



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Missouri River

Least Tern *Status: Endangered*

Piping Plover *Status: Threatened*

A large river ecosystem, like the Missouri River, can support an abundance of wildlife. It was once home to a diverse array of birds, fish, and other wildlife that found suitable habitat in its channels, backwaters, wetlands, and adjacent uplands.

Shorebirds like the least tern and piping plover depend on the Missouri River for nesting habitat in which to breed and raise their young. Their preferred habitat is sparsely vegetated sandbars along rivers or lakes and reservoir shorelines. The serious decline of these birds species is directly related to the current operation of the system and the elimination of habitat necessary for their survival.

The large reservoirs formed by the six dams on the river have greatly changed the character of the river and the fish and wildlife it supports.

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service believes a return to



Photos by Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Least terns (above) and piping plovers (to the right and lower left) are shorebirds that nest on sandbars along the Missouri River.



higher spring flows and lower summer flows is essential to the recovery of the Missouri River's ecological health.

A modest increase in spring flows will scour channels and move sand downstream creating sandbars that will provide resting and nesting habitat for terns and plovers.

Lower summer flows will keep tern and plover nests above water and prevent hatchlings

from being washed downstream. It will also enhance the reproductive success for these birds by allowing both adults and chicks easy foraging access to small fish. Large, open areas with little vegetation also reduce the chances of predation.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
P.O. Box 25486, DFC
Denver, Colorado 80225-0486
<http://www.r6.fws.gov>

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