STILLWATER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPLEX
COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION PLAN
and
BOUNDARY REVISION

Churchill and Washoe Counties, Nevada
Type of Action: Administrative
Lead Agency: U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service
Cooperating Agencies: U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs
Nevada Division of Wildlife

Responsible Official(s):

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(NOTE: what follows is the portion of the May 2002 CCP Final EIS that was approved and published; only the portion pertaining to Fallon NWR is listed below; for a full copy of the CCP that includes Stillwater and Anaho Island NWR, please contact the Refuge Manager at 775/423-5128 or mail to the address above)

STILLWATER NWR COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION PLAN FINAL EIS CHAPTER 3 - ALTERNATIVES – MAY 2002

Abstract: This Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge Complex Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Boundary Revision (Final CCP EIS) describes and evaluates five alternatives for management. The Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Complex is comprised of Stillwater NWR, Fallon NWR, Stillwater Wildlife Management Area (WMA), and Anaho Island NWR.

The No Action Alternative (Alternative A) would retain the existing boundaries and baseline management as outlined in the 1987 Management Plan for Stillwater WMA and modified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) water rights acquisition program.

Alternative B would result in the lands within Stillwater WMA reverting back to U.S. Bureau of Reclamation management or other public land status. Management would focus on providing fall and winter habitat for waterfowl and opportunities for waterfowl hunting on Stillwater NWR, and breeding habitat for waterbirds on Fallon NWR.

Under Alternative C, the Service would seek legislation to expand Stillwater NWR to include much of Stillwater WMA and Fallon NWR to conserve additional riparian and dune habitat. This alternative would emphasize the approximation of natural biological diversity with adjustments to enhance breeding habitat for waterbirds and fall and winter habitat for waterfowl, and would provide enhanced opportunities for wildlife observation and environmental -iieducation.

Under Alternative D, similar to Alternative C, legislation would be sought to expand Stillwater NWR's boundary to include much of Stillwater WMA and Fallon NWR to conserve additional riparian and sand dune habitat. Management would focus on restoring natural hydrologic patterns and other ecological processes. Visitor services management would focus on providing opportunities for wildlife observation and environmental education.

Alternative E (the preferred Alternative) closely follows the structure of Draft CCP EIS Alternative C, Option 2, as modified by comments received. Alternative E incorporates elements of all Alternatives presented in the Draft CCP EIS, but remains within the range of options analyzed in the Draft CCP EIS. In all alternatives, Anaho Island NWR would be managed much as it has in the past, with continued emphasis on protecting the American white pelicans and other colonial nesting birds that use the island.

The issues addressed in this Final CCP EIS include the potential effects of the alternatives on populations of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitat; priority public uses of the National

Wildlife Refuge System; other public uses; cultural resources; Newlands Irrigation Project operations; Naval Air Station-Fallon training; and the local economy. The major factors limiting achievement of the purposes of Stillwater NWR and Fallon NWR include an insufficient volume of quality water inflow, nonnative species (including livestock), and contaminants. The Final CCP EIS also addresses the compatibility of public use of the refuges.

3.4.B.3 FALLON NWR

3.4.B.3.1 Boundaries

Boundary Alternative B would result in no changes to the existing boundary of Fallon NWR (Map 3.3). The Bureau of Reclamation's primary withdrawal on lands within Fallon NWR would be rescinded and replaced with a primary withdrawal by the Service. The ecological

zones depicted in Map 3.3 show the general types of habitat that would be encompassed within this boundary alternative, as compared to their extent inside the existing boundaries. Ecological zones represented within Fallon NWR would primarily include The Carson River delta and the westernmost part of the sand dune system.

Guiding Principles, Objectives, and Strategies

The overall mission of Fallon NWR, under this alternative, would be to provide high quality springtime habitat for waterfowl and other wetland birds and year-round sanctuary habitat to the extent that water is available to support these habitat on Fallon NWR wetlands. A secondary mission would be to provide opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation during this season. Fallon NWR would be managed mostly under custodial maintenance, but, to the extent that drainwater and spill-water supplies allow, breeding habitat would be enhanced. Opportunities for waterfowl hunting would be provided on Fallon NWR when sufficient wetland habitat is available during the hunting season, and other uses including outdoor education and interpretation, wildlife observation, and wildlife photography would be facilitated.

3.4.B.3.1 Fish, Wildlife, and Vegetation Conservation

Guiding Principles

Management of fish, wildlife, and habitat would be guided by the following principles:

Habitat Conditions. This alternative would focus on providing for the habitat needs of waterfowl and other wetland waterbirds during the breeding season, to the extent that spill-water and drainwater allow. An assumption under this alternative is that the biotic integrity and environmental health would be enhanced by providing high quality habitat for breeding waterbirds. In so doing, habitat for all wetland wildlife species would be enhanced.

General Approach to Producing these Habitat Conditions. In developing annual water plans, the priority for water use would be to (1) provide high quality nesting and brooding habitat, (2) provide high quality feeding and resting habitat for waterfowl and other waterbirds during the spring migration, and (3) flush salts from wetlands.
Habitat management would focus on the management tools that would most effectively produce the habitat conditions to meet the particular needs of the species or species' group of interest. Water management and prescribed burning would be the primary management tools. Other tools

would include controlled livestock grazing, mechanical treatments, and herbicides.

Compatibility. Under this alternative, compatibility determinations would evaluate the potential effects of public uses on waterbird nest success and production, waterbird behavior during the breeding season and during fall and spring migrations and winter. Given the purposes of Fallon NWR and other provisions of the executive order establishing the refuge (an emphasis on minimizing human disturbance), attempts would be made to proactively manage human

disturbance in a way that avoids future compatibility problems, minimizing the extent to which changes have to be made to public use in response to problems.

Monitoring. Recognizing the importance of a sound monitoring program in a successful management program, increased emphasis would be placed on monitoring the status and trends of fish, wildlife, and plant populations and their habitat on each refuge (Refuge System Administration Act, Sec. 5(3)(N)). Priority in the monitoring program would be given to tracking long-term wetland habitat acreage, and long-term waterfowl and shorebird data sets.

Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Goal A: Provide high quality sanctuary and breeding habitat for migratory birds.
Subgoal A.a: Provide wetland habitat conditions that are generally beneficial to waterfowl and other wetland wildlife during spring and early summer during years when spill-water reaches the Carson River delta.

Objective A.a.1: Sustain a long-term average of 500 acres of wetland habitat at the Carson River delta, which would be maintained through an average, spill-year spring peak acreage of about 2,000 acres, occurring on average one of every four years.

Basis of Objective: Maintaining a long-term average of 500 acres of wetland habitat, at the Carson River delta portion of Fallon NWR, would contribute toward the target of 14,000 acres for Stillwater NWR and [former, under this alternative] Stillwater WMA, as this part of Fallon NWR is within the Stillwater WMA. The objective also generally contributes toward goals and objectives of the Intermountain West Joint Venture Plan (Intermountain West Joint Venture 1995), as well as the Nevada Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Plan (Partners in Flight), and U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, Intermountain West Region (Oring and Neel 2000).

Strategies to Achieve Objective: Wetland habitat on Fallon NWR primarily results from precautionary releases and spills from Lahontan Reservoir, and this would continue under this alternative. Depending on spill intensity and duration, it would be possible to retain spill water by closing structures in a recently restored levee separating the Carson River delta wetlands from the Carson Sink. To minimize damage to this levee, structures would remain open during high intensity flows. As flow intensity decreased towards the end of the precautionary release or spill, structures would be closed to retain remaining water.
High evaporation rates occurring through summer months would rapidly deplete wetland habitat acreage, but this strategy should provide up to 3,000 acres of spring migration and breeding habitat in spill years. Priorities for water management at Fallon NWR would be to (1) provide high quality nesting and brooding habitat and (2) provide high quality feeding and resting habitat for waterfowl and other waterbirds during the spring migration. The Service would explore ways to increase the amount of water flowing into Fallon NWR. For example, input would be provided into the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's study of the Fallon flood-abatement study and would seek to participate in the development of any subsequent plans based on the study

Monitoring Elements: Use of remote sensing to monitor annual spring acreage of wetland habitat.

Objective A.a.2: On a broad scale, enhance and maintain nesting, brooding, feeding, and resting habitat.

Basis of Objectives: This objective would generally support Goal A of Fallon NWR, by maintaining quality breeding habitat in Carson River delta wet meadow habitat, for a range of waterfowl and other waterbird species and would generally support habitat objectives outlined in the Intermountain West Joint Venture Plan. A numeric objective is not possible because the Service is not in control of timing, volume, duration, or frequency of water inflow.

Strategies to Achieve Objectives: The primary strategy would be to regulate water flows during spills and precautionary releases to minimize nest flooding to maintain brood habitat into early summer months. This would be accomplished through water management strategies identified in Objective A.a.2, but enhanced through eliminate livestock grazing for all but specific habitat management purposes. Unrestricted livestock grazing on the Carson River delta has reduced vegetative structural characteristics, reduced plant species diversity, and facilitated spread of invasive vegetative species (unpublished data on file at Stillwater NWR), which decreases nest site suitability for waterfowl. However, livestock grazing could be used under management prescription, to produce quality foraging and breeding habitat for shorebirds, by opening up areas with dense residual vegetation and providing lightly vegetated uplands for shorebird breeding colony establishment. Livestock grazing would be one tool available for this purpose while controlled burning, mechanical treatment, herbicide application, and release of saltcedar beetles would also be considered.

Monitoring Elements: Analysis of aerial photographs or satellite imagery would be used to determine the extent and relative percentage of wet meadow habitat within the Carson River delta. Additionally, livestock grazing exclosures would continue to be monitored to determine changes in vegetative structure, diversity, and invasive species encroachment.

Objective A.a.3: Provide a range of water conditions throughout the Carson River delta to the Carson Sink, from freshwater areas (less than 1,000 milligrams per liter (mg/L) total dissolved solids to areas of highly saline alkali playa in the Carson Sink (e.g., up to 50,000 mg/L or more)).

Basis of Objectives: Different plant and animal communities tend to form within a specific range of water conditions. Providing a wide range of these conditions would maximize biological diversity and species richness.

Strategies to Achieve Objectives: Because methods to store water distributed to Fallon NWR during precautionary releases and spills are not available, water conditions would primarily be controlled through the structure releasing water from the Carson River delta to the Carson Sink.
Water would be allowed to flow to the Carson Sink unregulated during high intensity portions of the precautionary release (when Carson River flows exceed 800 cfs) which would flush surface salts out to the Carson Sink. Salt removal would tend to freshen the system, which would allow plant species with low salinity tolerance to germinate in the wetlands. By closing the outflow structure when flow intensity decreases, remaining water would be retained and salinity would increase as evapotranspiration began to remove water during early summer months. Therefore, salinity ranges would be regulated by a combination of flow intensity during precautionary releases and spills (with salinity generally increasing with distance from the Carson River), and season as remaining water evaporates during summer.

Monitoring Elements: TDS monitoring of Carson River inflows to the Carson River delta and periodic monitoring at different points along the delta to the Carson Sink when Fallon NWR is hydrated.

Objective A.a.4: Minimize the amount of contaminants entering the Carson River delta and reduce mercury levels in wetland sediments to less than 1.5 parts ppm.

Basis of Objectives: Contaminants have the potential to impair the Service's ability to achieve refuge goals and purposes.

Strategies to Achieve Objectives: Strategies to achieve this objective would be similar to those described for Stillwater NWR. Through coordination with TCID, steps would be taken to ensure that water entering the refuge does not contain herbicides and other pesticides detrimental to aquatic life and other wildlife. Through

cooperation with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Ecological Services office of the Fish and Wildlife Service in Reno, the most appropriate means to reduce mercury concentrations and avoid any increased distribution of mercury contamination would be determined. With the recognition that few options exist for managing water at Fallon NWR, the Service would work with Bureau of Reclamation, TCID, and EPA to identify and explore options of spilling water from Lahontan Reservoir in a way that would minimize transport of mercury from Lahontan Reservoir.

Monitoring Elements: Coordinate with the Ecological Service office of the Fish and Wildlife Service to periodically assess mercury loading at designated sites.

Subgoal A.b: In the wetland habitat that is available during the breeding season, maximize nesting success and production of waterfowl and other waterbirds.

Objective A.b.1: Within wet meadow and adjacent upland habitat, enhance and maintain dense nesting cover for mallards, green-winged teal, gadwall, and other waterfowl in areas close to brooding habitat.

Basis of Objective: Waterfowl nesting studies have repeatedly shown that higher nest success in dabbling ducks is associated with dense nesting cover.

Strategies to Achieve Objectives: In years where spill water reaches the Carson River delta, a mix of dry and hydrated wet meadow sites would be maintained primarily through water level control described in Objective A.a.1. Other methods to increase quality of dense nesting cover for waterfowl include prescribed burning and exclusion of livestock grazing, except on a limited basis to reduce residual plant material (see objective A.a.1). Cattle grazing on Fallon NWR would be reduced from current levels to desired levels identified in this alternative over a period of three years (a maximum of 500-1,000 AUMs for both Fallon NWR and Stillwater NWR).

Monitoring Elements: Waterfowl brood counts would be used as an index of habitat availability.

Objective A.b.2: Provide high quality nesting and brood rearing habitat for shorebirds, especially American avocets (targeting 1,500 pairs, combined with Stillwater NWR, in spill years), and snowy plovers (to contribute significantly to the Statewide target of 900 adults; targets identified in the Nevada Partners in Flight Plan).

Basis of Objectives: The Carson River delta and other wetlands in the Lahontan Valley are components of the Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Network, which stresses the importance of contributing to the international effort to conserve shorebird populations. The Lahontan Valley wetlands provide important breeding habitat for American avocets and snowy plovers (a species of special concern), which are key species identified in the Nevada Partners in Flight Plan. Providing high quality habitat for shorebirds would also contribute toward accomplishing goals and objectives in the U.S. Shorebird Management Plan.

Strategies to Achieve Objective: To the extent that spill water reaches the Carson River delta and water management strategies prescribed under Objective A.a.1 were implemented, American avocets and other shorebirds would be provided shallowly-flooded wet meadows throughout the Carson River delta, and snowy plovers would be provided flooded alkaline playa in the Carson Sink. This would contribute to the Nevada Partners in Flight Plan during spill years by providing at least one flooded alkaline playa. The nesting habitat needs of snowy plovers would be studied, and periodic censuses would be coordinated with other agencies and groups involved in snowy plover recovery efforts. Predation of chicks and eggs would be monitored, and remedial action would be taken if predation levels exceed 50 percent (Nevada Partners in Flight Plan). Remediation strategies are defined in objective A.b.3.

Monitoring Elements: Coordinate a shorebird breeding population survey with other agencies (Nevada Partners in Flight Plan). Annually accomplish snowy plover and American avocet breeding pair survey on Fallon NWR.

Objective A.b.3: Minimize the effects of nest depredation on nesting success of waterfowl, shorebirds, and other waterbirds.

Basis of Objectives: Upland nesting waterfowl and shorebirds, are a primary management focus under this alternative. Apparent increases in natural predator populations (primarily common ravens) may have surpassed levels commonly associated with the Carson River delta.

Strategies to Achieve Objectives: A predator control program would be designed and implemented to enhance nest success and production of waterfowl, shorebirds, and other waterbirds. The main target species would be common ravens, although other nest predators could be included. Methods could include trapping, shooting, and in extreme cases, poisoning.

Monitoring Elements: In years when the Carson River delta wetlands are flooded, waterfowl breeding pair numbers would be compared with waterfowl brood counts to estimate relative nest success. Common ravens would be censused to determine trends in abundance.

Subgoal A.d: Ensure that recreational and other uses do not adversely impact nesting waterbirds, and that opportunities for priority wildlife-dependent and other uses are managed to minimize impacts to waterbirds and other wildlife during the remainder of the year.

Objective A.c.1: Minimize the adverse effects of disturbance to waterbirds during the nesting and brooding seasons, while still providing opportunities for environmental education, wildlife observation, and other wildlife-dependent recreational uses.

Basis of Objectives: Many waterbird species are particularly sensitive to disturbance during the breeding season and select nest sites that are remote and relatively disturbance free. Human activities (whether public use, researcr, or staff related) tend to compound natural levels of disturbance to which these species have adapted.

Strategies to Achieve Objectives: Waterbird disturbance would be minimized during the breeding season by limiting visitor use to roads and established parking areas. Research and monitoring activities would be limited to those activities essential to achieving objectives for Fallon NWR, for example, data collection to determine whether objectives under Goal A are being met. Other activities conducted by refuge staff would include prescribed habitat management procedures to achieve habitat objectives and operation of the water control structure to facilitate water distribution between the Carson River delta and the Carson Sink. Habitat Management prescriptions would only be implemented after the breeding season.

Monitoring Elements: Public use monitoring, law enforcement to ensure compliance.

Objective A.c.2: Provide secure feeding and resting habitat for waterfowl and other waterbirds during the hunting season when wetland habitat is available during the hunting season.

Basis of Objective: The purposes of the refuge call for Fallon NWR to be managed, at least in part, as a sanctuary. Therefore, when sufficient water exists in Fallon NWR to provide hunting opportunities, part of the refuge must be closed to hunting to maintain consistency with refuge purposes.

Strategies to Achieve Objective: Waterfowl hunting would be allowed on up to 40% of Fallon NWR during the waterfowl hunting season with the remaining 60% to be retained as sanctuary for fall migratory waterbirds. If less than 500 acres of wetland habitat is available during the hunting season, the refuge would be closed to hunting.

Monitoring Elements: Proportion of wetland habitat that is in the hunted and non hunted areas.

Goal B: Restore and maintain natural biological diversity.

Under Alternative B, it would be assumed that the achieving of subgoals and objectives under Goal A would generally address the goal to restore and maintain natural biological diversity in the Carson River delta wetlands. The following objective would address the biological diversity in the sand dune area, with an emphasis on native species richness.

Objective B.1: Restore, approximate, and maintain the natural distribution and abundance of upland plant communities and habitat types that would exist naturally, according to location, throughout upland portions of the refuge.

Basis of Objectives: Sand dunes located on Fallon NWR add to the overall natural biological diversity of the refuge and represent a unique component of the Great Basin ecosystem. This sand dune system is currently subject to invasive species encroachment (primarily saltcedar), livestock grazing, and off-road vehicle use.

Strategies to Achieve Objectives: Integrity of the sand dune system would primarily be accomplished through a combination of restricting access and controlling invasive species encroachment. Off-road-vehicle use would be eliminated through periodic law enforcement patrols and public use impacts would be minimized to the extent that strategies outlined under Objective A.c.1 were achieved. Invasive species encroachment would be controlled to the extent that funding could be secured to eliminate existing saltcedar stands. Periodic monitoring of invasive species would be used to ensure that other invasive species did not become established.
Additionally, a study design would be considered to determine the importance of Carson River sand deposition as a process contributing to regeneration and movement of the sand dune system. As part of this effort, other agencies such as the U.S. Geological Survey would be considered cooperators.

Monitoring Elements: A combination of public use monitoring strategies, remote sensing to identify saltcedar distribution, and periodic cruising to determine whether other invasive species have become established would be used. A study to determine sand deposition rates and related alluvial process would be conducted to the extent that funding and outside agency expertise could be obtained.

3.4.B.3.2.2 Public Use Management

Guiding principles would be similar to those for Stillwater NWR under this Alternative, except that much more emphasis would be placed on minimizing human activity impacts on Fallon NWR, given the purposes of the refuge.

Goal C: Provide opportunities for environmental education and wildlife-dependent recreation that are compatible with refuge purposes and the Refuge System mission.

Subgoal C.a: Provide opportunities for high quality hunting experiences.

Objective C.a.1: Provide hunting opportunities when sufficient water is available during fall at Fallon NWR, where hunters would have a reasonable chance of success.

Basis of Objective: Hunting has been identified as a primary, wildlife-dependent recreational activity under the Refuge System Administration Act, and while the Fallon NWR establishing authority states that this area will be maintained as a sanctuary and breeding habitat for migratory birds, up to 40% of the area can be opened to waterfowl hunting during the established waterfowl hunting season.

Strategies to Achieve Objective: In years when adequate wetland habitat exist during fall (at least 500 acres), up to 40% of Fallon NWR would be opened to waterfowl hunting. The area available for hunting generally encompasses the southwest corner of the refuge (Map 3.4) and consists of all lands located south of the levee separating the Carson River delta wetlands from the Carson Sink. All lands north of this levee would be maintained as sanctuary in all years. All regulations specific to Stillwater NWR (Objective C.a.1) would also apply to Fallon NWR.

Monitoring Elements: Numbers of hunters, feedback on the quality of the hunting experience.

Objective C.a.2: Ensure that hunting experiences are safe**.**

Basis of Objective: Beyond being a vital consideration in the management of any public use, the Refuge System Administration Act requires that wildlife-dependent recreation be allowed only to the extent that it is consistent with public safety.

Strategies to Achieve Objective: If hunter densities approach unsafe levels, hunter density thresholds may be established. Otherwise, thresholds would not be established.

Monitoring Elements: Number and types of reported and observed injuries per hunting season, observations by staff of unsafe practices and law enforcement violations.

Subgoal C.b: Provide opportunities for an experience in environmental education that generally meets the needs of a wide range of users.

Objective C.b.1: Provide opportunities and resources for environmental study on Fallon NWR.

Basis of Objective: Opportunities to learn more about sand dune development, functioning of Great Basin riverine systems, and the culture of the northern Paiute people are available at Fallon NWR. This allows for an educational opportunity that encompasses unique components of the Great Basin ecosystem, some of which are not found on Stillwater NWR.

Strategies to Achieve Objective: Considering that no development of environmental education facilities would be constructed at Fallon NWR, the primary strategy to achieve this objective would be to inform visiting educators that this opportunity exists and to make arrangements when a tour group wishes to observe components unique to Fallon NWR. Because no effort would be made to improve access to this area, visits would be dependent on condition of roads and availability of refuge personnel to lead tour groups. To the extent that tour groups desired this educational opportunity, facilities would be considered in future public use step down management plans.

Monitoring Elements: Number of groups receiving tours to Fallon NWR.

Subgoal C.c: Provide opportunities for wildlife viewing and photography.

Objective C.c.1: Provide viewing and photography opportunities through portions of the distinctive habitat of Fallon NWR.

Basis of Objective: The Refuge System Administration Act identified wildlife viewing and photography as wildlife-dependent recreational uses are to be facilitated in the Refuge System, and the Act strongly encourages the Service to provide opportunities for these uses. By providing the public with opportunities to view and photograph wildlife, plants, and wildlands; public awareness, understanding, and appreciation of ecosystem function and the benefits of ecosystem conservation to fish, wildlife, and people will increase.

Strategies to Achieve Objective: Similar to Objective C.b, no additional facilities or roads would be developed at Fallon NWR to fulfill this objective. However, Fallon NWR would provide a unique opportunity for individuals desiring a more primitive wildlife observation and photography experience in a setting with few other individuals present. The road currently accessing Fallon NWR would remain open but would be listed as a primitive road in refuge maps. As with Stillwater NWR, visitors would be restricted to vehicles except at designated pullouts and a primitive parking area located at Battleground Point. No additional construction would be undertaken. However, designated areas would be identified on the refuge brochure. Parameters associated with wildlife education and photography for Stillwater NWR (Objective C.c.1) would apply to Fallon NWR.

Monitoring Elements: Monitoring elements for this objective will primarily be provided to the extent that feedback is received from refuge visitors. Visitation is not anticipated to be at a level which would justify public use monitoring at Fallon NWR. If public feedback suggests that monitoring of Fallon NWR is warranted, monitoring procedures will be incorporated into the Public Use monitoring program.

Subgoal C.d: Encourage and provide opportunities for research by other agencies (e.g., U.S. Geological Survey, Agricultural Research Service), universities, and other institutions, especially as they relate to the management goals and objectives of Fallon NWR.

Objective C.d.1: Foster relationships with government agencies, conservation groups, and

institutions of higher education by providing research opportunities and by developing cooperative working programs.

Basis of Objective: While not a stated purpose of Fallon NWR, outside research would be a key element to understanding ecological processes such as sand dune formation and movement; contaminants impacts on plants, fish and wildlife; and cultural resource implications on this refuge.
Stillwater NWR Complex CCP and Boundary Revision Chapter 3 - Alternatives
Final EIS C h . 3 P g . 1 0 4 Alternative B

Strategies to Achieve Objective: At present, this objective would be accomplished through coordination with research related agencies for the identified research needs suggested above. To the extent that these information needs were filled, other proposals submitted by outside agencies would be considered, with priority given to proposals which most closely reflect management objectives outlined under this alternative and which contribute to enhancing, protecting, use, preserving, and managing of native wildlife populations and their habitat in their natural diversity (4 RM 6).

Monitoring Elements: Ongoing and completed research projects would be counted along with the number of