment for habitat improvement.</p>	<p>The district staffs would have the resources necessary to improve habitats and management for migratory species.</p> <p>New improvements and accessibility would increase the value and usability of the districts to visitors.</p>	<i>Same as alternative B.</i>

