REVIEW AND APPROVALS

UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE AND FISH REFUGE

McGregor District
McGregor, Iowa

ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT

January 1996 - December 1996

3/30/99

Acting District Manager Date

Refuge Manager Date

Refuge Supervisor Review Date

Regional Office Approval Date

INTRODUCTION

1. Location

The McGregor District is one of four districts comprising the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. The District Office is located at McGregor, Iowa with Refuge Headquarters at Winona, Minnesota. This District contains parts of Houston County, Minnesota (8,651 acres); Grant, Crawford, and Vernon Counties, Wisconsin (37,495 acres); Dubuque, Clayton, and Allamakee Counties, Iowa (32,038 acres) for a total of 78,184 acres. The District covers navigation Pools 9, 10 and 11 and is 97 river miles long, extending from Dubuque, Iowa to Genoa, Wisconsin. Adjoining or nearby public land areas are: 1) Grant River Public Use Area, Potosi, Wisconsin; 2) Nelson Dewey State Park, Cassville, Wisconsin; 3) Pikes Peak State Park, McGregor, Iowa; 4) Wyalusing State Park, Wyalusing, Wisconsin; 5) Effigy Mounds National Monument, McGregor, Iowa; 6) Yellow River State Forest, Harpers Ferry, Iowa; 7) Blackhawk Park, Victory, Wisconsin; 8) Genoa National Fish Hatchery, Genoa, Wisconsin; 9) Fish Farm Mounds State Park Preserve, New Albin, Iowa, and several smaller access areas.

2. Topography

The Refuge lies within the Mississippi River Valley which is two to five miles wide and cradled between forested bluffs, rising up to 500 feet above the River. The elevation of the valley is approximately 600 feet msl.

3. Points of Interest

The McGregor District contains no large cities, but small river towns flank the river. Commercial fishing, clamming, and furbearer trapping provide income for some residents along the Refuge. Sport fishing is the most popular recreational activity, occurring every day of the year. Waterfowl hunters may travel over 200 miles to participate in opening day hunts on the Refuge. As a migration corridor, the Mississippi River valley may be unsurpassed in significance.

4. Physical Facilities

The McGregor District Office/Visitor Contact Station (DO/VCS) completed in July, 1986 is located in McGregor, Iowa. Satellite stations are located at Cassville, Wisconsin, and Lansing, Iowa. Warehouse/storage areas are located at Cassville and Genoa, Wisconsin, and McGregor and Lansing, Iowa.

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HIGHLIGHTS

Over 260 bald eagles concentrate on Cassville, Wisconsin river front (Section 1.a.).

Highest spring mallard numbers in the last 11 years (Section 1.a.).

Staff off to Nestor One, Churchill, Manitoba, and Western Fires (Section 1.a.& 3.f.).

Four and one-half million waterfowl-use days recorded during the fall migration (Section 1.a.).

All time high production of eagle chicks (58), including eight sets of triplets (Section 1.a.).

Great blue heron nesting populations decline significantly (Section 1.a.).

Renowned Moist Soil Biologist Leigh Fredrickson visits District Units (Section 3.b.).

Guttenberg Ponds Moist Soil Unit dike breaches (Section 3.b.).

District starts its first Forestry Management Unit (Section 3.d.).

The Pool 11 Islands and the Ambro Slough EMP projects take shape (Section 3.h.).

Island 189 South spoils issue ends up in court (Section 3.h.).

Concentrated trapping law enforcement in Pool 9 stirs the pot (Section 6.a.).

Two wildlife observation decks funded (Section 7.a.).

Waterfowl hunting success 1.57 ducks per hunter per day (Section 7.c.).

Trapping permits increase by 50 percent (Section 7.d.).

Fall canvasback duck-use days 3,092,415, tundra swans-use days 133,050 (Section 9.b.).

Ross' goose makes rare appearance (Section 9.b.).

1. MONITORING AND STUDIES

1.a. Surveys and Censuses

Results of the 1995 Mid-December Goose Survey were consolidated and sent to Guy Zenner of Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) as requested on January 16. A total of 12 Canada geese was observed on the District. In addition, 602 common mergansers and 560 mallards were noted.

On January 17, Pool 11 eagle survey information was provided to Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Bureau of Endangered Resources, Cassville Department of Tourism, and WDNR Nelson Dewey State Park personnel upon their request. The information was also incorporated into Cassville, Wisconsin's Bald Eagle Days publicity campaign.

Several eagle surveys were conducted during January. Biological Technician (BT) Dulik conducted a Pool 9 eagle survey on January 9. A total of 283 birds was observed on the pool. Seventy of the birds were at the Dairyland Power Plant. During the Mid-Winter Goose Survey, conducted on January 16, a total of 196 adult bald eagles and 103 immature eagles was observed. ROS Male conducted a Pool 11 eagle survey on January 23 with phenomenal results. Over 260 eagles were observed

The last waterfowl survey point counts of the season were conducted within the District on November 27. Main channel ice started forming on November 15, and by this last survey, few birds remained.

A total of 587 bald eagles was observed within the District during a survey conducted on December 19. The count included 467 adult eagles and 120 immature. A concentration of 173 birds was noted below Lock and Dam 8 at Genoa, Wisconsin. Another buildup of 120 eagles was also noted below Lock and Dam 9. Twenty-six eagles were counted in one tree at this location. Waterfowl populations within the District were also surveyed on December 19. More than ninety-five percent of the District's waters were frozen. A total of 135 mallards and 7 common mergansers was observed.

Eagle Nesting Activity and Production Surveys:
On March 30, ROS Male checked six previously active eagle territories in Pool 11 for nest activity. Four of the nesting territories were found to be active with an incubating adult on each nest. One additional territory had both adults present within the nest tree, but not on the nest bowl. The Hauk Pond nest, which was blown out of the tree last year, had no eagle activity in the area.

BT Dulik completed the Pool 9 Eagle Nesting Activity Survey on April 25. Twenty-five nests were located, including 7 new nests of which 5 were new territories. The Pool 10 survey was completed by April 30. Three new eagle nests, including one new territory, were discovered in Pool 10 for a total of 6 nesting territories. The Pool 11 Eagle Nesting Activity Survey was completed by April 11, and all six active eagle nests within Pool 11 were checked periodically during the month. All nests remained active and chicks were visible at several locations by the end of April.

ROS Male conducted a preliminary eagle nest production count for Pool 11 on May 13. Of the six originally active nests, one triplet, three doubles, and two single chicks were observed. With the exception of one nest, which still had undeveloped young, all chicks were fully feathered and on the edge of their nest bowls. The Eagle Production Survey was completed on June 28. There were 36 active nests on the District this year, eight of them being new territories. All 36 initially active nests were checked for production. A total of 58 chicks reached fledgling stage in 29 nests, compared to 45 young produced in 1995 and 41 in 1994. Eight of the nests produced triplets. Two active nests were blown down during the nesting season, all of the chicks were killed. One additional nest was blown down just after the chicks were fledged. Pool 9 had the highest activity and production, with 25 active nests producing 37 chicks.

Two new bald eagle nests were discovered on the District on November 15. Both nests appeared to have been active during the previous nesting season. One of the new nests, discovered by BT Dulik, was located across the main channel from the Interstate Power Plant in Pool 9. The second nest was discovered by ADM Male in the John Deere Marsh Area in Pool 11. This nest is the only active nest in lower Pool 11. With these two new additions, the District total for active territories stands at 38.

Eagle production reaches a new district high of 58 chicks.

Colonial Nesting Bird Census:
The activity phase of the Colonial Nesting Bird Census was completed by May 2. Of the District's seven active rookeries, four have shown declines in the number of nesting great blue herons. Two rookeries have shown increases in the number of active great blue heron nests, one rookery exhibiting a significant gain. The most dramatic declines occurred within the Butler Lake Rookery, the District's most active rookery, growing steadily since 1978. Both the number of active great blue heron nests and the number of active great egret nests have declined. A total of 651 active great blue heron nests was counted in 1996 compared to 901 in 1995, and 1,007 in 1994. Great egret numbers have also decreased from 80 active nests in 1995 to 27 active nests in 1996. Double-crested cormorant nests have increased from 282 active nests in 1995 to 364 active nests in 1996. District-wide, active great blue heron nests have declined from 2,282 active nests in 1995 to 1,787 active nests in 1996. While this may just be a bump in the nesting population dynamics of great blue herons, the decline may represent a trend that may exceed beyond the recorded two-year decline. The number of active nests has not been this low since 1983. A news release was issued to local newspapers on May 20 regarding the results and survey methodology of the Colonial Nesting Bird Census.

The Butler Lake rookery was selected for the production survey count. A total of 75 great blue heron nests was surveyed with young. The average number of young per nest was 1.76. The total great blue heron production for the McGregor District was estimated at 3,216. Cormorant production was calculated at 2.25 young per nest based on a sample size of 39 nests with young, for an estimated 819 cormorants raised on the District. Productivity estimates were not calculated for great egrets due to their later nesting cycles. Specific rookery information is as follows:

Table 1. Summary of 1996 Colonial Nesting Bird Survey, McGregor District

GBH-great blue heron, GE-great egret, DCC-double-crested cormorant

Rookery	GBH Nest Trees	Active GBH Nests	Average Yng/Nest	Est. GBH Production	GE Nests	DCC Nests
Dairyland Power	135	205		369		
DeSoto	Abandoned					
Lansing Dike	124	393		707		
Butler Lake	348	651	1.8	1,172	27	364
Methodist Lake E	39	109		196		
Methodist Lake W*	Abandoned					
Effigy	89	214		385		
Vogt Lake*	Abandoned					
Brinkmans West	31	147		265		
Brinkmans East	8	8		14		
Pig Island	30	60		108		
Dago Slough	Abandoned					
Rosebrook	Abandoned					
TOTALS	804	1787	1.8	3216**	27	364

* Rookery was abandoned in 1995 as well

** The production coefficient used is 1.8, the number for the Butler Lake Rookery production survey.

1.b. Studies and Investigations

Christine Custer, NBS, conducted two ongoing research projects on the District during 1996: "Locations and Characteristics of Feeding Habitat of Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets from the Lansing Dike and Butler Lake Rookeries", and "Prey Capture Rates of Feeding Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets in Pools 5-9 of the Upper Mississippi River".

On February 7, ROS Maycroft and BT Dulik attended an interagency meeting in La Crosse, Wisconsin. The meeting covered summaries of several research projects that have been on-going on the refuge, including invertebrate sampling and the great blue heron flight following study. The great blue heron flight following study was being conducted by the NBS. Four rookeries on the Refuge were studied this year, two of them on the McGregor District-Lansing Dike Rookery and Butler Lake Rookery, both in Pool 9. The Lansing Dike Rookery was flown 10 times during the nesting season. There was only one boating disturbance documented during those 10 flights. The disturbance rate was much higher on the Butler Lake Rookery. There were 18 flights that took place, with disturbances documented during 12 of the flights. During 10 of the 12 flights where disturbances took place, there were multiple disturbances.

2. HABITAT RESTORATION

2.a. Wetland Restoration (See 5.b.)

2.b. Upland Restoration

On October 31, a grassland restoration project to benefit nongame grassland birds was submitted to Winona for inclusion in the Refuge Nongame Bird Conservation Projects list. The project site involves nine small abandoned farm fields in the Dago Slough Closed Area of Pool 11. The goal of the project is to restore the native grass and forb community, thus recreating a natural grassland for nongame birds.

3. HABITAT MANAGEMENT

3.b. Moist Soil Management

ROS Male and DM Mullen toured potential moist soil project sites with Refuge Biologist Nelson on May 2. The purpose of the tour was to familiarize Nelson with the sites prior to the arrival of Leigh Fredrickson. Fredrickson, a renowned moist soil expert, was planning on visiting four sites within the District during his Refuge-wide tour. Recommendations from Fredrickson should be helpful while developing ideas for the new units.

Pool 11
DM Mullen and ROS Male met with IDNR representatives to present a concept plan for the Turkey River Moist Soil Units. Iowa was excited about the project and willing to participate in the initial discussions. In addition to the moist soil units, a possible fisheries component was talked about. There was a possibility that we may be able to rank the fisheries project as a viable EMP project; however, the future of new EMP projects remained questionable.

Guttenberg Ponds Moist Soil Units:
On January 25, DM Mullen, ROS Male, and IDNR representatives discussed the establishment of an inviolate Closed Area around the Guttenburg

Ponds Moist Soil Units. Iowa agreed with the District's position on closing these areas to prevent human intrusion. Plans were made to sign the area in the spring.

ROS Male discovered a breach in the southern dike of Area 2 within the Guttenberg Moist Soil Units on May 30. The breach was 25 feet wide and 7 feet deep. EMP Coordinator Beseke was notified. In addition, a small cave-in occurred on the western dike of Area 2, that caused problems for vehicle traffic. The District had not officially accepted Stage II of the EMP project, and repair responsibility had to be determined.

On October 8, ROS Male, EMP Coordinator Beseke, and representatives from the Corps, IDNR, and the contractor met on site at the Guttenberg Ponds Moist Soil Units for a pre-final inspection. Several minor problems were noted with the water control structures, including binding a main line valve and a leaking seal on the "Y" gate. The contractor corrected the problems by month's end. Another problem was discovered soon after, not associated with the contractor's work. A ten-inch cross pipe connecting the two moist soil cells had to be plugged before units were operational. Refuge staff completed this work as soon as it was possible. ADM Male met with the contractor again on December 10. This was the second meeting after the final inspection to correct problems with the slide gates. One gate was still not functioning as designed. The contractor tried for the third time to get it right. MW Brown and ADM Male also inspected the newly constructed rock lined emergency spillway on December 10. The spillway was made in the dike located along the south edge of the west unit, and it had been breached during the May flood . The new design should allow for release of spring flood waters without breaching the dike.

EMP Inspector General Beseke gives it one last try before it becomes ours during the pre-final inspection of the Guttenberg Pond Moist Soil Units.

John Deere Marsh:
On February 14, ROS Male and DM Mullen met with representatives from the Mathy Construction Company at the John Deere Marsh. Mathy was interested in creating an off-loading ramp utilizing the Refuge's existing earthen dam and rock jetty for access to the main channel. They currently operate a rock quarry less than two miles away. Normally there would not be much discussion, except several ways to say "NO"; however, this proposal could have some long term benefits in exchange for a season or two of inconveniences. The dike was leaking and in need of repair. It was also one in which we would like to develop a crushed stone path for bikes and pedestrian. The District was waiting for Mathy's formal written request to examine the benefits.

On February 26, the John Deere Marsh water control stop-log structure was opened to allow rising water levels to inundate the marsh. We had intended to regulate water levels between 8 and 12 inches during the spring for migrants. This marsh is usually the first location within the District that spring migrants appear. This year, however, thick ice within the stop-log structure prevented water from inundating the 38-acre wetland. When the ice finally did melt on March 20, river stages were too low to flood the marsh. Only 1,085 duck-use days were recorded within the unit during the month of March. Water began flowing into the marsh through the stop-log structure due to high river stages at the end of April. When sufficient water levels were reached within the unit for summer water retention, the stop-log structure was closed. A total of 3,210 duck-use days and 6,600 coot-use days was recorded in April. On May 10, the stop-logs within the water control structure were reseated and one-inch tar plugs were placed into the log edges to seal the structure for the summer. Water levels within the marsh remained adequate until evaporation exceeded precipitation during mid-August.

Water levels at the John Deere Water Control Marsh increased from 1.20 feet at the beginning of October, to 2.40 by month's end. The cause of this increase was due to hydraulic dredging into an adjacent non-Refuge cell by the John Deere Company. The intake channel, which supplies water to the their power plant, had less than 16 inches of water at some locations. Plant managers feared that if the channel was not dredged, it would freeze to the bottom, shutting down the plant. Dredging was scheduled to be completed at the intake channel by November 10. Unfortunately, because of the timing of the rise in water levels, muskrat populations within the Refuge marsh were forced to reconstruct all of their lodges. Waterfowl numbers were low in the unit during October, probably due to the construction activities in the area.

3.d. Farming

On February 20, ROS Male contacted the RO and several refuges in an attempt to find a way to utilize revenues generated through the co-op farming program to improve existing units. The responses were not favorable, but DM Mullen looked into some "gray areas."

At the end of February, cooperative farmer Brandt was advised that the 12-acre parcel, known as Patzner's field near Potosi, Wisconsin, that he had been farming under the co-op farming program in 1995 would not be available this year. As a result of Brandt's row crop manipulation, afantastic black walnut stand emerged. The seedlings grew as much as five feet in their first year and now blanket the field. There are currently 383 trees averaging four feet in height. District staff

pruned sucker shoots off the trees during the spring, and one additional trimming will be necessary in the spring of 1997.

The District's first Forestry Management Site boasts over 383 black walnut trees.

On March 4, DM Mullen and ROS Male completed the Cooperative Farming Agreements for the Turkey River Bottoms near Guttenberg, Iowa. The agreements contained several changes from previous years, the most significant of which was that this will be the last year of the Cooperative Farming Program within these units. Four cooperative farmers had been farming a total of 336 acres. The 25 percent government share of crop left in the field since last fall for wildlife was made available to cooperators in April, after any chances of flooding, and the bulk of waterfowl migration was complete. With corn prices at $4.50 per bushel, there were some happy cooperative farmers in the District. On May 21, ROS Male and MW Brown installed new boundary signs and relocated others within the farming units to correspond with the newly surveyed boundary. Cooperative farmer Wachendorf was notified of this boundary change so that he could adjust his planting pattern to ensure that he did not infringe on adjacent farmers. On October 19, ADM Male met with co-op farmers Vogt and Wachendorf. Discussions involved share adjustments for additional small grain wildlife plantings and chopping restraints with the corn crop. By December 31, three of the four co-op farmers had finished harvesting the corn within their respective units. The remaining farmer had approximately 20 acres left standing. Yields were lower than usual, averaging 120 bushels of corn per acre. The lower yields were a result of unusually wet weather throughout the growing season.

3.e. Forest Management

On March 26, DM Mullen and ROS Maycroft attended the annual Corps Forestry Meeting in Bellevue, Iowa. GIS applications related to the stand mapping inventory data were topics of much discussion. Other topics included a recent clear-cut, several dredge spoil tree planting

projects, and a tree planting project at the Lansing Big Lake EMP project.

Permission was granted to National Forest Health Monitoring Program personnel to assess a Refuge stand of forest in Crawford County, Wisconsin. This annual visit is one of many conducted across Wisconsin to assess overall forest health.

3.f. Fire Management

On January 8, prescribed burn proposals for areas in Pool 11 were forwarded for approval.

On March 14, a wildfire was discovered at 1600 hours within the Turkey River Bottoms by ROS Male. Male responded to the fire by boat with a backpack sprayer and hand tools. The fire, which had nearly burned out, was completely extinguished by 1730 hours. The fire was believed to be the continued work of an arsonist who has targeted this same area over the last seven years. The burn consumed 47 acres of a monotypic stand of reed canary grass. Coincidentally, this same area had been scheduled for a fuel reduction burn this spring. A fire incident was completed and forwarded to Fire Coordinator Norm Brown.

On April 22, ROS Luebke, BT Dulik, and ROS Maycroft conducted the District's first prescribed burn near the Dairyland Power Plant in Genoa, Wisconsin. Approximately 10 acres of grassland were burned with the assistance of Refuge Manager Frietsche, MW McDonah, and the Genoa Fire Department. On April 24, ROS Male and ROS Luebke conducted an 11-acre prescribed burn on an abandoned farm field south of Potosi, Wisconsin. The primary objective of both burns was to maintain or reestablish open grassland. Photo points were established at the Potosi site, and vegetative growth was documented in the spring. Vegetative develo spment was delayed due to flooding over much of the area in the spring.

The first prescribed burn on the District in 17 years was conducted in the Patzner Field, in Lower Pool 11.

On May 13, ROS Luebke, ROS Maycroft, ROS Male, and BT Dulik participated in prescribed grassland burns on several units of the Driftless Area NWR. A total of 48 acres was burned in the course of two days.

On May 23, a letter was sent to the Cassville Volunteer Fire Department thanking them for their continued fire protection at the Cassville warehouse. Approximately 30 excess camouflage military outfits and 30 duffel bags were made available to them at their meeting to supplement the letter.

3.g. Pest Plant Control

Information was gathered during January for completion of the 1995 Pesticide Use Report.

Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*):
During the beginning of January, ROS Maycroft attended a two-day workshop on the biological control of purple loosestrife. Intensive monitoring techniques were discussed, and propagation supplies, purchased last fiscal year, were transferred to Shiawasee National Wildlife Refuge. District staff spoke with Craig Czarnecki of the Washington Office on January 29 about our current biological control program. General information was shared and a suggestion was made for the District to write an article for inclusion in the *Nuisance Species Digest*, published periodically. The District pursued this suggestion. Maycroft also spoke with Jeff Smith of the Apostle Island National Seashore in February about propagation and release procedures. On March 12, ROS Maycroft spoke with Jim Mattson, Shiawasee NWR, and Sherburne NWR to coordinate equipment needs for the biological control programs on the Refuges this season. Materials were ordered and a contractor was selected to construct approximately 120 additional sleeve cages to be distributed among the three Refuges. An on-site visit of the District's propagation program was scheduled for May 14. A request was made during April to Cornell University for the receipt of 1000 *Galerucella* beetles to augment the District's existing colony.

At the end of May, ROS Maycroft, Deb Quist, and MW Brown collected and potted 85 purple loosestrife plants in preparation for the rearing of the District's colony of overwintering *Galerucella* beetles, and the receipt of additional beetles from Cornell University. Due to the unusually cold spring temperatures and heavy rainfall, the beetle propagation did not swing into full gear until the first week of June. Survival rates of the District's over-wintered beetles was approximately 10 percent, well below expected. Similar survival rates were experienced by Cornell University and other propagation facilities. Cornell University sent 180 beetles in June, and an additional 500 beetles in July. ROS Maycroft also acquired approximately 1,000 *Hylobius* eggs at the end of June from Cornell University, and distributed the eggs among the Savanna and La Crosse Districts, and the Trempealeau NWR. During the 1996 growing season, both *Hylobius* and *Galerucella* beetles were used for the control of purple loosestrife. Volunteers Deb Quist and Lora Dittmer, along with District staff, made four releases of eggs/adults at four different sites on the refuge. Each of the four sites was permanently marked and monitored using the standardized forms from Cornell, and all sites were checked in the fall. All four sites revealed slight feeding damage, but an actual beetle sighting was made at only one site-a viable *Hylobius* larvae on a stem.

DM Mullen and BT Dulik conducted an on-site visit to Conway Lake in Pool 9 on March 15. Ideas were exchanged for a proposed EMP project. An EMP meeting was held on December 12 at the La Crosse WDNR offices. EMP Coordinator Beseke and DM Mullen attended.

On January 16, DM Mullen, ROS Luebke, and BT Dulik attended a meeting held by the WDNR to discuss a proposal to protect the Kettle Creek drainage basin in Pool 9, near Ferryville, Wisconsin. The entire Kettle Creek drainage basin was reviewed on January 22. In March, BT Dulik adjusted the stop-logs on the water control structure to divert flow from Kettle Creek directly to the River. In November, the water control structures diversion boards were positioned so that oxygen-rich water from Kettle Creek was being diverted into the winter fisheries unit.

On January 22, DM Mullen, ROS Luebke, and ROS Maycroft attended a watershed protection meeting at the La Crosse District Office. Topics of discussion included projects considered by the Districts, the RO's commitment to off-refuge watershed protection projects, and the role of the Area Watershed Biologist Tex Hawkins.

On February 6, the District drafted a memo to Jim Fisher expressing our concerns over proposed dredging and placement of several docks along the northeast shoreline of Bussey Lake.

On February 7, ROS Male, DM Mullen, and CM Fisher met with IDNR officials regarding an alternative to dredged material placement on Island 189 South, Pool 11. Male and Mullen had presented the new plan for developing the Turkey River Moist Soil Units to CM Fisher previously that day, and the plan called for strong partnership between the Service, the IDNR, and the Corps. This particular issue had escalated to an all out fight between IDNR and the Corps as to using the island site for spoiling. The Refuge's proposed alternative would allow spoiling on a previously used Refuge spoil site. This site would then be used as a beneficial use stockpile for the construction of low-level dikes associated with the Turkey River Moist Soil Units or other uses. ROS Male, DM Mullen, and CM Fisher attended another meeting with IDNR and the Corps on February 22 regarding the proposed beneficial use site. Mullen and Male presented the Refuge's objectives in allowing this site to be considered. The Corps then wanted a specific Refuge design for the creation of the moist soil units. This enabled a full analysis, given it was the only site that will not detrimentally affect the resource. In fact, it is a beneficial use site that will actually benefit the resource. ROS Maycroft visited the FSA office in Elkader, Iowa on March 28 to acquire aerial photos of the Turkey River Bottoms in preparation of surveying the area for the construction of the proposed moist soil units.

On March 15, BT Dulik responded to the Corps on a proposal to fill in a wetland at Lock and Dam 9, Lynxville, Wisconsin. The Corps had proposed filling the wetland on the Refuge in order to widen their access road to the dam. After Dulik and the Corps viewed the site, it was agreed that the wetland would not need to be filled in order to expand the road.

On April 3, ROS Luebke, Maycroft, and Male worked with representatives from the NRCS and the Rock Island ES Field Office to complete the topographical work in the Turkey River Bottoms. Elevations were gathered for two, 60 to 70-acre possible moist soil unit sites. The Rock Island ES Field Office agreed to analyze the data and develop a topographical schematic for the area.

On April 15, ROS Male attended a post-disposal on-site meeting dealing with lower Pool 11 dredge sites. Other attendees included representatives from the Corps, IDNR, WDNR, and the Rock Island ES Field Office. The Corps agreed to plant willows between the dredge spoil discharge sites along Ball's Island. Without additional bank stabilization, the current continues to transport sand away from the beach. The first attempt at planting willow was thwarted by ambitious beavers and campers looking for hot dog sticks. This time larger stock will be planted in greater concentrations. If this technique is not successful, rock groins will be employed. Wing dam rehabilitation sites were also visited to assess any Refuge resource problems. During May, suggestions and comments were forwarded to Kevin Griggs of the Corps on the Hurricane Island Material Placement Site Erosion Control Management Plan within Pool 11. Refuge concerns dealt primarily with the use of large enough plant stock and the random placement of willow to create vegetated groins. It is hoped that these plantings will stop the transport of sand along the beach front into the Refuge backwaters. Small signs will also be placed adjacent to the plantings informing beach users not to damage the trees and how they will function to save their beach.

On April 22, DM Mullen and ROS Male attended an EMP Pool 11 Islands meeting in Guttenberg, Iowa. Several project features were discussed and the Corps began analyzing these for feasibility. The list of possible features will undoubtedly be trimmed due to cost. Some particular project features included restoring several island complexes in the lower portion of the Pool, fishery habitat enhancement in the Mud Lake Area, the construction of deflector dikes at John Deere Marsh, Sunfish Lake and Mud Lake, and the construction of a several- acre boulder field within a historical diver duck-use area near Potosi, Sunfish Lake and Mud Lake, and the construction of a several- acre boulder field within a historical diver duck-use area near Potosi, Wisconsin. On June 4, DM Mullen and ROS Male toured the Pool 11 Islands

4. FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

4.a. Bird Banding

On March 12, BT Dulik and ROS Male traveled to Winona to build two salt-plains duck traps. Boe Petschow shared his expertise and welding knowledge, and was invaluable in building the traps. Petschow and Dulik spent a second day finishing up the project. At the end of April, MW Brown finished attaching the wire mesh to the trap panels. The traps were employed during the season in conjunction with the canon nets.

BT Dulik only captured three birds before pulling the plug on the banding season. His commitment to the Regional Fire Crew required deployment before any serious efforts could take place.

4.b. Disease Monitoring and Treatment

On November 16, the District received information on a possible waterfowl die-off around the artesian well at the mouth of New Albin Big Lake, Pool 9. The report, which was received second hand from the IDNR, indicated that 20 American coot were dead with another 20 apparently sick. When BT Dulik investigated the situation, all the remains had been eaten by scavengers and no additional birds were found. It is possible that the birds had become entangled in commercial fishing nets, as local fishermen had recently hauled their nets in that area. The complaint stated that some of the birds appeared to be bleeding from their legs.

4.e. Pest, Predator and Exotic Animal Control

On June 14, District staff responded to an adjacent landowner's complaint in the Turkey River Bottoms. Ambitious beavers on a Refuge slough had caused flooding on two adjacent cornfields. Three dams were removed and water levels receded to acceptable levels.

On October 2, Gypsy moth trap catch results were forwarded to the U.S. Forest Service in St. Paul, MN. Three traps were set within the District. No Gypsy moths were captured.

5. COORDINATION ACTIVITIES

5.a. Interagency Coordination

On February 3, ROS Maycroft assisted the IDNR at an EWALU meeting near Strawberry Point, Iowa. The DNR was developing a teaching program on neotropical migrants and requested the District's input.

On October 4, DM went to Ames, Iowa to attend a regional meeting of the National Audubon Society. Discussions were held on how to set up an Iowan Audubon Office, whether or not the USFWS could help with such an office (possible assistance from the Walnut Creek NWR), and how National Audubon could help the Service with our outreach efforts. Additional meetings were scheduled for early 1997.

5.b. Private Lands Activities

Several wetland determination changes were reviewed in Clayton County, Iowa during January. The Service concurred with the changes.

On January 29, permit approval was requested from the Corps and the WDNR Regulatory and State Historical Society for a 1.5-acre wetland restoration project on the Randy Meier, et. al., property in Grant County, Wisconsin. Construction was scheduled to be completed in the spring. On May 14, Pat Brockway of Gays Mills, Wisconsin was contacted for an estimate to enhance the two wetlands. Initial estimates provided by Brockway Construction were $3,500 and deemed unreasonable. On June 19, construction plans were submitted to Digger Don Excavating, Soldiers Grove, Wisconsin.

On January 31, ROS Maycroft participated in a conference call sponsored by the Iowa Private Lands Office. Nearly all appealed wetland determination changes are being overturned. Jim Munson suggested investigating other alternatives, such as minimal effect determination with conditions, that will provide for the farmer's needs and still protect a portion of the natural resources without involving the appeal process.

Partners for Wildlife Calendars were distributed to several landowners and agency partners during February.

On February 23, ROS Maycroft supplied Jeff Tisl, NRCS, with prairie restoration procedures and species specific information. A landowner participating in a stream stabilization program sponsored by NRCS wanted to restore a mesic prairie tract on his property and had requested the information.

On February 28, ROS Male, ROS Luebke, and DM Mullen attended the Wisconsin Annual Private Lands Meeting at Horicon NWR. Topics included WRP reviews, CRP update, FSA manual changes, and various other private land issues. Male also completed the International Tracking System Accomplishments and forwarded the information to the Madison Private Lands Field Office.

On March 5, ROS Male conducted a minimal effects evaluation on the Terry Schaefer farm. Schaefer wanted to tile approximately 400 feet of a small drainage. The drainage was a result of previous tile outlets located at the head of the area in question. A minimal effects exemption was granted based on the fact that the wetland values were not significant. The only real value of the area will be enhanced with provisions stipulated as conditions for the exemption.

On March 7, ROS Male gave Jim Ruwaldt from the Madison Private Lands Office a tour of several private lands projects within the District. DM Mullen, ROS Male, and ROS Maycroft all met with Jim Ruwaldt to discuss private lands issues and activities on the District.

ROS Maycroft spoke with Jerry Muff on March 12 regarding the James Pattison wetland restoration project. Approximately $1,200 has been obligated at 75 percent cost-sharing for the project.

On March 19, ROS Male visited the 450-acre Sinsinawa Mounds farm in southwest Wisconsin at the request of NRCS. The operators of this oldest working farm in Wisconsin were interested in any possible wetland restorations within their boundaries. Three locations were identified for possible projects. Two of the sites involved the construction of a small berm in order to restore the function of the wetlands. Survey work was completed by District staff on the two sites and plans were developed. The third site was submitted for challenge grant funding

under prairie restoration. Contacts were made with WDNR and Southwest Prairie Enthusiasts regarding this site. On April 8, ROS Male marked out the buffer area around the wetland restoration site #1 on the Sinsinawa Mounds Farm. Because of the small size of the restoration, a substantial buffer was needed to truly gain resource benefits. The cooperators decided they were willing to accept this excluded area in the agreement. Site #2 was visited again with NRCS personnel to determine watershed runoff to the wetland enhancement site. At the end of December, the Sinsinawa Mounds Prairie/Oak Savanna Restoration Project, submitted under the Service's Challenge Cost-Share Program, was funded for $5,000. Notifications were made to the partners, and meetings were planned for later in January to discuss the project.

On March 21, ROS Maycroft conducted a Section 7 Intra-Service Evaluation at the Decorah High School wetland restoration site in Decorah, Iowa. The 2.5- acre site is a multi agency effort including NRCS, the Service, the National Guard, and IDNR. The site will include bank shaping and stabilization, native prairie establishment, and excavating a 0.5-acre shallow wetland basin 1.5-3.0 feet deep.

In April after consulting Nancy Derey of the Iowa Private Lands Office, the District committed to approximately $1,500 cost-sharing for the shallow portion of a large wetland complex, and the restoration of a native prairie community in the buffer portion of the wetland on the Lewis Christen's property in Elgin, Iowa.

On April 11, ROS Male completed the second quarter ITS report and submitted it to the RO.

On April 15, ROS Maycroft, NRCS soil scientist Clearance Stegall, and landowner Harvey Timp, met on-site to survey and discuss wetland restoration potential on approximately 5 acres of the grazed wetland/pasture. It appears that a dike approximately 6 feet high should enhance approximately 3 acres of pastured wetland into an emergent marsh community. Harvey is also planning to plant 2 to 3 additional acres of native prairie around the wetland.

On April 25, with the assistance of the RO Private Lands Coordinator Greg Brown, the District responded to a FMHA landowner lawyer's request to reevaluate the appropriateness of a conservation easement of the Gott FMHA property. Mr. Darwin Eimers purchased the property knowing that an easement existed, and now he wishes to eradicate it. His lawyer, Mr. John Tremaine, cited improper recording procedures by the government and that the easement area was not delineated as wetland. The District responded to both accounts. Another correspondence was drafted by Greg Brown of the RO on May 13 regarding the easement. The new landowner continued to question the validity of the easement. A copy of the Quit Claim Deed was attached to the letter. No response was received from Mr. Eimer's lawyer. On October 17, a letter was drafted by the RO and sent by the McGregor District to Mr. Tremaine. The letter addressed the criteria that was used when the conservation easement was established on

DM Mullen met with Allamakee County NRCS staff on November 19 to discuss future cold water stream projects and tour completed projects.

On November 22, DM Mullen met with Jim Jansen, IDNR Fisheries Biologist, to review possible wetlands enhancement/fisheries projects on French Creek.

On December 9, DM Mullen and ADM Male visited two possible WRP sites in Allamakee County, Iowa, owned by Howard Bright. Both areas appeared to be eligible for the program, and would make fine additions to the scarce number of wetlands in the county.

6. RESOURCE PROTECTION

6.a. Law Enforcement

The District's law enforcement program suffered two losses this year, as RO Luebke left the District in mid-summer, and RO Male was promoted, leaving less staff time for law enforcement.

On January 13, RO Dulik conducted an investigation on a golden eagle that was trapped on private land south of Lansing, Iowa. The investigation revealed that the trappers were illegally trapping by using "sight baits". A fish and dead cat were placed on and near the traps, which subsequently attracted the eagle. It was believed to be caught in the trap for several days. A citation was issued for the violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The eagle was flown to the Raptor Rehabilitation Center in St. Paul, Minnesota and one of its toes was amputated due to frostbite. We had hoped to release the bird near Lansing, Iowa where it was found, when it was completely rehabilitated. However, while the eagle was under observation by the Raptor Center, further complications developed and the eagle underwent emergency surgery to relieve respiratory distress. Unfortunately, it did not recover. On November 5, the golden eagle was sent to a taxidermist in southern Illinois for eventual display at the McGregor District's Visitor Contact Station. The violator paid a $350. fine and the case is now closed.

On January 17, ROS Male drafted a letter at SA Kocal's request to the United States Attorney's Office(USAO) in Madison, Wisconsin regarding a violation of illegal harvested plants. It appeared that the USAO did not feel the commercial harvest of plants on a National Wildlife Refuge was a big deal. The letter emphasized the importance of being firm on this case, because of the publicity it had received. In addition, the intent of the individual involved was to knowingly steal plants from a National Wildlife Refuge for personal profit. With Refuges and SA Kocal's support, the perpetrator will hopefully get his just rewards.

On February 9, ROS Male patrolled the various landings and access points within Pool 11. Activity was light as ice fishing had been poor throughout the month, and no problems were noted.

On February 12, Refuge Officer Dulik attended the Pressure Point Control Tactics (PPCT) Instructor Training Course in Moose Lake, Minnesota. The training, which lasted one week, certified Dulik to teach defensive tactics to Service officers.

On February 14, ROS Male attempted to hand-deliver an NOV to an individual who had refused it three times by Certified Mail. Male was

unsuccessful in his attempt as no one would answer the door. The NOV was then given to the Cuba City Police Department. They evidently have had many occasions to visit the defendant. On February 15, we received notification that they had delivered the citation. A thank you letter was then sent to the Cuba City Police Department for their assistance.

On February 15, ROS Male visited with WDNR Warden DeWitte. Information was exchanged regarding several pending LE cases. DeWitte was also lent several Higgins Eye shells for an upcoming presentation.

On February 29, RO Brown compiled the District's Annual Law Enforcement Program Report and forwarded the information to Tom Worthington.

While RO Dulik was returning to the Lansing warehouse on March 24, he found himself driving behind a suspected drunk driver. The driver was swerving across both lanes of traffic and nearly struck two cars head-on. Dulik followed the vehicle while attempting to contact the Allamakee County Sheriff's Department. After several minutes of not being able to contact anyone, a Deputy responded who happened to be nearby. While Dulik was still following, the suspect accelerated to over 50 mph in a 25 mph zone, and over 70 mph in a 55 mph zone. About the time the Deputy caught up, the suspect went into the ditch and was thrown out the back window of his Bronco. He landed 37 feet from his vehicle. Amazingly, the driver survived the crash. Charges were pending.

ROS Male patrolled Pool 11 landings and upper Pool 12 during March. The Turkey River Bottoms and John Deere Marsh area were also patrolled for vehicle trespass. No violations were noted.

On March 15, RO Dulik forwarded information to the IDNR for prosecution of an individual for fishing without a license. The individual is a habitual violator of wildlife game laws and is likely to lose fishing privileges for two years as a result of this citation.

On March 25, RO Dulik, RO Luebke, RO Male, and RO Brown attended the Annual Law Enforcement Refresher Training in Des Moines, Iowa. RO Dulik taught the PPCT, defensive tactics training session during the week.

On April 2, RO Dulik and RO Brown returned to Des Moines, Iowa for the second week of the law enforcement refresher. Dulik instructed other officers on the PPCT, defensive tactics, and Brown assisted with the firearm's qualification training as a range instructor.

On the evening of April 4, ROS Male received a tip at his residence involving a turkey poaching incident off-Refuge which had just occurred. After contacting WDNR wardens, they requested that Male respond due to the fact that the nearest warden was an hour away. Male, who was later joined by WDNR Warden DeWitte, apprehended the individual at his residence. The only real lead was a partial vehicle description given by the informant. The lead matched a vehicle Male had observed days before parked at a residence in the country. When the turkey was recovered, it had already been breasted out and was soaking in the violator's kitchen. The remainder of the bird was buried deep within a trash pile. The individual was charged with various state violations totaling $300., and the loss of all hunting, fishing, and trapping privileges for a year.

Eugene Behrend, who became known as the number one violator within the District, may be dead and gone, but apparently he may get the last laugh. A junk dock and shanty belonging to the late Behrend appeared within Pool 11 during the end of April. Several years ago, it had been purchased for one dollar and remained tied up to private ground. When high water came this spring, it floated down River some 20 miles and is now a Refuge problem. ROS Male has contacted the Clayton County attorney who agreed to try to get the piece of junk included in Eugene's estate. The estate was finalized sometime in May. Hopefully there is something in the estate that is worth enough for one of Eugene's heirs to claim it all.

On May 23, RO Dulik issued two citations to two individuals for undersized walleye. One of the citations went to the WDNR and the other was processed by the District.

Another wild weekend on the old Upper Miss. ADM Male and state wardens were called out early Sunday morning to all that remains from a 16-foot bassboat involved in a weekend boating accident.

Visitation on Pool 11 over the Memorial Day Holiday weekend was down considerably. Cold, rainy weather all three days gave the Refuge beaches a reprieve from the normal holiday rush. Only seven active camp sites were observed.

RO Brown investigated an illegal barge mooring in Pool 10 on June 24. Brown met with the informant and local grain terminal representatives in the area. However, the phantom barge was gone and no one claimed ownership. Grain terminal employees agreed to advise their customers not to use this area in the future.

On October 23, acting on a request for assistance from the Horicon NWR, RO Brown retrieved several cannon net charges and other items from the Vernon County Sheriff's Department. Evidently, several items stolen from Horicon were recovered from the trunk of a vehicle during an arrest. Plans were later made for the return of all the items.

Monthly law enforcement efforts were geared toward waterfowl hunting during October. Three individuals were cited for the possession of toxic shot (lead) while hunting waterfowl. There still appears to be a small part of the waterfowl hunting community that is not willing to give up lead. Four other citations were issued for the possession of alcohol while hunting. Inconsistencies between various state and federal jurisdictions along the river have made enforcing this regulation difficult. Possession of alcohol while hunting in the state of Iowa will earn you a $50. NOV in federal court, while across the river this same violation is $125. We have started the dialogue with the various Special Agents to strive for some consistency. Several warnings were issued by officers as well: one toxic shot, two alcohol while hunting, nine camping out of sight of main channel, one unsigned duck stamp, and one warning for not possessing a hunting license in the field.

On November 11, RO Dulik and IDNR State Warden Bill Collins worked together on a Harpers Slough Closed Area hunting complaint in Pool 9. An individual who was suspected of hunting in the Closed Area was actually hunting between closed area signs and the main channel, a strip of a few hundred feet. Each year a few hunters like to take advantage of the fact that we can only install the closed area signs in shallow water along the navigation channel. This allows for continued hunting along the fringes, and reduces the effectiveness of the Harpers Slough Closed Area. An adjustment in posting the Closed Area boundary will be necessary next year so it can function as intended.

The three District Refuge Officers combined forces to concentrate on trapping enforcement in the Lansing, Iowa area. The one day event, held on November 13, netted several violations and was the talk of the town for several weeks. Violations included one NOV for checking traps belonging to another, one NOV for using untagged traps on the Refuge, and two NOV's for various waterfowl violations. On December 5, DM Mullen responded by letter to the father of one of the Lansing individuals that was apprehended during a trapping law enforcement effort. The father did not understand why his son could not check his traps because, as he put it, "I am a busy man, and don't have time to check traps". Unfortunately this one will probably be in the courts before long.

A total of 36 violations was issued this year. An additional four cases were turned over to the appropriate State for prosecution. Violations by State and activity are listed as follows:

Table 2. Summary of 1996 Violations

Violation	#Cases MN	#Cases IA	#Cases WI
Take migratory, non-game bird (golden eagle)		1	
Hunting migratory waterfowl with shotgun capable of holding more than 3 shells		1	
Hunting migratory waterfowl without a Federal stamp		2	
Hunting migratory waterfowl without a State stamp		2	
Possess lead shot while hunting migratory waterfowl		3	
Take migratory waterfowl during closed season		2	
Hunt migratory waterfowl without state habitat stamp		1	
Hunt on NWR while possessing alcohol		3	5
Exceed daily limit-waterfowl			3
Possess a controlled substance on a NWR			1
Violate trapping regulations-untagged traps		1	
Violate trapping regulations-check traps belonging to another		1	
Possession of undersize fish	1		
Destroy or injure plant on NWR		3	
Littering on NWR		1	2
Vehicle trespass on NWR	1	1	1
TOTAL	2	22	12

Table 3. Summary of 1996 Violations Transferred to the Appropriate State

Violation	# Cases IA	# Cases WI
Fish without a state fishing license	1	
Possession of undersize fish-walleye		1
Disorderly conduct		1
Take game birds out of season		1
TOTAL	1	3

6.b. Permits and Economic Use Management

On March 25, DM Mullen met with County officials and an adjacent landowner concerning the Red Oak Hollow Road near Lock and Dam 9 in lower Pool 9. The road had deviated considerably from its original right-of-way onto a private citizen's land. The individual was petitioning the County to shut the road down completely. As the road offers Refuge visitors an unique opportunity to view tundra swans and other migrating waterfowl, DM Mullen suggested returning the road to the original right-of-way despite the landowner's and County's protests. On October 10, DM Mullen met with Bill Kerndt, Allamakee County Engineer, to discuss public access to Refuge lands via the Red Oak Hollow Road. The County Supervisors decided to take legal action to keep the road open.

On May 5, District staff provided their comments to the RO regarding an archaeological investigation permit request along McGregor Lake shoreline near McGregor, Iowa, in Pool 10. An active bald eagle nest is in the vicinity and restrictions were placed on the approved permit to prevent disturbance to the eagles. An additional Special Use Permit was issued on October 28 to Great Lakes Archaeological Research Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin for continued work on the McGregor Lake Archaeological Site. The permit allowed coring with a "geoprobe", an instrument that extracts 2" and 4" diameter soil cores. The work will enable scientists to better define the horizontal limits of the buried site.

Throughout May, District staff investigated issues pertaining to Wisconsin Power and Light Company's request to construct a power line across the Refuge land from Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin to McGregor, Iowa. Realty Specialist John Connors was contacted about the District's concerns regarding the right-of-way easement placement. An interagency meeting was scheduled for June to include representatives from Wisconsin Power and Light Company, Wisconsin Public Service Commission, Rock Island Field Office, and DM Mullen.

During October, DM Mullen and Mike Griffin, IDNR, inspected, mapped, and video taped the bathtub spoil site on McMillan Island, Pool 10. The

The McMillan Island spoils site in Pool 10 continues to receive spoils despite the fact it is at full capacity. Plans are finally being developed by the Corps to address this issue.

Corps was pumping on the day of the visit, and the site was full and overflowing into the adjacent marsh. Mr. Griffin agreed to handle the issue through his office.

On November 15, DM Mullen met with Bob Clevenstine, ES Rock Island Field Office, to discuss permit issues relating to the power line crossings at McGregor, Iowa and the Turkey River Bottoms.

Seven Special Use Permits were issued to disabled individuals for the use of off road vehicles to access a popular ice fishing location in Pool 11.

Special Use Permits were renewed for the two fish floats operating below Locks 8 and 9. The permit fees are $100. each. Complaints from boat operators and the float operator at the Lynxville (Lock 9) float have been virtually nonexistent this year, in sharp contrast to 1995.

6.f. Cultural Resource Management

ROS Maycroft and ROS Luebke attended an Audubon sponsored session on Archaeology in Northeast Iowa on March 19. The event was hosted at Decorah High School, Decorah, Iowa. The two and one-half hour program discussed early American to pre-modern culture.

The Alfred Reed Mound group was inspected for disturbance. Except for minor erosion, the native American burial mounds were undisturbed.

6.g. Land Acquisition Support

On January 10, 1996 a Certificate of Inspection was completed for the Quality Beverage Tract north of Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. No alterations to the property were noted. Realty closed on the property in December during the government shutdown.

7. PUBLIC EDUCATION AND RECREATION

7.a. Provide Visitor Services and 7.b.Outreach

BT Dulik gave an eagle talk and slide show on January 13 in Lansing, Iowa. About 30 people attended the talk, which ended with a short trip to view eagles at the Lansing Power Plant. Several additional people stopped along the highway to view the eagles when they saw us viewing the birds with spotting scopes.

On January 17, ROS Male met with the Nelson Dewey State Park Superintendent and Grant County WDNR Warden DeWitte. Discussions included boundary issues and the upcoming Cassville Bald Eagle Days celebration. On January 27, ROS Male assisted WDNR and the Village of Cassville by staffing the eagle viewing site during the Cassville Bald Eagle Days. Unfortunately, 15" of snow and 35 degrees below zero wind chills made for more eagles than visitors.

On February 4, BT Dulik compiled and sent information to a local science teacher at his request, including brochures and handouts on invertebrates and stream fishes that are found in the area.

During February, BT Dulik compiled a packet of information for the RO engineering staff, regarding the proposed cement floor for the Lansing warehouse. Since the floor cost was more than $2,000., engineering became involved and required a site visit to inspect the building. The proposed project cost estimate summary was received by the end of March. On March 13 electricity was installed in the warehouse by Maas Electric Company. Work began on the cement floor at the end of October. Complications had developed after the original contractor refused to start the project. So his brother, also a cement contractor (who appeared to have a lot more gumption), was awarded the contract. An amended contract was submitted to the RO in December for additional work on an additional 6x8 foot concrete slab with plumbing for an eventual bathroom.

On February 11, ROS Maycroft presented information at the Prairie du Chien United Methodist Church on threats and conflicts the Refuge has and is experiencing. Approximately 60 people attended the Sunday morning presentation. Throughout the month of February, the Reverend is profiling mankind's ethical responsibility to protect the environment.

During February, a photo sensitive light was placed to illuminate the flag pole during the evening and early morning hours. The office ground's exterior lights were also inspected after several bulbs burned out shortly after replacement.

On March 18, AT Palmer distributed 110 National Wildlife Week Education Packets to 47 local schools.

On March 19, BT Dulik attended the city council meeting at Ferryville, Wisconsin to discuss a proposal to build a wildlife observation deck within the city limits. The city council members were very excited about the proposal and agreed to build the deck. Dulik submitted a challenge grant cost-share proposal during the summer. The local Booster Club expressed interest in contributing funds for the project, and further funding options were also being investigated. In a second challenge cost-share project, ROS Male worked with the city of Cassville, Wisconsin on building an observation deck at their city park,

overlooking the Refuge. The District received notice on December 17 that the two projects were approved and would be funded by the RO. Notifications were made to the various matching partners and meetings were scheduled in the near future. Both projects will be built in 1997.

On March 31, BT Dulik conducted 10 school talks at three different schools. Approximately 360 students attended these talks. Topics covered the history of the Mississippi River and Refuge. A slide show and several "freezer creatures" were shown to the students along with eagle feathers and eagle eggs. Our mounted eagle was also displayed during the school talks.

In February, ADM Maycroft attended a public meeting in Elkader, Iowa regarding the Air National Guard's proposal to have low level military flights in a corridor between McGregor, Iowa and Lansing, Iowa. The military aircraft would cross the River in an east-west orientation an average of eight sorties per day, Tuesday through Saturday, between 9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. The proposed elevation of the aircraft ranged from 300 feet during "war time" to 1,500 feet. Local citizen groups opposing the flights formed in Wisconsin and Iowa, and information on migrant species diversity and peak numbers was provided to concerned citizens who contacted the District. On April 9, ROS Maycroft attended an open house in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin sponsored by U.S. Senator Feingold. Maycroft spoke about the potential biological impacts the proposed low-level flights could have on the natural resources, including the five nesting bald eagle territories in the proposed flight corridor. Several grass roots organizers also spoke about their concerns regarding the flights. The next Thursday, Maycroft received notification that the Guard had decided to withdraw their proposal for the low-level flight corridor and the Hardwood Range expansion. The reconsideration was based on the strong grass roots opposition and the potential impacts to the natural resources in the area.

On April 10, BT Dulik spoke to 24 fourth and fifth graders at St. Patrick's Grade School, in Waukon, Iowa. A slide show was shown as well as the freezer creatures display.

On April 17, ROS Male erected a new road sign along County Road VV for the Cassville warehouse. In addition, the old sign located at the Cassville warehouse, which indicated Cassville as the District Office, was removed and a new recognition sign was installed.

The gate accessing Turkey River Road was closed on April 19 due to high water levels on the Turkey River Landing. Most of the Refuge's landings were inoperable during April, including the access road to the Cassville warehouse, which was closed on April 26 due to flooding.

On April 22, ROS Maycroft spoke to a group of 4 boy scouts and 3 adults at the Visitor Contact Station. Topics included what a wildlife manager does, why refuges are established, and the difference between a stable population and an endangered population, and extinction.

On April 26, DM Mullen and ROS Male met with Potosi, Wisconsin board members Walsh and Fiorenza in an attempt to restart the Potosi Pier Interpretive Area Project. Interest remained high on this project, but Potosi was struggling with finding money to match federal dollars. Several new funding possibilities were explored and another meeting was set for mid-May.

On April 27, District staff coordinated the exhibition of the Partners in Flight tabletop display with Dennis Kirschbaum of the WDNR. The exhibit was displayed at La Riviere Park in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, during their annual spring open house. Approximately 60 people enjoyed the attractive display.

Biological Technician Dulik takes the Refuge show on the road at one of the many local events.

During April, Cassville, Wisconsin high school student Jake Fishnick participated in a Job Shadow program with ROS Male on Pool 11. Activities included eagle nest activity checks, rookery activity work, and other biological reconnaissance.

During May, BT Dulik conducted 5 school talks to 290 students. Four of the talks were held at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Blackhawk Park. The students were from Roosevelt School in La Crosse, Wisconsin. The fifth talk was held at the DeSoto Middle School, DeSoto, Wisconsin. Kindergarten through eighth grade students were in attendance.

On May 15, ROS Maycroft presented Refuge management information, general information, and information on threats and conflicts to 11 University of Northern Iowa students and faculty members at the Visitor Contact Station.

On May 18, at the request of Effigy Mounds National Monument, District staff presented information on the procedure for transferring injured eagles and other migratory bird species to licensed rehabilitators and the Raptor Rehabilitation Center. Topics of discussion also included the Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and Bald Eagle Act, and various State regulations pertaining to endangered and threatened wildlife and resident wildlife.

The new Visitor Contact Station signs were placed along Highway 18 during May.

On May 24, ROS Male constructed a single kiosk for the Village of Cassville, Wisconsin. The kiosk displays visitor information adjacent to the District's kiosk, which is adjacent to the city's main boat ramp.

ROS Maycroft completed a request for a JTPA summer youth worker to assist with various maintenance and wildlife survey activities on the District this summer. Due to funding shortages last year, the District did not receive a participant; however, we were hopeful for this year.

June 19, BT Dulik attended the Ferryville, Wisconsin City Council meeting to discuss the proposed observation deck. The city has agreed to design and build the deck and at least three organizations have agreed to contribute a total of $1,200. Two more organizations have indicated that they will contribute, but have not indicated how much. Dulik will be formulating a challenge grant proposal, and if selected, the deck will be built in the spring of 1997.

A Nongame Bird Conservation Project was submitted during October through Winona, Minnesota to the RO, for the purchase of two spotting scopes. The scopes will be used at the McGregor Visitor's Center Wildlife Viewing Platform. The scopes will greatly enhance visitor opportunities to view migrating birds and other wildlife that utilize the river floodplain.

On June 20, ROS Maycroft compiled information and slides of great blue herons for Wendy Herald of the Mississippi River Visitor Center in Rock Island, Illinois. Wendy was developing a River slide program that she will be presenting to local elementary students.

On October 7, the District celebrated National Wildlife Refuge Week by visiting five area elementary schools. DM Mullen, ADM Male, and BT Dulik presented programs on the importance of the National Wildlife Refuge System and some basic biology on some of the creatures found within the District.

On October 10, DM Mullen met with Bill Kerndt, Allamakee County Engineer to discuss public access to Refuge lands via Red Oak Hollow Road. The road runs parallel to the Closed Area in Pool 9 and is the only way the public can view the Closed Area by vehicle. The county supervisors decided to take legal action to keep the road open.

Also in October, DM Mullen toured the Sny Magill/Johnson Slough area of Pool 10 with Dick Hyde. Sedimentation had reduced boating access, plus fish and waterfowl use in the area. Mr. Hyde was encouraged to send us his concerns, attend EMP meetings, and to make his views known to government and elected officials.

On November 14, ADM Male provided comments to the Corps Real Estate Division on the proposed lease renewal of the Turkey River Landing to the IDNR. The most significant suggestion was that the Village of Cassville be responsible for landing maintenance. Currently, the Village uses the landing for the Cassville car ferry, but does not share any of the cleanup. Approximately 80 percent of the traffic using the landing during the summer months is ferry related.

On November 25, MW Brown and BT Dulik installed a cattle gate across the Cassville warehouse entrance road. The gate was installed for security reasons, now that the Station is not occupied on a regular basis.

In December MW Brown replaced the drive motor on the light path display for the Migratory Bird Exhibit at the Visitor's Contact Station.

On December 19, DM Mullen attended a meeting in Waukon, Iowa to discuss hunting and trapping in Northeast Iowa, including Refuge lands. The meeting, hosted by the IDNR and local legislation, was attended by 130 individuals. DM Mullen also attended a briefing for freshman Wisconsin Congressman Ron Kind, held at the La Crosse District office on December 16.

Several beaches in Pool 9 were rehabilitated by the WDNR during 1996. The WDNR had received a public use grant, and used the money to reshape and expand the beaches.

The RMIS Public Education and Recreation Report for FY 96 was forwarded to Winona and the RO. An estimated 910,000 visitors used the McGregor District during FY 96. According to the estimates, nearly one-half of the visits involved hunting or fishing as a recreational activity.

7.c. Hunting

The Iowa youth waterfowl hunt was held the first weekend of October. Like the Wisconsin youth hunt, turnout was light. However, many positive comments were received from parents and children in the field. RO Dulik reports that one father shared this story about the morning's hunt: His son had shot about 15 times until he finally hit a duck. With pure excitement his son turned to him and yelled,"Hey, I hit one! Now I am ready to go home."

Waterfowl hunting during November was slow, especially during the several days surrounding November 14, when major ice formation on the backwaters and main channel occurred. Overall hunting success during November was calculated at 1.57 ducks per hunter per day, based on law enforcement field checks. Nine different species were present in bags. As expected, mallards made up over 70 percent of the harvest.

The waterfowl hunting season was extended to a 50-day season and a five-bird limit. This increase of 10 more hunting days, and the predictions of the best mallard hunting since 1970, brought many hunters out of the woodwork. Unfortunately, the mallard hunting was less than spectacular and we heard about it. The puddle ducks appeared to bypass this stretch of the river, though some hunters in lower Pool 9 did report excellent hunting for mallards for about a two week period.

Canada goose hunting opportunities are generally limited on the District. However, success was noteworthy during the first few days of the season in the New Albin area, Pool 9. After the first few days, the local birds are either educated or dead. The migratory geese that we see are fairly spread out and hunters occasionally bag a bird, though few set out goose decoys.

7.d. Trapping

While checking late season beaver trappers on March 11, ROS Male encountered two seasoned trappers who had captured 104 beavers during late February and early March. While this number is not necessarily impressive, the fact that they caught all of them in only a three-mile stretch of open water habitat just south of Cassville, Wisconsin is

noteworthy. The pair also indicated that 65 of the beavers were in the 65 to 70 pound range.

Trapping interest increased dramatically this year. A total of 145 Permits were issued, compared to 97 Permits in 1995, 90 Permits in 1994, and 75 in 1993. The increase was probably due to the predicted increase in fur prices. Preseason predictions had muskrats around $4. and racoons in the $13. to $17. range. Muskrat populations looked good in most area marshes, based on lodge construction. Raccoons continued to be as abundant as mayflies in July. BT Dulik issued trap tags in the Lansing, Iowa area for the convenience of area trappers. Trap tags were also issued in Cassville, Wisconsin on November 8. RO Brown reported that no one showed up to take advantage of the Cassville satellite trap tag issuance. ADM Male reported that there were numerous phone calls to his Cassville residence after November 8. Evidently the news release outlining trap tag issuance dates and locations was deemed not newsworthy by the Grant County Newspaper. New trap tags had to be issued to a Harpers Ferry, Iowa resident who had 13 traps and tags stolen. An affidavit indicating trap tag loss was taken from the individual. In addition, he was required to return his old trap tags prior to the issuing of new tags.

According to IDNR Wildlife Biologist Ron Andrew, the 1996-97 fur market was again showing signs of strength. It was believed to be due to several factors, including a renewed interest in buying and wearing fur, the demand for U.S. muskrat and beaver fur from Asian countries such as China, Korea, and Russia, and raccoon fur from Greece, and the high levels of most furbearer populations.

On November 2, the Iowa and Minnesota trapping seasons opened on the District. Conditions were good for these early openers and remained so for a few weeks. The Wisconsin trapping season opened for the main portion of the Mississippi River on November 22. Trappers were met with horrible conditions. High water and developing ice made finding sets difficult. Conditions even worsened by month's end, when water levels receded, leaving large sheets of three inch thick shell ice over islands and marshes. Due to the length of the duck season, trappers in Wisconsin were not able to trap on the entire District until November 27. The Refuge is still investigating the possibility of allowing trapping to open in Wisconsin before the close of the duck season, as is permitted in the other states of the Refuge. Considerable opposition has been generated from duck hunters, who fear that their dogs would be caught in the traps. Some trappers also oppose to opening the season earlier, as they feel that the fur is much better by the time the season opens on the river. A controversy has developed between Iowa trappers and Wisconsin trappers. Several Wisconsin trappers obtained nonresident Iowa trapping licenses, but Iowa residents are not allowed to obtain nonresident Wisconsin trapping licenses. Discussions with phrases like "our beaver" and "our muskrat" ensued.

7.e. Fishing

Commercial fishermen once again reported bountiful catches of catfish. The commercial fishermen seem to agree that the imposed size limit placed on the commercial take of catfish a few years ago appears to be a contributor to the increased harvest.

Significant snow falls up north brought higher than normal water levels in the spring, which limited fishing success for walleye and sauger in

the early spring. The high water continued through spring and into the early summer. Fishermen that were willing to experiment and try new fishing spots out of the heavy current, were much more successful than those that were not willing to change.

Fishing tournaments continued to occur within the District nearly every weekend during the spring and summer. The effects of these tournaments are still unknown.

7.f. Other Public Use

On January 23, BT Dulik attended a meeting on the upcoming Iowa sesquicentennial canoe trip. On August 4th the canoe trip started at the New Albin Boat Landing and ended at Keokuk, Iowa. The trip lasted two weeks and included two hundred canoes and 50 safety (motor) boats. The committee had wanted to have a miliary air show over the Refuge, but was satisfied when the suggestion was made to hold the show farther inland.

The Iowa Sesquicentennial Canoe Trip was a big attraction for canoeist and spectators alike through the District.

8. PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

8.a. Comprehensive Conservation Planning

DM Mullen met with Peg Kohring, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, during October on habitat protection and enhancement strategies in the New Albin/Upper Iowa River areas.

During October, DM Mullen attended a public meeting in Lansing, Iowa with members of the Allamakee County Planning Board to discuss ways of preserving the county's natural resources through sound economic development.

8.b. General Administration

Throughout the month of February, AT Palmer and Janice Whitney attempted to iron out the kinks in the new CC:Mobile computer program. At month's end, the program was still experiencing technical difficulties.

On February 21, AT Palmer submitted a request for an additional HP Laserjet II printer from an available property list.

During February District staff submitted the fourth quarter RMIS public use data for the Driftless Area NWR and the McGregor District to the RO. Also, modifications to the RO list of FY 96 MMS projects were submitted to Doug Johnson.

A letter was received in February with an enclosed photograph of a wintering bald eagle. DM Mullen drafted a letter expressing his delight on receipt of the letter and the citizen's concern over our natural resources and our national emblem.

On March 1, DM Mullen, ROS Luebke, and ROS Maycroft attended the Wisconsin Wildlife Society Mid-Winter Meeting in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Several interesting papers were presented pertaining to the River system and statewide investigations conducted by various universities, the U.S. Forest Service, NBS, and the FWS.

On March 13, DM Mullen and BT Dulik attended a River Revival meeting in Lansing, Iowa. The MNDNR gave a slide show and EMP projects were discussed. After the main portion of the meeting ended, small groups were formed to brainstorm on what individual people could do to help the River resource. Also on March 13, DM Mullen and ROS Maycroft attended a GIS workshop at the La Crosse Fisheries Building. Applications of the technology and hands-on training with the user-friendly ARCVIEW program were demonstrated. Applications of the program to the Refuge were readily apparent.

On March 22, DM Mullen, ROS Maycroft, and ROS Luebke talked to Lora Dittmer of Elkader, Iowa about a possible internship on the District this summer. Potential projects, various wildlife monitoring and survey activities, and funding availability were discussed.

The annual Accountable Property Inventories for the District and Driftless Area NWR were forwarded to the RO as requested on April 1.

On May 3, ROS Maycroft attended the Non-game Bird Survey and Monitoring Methods course in Buchanon, Tennessee. Various monitoring techniques and methods were demonstrated.

BT Dulik and ROS Male attended an organizational fire meeting at Sherburne NWR at the end of May. Dulik and Male were both on the Regional Fire Fighting Crew and on call to fight western wildfires.

On May 1, AT Palmer applied for an Iowa Motor Fuel tax permit number to recoup Iowa gasoline tax. Due to a change in Iowa State Law, gas tax is not automatically deducted from our monthly charges. The District has decided to purchase gasoline primarily in Wisconsin, who still offers the automatic tax deduction, and purchase gasoline only during emergencies in Iowa.

On May 13, a computer monitor, processor, and tape drive were requested from the RO through the Available Property Inventory List. The computer systems were located at the Savanna District.

AT Palmer attended Internet Training for two days during October in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

On October 3, AT Palmer calculated and submitted the District's Annual Energy Report for FY 96. Electrical use increased slightly due to the new Lansing warehouse electric demand.

On October 10, AT Palmer provided comments to the Uniform Committee regarding the inclusion of a dress Class A-B sleeveless vest.

During November, the Maintenance Management System accomplishments during 1996 and the updated project list for proposed '97 projects were forwarded to the MMS Coordinator in the RO. Five new projects were added to the existing list of 23.

During November, AT Palmer advised our vendors and contractors that payments will now be processed only through electronic funds transfer. Unfortunately, this improvement in Government efficiency was not viewed by the public the same way. The station received numerous complaints from vendors. All still wanted to be paid by check.

The District Manager's meeting was held at Lansing, Iowa on December 11.

Both AT Palmer and ADM Male were off using use-or-lose for several weeks during December.

8.c. Safety

Several videos were shown and discussed at monthly safety meetings, including "Beating a Blowout", "Stress in the Workplace", "Digging Dangers", " Prevention and First-Aid Treatment of Childhood Injuries", "Drive Safely", "Judgement on the Water", "Making Your Home Lead Safe the Iowa Way", "There are Choices", a video about choosing fire extinguishers, and "Accident Investigation".

A safety questionnaire was completed for the District during February. Several questions generated further discussions on our current procedures. Merlin Bittner suggested that additional information should be included in our District's procedures to enhance individual accountability for assigned property. Also during February, ROS Maycroft attended OSHA Collateral Duty Safety Training in Des Plaines, Illinois. Besides a tour of a 1940's Air Force refueling jet, the training session provided the opportunity for on-site OSHA inspections for several facilities.

District field staff were tested for Lyme disease during March. All titers were within normal range.

On April 1, DM Mullen, ROS Male, ROS Luebke, ROS Maycroft, BT Dulik, and MW Brown attended First Aid/CPR recertification training at Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.

On May 15, MW Brown attended a water sampling seminar in Dubuque, Iowa. Collection procedures and positive reading protocols were discussed.

8.d. Maintenance

A review of the Bureau of Mines surplus property list put out in January resulted in a request for several items, should they become available. Items included: a trailer capable of hauling our tractor and mower, a drill press, and some computer related items.

ROS Male removed snow from the Cassville warehouse road and yard on several occasions during January, including a 15" snowfall at the end of the month. Male also repaired the steering problem on the Cassville 16-foot Lowe boat, and constructed a computer stand for the computer at Cassville.

On February 20, a U.S. West repairman spliced our local line and placed an additional jack to accommodate the newly purchased answering machine.

ROS Male graded the gravel access road to the Cassville warehouse on March 13.

On March 30, MW Brown arranged for the repair of the Spartan boat trailer and the sickle mower. Brown also replaced the Bagley Bottoms' bathroom doors, and the 1989 Dodge pickup truck's battery.

The shop floor at the Cassville warehouse was painted in April. Other maintenance tasks were performed on the District's flood boat and the 18-foot Polar Kraft boat.

A DI-104 form was forwarded to the RO and Minnesota Valley NWR for the receipt of a Midland radio.

The District staff winterized boats at McGregor and at the Cassville and Lansing warehouses during October. MW Brown coordinated the installation of permanent LE lights and winches on several of the District's vehicles. Brown also assembled and installed several new furniture items at the District office.

On October 1, MW Brown, DM Mullen, and ADM Male traveled to Trempealeau NWR to look at a surplus farm tractor and dump truck. A disk and a John Deere Tractor, model 2640, was transferred from Trempealeau NWR to the District at the end of December. Trempealeau transported the items to a local implement dealer for servicing and repairs. The equipment, which will be stored at the Cassville warehouse, will be used to restore the Dago Slough Closed Area fields, plus other District projects.

On December 19, the Radio System Profile request was sent to the RO. If the upgrade is approved, the District will require replacement of eight mobile units and seven handhelds. In addition, the Base Station and two repeaters will need upgrading.

8.e. Volunteers

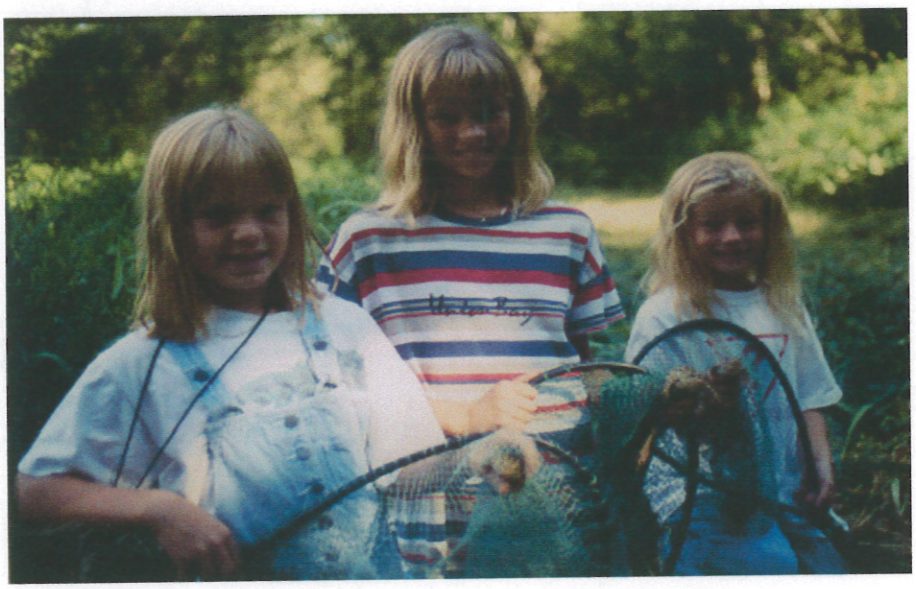
Steve Groak contributed 12 hours of volunteer work during the month of March. Most of Steve's time was spent observing the Brinkman's Rookery for nesting activity and heron nest selection.

During April Sally Steele and Dennis Kirschbaum began their second year conducting Non-game Breeding Bird Point Count Surveys on Pool 10. Steve Groak continued to make detailed observations on the Methodist Lake

Rookery within Pool 10. He contributed 25 hours to this endeavor during April.

A total of 42 hours was donated by five District volunteers during the month of May. Activities included assistance with the Frog and Toad Survey in Pools 10 and 11, the Colonial Nesting Bird Census, purple loosestrife propagation set-up, and the Non-game Breeding Bird Survey.

Several volunteers made substantial contributions during June. Sally Steele and Dennis Kirschbaum contributed 18 hours each conducting Non-game Breeding Bird Surveys. Deb Quist contributed 18.5 hours assisting with the biological control program for purple loosestrife, including the inoculation of 388 *Hylobius* eggs in a loosestrife patch just south of Lock and Dam 8. Tyler Kirkpatrick, the District's most recent recruit, contributed 9 hours conducting a Great Blue Heron Productivity Survey in the Butler Lake Rookery. Lora Dittmer contributed a total of 87.5 hours assisting in cold water stream restoration and habitat enhancement activities, inoculating *Hylobius* eggs, conducting Bald Eagle Production Surveys and Rail and Bittern Surveys on Pool 10, and other activities as assigned.



The District's three youngest volunteers appeared to have a great time collecting frogs for the Amphibian Survey.

The Volunteer Service Report for fiscal year 1996 was forwarded to the RO in December. Fourteen volunteers contributed a total of 628 hours. The bulk of hours were logged in activities associated with resource support.

8.f. Personnel

Picture Key (right to left)

1. Douglas M. Mullen ---------- District Manager, EOD 12/08/95

2. Kathleen A. Maycroft ---------- Refuge Operations Specialist, EOD 12/29/91, Transferred to CrabOrchard NWR 07/06/96

3. Clyde B. Male ----------Refuge Operations Specialist, (Cassville), EOD 06/23/85

4. Bruce A. Luebke ----------Refuge Operations Specialist, (Driftless Area NWR) EOD 06/18/90,Transferred to Cape May NWR 08/03/96

5. James D. Brown ---------- Maintenance Worker, EOD 06/07/87

6. Dixie L. Palmer ----------Administrative Technician, EOD 11/02/87

7. Kenneth E. Dulik ---------- Biological Technician (Lansing), EOD 12/29/91

9. WILDLIFE

9.a. Endangered/Threatened Species

Files on dead/injured eagles were reviewed and organized in January. Old files were culled and yearly summaries were computerized.

A total of five dead eagles was processed by District staff during 1996. Two birds had been electrocuted, two died of lead poisoning, and one died of unknown causes. One live eagle was sent up to the Raptor Rehabilitation Center in St. Paul, Minnesota. In addition to these eagles, one live injured golden eagle was handled by our office (see section 6.a. - Law Enforcement). On January 23, a news release profiling the cooperative effort of several individuals and agencies to successfully transport the golden eagle to the Raptor Rehabilitation Center was distributed to area newspapers.

Three trumpeter swans were sighted in Pool 10 near Wyalusing City Park, Wisconsin, on March 6. Two of the swans had neck bands and all had leg bands. The Bagley resident who sighted the swans requested information on the birds. After consulting with WDNR Endangered Species Specialist Sumner Madison, it was discovered that the swans were part of the their reintroduction program. The neck banded swans were an adult male and its offspring from last year's nesting season. The swan without the neck band could not be identified by its leg band, but it is hoped that it is the adult female that nested with the captive-reared "Alaskan" male for the past few years. The local resident who reported the sighting is planning to take his grandchildren to visit the swans on their northern Wisconsin breeding grounds this summer.

On April 10, a dead eagle was picked up by BT Dulik from a farm near Dorchester, Iowa. The bird was found beneath a tree. It appeared to have fallen out of the tree dead. There were no apparent signs of injury and the bird appeared to be in good health. The eagle had only been dead a couple of days, so it was sent to the National Wildlife Disease Lab in Madison, Wisconsin. Autopsy results indicated lead poisoning. Five partially dissolved number 4 pellets were located in the eagle's stomach. Results were forwarded to Wisconsin Conservation Warden Dennis Kirschbaum, who had recovered the eagle.

On April 22, BT Dulik found a great horned owl nest in an inactive eagle nest on the north end of Pool 9. One adult and two owl chicks were observed in the nest. The eagle/owl nest, which is located on the fringe of the Dairyland Heron Rookery, has been active since 1993. There is an active eagle nest less than one-fourth mile from the nest and it is the alternate for the eagle/owl nest.

On May 1, a peregrine falcon was observed hunting within the flooded Turkey River co-op fields. The falcon rocketed through several large rafts of yellow legs that were feeding in the flooded stubble, but was unsuccessful.

On May 7, MW Brown responded to a tip by Mike Ouverson of IDNR. A turkey hunter reported the remains of a bald eagle on private property off of the Great River Road two miles north of Balltown, Dubuque County, Iowa. Only scattered feathers, the wings, the legs, and feet were recovered. The remains were in very poor condition and were destroyed at the McGregor District Office. Information regarding the recovery, including the turkey hunter's and the landowner's names, was forwarded to Special Agent Walt Kocal.

On November 18, MW Brown recovered a dead adult bald eagle from a location in Clayton County, Iowa. An examination by District staff revealed the bird had been electrocuted as evidenced by burnt feet and wing tips. The bird was forwarded to the repository in Colorado.

BT Dulik attempted to find an injured bald eagle near New Albin, Iowa on December 5. The eagle had been reported by several individuals. The bird reportedly could fly short distances, but with great difficulty. Several attempts at locating the eagle were made by District staff and Iowa Conservation Officers, however the bird was never recovered.

9.b. Waterfowl

The first Canada goose migrants were observed on February 20. By February 26, goose numbers had risen to an estimated 400 birds on Pool 11. The first snow geese were noted February 27, when several flocks were heard passing over Cassville, Wisconsin during the cover of night. ROS Male also conducted a pool-wide waterfowl survey for Pool 11 on February 26. Despite the fact that the majority of the Pool remained ice-covered, some early migrants were observed for the first time of the season. In the warm water discharge below the John Deere Power Plant, canvasback, scaup, ring-necked, and northern pintail were observed. Elsewhere on the Pool, buffleheads were encountered. Earlier this month, first sightings included a migrating common merganser on February 17, followed by common goldeneye and flocks of mallards on February 21.

The first green-winged teal was observed north of Cassville, Wisconsin on March 1.

The first redhead duck was observed north of Cassville, Wisconsin on March 4.

On March 7, hooded mergansers were observed near New Albin, Iowa and bufflehead were observed near the Bad Axe Landing in Genoa, Wisconsin, both in Pool 9.

The first wigeons of the spring, and an estimated one thousand mallards, were observed utilizing the Turkey River Bottoms in Pool 11 on March 14. This early waterfowl concentration was due to an ice jam on the Turkey River that resulted in flooding surrounding low lands.

The first gadwalls, shovelers, and coot rafts were observed within Pool 11 near Potosi, Wisconsin on March 15.

The first wood duck of the spring season was observed along the Turkey River within Pool 11 on March 20.

On March 28, several significant concentrations of spring migrants were observed on Pool 10. A raft of approximately 1,500 canvasbacks and 700 scaup was sighted on the East Channel near Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin for several days. In addition, approximately 750 mallards were concentrated in a flooded farm field near Ambro Slough Landing, also near Prairie du Chien.

The first tundra swans of the spring migration were observed south of the Potosi Marsh, in Pool 11, on March 30.

On April 4, a Ross' goose was sighted in a wetland just north of Highway 18 in Marquette, Iowa. Although the species is occasionally observed in the western portion of Iowa, the sighting was a rare opportunity in northeastern Iowa.

River water levels were low for nearly the entire month of October, making the abundance of seeds and plants surrounding the Refuge wetlands

unavailable for waterfowl. Water levels finally increased another 2.5 feet during the third week in October. After that, most of the District had excellent puddle duck feeding habitat.

Small rafts of ruddy ducks were observed at several locations on Pool 11 at the beginning of October.

The first real waterfowl fall migration push was experienced within the District on October 17. Strong NW winds and an advancing cold front signaled this yearly ritual.

The first tundra swans started to appear on the District on October 31. The first sighting in Pool 9 was recorded October 16, followed seven days later by sightings in Pool 11. Canvasbacks were first sighted on the District on October 8. The population within Pool 9 was estimated at over 50,000 on October 21. The first buffleheads and common goldeneyes were observed October 28.

Tundra swan populations peaked within the District on November 18. The largest concentration of birds was noted in the Sugar Creek area with just over 6,000 swans. An additional 265 swans were also noted elsewhere in Pool 9. Other sightings included 330 birds south of Potosi and another 140 elsewhere in Pool 11. Total swan-use days within the District for November was calculated at 126, 965.

The Harpers Slough Closed Area located in lower Pool 9 continues to be a favorite location for tundra swans and puddle ducks in the District.

Canvasback populations peaked within the District the first week of November, at an estimated 108,140 birds. Concentrations of over 75,000 birds were noted in the Pool 9 Closed Area with another 33,000 in the Sugar Creek area. Two weeks later on November 18, only 4,805 birds were using the Pool 9 Closed Area. However, the Sugar Creek area still hosted an estimated 68,100 canvasbacks. Total canvasback-use days for the month of November was calculated at 2,192,280.

Once again, canvasback ducks accounted for the highest number of duck-use days in the District with 3,092,415 use days recorded. Lesser scaup accounted for the second highest number with 1,461,090 use days. A distant third in use days was the mallard with 150,545, and tundra swans with 133,050.

The puddle duck migration did not amount to much, in this, the year that was supposed to see more mallards than any year since 1970. Numbers peaked at about 6,000, well below the normal, and way below what was expected. One possible reason that we were passed up this year was the high atmospheric winds at the time the mallards were supposed to arrive. Instead of stopping in our section of the river, the birds continued down to Louisiana all in one swoop. It was reported that there were more ducks in Louisiana before their hunting season opened than they had ever seen.

9.c. Marsh and Water birds

On January 19, ROS Male provided information to the International Crane Foundation (ICF), upon their request, on great blue heron wire strikes. Of particular interest was the multi-strand cables that transect the Refuge between the Brinkman's and Dago Slough heron rookeries. No significant problems have been noted by District staff. The information was going to be used by ICF at a hearing.

The first great blue heron of the season was observed north of Cassville, Wisconsin on March 4. Within eight days, dozens were present on the District. Nest occupancy within the rookeries was first noted on March 21, when ROS Male conducted a preliminary activity check on Pool 11 rookeries. Of the four previously utilized locations, only one was found to be active with a 75 percent occupancy rate on existing nests. In addition, the rookery discovered on Pig Island this fall was also active, with a 90 percent occupancy of existing nests.

The first great egrets were observed within the District south of Mud Lake in Pool 11 on April 6.

Two sandhill cranes were observed within the Turkey River Bottoms on April 8. One additional bird was observed several weeks later in the Jack Oak slough area.

American white pelicans were first sighted on the District in the Pool 10 Closed Area on April 11. Five pelicans were sighted loafing among a few tundra swans and several dozen Canada geese. On April 13, American white pelicans were observed north of the Potosi Dike area. The flock started out with 10 birds and grew to a high of 116 birds. Previous sightings of more than 25 pelicans in Pool 11 were rare. This unusual gathering is believed to be a result of fish concentrations with the Grant River and the Mississippi River confluence.

On May 9, ROS Male was walking the perimeter dike at the John Deere water control marsh when he flushed a total of 31 sora rails. It is probable that there were just as many calling from the interior of this 34-acre managed marsh. Two American bitterns were also observed.

BT Dulik observed two immature sandhill cranes near New Albin, Iowa on April 25.

Rafts of double-crested cormorants numbering in the hundreds assembled in the lower Pool 11 area at the beginning of October.

A report was received during December from Refuge Biologist Eric Nelson describing the continuing decline of great blue heron nest counts on the Refuge. The downward trend from the peak of 8,187 nests in 1989 continues. This year 5,715 active great blue heron nests were counted. The average brood size has also declined (young/successful nest); it was 2.1 yng/nest in 1994, 1.7 yng/nest in 1995, and 1.6 yng/nest in 1996. The report also discussed trends in the existing and historical colonies. Research and investigation may be necessary to determine if the decline is part of a natural fluctuation or cycle, or if there are outside impacts pushing numbers down. The total number of great blue heron nests in colonies on the McGregor District, with nest counts made by various methods for selected years, was as follows:

Table 4. Total number of great blue heron nests in colonies

1977	1978	1980	1983	1987	1989	1993	1994	1995	1996
392	1084	1458	1532	331	3769	2726	2973	2282	1787

9.d. Shorebirds, Gulls, Terns, & Allies

Herring gulls returned to the District on February 26. Their numbers continued to grow with each passing day. The ring-billed gulls usually associated with this initial push in migrants had not yet been observed.

On April 3, common snipe were first observed within the District along the Turkey River delta. Solitary sandpipers were encountered on April 18 near this same area. A major movement of shorebirds, mostly yellowlegs, occurred on April 25. Flocks up to 35 birds were observed almost the entire day despite strong northeast winds.

Willets, a rare sighting within the District, were reported in concentrations in farm fields adjacent to the Refuge and the Turkey River Bottoms this spring.

On May 2, Caspian and common terns were observed within the District in Swift Slough, just south of Guttenberg, Iowa.

Black terns were first sighted on the District on May 15, and by May 23, the birds were sighted throughout the District.

Bonaparte's gulls appeared within the District on October 8. Ring-billed and herring gull populations continued to mount toward their traditional peak in November.

9.e. Raptors

On January 24, the District sent a red-tailed hawk and rough-legged hawk to the National Forensics Lab for analysis. The hawks were suspected to have been shot in order to protect an individual's pen-raised pheasants. The follow-up investigation was being conducted by WDNR Conservation Warden Dennis Kirschbaum.

On November 11, District staff captured an apparently injured immature red-tailed hawk just north of the Visitors Center. The bird, which was

lethargic and unresponsive, was housed overnight in our warm maintenance building. The hawk appeared fully recovered the next morning, and was released onto the Refuge.

The first kettle of turkey vultures was observed working the bluff updrafts just north of Cassville, Wisconsin on March 22.

9.f. Other Migratory Birds

On November 14, BT Dulik was nominated by the District for the Migratory Bird Assignment at Crab Orchard NWR (Waterfowl Wingbee).

9.i. Fisheries Resources

On February 10, MW Brown distributed paddlefish alert signs to the IDNR and WDNR for placement at State landings in which anglers might catch tagged paddlefish.

On May 8, District staff attended a law enforcement/mussel identification meeting at the La Crosse District Office. A mulit-agency task force, for the strengthening of law enforcement against illegal mussel harvest, was discussed. The Refuge has agreed to provide surveillance information as available.

10. ITEMS OF INTEREST

Furloughed employees returned to work on January 9, 1996, after an 18-day government shutdown.