Comprehensive Conservation Plan

North Dakota Wetland Management Districts

September 2008

Prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Arrowwood Wetland Management District
Audubon Wetland Management District
Chase Lake Wetland Management District
Crosby Wetland Management District
Devils Lake Wetland Management District
J. Clark Salyer Wetland Management District
Kulm Wetland Management District
Lostwood Wetland Management District
Valley City Wetland Management District

and

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Date

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Administration Act</td>
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<td>APHIS</td>
<td>Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCR</td>
<td>bird conservation region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCP</td>
<td>comprehensive conservation plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFR</td>
<td><em>Code of Federal Regulations</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>cfs</td>
<td>cubic feet per second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWCS</td>
<td>comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy</td>
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<td>CWD</td>
<td>chronic wasting disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>district</td>
<td>wetland management district</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNC</td>
<td>dense nesting cover</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOI</td>
<td>U.S. Department of the Interior</td>
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<tr>
<td>EA</td>
<td>environmental assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>EO</td>
<td>executive order</td>
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<tr>
<td>FmHA</td>
<td>Farmers Home Administration</td>
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<td>FMP</td>
<td>fire management plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>full-time equivalent</td>
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<td>geographic information system</td>
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<tr>
<td>gpm</td>
<td>gallons per minute</td>
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<td>GPS</td>
<td>global positioning system</td>
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<tr>
<td>GS</td>
<td>general schedule (employment)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HAPET</td>
<td>Habitat and Population Evaluation Team</td>
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<td>HPAI</td>
<td>highly pathogenic avian influenza</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improvement Act</td>
<td>National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997</td>
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<td>integrated pest management</td>
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<tr>
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<td>invasive species strike team</td>
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<td>NABCI</td>
<td>North American Bird Conservation Initiative</td>
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<td>North American Wetlands Conservation Act</td>
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<td>PPJV</td>
<td>Prairie Pothole Joint Venture</td>
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<td>Refuge Annual Performance Plan</td>
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<td>Refuge System</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
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<td>RLGIS</td>
<td>refuge lands geographic information system</td>
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<td>Service</td>
<td>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service</td>
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<td>SWG</td>
<td>State Wildlife Grant</td>
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<td>United States Code</td>
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<td>U.S. Department of Agriculture</td>
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<td>USFWS</td>
<td>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service</td>
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<td>USGS</td>
<td>U.S. Geological Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>VOR</td>
<td>visual obstruction reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDA</td>
<td>wildlife development area</td>
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<tr>
<td>WG</td>
<td>wage grade (employment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WMD</td>
<td>wetland management district</td>
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<tr>
<td>WPA</td>
<td>waterfowl production area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WUI</td>
<td>wildland–urban interface</td>
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This is a summary of the comprehensive conservation plan for nine of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's wetland management districts in North Dakota:

- Arrowwood
- Audubon
- Chase Lake
- Crosby
- Devils Lake
- J. Clark Salyer
- Kulm
- Lostwood
- Valley City

The nine wetland management districts manage 1,208 waterfowl production areas, tens of thousands of conservation easements, and 37 wildlife development areas in 34 counties. These district lands, totaling 1,125,084 acres, are part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a network of lands set aside to conserve fish and wildlife and their habitat.

The prairies of North Dakota have become an ecological treasure of biological importance for waterfowl and other migratory birds. The prairie potholes of North Dakota support a wide diversity of wildlife, but they are most famous for their role in waterfowl production. Complexes of wetlands scattered throughout the nine wetland management districts attract abundant numbers of breeding duck pairs.

**The Districts**

A wetland management district provides oversight for all of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s small land tracts in a multicounty area.
Planning Process and Main Issues

The planning process began in February 2007 with the issuing of a notice of intent in the Federal Register. The Service finalized the comprehensive conservation plan in September 2008. The district staffs and the public identified the primary issues for the districts, which the plan addresses; these issues are summarized below.

**Wetland and Upland Habitats**

All districts have a primary purpose to provide optimal habitat conditions for the needs of a suite of waterfowl and other migratory birds and, to a lesser extent, native, resident wildlife.

**Invasive Plants**

Nonnative grasses and forbs and potentially invasive, native, woody species substantially diminish the quality and suitability of upland habitat for many native wildlife species.

**Energy Development**

Impacts to the districts’ waterfowl production areas from oil and gas development include salt water contamination, wetlands filling, and road development. Wind power has an unknown effect on bird species and needs evaluation.

**Prairie Conversion**

The loss of native prairie is occurring at an alarming rate. Restoration and management needs to be part of the districts’ plan.

**Wildlife Management**

Threatened and endangered species, predators, and wildlife disease are mounting issues for each district.

**Visitor Services**

A growing demand for public recreation in North Dakota and the nation makes hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation primary issues of interest.

**Operations**

The efficient use of staff, partnerships, volunteers, and funding—through effective communication and innovation—will support each of the districts.

**Monitoring and Research**

The Service needs basic data about recruitment, mortality, and habitat use for representative groups of species. It is important to collect and analyze this data on a regular basis so the Service can make appropriate decisions about the habitats on which these species depend.

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**Vision Statement**

Wetland management districts conserve an important network of public and private wetland and upland habitat in North Dakota. This network preserves the integrity of the historical and vital resting and breeding grounds of North America’s migratory waterfowl.

As part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, these lands benefit ducks, other migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, and resident wildlife.

The responsible management and protection of this expanding network requires adequate funding, dedicated personnel, and successful partnerships.

District communities and visitors value grasslands and marshes as a beneficial and important component of a diverse, healthy, and productive prairie landscape.

Current and future generations enjoy wildlife-dependent uses of these lands and partners, especially waterfowl hunters, actively support and encourage the districts’ habitat conservation programs.
Goals
The Service developed goals to meet the vision.

Habitat and Wildlife Goal
Protect, restore, and enhance the ecological diversity of grasslands and wetlands of the North Dakota Prairie Pothole Region. Contribute to the production and growth of continental waterfowl populations to meet the goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Also, support healthy populations of other migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, and other wildlife.

Monitoring and Research Goal
Use science, monitoring, and applied research to advance the understanding of the Prairie Pothole Region and management within the North Dakota wetland management districts.

Cultural Resources Goal
Identify and evaluate cultural resources in the North Dakota wetland management districts that are on Service-owned lands or are affected by Service undertakings. Protect resources determined to be significant and, when appropriate, interpret resources to connect staff, visitors, and communities to the area's past.

Visitor Services Goal
Provide visitors with quality opportunities to enjoy hunting, fishing, trapping, and other compatible wildlife-dependent recreation on Service-owned lands and expand their knowledge and appreciation of the prairie landscape and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Partnerships Goal
A diverse network of partners joins with the North Dakota wetland management districts to support research; protect, restore, and enhance habitat; and foster awareness and appreciation of the prairie landscape.

Operations Goal
Effectively employ staff, partnerships, and volunteers and secure adequate funding in support of the National Wildlife Refuge System's mission.

Management Direction
Management objectives for habitat types are based on the habitat preferences of groups of target species such as waterfowl, migratory shorebirds, grassland birds, and threatened and endangered species.

The Service will focus on high- and medium-priority tracts. District staffs will carry out compatible techniques to enhance production of targeted migratory bird populations.

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

The Service proposes, at a future date, (1) one new administration 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.