

V. Implementation and Monitoring

5.1 Funding and Personnel

Staffing Needed to Implement This Plan: Table 5.1 shows current staff and proposed additional staffing needed to fully implement this plan. If all positions were filled, the Refuge would be able to carry out all aspects of this plan to a reasonable standard. If some positions are not filled, completion of some projects may be delayed or not completed. Staffing and funding are expected to come over the 15-year life of this Plan. Seedskadee NWR is currently responsible for management of Cokeville Meadows NWR (7,677 acres) which remains an unfunded Refuge.

| Table 5.1 Staffing Plan | |
|--|--|
| Current Personnel | Personnel Needed |
| Refuge Manager (Project Leader) GS-12 | Refuge Manager (Project Leader) GS-12 |
| Assistant Refuge Manager (ROS) GS-11 | Assistant Refuge Manager GS-11 |
| Administrative Support Assistant GS-06 | Administrative Assistant GS-07 |
| Ecologist GS-06 | Ecologist GS-11 |
| Biological Technician (Wildlife) GS-06 | Biological Technician (Wildlife) GS-07 |
| Engineering Equipment Operator WG-09 | Engineering Equipment Operator WG-10 |
| New Position | Public Use Specialist GS-09/11 |
| New Position | Maintenance Mechanic WG-09 |
| New Position | Biological Technician GS-5 (Seasonal) |

Funding Needed to Implement This Plan: Currently, a large backlog of maintenance needs exists on the Refuge. The needs are recorded in a national Maintenance Management System (MMS). In 2000, under current management plans, the backlog for Seedskadee NWR was \$2,271,000. These needs would need to be met under this plan. A summary of these needs is listed below.

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Vehicles and Equipment | \$1,428,000 |
| Water Control Structures and Dikes | \$ 335,000 |
| Domestic Water System | \$ 375,000 |
| Bridges and Roads | \$ 25,000 |
| Buildings | \$ 90,000 |
| Radio System | \$ 18,000 |
| TOTAL | \$2,271,000 |

The System also uses another database, the Refuge Operating Needs System (RONS). Table 5.2 reflects the Service's (Refuge's) proposed projects, in priority order, as detailed in the Refuge Operational Needs System (RONS). Many of these "projects" involve increases to the Refuge's permanent staffing and funding to carry out the increased responsibilities outlined in this CCP. They also represent needs stemming from an increase in acquired acreage and the maintenance of additional facilities. Each year RONS projects are submitted and compete with similar projects within the Region and with other Service Regions for Refuge funding increases. Completed RONS data sheets for the proposed projects can be found in Appendix C of this document.

| Table 5.2 RONS Project Summary for Seedskaadee NWR (2000) | | |
|---|--|-------------------|
| Project Description (in priority order) | Base Increase (B) # of Year Funds (1-4) Hire Personnel (P) | Projected Cost |
| Enhance Public Education and Outreach Activities | B/P | \$139,000 |
| Control and Eradicate Noxious Weeds | B/P | \$78,000 |
| Maintain Public Use and Refuge Facilities | B/P | \$125,000 |
| Improve Water Level Management to Enhance Wetland Impoundments | 1 | \$49,000 |
| Improve Trumpeter Swan Management and Augmentation Program | 1-2 | \$38,000 |
| Improve Directional and Interpretive Signing To Enhance Visitor Experience and Protect Habitat | 1 | \$36,000 |
| Enhance Refuge Brochures and Public Information | 1 | \$29,000 |
| Enhance Volunteer and Temporary Hire Housing Facility | 1 | \$65,000 |
| Implement Riparian Restoration Efforts | B | \$54,000 |
| Provide Education Outreach Displays and Protect Historic Trails | 1 | \$40,000 |
| TOTAL | | \$653,000 |

Table 5.3 outlines projects which the Service and Reclamation agree to carry out jointly as part of Reclamation's mitigation obligations for the Seedskadee Project. Funding is generally available for this mitigation work and it is anticipated that these projects will be completed on or about the schedule proposed below. None of these "projects" represent increases to the Refuge's base funding.

| Table 5.3 Reclamation Cooperative Mitigation Projects | |
|--|--------------------|
| Project Description | Work Schedule (FY) |
| Habitat Development Projects | |
| Enhance Pal Unit Wetlands | 2001-2002 |
| Restore Oxbow/Other Wetlands | 2002-2003 |
| Enhance Dikes and Water Control in Hawley Unit | 2002-2003 |
| Control Pepperweed/Restore Infested Areas | 1999-2010 |
| Restore Riparian Areas | 1999-2010* |
| Rip, Seed and Restore Non-designated Roads | 2000-2004 |
| Reclaim Gravel Barrow Pit | 2002 |
| Enhance Volunteer Housing by Adding Air Conditioning, Propane Heat, Mudroom, and Screen Porch | 2002 |
| Public Use Projects | |
| Construct Boat Ramps and Parking | 1999-2002 |
| Improve Access and Auto Tour Route, Upgrade Road System to All-Weather | Completed |
| Design and Install Interpretive Signs Along Auto Tour Route | 2003-2004 |
| Construct a Lombard Interpretive Trail | 2001 |
| Construct Interpretive Trail Near Headquarters | 2002-2003 |
| Revise and Reprint Refuge Brochures | 1999-2003 |
| Construct Environmental Education Facility | 2001-2003 |
| Construct Accessible Restroom and Associated Parking Lot Facility at Upper Dodge Bottoms Boat Ramp | 2002 |
| Finish Fencing of "Roundout" Parcels Transferred From Reclamation in 1997/78 | 2003 |
| Install Gates at Administrative Roads Throughout the Refuge to Reduce Off-Road Travel | 2002 |
| Cultural Resource Inventory; Document Historic sites | Complete |

* (Reclamation funding through 2003 - work likely to extend well beyond 2003)

5.2 CCP Implementation and Step-down Management Plans

The 1987 Refuge Master Plan, 1989 Station Plan, and 1995 Refuge Development Plan will be replaced by this Comprehensive Conservation Plan (Table 5.4). The CCP describes Refuge management and priorities for the next 15 years and details Refuge development (infrastructure, habitat, and public use) projects, both by the Service and by Reclamation under their mitigation obligation. This CCP is intended as a broad umbrella plan that provides general concepts, specific wildlife and habitat objectives, and federally listed species, public use, and partnership objectives. Depending on the Refuge needs, these may be very detailed or quite broad. The purpose of step-down management plans is to provide greater detail to managers to implement specific actions authorized by the CCP. Step-down management planning is the formulation of detailed plans that describe management activities necessary to implement strategies identified in this CCP. Step-down management plans describe the specific management actions to be followed, “stepping down” from the general goals, objectives, and strategies.

| Table 5.4 Management Plan Status | | | |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|--------|
| Plan | Date Last Revised | Action | Revise |
| Refuge Master Plan (Development Plan 1987) | 7/87 | Replaced by the CCP | 2001 |
| Station Plan (with goals and objectives) | 8/89 | Replaced by the CCP | 2001 |
| Refuge Development Plan | 12/95 | Replaced by the CCP | 2001 |

Table 5.5 displays a list of step-down plans and a schedule for their revision. Following completion of the CCP, most plans will need to be reviewed and revised, as necessary, to comply with the CCP and new policies following the passage of the Refuge Improvement Act of 1997. Additionally, several new plans, including the Public Use Plan and the Habitat Management Plan, will be developed. The preparation of new step-down plans or substantial changes to existing step-down plans typically will require further compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), other policies, and opportunity for public review.

The Habitat Management Plan is a new plan that will address management of all habitat types on the Refuge. It will include a discussion of habitat management objectives and various treatments (tools) to be used in habitat management and incorporate several existing step-down plans which deal with habitat management. The Public Use Plan will address the appropriate types and level of public use to be allowed on the Refuge, program management, such as hunting, and the development of facilities to accommodate public use.

Table 5.5 Status of Step-down Plans

| Step-down Plan | Date Last Revised | Objective | Revise |
|---|----------------------|---|--------|
| Beaver Trapping Plan | 3/81 | Review and incorporate into Habitat Plan | 2004 |
| Cultural Resource Plan | New | Complete | 2004 |
| Fire Management Plan | 5/83 | Review and revise | 2002 |
| Fishing Plan with Commercial Guide Sub-Plan | 3/81 | Review and revise | 2002 |
| Grassland Management Plan | 5/82 | Review and incorporate into Habitat Management Plan | 2004 |
| Habitat Management Plan | New | Complete | 2004 |
| Hunting Plan | 8/86 1990 amended | Review and revise | 2002 |
| Integrated Pest Management Plan | 1/98 | Review and incorporate into Habitat Management Plan | 2003 |
| Predator/Furbearer Management Plan | 4/91 | Review and revise | 2002 |
| Public Use/ Sign Plan | New | Complete | 2002 |
| Safety Plan | 7/98 | Review | 2001 |
| Water Management Plan | 1/98 | Review and incorporate into Habitat Management Plan | 2004 |
| Wildlife Inventory Plan | 8/91 | Review and revise | 2004 |
| Commercial Guide Plan | NEW | Draft Complete 2000 | 2001 |

5.3 Partnership Opportunities

Only with public support will the Service succeed in its mission. That support comes through outreach: fostering education, understanding, and communicating the importance of the Service commitment to protecting habitat upon which wildlife depends. Outreach includes a broad array of activities and services focused on building relationships and communication. The Service is committed to getting its message to both traditional and nontraditional groups.

SeedsKadee NWR will continue to actively seek out and foster partnerships with organizations and individuals with whom a common goal is shared. Many individuals, groups, and organizations have contributed in significant ways to the Refuge. Local Scout Troops have assisted with many fencing and other maintenance projects. Ducks Unlimited has assisted with construction, placement, and maintenance of nesting structures. Trout Unlimited has helped the Refuge sponsor "Take a Kid Fishing" day and assisted with planning for numerous instream fish habitat structures on lands upstream off-Refuge. Individual volunteers have completed habitat and biological surveys, constructed brochure boxes, graded roads, repaired fence, entered data into computers, completed environmental education programs, conducted general maintenance, completed numerous wood working projects, etc.

The WYG&F has been a partner with the Refuge by coordinating management of game species and fisheries on the Refuge, distributing information to the public about the Refuge, and providing cost share and technical assistance on habitat projects. The Bureau of Reclamation has provided extensive financial and technical assistance for completion of Refuge projects. Many individuals with an interest in the Refuge have provided thoughts and ideas for habitat projects, have assisted with cleanup of trash, and provided the Refuge information to enhance law enforcement efforts.

SeedsKadee NWR has partnered with the Bureau of Reclamation, the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, and private individuals to produce The Green River and Bear River Focus Area Plans of the Intermountain West Joint Venture. This plan supports projects that benefit wetland and riparian habitats. The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program is another example. Through this program, SeedsKadee NWR provides technical assistance to private landowners interested in improving habitat on their property.

The American Bird Conservancy (ABC) recently partnered with SeedsKadee NWR to designate the Refuge as a "Globally Important Bird Area (IBA). The Refuge's designation as a IBA will assist ABC in developing a network of key sites in the U.S. and globally to further national and global bird conservation efforts. The Refuge will benefit through national attention as a valuable bird area, increased visitor support, and potentially increased funding.

The Big Sandy Working Group is a group of land managers and private individuals interested in improving riparian and upland habitat along the Big Sandy River. The Big Sandy watershed, upstream of the Refuge, has a direct impact on the success of Refuge projects to restore habitat. The Refuge has also partnered with the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, and Bureau of Reclamation to cooperatively manage recreation resources along the lower section of the Green River in Wyoming. These partnerships benefit wildlife and fisheries and their habitats in the Green River Basin.

Many new partnership opportunities await Seedskadee NWR. The Partners in Flight program strives to “improve our understanding of neotropical migrants, identify species most at risk, and develop and carry out cooperative plans to protect their habitat.” This partnership is a natural area of emphasis for Seedskadee with its important riparian habitats. While the Refuge participates in this program to some extent, a more active role in the future is anticipated.

Additionally, the Refuge staff needs to spend more time on outreach. The staff has, and will continue to communicate and work with local ranchers, congressional staffs, State and local governments, local businesses in Green River, Rock Springs and Farson, area schools, and universities and colleges (particularly in Wyoming). More outreach in the local communities is needed to understand the concerns of local citizens and to help them understand the mission, goals and objectives of Seedskadee NWR. An environmental education center, constructed by the Service and Reclamation could provide a place for area schools to conduct year-round environmental education as well as a center for forums with the local communities on issues affecting wildlife and the environment in southwestern Wyoming. It would be advantageous for the Refuge to explore the development of a “Friends” group or other community support organization to assist the Refuge in carrying out its goals and objectives. The Environmental Education center could provide the catalyst for such a group.

5.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

This CCP is designed to be effective for a 15-year period. The plan will be reviewed annually and revised as required to ensure that established goals and objectives are still applicable and that the CCP is implemented as scheduled. The monitoring program will focus on issues involving public use activities, habitat management programs, wildlife inventory, monitoring and management activities, and the progress and success of Refuge development as part of Reclamation's mitigation efforts. Monitoring and evaluation will utilize the adaptive management process which includes goal and objective setting, applying management tools and strategies, and monitoring and feedback to validate objectives. Adaptive management provides a framework within which biological measures can be evaluated by comparing the results of management, to results expected from objectives.

Where information gaps exist, a concerted effort will be made to obtain information. With new information, goals and objectives may need modification. Public involvement will be encouraged during the evaluation process.

Monitoring of public use programs will involve the continued collection of visitor use statistics. Monitoring will be done to evaluate the effects of public use on Refuge habitat, wildlife, and refuge visitor experience. In particular, river use will be closely monitored to assess success and satisfaction with river use levels and commercial use of the river by permitted outfitters.

Collection of baseline data on all wildlife populations will continue. This data will be used to update existing species lists, wildlife habitat requirements, and seasonal use patterns. Neotropical migratory birds, raptors, and species of management concern will be the focus of monitoring efforts. Wildlife monitoring will be used to evaluate the effects of public use and habitat management programs on wildlife populations. Additionally, a series of vegetative transects/plots in all major habitat will be established as a long-term habitat monitoring network. This information will be used to assess the effects of abiotic factors (weather), habitat manipulation (such as burning and invasive species control), and wildlife population management strategies (hunting, trapping, etc.) on long-term habitat trends on the Refuge.

This CCP outlines the development actions needed to complete Reclamation mitigation efforts on Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge under the Seedskadee Project (Section 8, CRSP) and, as such, supersedes the 1958 "Coordination Act Report" for Seedskadee NWR. A list of projects, with expected start and completion dates, responsibilities, and estimated budgets, will be reviewed and revised annually by the Service and Reclamation. Most activities, particularly in the area of infrastructure and public use development, are detailed in this CCP. Some actions necessary for habitat mitigation (i.e., riparian restoration) are still in the developmental stages and therefore specific mitigation actions are not included here but will be part of later specific action plans (i.e., riparian restoration plan). The Service will provide an annual progress report to Reclamation. The success of mitigation efforts in meeting goals and objectives, outlined in this CCP, will also be addressed.

5.5 Plan Amendment and Revision

The Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge CCP is a dynamic plan. While it will serve as a guide for overall Refuge direction, it will be adjusted to consider new and better information, ensuring that Refuge activities best serve the established purpose of this Refuge and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The CCP will be reviewed every five years, and monitored continuously to ensure the developed management actions support the goals and objectives of Seedskadee NWR.

This CCP will be informally reviewed by Refuge staff while preparing annual work plans and updating the Refuge Information Management System (RMIS) database. It may also be reviewed during routine inspections or programmatic evaluations. Results of the reviews may indicate a need to modify the CCP. The monitoring of objectives is an integral part of the plan, and management activities may be modified if desired results are not achieved. If minor changes are required, the level of public involvement and associated NEPA documentation will be determined by the project leader. This CCP will be formally revised at least every 15 years.

