

Quick Facts

Fergus Falls Wetland Management District

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History

- District established in 1962
- Prairie Wetlands Learning Center established in 1998

Acreage

- Waterfowl Production Areas: 217 units totaling 44,218 acres
- Wetland easements: 1,008 totaling 22,984 acres
- Grassland easements: 11 totaling 1,314 acres
- FmHA easements: 29 totaling 2,974 acres
- District also manages two tracts of the Northern Tallgrass Prairie NWR totaling 258 acres
- Counties in District: Otter Tail, Grant, Douglas, Wilkin and Wadena

Financial Impact

- 50,000 visitors annually
- FY 2008 Budget: \$1.5 million
- Staff: 13 permanent; 8 temporary

Natural History

- Landscape dotted with thousands of small wetlands or “prairie potholes,” created by glaciers
- Prior to settlement, this area was a paradise for waterfowl, prairie chickens, whooping cranes, bison, wolves and other prairie wildlife
- Agriculture changes to the landscape included the loss of most native prairie and the drainage of over 80% of the small wetlands
- The area remains a critical waterfowl production and migration area - the highest nesting density in Minnesota was recorded here (3.5 nests per acre)



District Objectives

- Acquire, develop and manage habitat for waterfowl production
- Provide habitat for native plants and animals, especially prairie songbirds
- Assist private landowners with restoration of wetlands and grasslands
- Provide wildlife-dependent recreation and education

Priorities

- Restoring and rehabilitating prairie wetland complexes to enhance waterfowl production and migration habitat
- Supporting the Prairie Science Class at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center

Public Use Opportunities

- Trapping and hunting
- Wildlife observation
- Environmental education

Prairie Wetlands Learning Center

- Built through a cooperative effort between the city of Fergus Falls, the state of Minnesota and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Promotes wetland and prairie stewardship
- Provides day and residential environmental education programs for students and interpretive programs for the general public

Photo by Russ Aguilar

